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James Ellis
Director for Legal, Policy and
Governance

MEETING	:	EXECUTIVE
VENUE	:	COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE	:	TUESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2025
TIME	:	7.00 PM

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Councillor Ben Crystall	- Leader of the Council
Councillor Mione H Goldspink	- Executive Member for Neighbourhoods
Councillor Carl Brittain	- Executive Member for Financial Sustainability
Councillor Alex Daar	- Executive Member for Communities
Councillor Joseph Dumont	- Executive Member for Corporate Services
Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward	- Executive Member for Planning and Growth
Councillor Sarah Hopewell	- Executive Member for Wellbeing
Councillor Tim Hoskin	- Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability
Councillor Chris Wilson	- Executive Member for Resident Engagement

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- must not participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting;
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AGENDA

1. <u>Apologies</u>

   To receive any apologies for absence.

2. <u>Leader's Announcements</u>

   To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council.

3. <u>Minutes - 7 October 2025</u> (Pages 5 - 20)

   To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2025.

4. <u>Declarations of Interest</u>

   To receive any Member(s) declaration(s) of interest.

5. <u>Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire – Submission of final proposals</u> (Pages 21 - 479)

6. <u>Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27</u> (Pages 480 - 486)

7. <u>Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy</u> (Pages 487 - 874)

8. <u>Disposal of council-owned land surplus to requirements</u> (Pages 875 - 884)

9. <u>Urgent Business</u>

   To consider such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration and is not likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information.

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 7 OCTOBER 2025, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor B Crystall (Leader)
                Councillors M Goldspink, C Brittain, A Daar,
                J Dumont, V Glover-Ward, S Hopewell,
                T Hoskin and C Wilson.

ALSO PRESENT:
                Councillors M Butcher, I Devonshire and
                S Watson.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Kirsten Brown	-	Corporate Procurement Manager
James Ellis	-	Director for Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Brian Moldon	-	Director for Finance, Risk and Performance
Oliver Rawlings	-	Service Manager (Licensing and Enforcement)
Sara Saunders	-	Director for Place
Stephanie Tarrant	-	Assistant Director for Democracy, Elections and Information Governance
Ben Wood	-	Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services

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182   APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

183   LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader referred to the recent sad news that former
Councillor Norma Symonds had passed away. A formal
tribute would be paid at the next meeting of Council.

184   MINUTES - 8 JULY 2025

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods proposed,
and The Executive Member for Communities seconded a
motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July
2025 be approved as a correct record and be signed by
the Leader. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken,
the motion was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – that the Minutes of the meeting held
> on 8 July 2025 be approved as a correct record
> and signed by the Leader.

185   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth declared
a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item 5
(Review of Resident Permit Zone Policy), on the grounds
that she was a resident of one the roads being considered
for a Resident Permit Zone.

186   REVIEW OF RESIDENT PERMIT ZONE POLICY

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability
presented a report which proposed targeted amendments
to both East Herts District Council's (EHDC) Resident
Permit Parking Schemes (RPZs) Operational Guidance
and EHDC's Resident Permit Parking Policy.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability
advised that the Council's 2024 Parking Strategy had

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committed to reviewing the RPZ approach in response to community concerns about parking availability and enforcement. In early 2025, Citisense was commissioned to independently assess the RPZ guidance and policy. The review made several recommendations as detailed in Appendix B of the report. Two key changes were proposed: reducing the non-resident parking occupancy threshold from 40% to 10% and lowering the requirement for on-street parking capacity from 75% to 50% of households in a proposed zone. These changes aimed to improve flexibility, reflect best practice and better align policy with lived experience in high-stress parking areas.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability made a minor amendment to the recommendation in the report to highlight the referral to Council. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability proposed that the recommendation, as amended, be supported. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods seconded the proposal.

Following a request in advance of the meeting to speak on this matter, Mr Ian Bailey was invited to address the Executive. Mr Bailey asked the Executive to review one of the recommendations made by Citisense (to reduce the requirement that more than 50% of households must respond before the consultation is taken forward to engagement stage) as it was not proposed to be adopted. Mr Bailey highlighted that a 50% response rate was an unrealistically high target and provided a local example by where consultation had not progressed due to a 40% response rate. Mr Bailey suggested that the scheme provided provision for officer discretion and requested the proposal in question be reviewed.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability responded by recognising that the policy aimed to meet most requirements and confirmed reluctance to alter the 50% democratic approach.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

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noted that the views of residents with a neutral stance needed to be expressed and recognised that hyperlocal elements within zones were important. He thanked Mr Bailey for his contribution and offered him a meeting, alongside the relevant ward Councillors to discuss his local situation.

The Executive Member for Resident Engagement welcomed the proposed changes noting his wards proximity to Stansted Airport and queried if there would be flexibility over restricted parking times. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability noted that there were several examples across East Herts where parking schemes had been embraced by local communities. These had been developed through consultation with residents, including the introduction of a "spoiler hour" to deter all-day parkers. He acknowledged that whilst this approach might not suit every area, it demonstrated how such schemes could be managed with flexibility.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability queried whether an increase in RPZs would be accompanied by sufficient resources to ensure proper enforcement. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability confirmed that existing resources were flexible and advised that this would be monitored.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing welcomed the proposal for the non-resident parking occupancy threshold to decrease from 40% to 10%.

The motion to support the amended recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – to recommend to Council that it adopts the below changes to East Herts Resident's Permit Zone (RPZ) Operational Guidance policy:
>
> •   That the requirement that non-resident parking

must exceed 40% occupancy at peak times, as a condition for Page 17 Agenda Item 5 implementing an RPZ, be reduced to 10% of occupancy at peak times;

- That requirement for there to be sufficient kerb space to enable 75% of households in a proposed area to park one vehicle on-street as a condition for implementing an RPZ, be reduced to 50% from the guidance.

187   CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT STATEMENT OF LICENSING PRINCIPLES UNDER THE GAMBLING ACT: 2025-28

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the revised draft Statement of Gambling Principles, following public consultation. The Executive Member for Planning and Growth highlighted that the Council was required to review its gambling policy every three years. It was noted that whilst the district historically held low numbers of gambling licences and received few complaints, it remained important to retain a robust policy.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that the Licensing Committee had reviewed the draft statement without highlighting any proposed changes and that the Chair of the Licensing Committee had acknowledged its thoroughness. Two responses were received in response to the public consultation, neither of which raised concerns about the policy itself and therefore no further amendments had been made.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed that the recommendations in the report, be supported. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability seconded the proposal.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods welcomed the updated gambling policy and thanked the Executive Member and officers for their work, she acknowledged

sections 10.7 and 10.8 of the policy, which highlighted the serious health impacts of problem gambling, including suicide and family breakdown. Whilst supporting the policy, The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods expressed regret over the limitations local councils had in restricting gambling promotion and advertising. In response, it was confirmed that East Herts had a policy prohibiting gambling advertising across its own venues and related areas.

The motion to support the recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – that following public consultation, the Executive Members reviewed the draft Statement of Licensing Principles under the Gambling Act and recommended the Statement, including any amendments, to Council for adoption.

188   CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT MARKETS POLICY FOLLOWING PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the draft Market Policy, recognising the value of markets to the local economy and community character. Members heard that the Council was keen to maintain a balance of markets within the district and ensure that there was consistency in the way that markets were organised. The new policy sought to set out the basis upon which markets were held and the process by which applications for new markets would be considered.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth explained that previously, markets had shifted from being licensed under market acts to the street trading policy, which limited flexibility, particularly on pricing. Once the new market policy came into effect, all references to markets would be removed from the street trading policy. A public consultation was conducted, with few responses

received, and the resulting changes were detailed within the report. The policy was set to be reviewed every 5 years.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. The Executive Member for Corporate Services seconded the proposal.

The Executive Member for Communities observed that the market in Hertford had been notably busy and acknowledged that whilst the new policy had not yet taken effect, changes made to date appeared to have had a positive impact.

The motion to support the recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – that the Market Policy, as amended following public consultation, be adopted, taking effect from the 1 January 2026.

189   PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2024/25 AND DRAFT
        STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2024/25

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Provisional Outturn 2024/25 and Draft Statement of Accounts 2024/25. Members heard that the figures remained provisional subject to auditor approval. The revenue account showed an overspend of £132,000, which marked a significant improvement from the £955,000 forecast at the end of quarter 3. It was noted that this was achieved through capitalisation of interest, a review of the minimum revenue provision and improved service costs. The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability highlighted that the Council had successfully returned to the required reporting schedule after previous delays. It was noted that with a new auditor in place, future timelines were expected to be met.

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The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. The Executive Member for Corporate Services seconded the proposal.

Councillor Devonshire asked why £170,000 for the URC Church Hall had been removed from the capital forecast and whether business rates were still being paid on Charringtons House and the former Lemon Tree restaurant, both of which were vacant.

It was explained that the URC Hall budget had not been spent but was rolled forward into the next financial year, making it a timing issue rather than a budget change. The future of the URC Church Hall remained under review, pending further discussions with community interest groups. In relation to business rates, it was confirmed that rates were still being paid on both properties whilst the properties remained in Council ownership. It was noted that the transfer of the Old River Lane (ORL) scheme, subject to planning approval, was expected to end the Council's liability for Charringtons House. The future of the Lemon Tree building remained under discussion and was dependent on the final design of the ORL scheme, with clarity expected within six months, although delays were possible.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability expressed gratitude to the finance team for the capitalisation of interest. Members acknowledged the positive impact on the accounts and expressed satisfaction in having audits up to date.

The Leader sought clarity in relation to the spending on refuse and recycling vehicles. It was confirmed that a reduction in spend was anticipated, with the original estimate of £8 million revised to £6.2 million. It was noted that this figure was provisional and likely to be fully confirmed in the Quarter 1 report.

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The motion to support the recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the general fund revenue outturn of £132k overspend to be funded from the general reserve be noted;

(B)   the capital outturn position and approve carry forward budgets of £358k be noted; and

(C)   the 2023/24 draft statement of accounts, be received.

190   FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2025/26 - QUARTER 1 FORECAST TO YEAR END

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Financial Management 2025/26 Quarter 1 Forecast to
year end.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability advised that there was a £789,000 overspend forecast. He said that key revenue details and variances were outlined in appendices A and B. It was noted that there had been a £270,000 income shortfall for BEAM which was related to the delay in recruiting a chef.

Members were advised that an appointment had now been made, and a food offering was now available which would significantly improve the financial results going forward. In addition, a £210,000 business rates pressure remained under appeal. These pressures were being examined to avoid repetition in the 2026/27 budget.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said that the capital programme (Appendix C) detailed a £637,000 underspend and the Aged Debt Analysis (Appendix D) reported a £698,000 debt reduction, aided by settlements and write-offs, with further improvements

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expected.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. The Executive Member for Corporate Services seconded the proposal.

Councillor Devonshire commented on the delay in appointing a chef for BEAM. Members heard that the delay had stemmed from the theatre director's decision to prioritise stabilising other aspects of the business before launching the food service. In addition, staff turnover had also contributed to this delay. It was noted that in the lead-up to BEAM's opening, the project had been running approximately six months behind schedule and efforts had focused on opening on time.

Members highlighted that Stage Two had only launched in April 2025 and that bookings had taken priority over food, with a successful programme now in place with sold-out events. Members noted that initial operational challenges highlighted the need for caution in future financial planning.

Members commended the work of the Director for Commercial, Customer and Regeneration and noted that alongside his team, they had successfully navigated the challenges faced with BEAM, opening Stage Two and launching a food offering. It was noted that theatre activity was seasonal, and activity was expected to increase from September to December, with pantomime anticipated to be a major income stream.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability commented on aged debts, highlighting that whilst a significant payment had been received from one of the largest outstanding debtors, aged debt figures had continued to grow since March 2025.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability explained that several large debts had been complex and

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required extensive investigation due to their age. Members were informed that these were actively being worked on, with many expected to be resolved within three to six months. The Director of Finance, Risk and Performance added that considerable progress had been made over the past six months, including careful write-offs following due diligence. Efforts had focused on streamlining the debt recovery process through automation, ensuring smoother transitions between stages and reducing delays. The team aimed to manage both old and new debts simultaneously, with a continued emphasis on minimising aged debt.

The motion to support the recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – that (A) the net revenue budget end of year projected overspend of £789k, be noted; and
>
> (B)   the capital programme forecast outturn of £637k, be noted.

191   TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2024/25 OUTTURN

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Treasury Management 2024/25 Outturn. Members heard that the Council was required under the CIPFA Code of Practice to approve treasury management reports twice yearly. The report provided an overview of the external economic environment, highlighting the rise in the 10-year gilt rate from 3.94% to 4.69%, which significantly influenced borrowing costs.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said that over the year, external borrowing increased from £53.6 million to £64.5 million, while investments rose from £33.7 million to £39.3 million, resulting in a net borrowing increase of £5.3 million to support the capital programme. The report confirmed that the Council had complied with

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the CIPFA Treasury Management Code by monitoring the required indicators.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability advised that the recommendation should read 'That the Executive recommend to Council that the Treasury Management Outturn and Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 be approved'.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the amended recommendation be supported. C The Executive Member for Corporate Services seconded the proposal.

The motion to support the recommendation, as amended, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – The Executive recommended to Council that the Treasury Management Outturn and Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 be approved.

192   STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER MONITORING Q1 2025/26

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Strategic Risk Register Monitoring Q1 2025/26 and updated Risk Management Strategy. Members heard that a review of the Risk Register had been conducted by the Leadership Team, examining both risk scores and mitigations. Appendix A detailed the findings, which remained largely unchanged.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said that the main adjustment was a reduced risk score for key contractor failure, following the start of the new waste contract. The accompanying Risk Management Strategy was reviewed annually and remained mostly unchanged. The main update was an enhancement to the risk scoring framework, shifting from a 3x3 to a 4x4 matrix to allow more detailed risk evaluation.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the amended recommendation be supported. The Executive Member for Communities seconded the proposal.

Members welcomed the reduction in risk for key contractor failure and thanked the Director of Finance, Risk and Performance and his team for their efforts in compiling the report, acknowledging the time and work involved.

The motion to support the recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – that (A)the 2025/26 quarter one corporate risk register and actions being taken to control and mitigate risk was noted; and
>
> (B) the Risk Management Strategy was reviewed and approved.

193   MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2026-2031

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2026-2031. The Executive Member advised that despite uncertainty around Local Government Reorganisation, the Council was required to produce a financial plan, which sought to provide a balanced budget by 2028. It was noted that Government funding levels remained unknown which made budgeting largely speculative. Members heard that a cautious approach had been adopted to model worst-case scenarios and prepare accordingly.

Members heard that the Government's Fair Funding review had been a key development, with the Council anticipating a funding reduction of over £2 million across three years. This raised concerns about the district's areas of need and the council's limited flexibility to raise

income to compensate the funding gap.

Members noted that the budget-setting timetable was outlined in section 8 of the report, with updates planned as new information emerged.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the amended recommendation be supported. Councillor Goldspink seconded the proposal.

The Leader of the Council thanked officers for the report acknowledging the high-quality presentation, background detail and graphics included.

The Leader of the Council queried the table on page 272 of the report, which detailed EV charge income on Council premises, noting that income appeared to drop after 2026/27. Officers clarified that this was not a reduction and Member heard that there was £25,000 of new income expected in 2026/27, followed by an additional £15,000 in 2027/28, bringing the total to £40,000.

Councillor Devonshire raised a concern regarding the fairness of business rate retention, noting that East Herts had only retained 9% due to being considered a high-revenue area. Members heard that the Government was reviewing the business rates system, however it was unlikely to provide an improved position.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services expressed disappointment at repeatedly facing budget constraints, wishing instead to focus on positive initiatives for the community. The Executive Member commented on the lack of financial clarity surrounding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), which had demanded significant officer time without adequate funding. Members noted that an update from the Government was expected following the autumn budget in late November 2025.

The motion to support the recommendation, having been

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proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – that (A) the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2026–2031, as set out in Appendix A, along with the financial assumptions and modelling used to forecast resources and pressures over the MTFP period, be approved;
>
> (B)   the projected budget gap of £531k in 2026/27 and the cumulative gap of £2.41 million through to 2030/31, be noted;
>
> (C)   the adequacy of General Fund balances and the ongoing review of grants and reserves, with outcomes to be reported as part of the 2026/27 budget report later in the year, be noted; and
>
> (D)   the financial planning framework and timetable for future reporting and decision-making, be noted.

194   ANNUAL PROCUREMENT REPORT

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Annual Procurement report. Members heard that the report summarised procurement activity over the past 12 months, outlined upcoming procurements and detailed actions taken to support the Council's procurement strategy. The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability advised that the report sought delegated authority for the relevant Director, in consultation with the portfolio holder, to proceed with procurement activities, preventing delays at critical stages.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. The Executive Member for Communities seconded the proposal.

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The Executive Member for Corporate Services asked whether there was any commentary on the timing and duration of forthcoming contracts in light of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and whether there were risks to achieving best value. Officers advised that contract lengths were being carefully considered to ensure best value currently whilst maintaining a good position to re-procure under a new structure.

The motion to support the recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – that (A) delegated authority be approved for the relevant Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to commence procurement for the forthcoming procurement activities listed in the table in paragraph 2.2.
>
> (B)   Executive have considered the actions and delivery against the procurement strategy to date; and
>
> (C)   Executive have considered the activities undertaken by procurement in 2025/26.

195   URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.08 pm

Chairman	....
Date	....

EAST HERTS COUNCIL REPORT

EXECUTIVE

Date of meeting: Tuesday 18 November 2025

Report by: Councillor Ben Crystall – Leader of the Council

Report title: Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire – Submission of final proposals

Ward(s) affected:

Summary – On 16 December 2024, the government published a white paper on English devolution and reform to local government, setting out the potential for the most significant reforms to local government since the Local Government Act 1972.

On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution wrote to the Leaders of all District and Borough Councils in Hertfordshire and Hertfordshire County Council (see appendix A), formally inviting them to develop proposals for a single tier of local government in the county.

Hertfordshire submitted an interim plan to the government in March 2025 setting out the approach to local government reorganisation in the county. Following the submission of the Interim Plan, all authorities across the county have worked with the consultants, IMPOWER, to produce the required full submission, which must be submitted to the government by 28 November 2025.

This submission, which is shown in Appendix B, outlines three unitary authority options that remain under consideration - two, three and four unitary councils for Hertfordshire. When submitted, the submission will indicate which option each council supports.

King's Counsel's opinion has confirmed that the final approval of the proposals to government is an executive decision and as such rests with the Executive. The meeting to review and agree the proposals to be supported will take place at the Executive meeting on 18 November 2025.

Although the decision rests with the Executive, given that the potential changes to the District Council are profound, the purpose of this report to invite council to consider and debate the options before a final decision is taken by the Executive.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE

For Executive to agree one of the following as the preferred option

Either

a) ***Submit proposal and identify the two unitary (2UA) option as preferred.***

b) ***Submit proposal and identify modified three unitary option (3UA modified) as preferred and request that Secretary of State formally modify the proposal by agreeing boundary changes, as set out in the proposal.***

c) ***Submit proposal and identify the modified four unitary option (4UA modified) as preferred and request that the Secretary of State formally modify the proposal by boundary changes as set out in the proposal.***

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 Having noted the indicative resolution of Council, passed at an extraordinary meeting on 13 November 2025 the Executive is required to make the final submission as set out above.

2.0 Background

2.1 The English Devolution White Paper, published on 16 December 2024, set out the government's plans to devolve greater power and funding to local areas and to deliver local government reorganisation in all 'two tier' areas

2.2 On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution wrote to all leaders of two-tier councils to formally invite them to develop proposals for a

single tier of local government in their counties. The letter to Hertfordshire Leaders is at Appendix A.

2.5   A formal statutory invitation, included as an appendix to the letter, set out the government's expectations including the criteria against which proposals will be assessed:

a)   **Proposals should seek to establish a single tier of local government.** Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area.

b)   **Proposed unitary councils must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.** New councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more (although it is recognised there may be certain scenarios where a lower figure could be considered).

c)   **Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.** Proposals should show how new structures will improve service delivery and avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.

d)   **Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view.** Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance and include evidence of local engagement.

e)   **New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.**

f) **New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.**

2.6 The Minister indicated he expected 'local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area … rather than developing competing proposals'.

2.7 County areas were required to submit an interim plan by 21 March 2025, setting out progress on developing proposals which are to be submitted by 28 November 2025.

2.8 It is anticipated that the Government will conduct a formal public consultation on reorganisation proposals for the county early in 2026. The Secretary of State's decision on which option is to be implemented in Hertfordshire would then be anticipated in summer 2026.

2.9 The Government's expectation is that new unitary authorities will then be delivered by April 2028, with shadow elections for the new unitary authorities taking place in May 2027.

Hertfordshire's response

2.10 Hertfordshire councils, with the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, jointly submitted to Government its Interim Plan on 20 March 2025. This indicated that four options were being developed:

- A single unitary for Hertfordshire
- Two unitaries for Hertfordshire
- Three unitaries for Hertfordshire
- Four unitaries for Hertfordshire

2.11 *Government feedback* on this plan was received on 15 May 2025. This feedback did not seek to approve or discount any option put forward. Key areas covered included:

- Each council must commit to a clear single option and geography for Hertfordshire as a whole in its final proposal.

- Proposals must address the Government's criteria and be supported by data and evidence. Councils were encouraged to collaborate on a consistent evidence base and financial analysis.

- Having unitary councils of a population size of 500,000 or more was referred to as a guiding principle, not a hard target.

- Councils should prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens and communities above all other issues.

- Engagement with those who may be affected by the disaggregation of services is encouraged. Final proposals should demonstrate how local ideas and views have been incorporated.

- New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

2.12 On 12 June 2025, the Leaders of Hertfordshire's 11 councils agreed to rule out the option of a single unitary authority for the county. This reflected a shared view that a single unitary council covering Hertfordshire's 1.2 million residents would be too remote from the county's diverse communities.

Development of the full submission

2.13 Following the submission of the Interim Plan, a Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme team was established in Hertfordshire. This work has been led by the Hertfordshire Chief Executives Co-ordinating Group, with strategic oversight and political steer provided by the Hertfordshire Leaders Group (HLG).

2.14 Leads and support from across the county and district and borough councils have worked with the consultants, IMPOWER, to produce the required full business case for submission on 28 November. Significant work has been undertaken to develop a shared evidence base to enable a robust of potential options for the county. Work on transition planning is also underway with a series of service design teams being set up to model proposals for disaggregation and merging of services as required.

2.15 Reflecting this work, a joint submission from the 11 Hertfordshire councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire has been prepared. This submission, as at Appendix A, outlines their shared commitment to reshaping local government to deliver simpler, more accountable and more sustainable services for Hertfordshire's 1.2 million residents.

2.16 The submission comprises of a 'spine' document with sets out in overall terms how the county's proposals meet the government's LGR criteria (as set out in paragraph 2.5 above) alongside specific proposals for each of the different unitary options being considered.

Strategic Vision and Ambitions

2.17 The submission sets out an agreed strategic vision and ambitions for the county, recognising that local government reorganisation presents a once in a generation opportunity to rethink how services are delivered, making them more

connected, more responsive and more focused on what matters most to people.

COMMUNITIES	PLACE	SERVICES
Empowered, connected and inclusive	Unlocking growth and opportunity	Integrated, efficient and people-centred
A STRONGER, SMARTER, MORE SUSTAINABLE HERTFORDSHIRE THROUGH DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION		

2.18 Key to this these ambitions is the desire to deliver devolution alongside local government reorganisation to maximise benefits for residents and businesses in Hertfordshire.

2.19 This includes securing a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) for Hertfordshire at the earliest opportunity. It is felt that Hertfordshire is of sufficient scale to warrant devolution and would be larger than many existing and planned devolution arrangements. By forming an MSA, it is felt that Hertfordshire can ensure that critical decisions about its economy, infrastructure, and public services are made locally, closer to the communities it will serve and therefore able to deliver better outcomes for its residents.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 To comply with the requirements set out by MHCLG in their letter of 5 February 2025.

4.0 Options

4.1 Whilst there is a common ambition for change, different partners currently hold different views on the best delivery model. The final business case outlines three unitary authority options that remain under consideration. These options are for two, three and four unitary councils for the county. When submitted, the business case will indicate which options are supported by which councils in the county.

4.2 The submission provides an options appraisal of the three shortlisted models which seeks to provide Government with a shared, objective and evidence-led comparison of the proposed options. The case for each of the three options, and how they meet the Government's criteria, are outlined further in individual sections of the submission.

5.0 Risks

5.1 Transition to new unitary councils will be the largest programme of organisational change Hertfordshire has undertaken in living memory. It will need to be managed in a way that ensures organisations are safe and legal from day one, but also in a way that lays the foundations for public sector reorganisation, innovation, better services and outcomes in the years ahead.

5.2 County Council services will need to be disaggregated and reestablished across new unitary footprints, while district and borough services will be re-shaped over wider areas. This will involve creating new statutory roles and governance structures, transferring thousands of staff, migrating complex IT and case management systems, and re-letting or novating hundreds of contracts. The risks, costs and complexities will be significant, especially in relation to critical services such as adult social care, children's social care, education and SEND, and housing and homelessness.

5.3 The council's proposed summary plan for delivering this transition is set out in the proposal. This anticipates delivering the new unitary authorities for Hertfordshire through 3 phases of activity. An initial Preparation phase is already underway to ensure a smooth step up of activity into the Transition phase in early 2026. This phase will primarily focus on developing safe and legal new councils. A more wide-reaching Transformation will be mobilised after vesting day.

5.4 It is proposed that this implementation work is overseen by a Member-led Board, with representatives from each authority,

ensuring political leadership and inclusive decision making throughout. A central Programme Management Office (PMO) will lead the delivery and be responsible for ensuring that the overall progress is made against the agreed timescales. A Programme Board made up of all Chief Executives, will oversee the work of the PMO to provide strategic direction and managing cross-organisational risks.

5.5   A full and detailed risk assessment has been undertaken and is being reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis as work is planned and delivered. The submission outlines current strategic transition risks and planned mitigation.

6.0   Implications/Consultations

6.1   To ensure the county's proposals are informed as much as possible by stakeholder and residents views, the following process of engagement has been undertaken.

6.2   **Phase 1: Engagement on principles and opportunities (July – August 2025):** This phase focused on establishing trust and shared understanding among key stakeholders and exploring the principles and opportunities for Hertfordshire's future governance. Engagement activity included roundtables with NHS, police, education leaders and businesses and webinars and meetings with voluntary groups, parish councils, and major employers.

6.3   The submission provides an overview of the feedback received. Overarching messages were; retain what works, simplify governance and ensure change leads to better services and increased public confidence. Transformation was viewed as an opportunity to modernise, while remaining firmly rooted in local responsiveness and partnership working.

6.4   **Phase 2: Engagement on proposals (September 2025):** building on from Phase 1, this phase extended participation in order to test the emerging models with a wider range of

stakeholders and the public. Public events were held across the county alongside and online survey. A dedicated Hertfordshire -wide microsite was set up hosting all relevant LGR information: https://www.hertfordshire-lgr.co.uk/. By the end of the engagement period, over 7,400 people had completed the survey.

6.5   The residents' survey and local engagement events provided valuable insight into public attitudes towards local government reorganisation. While views were mixed, residents engaged thoughtfully with the principles of change, identifying clear priorities for local services, accountability, representation and hopes for greater value, accountability, and coordination.

6.6   The submission provides an overview of the feedback received. Overall, the views expressed by residents present a clear and consistent picture. People wanted local government that delivers the basics well, spends public money wisely, and makes it easy to understand who is responsible for what. They saw real opportunity in more joined-up services, clearer accountability, and better coordination across the county, provided this does not come at the expense of local connection or community identity. These insights provided a strong foundation for shaping future work, ensuring that future proposals reflect residents' priorities and the values they most associate with effective local government.

6.7   There was no clear consensus on a preferred structure. While survey responses showed a slight plurality for four unitary councils, the two- and three-unitary models also received significant support. Each option attracted backing for distinct reasons:

- Two-unitary model: favoured for efficiency, scale, and strategic coordination; viewed as simple and cost-effective.
- Three-unitary model: seen by some as offering a balanced approach, avoiding both excessive scale and over-

fragmentation. Attracted positive comments on the geography.

- Four-unitary model: preferred by those emphasising local identity and representation, with smaller councils viewed as closer and more accountable to communities.

Community Safety

None

Data Protection

None

Equalities

An initial Equality Impact Assessment (see Appendix C) has been carried out on the implications of LGR for Hertfordshire residents, staff and councillors. This assessment, which is appended to Hertfordshire's submission, has identifies a range of potential impacts and implications that the 11 councils will need to take into account as the implementation of the new unitary councils progresses. The principle of equality by design will be used in developing these new councils' service offers to ensure that most vulnerable and underrepresented in our communities are not disadvantaged by these changes.

Environmental Sustainability

The Climate Change Act 2008 requires the UK government to reduce greenhouse gases by 100%, relative to 1990 levels, by 2050. As a local authority, the council is committed to this target, having declared a climate emergency in 2023, building on its previous climate change declaration from 2019.

East Herts Council has chosen to consider sustainability within its decisions, to identify suitable mitigation and adaptation measures to address the impacts of climate change where required and practicable in all the circumstances.

When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are aware of and have considered the sustainability implications of the decision that they are taking.

No assessment was undertaken in relation to this submission but implications will need to be closely considered as the development of options progresses.

Financial

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has allocated Hertfordshire councils £387,077 to support the development and delivery of the county's final business case. External consultants, IMPOWER and Connect PA, have been commissioned using this funding to support the 11 councils' development of the county's business case.

The financial modelling of the three unitary options is set out in Appendix B. This has been worked on by all Chief Financial Officers across Hertfordshire and IMPOWER. It should be noted these are for indicative purposes only, with a range of assumptions being used both prior to vesting day and post vesting day. The actual cost and savings from local government reorganisation will be dependent on wide a range of factors, including the option selected by the government, future funding settlements, decisions taken by predecessor councils up to vesting day such as savings and growth items, and decisions by the successor councils on areas such as council tax, council tax support, and service design.

There will be upfront costs to local government reorganisation. The financial modelling currently assumes these are charged to revenue and does not at this stage consider alternative approaches to the financing of these costs, such as capitalisation.

There may be direct implications for this council before the vesting day of the new authorities. Such implications could include increased reliance on agency and consultancy for vacant roles, impacts to contract costs on renewal, and preparatory/transition costs such as system data extracts and migration of data. A review of the councils earmarked reserves will be undertaken during the budget process with a view to managing some of these risks and implications.

Health and Safety

None

Human Resources

Local government reorganisation will have a direct impact on the council's recruitment and retention, and this will continue to be monitored by the council's Leadership Team, along with support from Human Resources team.

Human Rights

None

Legal

The Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007 provides that proposals for local government reorganisation should be based upon existing district council boundaries. A proposal that is not based on district council boundaries is likely to be non-compliant and may well be rejected by the Secretary of State on this basis.

However, the Secretary of State has also made it clear in the invitation to local authorities to make proposals, and associated guidance, that he would welcome proposals for unitary government that suggest modified local authority boundaries. The best way to ensure that a proposal is compliant with both invitation and relevant legislation, whilst also achieving the Council's desire to make a proposal that involves boundary changes it to adopt a bifurcated approach.

The proposal should first set out the base proposal based on existing district council boundaries and briefly explain why such a proposal would meet the various criteria set out in the Secretary of State's invitation and attached guidance. The proposal should then go on to set out a modified proposal that is not based on such boundaries and explain in detail why such a modified proposal is superior to the base proposal and why it better meets the various criteria. Such an approach is the best way to reduce the risk of either the proposal being rejected by the Secretary of State or, if adopted by the Secretary of State, such a decision being successfully challenged by way of judicial review.

As was set out the initial letter from the Secretary of State, "there will need to be a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for any proposals that involve boundary changes, or that

affect wider public services, such as fire and rescue authorities, due to the likely additional costs and complexities of implementation"

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

Appendix A – MHCLG Letter to Hertfordshire Authorities
Appendix B – Final submission
Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment

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Jim McMahon OBE MP
*Minister of State for Local Government and
English Devolution*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Your reference:
Our reference:

To: Leaders of two-tier councils in
Hertfordshire
 Broxbourne Borough Council
 Dacorum Borough Council
 East Herts Council
 Hertfordshire Couty Council
 Hertsmere Borough Council
 North Hertfordshire District Council
 St Albans City and District Council
 Stevenage Borough Council
 Three Rivers District Council
 Watford Borough Council
 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

5 February 2025

Dear Leaders

This Government has been clear on our vision for simpler, more sustainable, local government structures, alongside a transfer of power out of Westminster through devolution. We know that councils of all political stripes are in crisis after a decade of decline and instability. Indeed, a record number of councils asked the government for support this year to help them set their budgets.

This new government will not waste this opportunity to build empowered, simplified, resilient and sustainable local government for your area that will increase value for money for council taxpayers. Local leaders are central to our mission to deliver change for hard-working people in every corner of the country through our Plan for Change, and our councils are doing everything they can to stay afloat and provide for their communities day in, day out. The Government will work closely with you to deliver these aims to the most ambitious timeline.

I am writing to you now to formally invite you to work with other council leaders in your area to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation, and to set out further detail on the criteria, guidance for the development of proposals, and the timeline for this process. A formal invitation with guidance for the development of your proposals is attached at Annex A. This invitation sets out the criteria against which proposals will be assessed.

Developing proposals for reorganisation
We expect there to be different views on the best structures for an area, and indeed there may be merits to a variety of approaches. Nevertheless, it is not in council taxpayers' interest to devote public funds and your valuable time and effort into the development of multiple proposals which unnecessarily fragment services, compete against one another, require lengthy implementation periods or which do not sufficiently address local interests and identities.

The public will rightly expect us to deliver on our shared responsibility to design and implement the best local government structures for efficient and high-quality public service delivery. We therefore expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals.

This will mean making every effort to work together to develop and jointly submit one proposal for unitary local government across the whole of your area. The proposal that is developed for the whole of your area may be for one or more new unitary councils and should be complementary to devolution plans. It is open to you to explore options with neighbouring councils in addition to those included in this invitation, particularly where this helps those councils to address concerns about their sustainability or limitations arising from their size or boundaries or where you are working together across a wider geography within a strategic authority.

I understand there will be some cases when it is not possible for all councils in an area to jointly develop and submit a proposal, despite their best efforts. This will not be a barrier to progress, and the Government will consider any suitable proposals submitted by the relevant local authorities.

Supporting places through change
It is essential that councils continue to deliver their business-as-usual services and duties, which remain unchanged until reorganisation is complete. This includes progress towards the Government's ambition of universal coverage of up-to-date local plans as quickly as possible. To support with capacity, I intend to provide some funds for preparing to take forward any proposal, and I will share further information later in the process.

Considering the efficiencies that are possible through reorganisation, we expect that areas will be able to meet transition costs over time from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.

The default position is that assets and liabilities remain locally managed by councils, but we acknowledge that there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices. Where that is the case, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation, and Commissioners should be engaged in these discussions. We will continue to discuss the approach that is proposed with the area.

I welcome the partnership approach that is being taken across the sector to respond to the ambitious plans set out in the White Paper. My department will continue to work closely with the Local Government Association (LGA), the District Councils Network, the County Councils Network and other local government partners to plan how best to support councils through this process. We envisage that practical support will be needed to understand and address the key thematic issues that will arise through reorganisation, including managing service impacts and opportunities for the workforce, digital and IT systems, and leadership support.

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Timelines and next steps for interim plans and full proposals
We ask for an interim plan to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025, in line with the guidance set out in the attached Annex. My officials will provide feedback on your plan to help support you to develop final proposals.

I will expect any full proposal to be submitted **by 28 November**. If I decide to implement any proposal, and the necessary legislation is agreed by Parliament, we will work with you to move to elections to new 'shadow' unitary councils as soon as possible as is the usual arrangement in the process of local government reorganisation.

Following submission, I will consider any and all proposals carefully before taking decisions on how to proceed. My officials are available throughout to discuss how your reorganisation and devolution aspirations might work together and what support you think you might need to proceed.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to work together to put local government in your area on a more sustainable footing, creating simpler structures for your area that will deliver the services that local people and businesses need and deserve. As set out in the White Paper, my commitment is that clear leadership locally will be met with an active partner nationally.

I am copying this letter to council Chief Executives. I am also copying this letter to local Members of Parliament and to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,

JIM MCMAHON OBE MP
Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution

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Annex A

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007

INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS FOR A SINGLE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in exercise of his powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act'), hereby invites any principal authority in the area of the county of Hertfordshire, to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government.

This may be one of the following types of proposal as set out in the 2007 Act:

- Type A – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned

- Type B – a single tier of local authority covering an area that is currently a district, or two or more districts

- Type C – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned, or one or more districts in the county; and one or more relevant adjoining areas

- Combined proposal – a proposal that consists of two or more Type B proposals, two or more Type C proposals, or one or more Type B proposals and one or more Type C proposals.

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with paragraphs 1 to 3:

1. Any proposal must be made by **28 November 2025**.

2. In responding to this invitation an authority must have regard to the guidance from the Secretary of State set out in the Schedule to this invitation, and to any further guidance on responding to this invitation received from the Secretary of State.

3. An authority responding to this invitation may either make its own proposal or make a proposal jointly with any of the other authorities invited to respond.

Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

F KIRWAN

A senior civil servant in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

5 February 2025

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SCHEDULE

Guidance from the Secretary of State for proposals for unitary local government.

Criteria for unitary local government

1. **A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.**

    a) Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area.

    b) Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.

    c) Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.

    d) Proposals should describe clearly the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these are expected to achieve the outcomes described.

2. **Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.**

    a) As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.

    b) There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.

    c) Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.

    d) Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.

    e) For areas covering councils that are in Best Value intervention and/or in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support, proposals must additionally demonstrate how reorganisation may contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing and what area-specific arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable.

    f) In general, as with previous restructures, there is no proposal for council debt to be addressed centrally or written off as part of reorganisation. For areas where there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation.

3. **Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.**

   a) Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery, and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.

   b) Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.

   c) Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.

4. **Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.**

   a) It is for councils to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way and this engagement activity should be evidenced in your proposal.

   b) Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.

   c) Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.

5. **New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.**

   a) Proposals will need to consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established or a decision has been taken by Government to work with the area to establish one, how that institution and its governance arrangements will need to change to continue to function effectively; and set out clearly (where applicable) whether this proposal is supported by the CA/CCA /Mayor.

   b) Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.

   c) Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.

6. **New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.**

   a) Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.

   b) Where there are already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.

Developing proposals for unitary local government

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The following matters should be taken into account in formulating a proposal:

Boundary Changes

a) Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.

b) There will need to be a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for any proposals that involve boundary changes, or that affect wider public services, such as fire and rescue authorities, due to the likely additional costs and complexities of implementation.

Engagement and consultation on reorganisation

a) We expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals.

b) For those areas where Commissioners have been appointed by the Secretary of State as part of the Best Value Intervention, their input will be important in the development of robust unitary proposals.

c) We also expect local leaders to engage their Members of Parliament, and to ensure there is wide engagement with local partners and stakeholders, residents, workforce and their representatives, and businesses on a proposal.

d) The engagement that is undertaken should both inform the development of robust proposals and should also build a shared understanding of the improvements you expect to deliver through reorganisation.

e) The views of other public sector providers will be crucial to understanding the best way to structure local government in your area. This will include the relevant Mayor (if you already have one), Integrated Care Board, Police (Fire) and Crime Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Authority, local Higher Education and Further Education providers, National Park Authorities, and the voluntary and third sector.

f) Once a proposal has been submitted it will be for the Government to decide on taking a proposal forward and to consult as required by statute. This will be a completely separate process to any consultation undertaken on mayoral devolution in an area, which will be undertaken in some areas early this year, in parallel with this invitation.

Interim plans

An interim plan should be provided to Government on or before **21 March 2025.** This should set out your progress on developing proposals in line with the criteria and guidance. The level of detail that is possible at this stage may vary from place to place but the expectation is that one interim plan is jointly submitted by all councils in the area. It may be the case that the interim plan describes more than one potential proposal for your area, if there is more than one option under consideration. The interim plan should:

a) identify any barriers or challenges where further clarity or support would be helpful.

b) identify the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.

c) include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities.

d) include early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.

e) include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions.

f) include a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local engagement to help shape your developing proposals.

g) set out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area.

h) set out any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE

OVERALL PROPOSAL 'SPINE' DOCUMENT

V3 draft - last saved 6th November 2025

1

Table of contents

Accompanying documents:

- Proposal for 2 Unitary Authorities
- Proposal for 3 Unitary Authorities
- Proposal for 4 Unitary Authorities
- Appendix C - Equalities Impact Assessment

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

All 11 Councils in Hertfordshire are committed to reshaping local government to deliver simpler, more accountable and more sustainable services for our 1.2 million residents and being effective delivery partners with a future Strategic Authority.

This suite of documents has been prepared by Hertfordshire Councils in response to the government's English Devolution White Paper and the formal statutory invitation from the Secretary of State on 5 February 2025, which sets out expectations for stronger, more strategic local leadership, simplified governance structures and greater alignment of public services. Our proposals respond directly to that agenda: we aim to unlock the benefits of devolution, ensure readiness for a future Hertfordshire Strategic Authority and Mayoral model, and provide a foundation for resilient and effective public services for the long term.

Partners in Hertfordshire share a common ambition for what can be achieved through devolution and reorganisation but currently hold different views on the best delivery model. We have collaboratively developed and tested three credible options using a wide range of evidence and information. We have also undertaken extensive consultation with our residents, partners and other stakeholders to understand their views.

A single, shared ambition for what devolution and reorganisation could unlock for Hertfordshire's communities, places and services.		
Rigorously tested options for the best Unitary Authority delivery model.		
Two Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire	**Three Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire**	**Four Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire**
	Three Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire (Modified)	**Four Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire (Modified)**
A commitment from all 11 Councils in Hertfordshire to work together to deliver whatever model is ultimately chosen by the Secretary of State		

This 'spine' document sets out our common ambition and shared evidence base, summarises and appraises the options, and gives a clear indication of which Councils in Hertfordshire support each option, as required by the Secretary of State. It is accompanied by three distinct proposals, one for each of the identified unitary models. The three proposals are appended to this document.

3

Two of our proposals include a request for the Secretary of State to modify existing district and borough boundaries. Further information about these requests and the underlying base proposals is included, with the case being made for these changes in the relevant proposals.

Alongside our shared ambition and options appraisal, this document summarises:

- the financial context for Hertfordshire and the potential impact of LGR;
- our plan for empowering communities;
- the collaborative process we have undertaken to consult on proposals;
- our plans to mitigate the risks associated with disrupting critical services, and
- how we plan to deliver the transition to new Unitary Authorities.

Work across Hertfordshire is proceeding at pace beyond these proposals. Councils are working together to engage residents, staff and partners in shaping the future of services, exploring opportunities for prevention and integration and considering what we can do in the interim, alongside, planning carefully for the transition to new Unitary Authorities once our direction of travel is known following a decision by the Secretary of State.

Whatever decision is reached, all Councils in Hertfordshire will work together to deliver on it.

SCHEDULE OF SUPPORT

Guidance from MHCLG is clear that: "for the final proposal(s), each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography".

For avoidance of doubt, whilst this document has been developed collaboratively by all 11 Councils within Hertfordshire, individual first preferences for a specific unitary option are recorded below.

The legislation which enables Local Government Reorganisation requires that proposals submitted by local authorities, for consideration by the Secretary of State, must be based on existing district council boundaries. In cases where it is considered that there is a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification and changes to the boundaries are considered to be an improvement on the base proposal it is possible to request the Secretary of State to exercise their power to modify the base proposal to include the desired boundary changes.

In this submission we set out three base proposals 2UA, 3UA and 4UA. The local authorities who support the 3UA and 4UA models consider that they would be significantly improved if their boundaries were altered and in accordance with the legislation, those local authorities have decided to request the Secretary of State to exercise their power to modify the 3UA and 4UA proposals to include the boundary changes.

In summary, the required modifications are thought to be necessary for the primary reasons of aligning boundaries to reflect the realities of the place; to align administrative boundaries with established communities, to position local economic and social areas, and for the financial sustainability of new councils. A fuller explanation of the justification for these modifications is set out within this document and the accompanying individual proposals.

The undersigned are agreed that whatever decision is ultimately made regarding a preferred model of unitary local government for Hertfordshire, following consultation with the Secretary of State, all Councils will work together to implement it positively, constructively and at pace, in pursuit of our shared ambition.

OPTION A - TWO UNITARY AUTHORITIES - IS SUPPORTED BY:

Authority	Signature
Logo and name	.... [Name – position]
Logo and name	.... [Name – position]
Logo and name	.... [Name – position]

OPTION B - THREE UNITARY AUTHORITIES - IS SUPPORTED BY:

Authority	Signature
Logo and name	.... [Name – position]
Logo and name	.... [Name – position]
Logo and name	.... [Name – position]

OPTION C – FOUR UNITARY AUTHORITIES - IS SUPPORTED BY:

Authority	Signature
Logo and name	.... [Name – position]
Logo and name	.... [Name – position]
Logo and name	.... [Name – position]

This 'spine' document and the accompanying three proposals are a direct response to the government's stated assessment criteria for local government reorganisation. The table below shows how and where each criterion is addressed.

MHCLG criteria (summarised)	MHCLG sub-criteria (summarised)	This 'spine' document includes...	The accompanying three proposals include...
1. Establishing a single tier of local government	*a) Sensible economic areas and tax base.* *b) Sensible geography that meets housing supply and local needs.* *c) Robust evidence and analysis.* *d) Clear description of structures and intended outcomes.*	• A factual summary of each proposal, its structure, geography and key features. • A summary of analysis undertaken and evidence available.	• Further information and evidence on each option. • Key arguments from the supporters of each model on why theirs is the best option to deliver our shared ambition.
2. Size, efficiency, capacity	*a) & b) Guiding principles on population sizes.* *c) Efficiency and VFM.* *d) Managing transition costs.* *e) BV intervention / EFS – not relevant.* *f) Debt – not relevant.*	• Comparative analysis of population sizes. • A description of our approach to financial assessment and comparison of models and a summary of results.	• Key arguments from the supporters of each model on the appropriate scale of unitary organisations. • Accompanying narrative on financial resilience.
3. Quality, sustainable services	*a) Improving services.* *b) Public service reform.* *c) Impacts on critical services.*	• Our shared ambition for improving services to residents and the public. • How we plan to mitigate the risk of disaggregating critical services.	• Key arguments from the supporters of each model on service improvements, public service reform and the future shape of critical services.
4. Collaboration and local engagement	*a) Local collaboration.* *b) Local identity, culture, history.* *c) Local engagement.*	• The process we have followed to work together in response to the White Paper. • How we have engaged with the public, partners and other key stakeholders to consult on options for reorganisation.	• Key arguments from the supporters of each model on identity, culture and history. • A summary of relevant findings from the stakeholder engagement process and how these have shaped each proposal.
5. Unlocking devolution	*a) Existing case – not relevant.* *b) 'unlock devolution'.* *c) Population ratios and timelines.*	• A description of how all proposals will facilitate a future Strategic Authority and unlock devolution.	• Specific considerations for each model around working with a Strategic Authority and supporting devolution.
6. Community empowerment	*a) Community engagement.* *b) Building on existing arrangements.*	• Overview of strategy and approach to community empowerment.	• Specific considerations for each proposed model.

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"BASE" PROPOSAL AND MODIFIED PROPOSAL

The "base" proposal for the 3 and 4 unitary options is detailed within the options appraisal chapter on page 30, along with the specific boundary changes that supporters are requesting the Secretary of State to enact in parallel. This chapter provides a side-by-side comparison of the "base" and modified proposals and sets out key differences between the two.

The rationale for specific boundary change requests is set out in more detail within the accompanying proposals for 3 and 4 unitary authorities.

For clarity, beyond the opening section of the options appraisal chapter, the remainder of the document focuses on evaluation of our modified proposals, as the preferred end point for the supporters of each model.

ASKS OF GOVERNMENT

To help us deliver the policy objectives for the Devolution White Paper at pace, we have the following asks of government:

1. PROCESS AND TIMETABLE

- A clear government process and timetable for decisions, Structural Change Orders, and transition, with confirmation that the LGR/devolution programme remains on track and to the original timescales despite recent ministerial changes.
- Further clarity on the process and timeline for establishment of Strategic Authorities, with commitment that this proceeds in parallel with the creation of Unitary Authorities.
- Confirmation of legislative interpretation: clarity that, under the current Bill, (I) any new Unitary Authorities must operate a Leader and Cabinet model (Clause 57 and Schedule 25, new Section 9B); (ii) all existing Councils operating a committee system must convert to Leader and Cabinet model within 12 months of commencement, except where reorganisation is under way, in which case the requirement is disapplied until dissolution (Schedule 25, new Section 9K).[1]

2. FINANCE AND RESOURCING

- Clarity on the treatment of General Fund balances, earmarked reserves, and outstanding debt during transition.
- Clarity on Fair Funding Review (FFR) impacts on the new Unitary Authorities and Strategic Authority.
- How Housing Revenue Accounts will be considered and managed both through transition and post transition.

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[1]Our interpretation (to be confirmed) is that the bill, if enacted, will require that (i) any new authorities created through a reorganisation process must operate a leader/cabinet model (Clause 57 & Sched 25 new section 9B) (ii) all existing LA's operating a committee system must convert to L/C within 12 months of the commencement of the Act, except for the following (iii) a special provision has been included for those existing committee system LA's which are undergoing LGR, the effect of which is to disapply the requirement to convert to L/C in the run up to their dissolution. (sched 25 new section 9K)

- Funding and capacity support for transition and implementation, covering both unitary Councils and the Strategic Authority. We expect the one-off costs of implementation alone to be in the range of £90m to £100m[2]
- Support with the costs of establishing new Town and Parish Councils, and clear government support for the principle of undertaking Community Governance Reviews in parallel with LGR.
- Clarity on approaches to borrowing and the handling of capital expenditure, particularly between now and 2028 and in the early stages of the new Authorities where capital projects might overlap this process.

3. HOUSING AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNTS (HRAS)

- Clarity on how HRAs can continue to deliver urgent works and investment into stock within Business Plans, including refinancing, under the restrictions of section 24 of the 2007 Act.
- Consent on the timing of HRA aggregation across new Unitary Authorities, ensuring continuity of service and investment, and confirmation of how houses currently held by non-HRA authorities will be treated when combined with HRA authorities.

4. SECTION 24 DIRECTIONS

- A review of the thresholds for issuing directions under Section 24 of the 2007 Act once Structural Change Orders are made, to facilitate smooth service delivery and transition.
- Specifically, confirmation of whether the government will retain precedent thresholds (land disposals over £100,000; capital contracts over £1m; non-capital contracts over £100,000 whole-life cost), and whether greater local discretion could be provided.

5. BOUNDARIES AND CIVIC IDENTITY

- Support to enact boundary changes required under the three-unitary and four-unitary models, including confirmation of the statutory process that will be followed.
- Supporting the preservation of civic status and ceremonial continuity in areas affected by reorganisation.
- Specifically, ensuring that Local Government Reorganisation plans are supported by legislation and the establishment of a Trustee Committee, that explicitly preserves and maintains the historic City status for St Albans and its associated ceremonial Mayoralty, and market rights set out within Letters Patent and Royal Charters.
- Support to ensure that all existing appointed Honorary Aldermen, Alderwomen, Freemen and Honorary Recorders would continue to hold their positions within Successor Unitary Authorities.
- Confirmation that there will be no "continuing authority" following the establishment of the new Unitary Authorities.

6. CREATION OF STATUTORY JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL AUTHORITIES

- Preserving the contracting scale of the county council for waste disposal services across the geography of Hertfordshire would avoid duplication of resources, cost and competition for the same regional end-treatment capacity in any new Unitary arrangement. To effectively implement services and strategies that provide the optimum financial and environmental outcomes for residents, it is important that there

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[2] Detailed assumptions are provided within the financial modelling sections of this document.

is sufficient flexibility to establish an appropriate framework for waste disposal that aligns, rather than competes with, geographical strategies, constraints and context.

- It is therefore requested that the provisions of the 1985 Local Government Act that created the original Statutory Joint Waste Disposal Authorities be reinstated in order that more can be created on the same basis, and/or reinstate the provisions for the creation of Voluntary Joint Waste Authorities (collection and/or disposal), that were consulted on and introduced by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and additional waste-specific regulations, noting that these were repealed by the Deregulation Act 2015. This would provide choice to enable service delivery to best meet local need.

ABOUT HERTFORDSHIRE

Hertfordshire's strength lies in the diversity of its places. Our county brings together assets and identities that are distinctive and complementary: from historic market towns to new towns and garden cities, from creative industries to bioscience clusters, and from chalk streams to commuter corridors. They all work together to form a County with a strong civic identity, a varied and high-performing economy, and communities that are proud of where they live.

Future local government structures will celebrate the distinctiveness of Hertfordshire's places, while creating a framework for simpler, more accountable leadership. The following themes illustrate how local identity, heritage and economic strengths combine to shape the county and support our proposals for change.

HERITAGE AND HISTORIC TOWNS

Hertfordshire is rooted in history. St Albans, with its Roman ruins and abbey, is a city of national significance. Market towns such as Berkhamsted, Tring, Hertford, Hoddesdon and Hitchin have shaped local identity for centuries, each with strong civic traditions and historic landmarks, from castles to paper mills. Cultural assets such as Hatfield House, Knebworth House and the Frogmore Paper Trail connect communities to their heritage, while museums, abbeys and market squares remain centres of civic life.

NEW TOWNS AND GARDEN CITIES

Hertfordshire's pioneering role in planned development made its mark in the 20th century. Letchworth was the world's first Garden City, followed by Welwyn Garden City, combining housing, green space and community infrastructure. Stevenage was the UK's first new town and remains a symbol of post-war ambition. Today, these towns are being reshaped through ambitious regeneration programmes, new bus interchanges, station gateway projects and cycle networks. Hemel Garden Communities and the Gilston area, which forms part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town located to the east of the county, add a new chapter with thousands of homes planned as part of sustainable growth strategies.

INNOVATION AND INDUSTRY

Hertfordshire is at the forefront of science and technology. Stevenage is home to one of the largest life sciences campuses in Europe, with companies such as Airbus, MBDA, GSK and Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult anchoring the UK's biomedical and aerospace sectors. In addition, GSK is developing a new 28-acre life sciences hub in Ware. Maylands Business Park in Hemel Hempstead and the Herts IQ Enterprise Zone reinforce this industrial strength, while the A10 corridor is attracting new technology and data infrastructure, including Google's investment in data centres. The University of Hertfordshire and teaching hospitals provide the talent pipeline to sustain this innovation, linking education and research directly to local industry.

CREATIVE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

The county is also a hub for creativity. Hertsmere, home of Elstree Studios which hosts BBC and Sky, has become central to the UK's screen and film industries supported by a growing cluster of studios, suppliers and creative talent. Three Rivers District Council is home to Warner Bros Studios, the largest in Europe, and the world-famous Harry Potter Studio Tours on the shared

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boundary with Watford. Planning permission has also just been given for new development at Langleybury to create a significant campus for support industries and new studio space.

Festivals, theatres and museums add to a vibrant cultural scene that combines local traditions with international reach. Diversity is celebrated and visible in community initiatives, cultural events and civic life, ensuring Hertfordshire remains a place where people feel a strong sense of belonging. In 2022, Watford was recognised as a 'rainbow town' by The Geographical Journal with its ethnic diversity increasing fourfold since 2001, fostering a welcoming and inclusive community.

NATURAL LANDSCAPES AND RURAL HERTFORDSHIRE

Beyond its towns, Hertfordshire is rich in natural assets. The Chilterns National Landscape and Ashridge Estate provide green space of national renown and significance, while the county's chalk streams are among some of the rarest habitats on the planet. Agricultural land and rural villages sustain a heritage of farming and food production and offer residents and visitors vital access to open landscapes. These natural features are part of Hertfordshire's identity and underpin its ambitions for sustainability, net zero and healthier communities.

CONNECTIVITY AND GROWTH CORRIDORS

Hertfordshire's location defines much of its character. With fast road and rail links to London via the M1, M25, A1, A10, Thameslink, Metropolitan Line, London Overground, West Coast Main Line and East Coast railway line, the county is closely integrated into the wider South East economy. It also sits on the Oxford-Cambridge-London innovation arc, with direct access to world-class research and global markets. Further major growth corridors are emerging, including Hemel Garden Communities and the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, where the UK Health Security Agency will be based just beyond East Hertfordshire's borders, as well as town centre renewal across Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City and public realm investment in Waltham Cross. These projects show how Hertfordshire is preparing for the future yet also focusing on retaining its local character.

DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

While the current two-tier system has served Hertfordshire for over fifty years, we recognise that the national context is changing and that direction of travel is towards reorganisation. We are proud of what we have achieved together, but we recognise that at times our existing structures can fragment service delivery and confuse residents.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Hertfordshire has 1.2 million residents and is set to grow by 22% by 2045(internal projection), The bigger shift is that of our ageing population, with the 65+ age group set to grow by around 40% over the same period. At the same time, adopted and emerging local plans provide for around 120,000 new homes over the next 10–15 years, largely within urban areas that already accommodate almost 90% of people on one third of the county's land. This combination of a larger, older population alongside significant, town focused housing growth will increase demand for school places, Primary and Community Health, Adult Social Care, transport and utilities. It strengthens the case for public service reform and devolution to enable Hertfordshire to plan housing, infrastructure and care together at the right scale, align capital programmes, and invest earlier in prevention to manage long-term demand.

INEQUALITIES AND DEPRIVATION

Hertfordshire is a prosperous county on average, but the gaps within are stark. People in the most deprived areas die three to four years earlier and spend up to 18 additional years in poor health, compared with those in the least deprived. Deprivation is concentrated in specific neighbourhoods, with parts of Stevenage, Broxbourne, Hertsmere and Watford among the 10% most deprived nationally, a situation further compounded by recent cost-of-living pressures. Around 4,000 families, including 9,500 children, are affected by the benefit cap, leaving them on average £65 a week worse off than they would otherwise be if receiving Universal Credit.

MAP: DEPRIVATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE
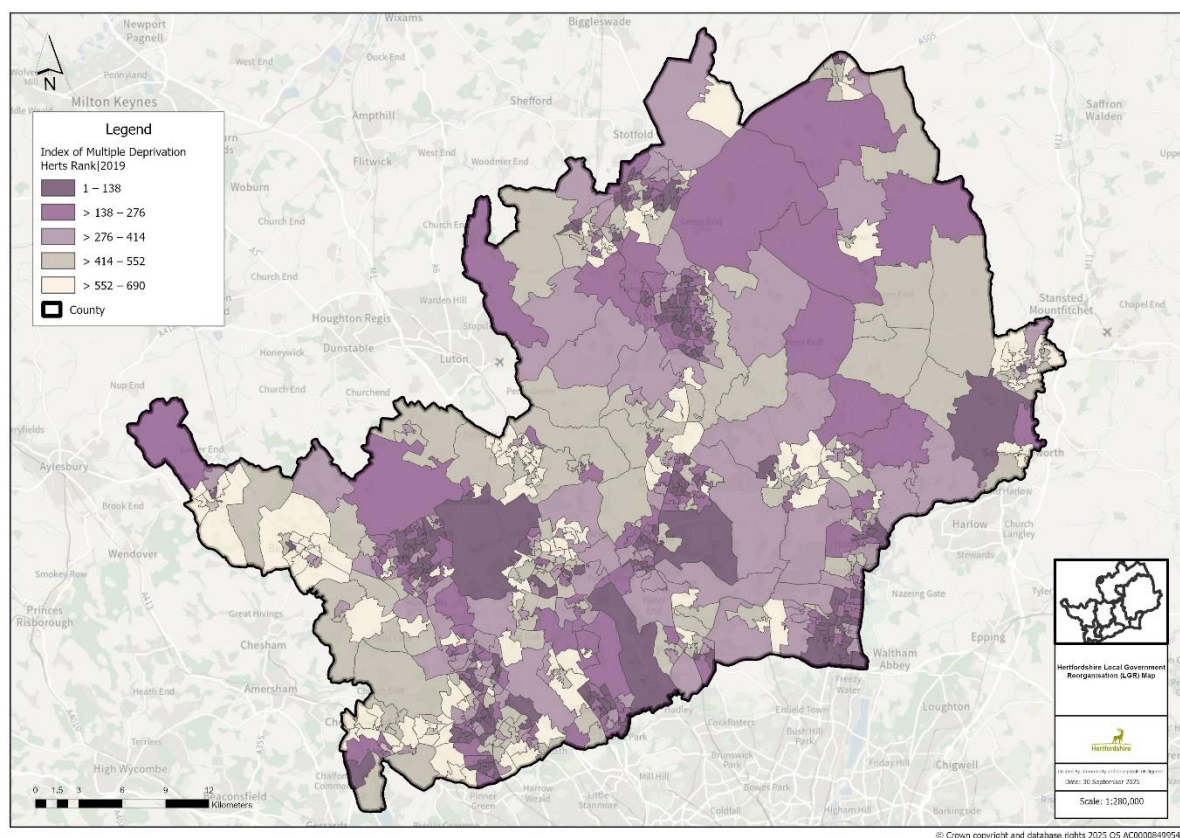
These inequalities drive demand for local services: Councils collectively see more than 7,000 homelessness approaches a year, and 1,377 households (including 1,841 children) were living in temporary accommodation at the end of last year. Higher prevalence of long-term health conditions in deprived communities also adds pressure on Adult Social Care and NHS services. Tackling these entrenched inequalities requires stronger prevention, earlier intervention and more joined-up action across housing, health, skills and employment. Current fragmented governance makes this difficult to deliver at the scale required. Reorganisation creates the opportunity to simplify responsibilities, align investment with need, and target resources where they can have the greatest impact in reducing inequality.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES

Hertfordshire faces escalating climate risks: increased flooding, heatwaves in urban areas, water stress (local usage 15% above UK average), drought threatening agriculture, and wildfire

risk in heathlands. All councils in Hertfordshire are taking urgent action to reduce carbon emissions, with the County setting a 2030 carbon-neutral target. Meeting this ambition is challenging against a backdrop of rapid growth: adopted and emerging local plans allocate around 120,000 new homes over the next 10–15 years, while residents already drive 7.4 billion vehicle-miles annually across a network of 3,200 miles of roads.

These pressures demand a more coherent system of governance. Fragmentation between County, District and Borough councils makes it harder to align planning, transport, energy and nature recovery. Reorganisation presents opportunities to retrofit homes at scale, expand active and public transport, accelerate EV infrastructure, and protect and enhance biodiversity. Reorganisation provides a platform for joined-up leadership on net zero and sustainability, ensuring that environmental goals are embedded in housing, transport and economic planning, and that Hertfordshire's growth is managed in a way that supports both prosperity and climate resilience.

INCREASING STRAIN ON PUBLIC SERVICES

Organisations in Hertfordshire are in a relatively strong financial position in comparison to similar areas across the Country, with no Authorities under intervention or in receipt of exceptional financial support from the government and none of the serious debt issues that place serious constraints on reorganisation in other areas. Through collaboration and transformation, our partnership has delivered substantial savings and managed demand effectively (overall children in care rates are lower than England's, though need is uneven in places like Stevenage and parts of Broxbourne). Even so, rising costs, volume and complexity are stretching capacity:

- Requests for support to Adult Social Care in Hertfordshire have risen by 58% during the last decade in England, from 20,820 in 2015/16 to 32,795 in 2023/24.
- The number of referrals to children's social care in Hertfordshire have increased by 22% since 2019/20 from 5,377 to 6,536 in 2024/25.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation in Hertfordshire has increased by 25% over the past six years, from 1,157 at the start of FY 2019/20 to 1,450 at the start of FY 2025/26.
- The number of children and young people with a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has risen by 251% over the past decade in Hertfordshire compared to 166% nationally - from 3,682 in 2015 (the first comparable year after EHCPs were introduced) to 12,920 in January 2025 and over 15,000 in November 2025. At the same time, pupils with an identified special educational need or disability but without an EHCP in Hertfordshire schools has increased by 31% from 24,293 in 2015 to 31,966 in 2025.

These dynamics, driven in part by demographic change, demonstrate the need to build more resilience into the system: simpler, more integrated organisations with clearer accountability and devolved powers to shift investment into prevention, share scarce expertise, and manage risks effectively at both a strategic and local scale.

SIMPLIFICATION FOR RESIDENTS AND PARTNERS

Residents expect simplicity but are sometimes faced with overlapping responsibilities, duplicate contact points and varied experiences. Financial pressure, demand-led services, and complex governance structures have made this harder to sustain. Residents face a patchwork of responsibilities: waste collected by Districts, disposed of by the County; Housing run locally, but Children's Services run county-wide; meaning services are not always easy to navigate.

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Key partners such as the NHS and police must also hold relationships with eleven different councils in the current system. Reorganisation offers a chance to reset governance, clarify accountability, give partners a clearer line of sight, and help Hertfordshire to speak with a louder voice on behalf of residents outside its boundaries.

OUR SHARED VISION

Hertfordshire is ambitious for its people and its places. With a population of 1.2 million and a dynamic economy worth nearly £50bn, we want every resident to reach their full potential and no one to be left behind.

As our communities grow and evolve, so too must the way we deliver public services. Advances in technology mean people are used to fast, personalised and easy-to-use services in other parts of their lives and they expect the same from public services. Public service reorganisation presents a once in a generation opportunity to rethink how services are delivered; a rare change to making them more connected, more responsive and more focused on what matters most to our residents, businesses and communities.

We want to build a system that supports people throughout their lives: one that gives children the best start; helps residents develop skills for life and live more sustainably; makes it easier to find work and housing; and supports people to live and age well in their local communities. To do this our services must align and work better together.

By transforming how public services are designed and delivered, we can better meet the needs of today while preparing for the challenges of tomorrow. That means unifying services around people and places, ensuring that services are integrated; focusing on resilience and prevention and using data and technology to deliver better outcomes and develop new models that wrap support around Hertfordshire's most vulnerable residents.

New unitary local government bodies for Hertfordshire will clarify accountability to residents, reduce duplication and generate financial savings that can be reinvested in local services.

WHAT DEVOLUTION AND A MAYORAL STRATEGIC AUTHORITY COULD UNLOCK FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

MHCLG Criterion 5: supporting devolution arrangements

This section describes the Hertfordshire Councils' ambition for devolution in the county. We recognise that devolution is achieved through a separate legislative process, and we have written to the Secretary of State in this regard. The references throughout this document are intended to signal our ambition and demonstrate how our strategic direction supports the government's potential opportunities for Hertfordshire.

Our ambition is to deliver devolution alongside Local Government Reorganisation to maximise benefits for residents and businesses in Hertfordshire and minimise disruption from reorganisation. This includes securing a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Hertfordshire at the earliest opportunity, launching in parallel to the new unitary authorities.

As a major economic engine for the UK, with a dynamic economy and a growing population in excess of 1.2 million, devolution gives us an important opportunity to take greater control of our future. The government's national devolution agenda is a chance for us to secure the powers and funding needed to address our specific challenges and build on our remarkable strengths.

Our economy is a powerhouse, generating a Gross Value Added (GVA) of £50bn - almost the same as Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire combined. Our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of over £40,500 would be among the highest of any Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) area in the country.

We are planning our devolution geography based on the County of Hertfordshire. We believe it is of sufficient scale to warrant devolution and would be larger than many existing and planned devolution arrangements. By forming an MSA for Hertfordshire, we can ensure that critical decisions about our economy, infrastructure, and public services are made here, closer to the communities we serve and therefore better for our residents.

MAYORAL AUTHORITY: A STRONGER, MORE COHESIVE STRUCTURE FOR THE COUNTY

A Mayoral Strategic Authority for Hertfordshire would help us to achieve:

- A stronger voice for Hertfordshire: a directly elected Mayor would sit on national bodies like the Council of Nations and Regions, advocating directly to the Prime Minister for our county's interests.
- Unified public services: the Mayor would assume strategic responsibilities of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Fire and Rescue Authority, creating services that are more efficient and coordinated.
- Integrated health and care: with representation on the Central East Integrated Care Board, the Mayor would be in a prime position to champion strategic alignment of health services with local government, designed around the needs of our communities.
- Economic growth: an MSA would manage this economic area as a single, strategic entity, potentially enabling us to leverage further investment from the private sector and deliver a joined-up Local Growth Plan.

This model would be underpinned by our plans for a streamlined local government structure of new Unitary Councils, ensuring services are both strategic and responsive to local communities.

A Mayoral Strategic Authority will help us go further and faster with:

Powering our world-class economy and investing in skills.	As we set out in more detail below, Hertfordshire is a unique economic powerhouse. An MSA would provide a single economic vision for the county.
	Building on the success of Hertfordshire's Local Enterprise Partnership, an MSA would have the devolved powers to direct investment to where it will have the greatest impact. With control over the Adult Skills Fund and a central role in the Local Skills Improvement Plan, we can ensure our workforce has the high-level skills needed for the jobs of the future, tackling skills gaps and supporting residents into better careers. This means aligning our excellent education providers directly with the needs of our innovative employers.

Building the right homes in the right places.	Our economic vibrancy creates intense pressure on housing, making it difficult for many local people to afford a home. With a housing affordability ratio of 10.15 (compared to the England average of 7.71), driven by a median house price of £449,950, strategic action is essential. An MSA provides the tools to tackle this head-on by: • Developing a county-wide Spatial Development Strategy, ensuring a more coherent and strategic approach to planning for new homes and employment sites. • Directing grant funding for housing and regeneration, allowing us to prioritise the delivery of genuinely affordable homes. • Using Compulsory Purchase Powers to unlock stalled sites and assemble land for key housing developments. This strategic oversight will build on our innovative work in developing Joint Strategic Plans in the county and ensure we go beyond simply building houses, to creating sustainable, well-connected communities.
Creating a modern, connected transport network.	Positioned at a national crossroads with the M1, A1(M), and M25 as well as national rail routes, Hertfordshire's transport network is vital to our economy but suffers from severe congestion. As the single Local Transport Authority, an MSA would have the power to manage this network strategically. This will enable us to create a truly integrated transport system – from east to west as well as north to south - linking rail, bus, and road travel more effectively as well as supporting active travel routes. Crucially, it will also allow us to accelerate the decarbonisation of our transport system, improving air quality and the health of our residents while meeting our climate goals.
A greener, healthier future for all.	Devolution offers a powerful opportunity to improve the quality of life for every resident. An MSA would take a leading role in tackling the climate crisis and enhancing our natural environment, delivering on our ambitions to be a net-zero county and implementing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Furthermore, an MSA can directly address deep-seated health inequalities. By focusing on the wider determinants of health, such as access to good jobs, quality housing, and a clean environment, the Mayor can champion a new, more ambitious approach. This integrated vision, combining economic, environmental, and social policy, is the key to ensuring that everyone in Hertfordshire can lead a long, healthy-, and prosperous life.

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WHAT REORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT COULD UNLOCK FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Our ambition for new unitary local government organisations in Hertfordshire extends far beyond simply being effective delivery partners for a Strategic Authority. The process of reorganising will be challenging, but it will also unleash huge energy and potential to accelerate delivery on behalf of our communities and place, and to transform and modernise local government institutions in Hertfordshire.

COMMUNITIES

Empowered, connected and inclusive
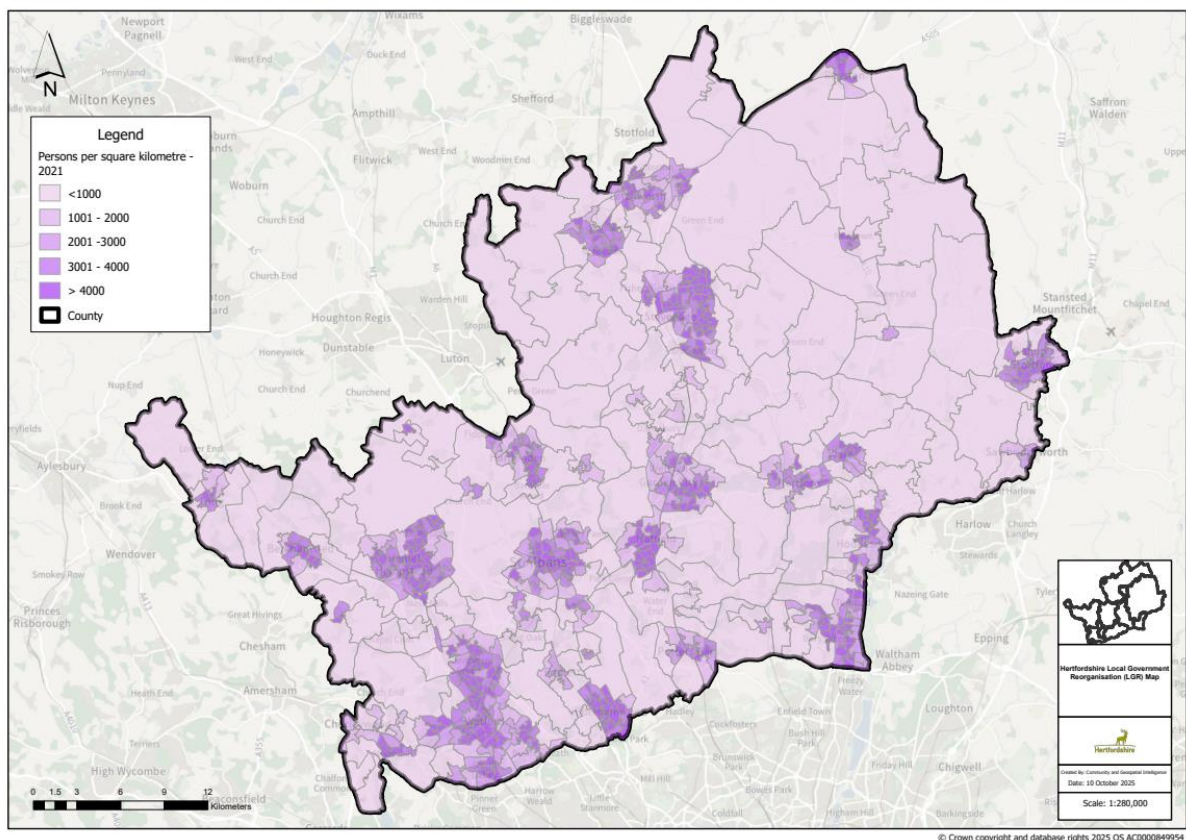
PLACE

Unlocking growth and opportunity

SERVICES

Integrated, efficient and people-centred

A STRONGER, SMARTER, MORE SUSTAINABLE HERTFORDSHIRE THROUGH DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

COMMUNITIES: EMPOWERED, CONNECTED AND INCLUSIVE

MAP: POPULATION DENSITY IN HERTFORDSHIRE

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1.24m residents rising to 1.48[3]m by 2045	... of whom 20% aged under 15 and 18% over 65	28% of residents from an ethnic minority compared with 27% for England	490,000 households
1 city (St. Albans), 25 towns, 100s of villages and hamlets	124 town and parish councils	Over 400 places of worship and faith centres across the county	5,451 Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector organisations spending £856m within Hertfordshire

We want every resident to feel connected, valued and safe and for Hertfordshire to be a place that everyone is proud to call home.

Local government reorganisation brings a rare and important opportunity to reimagine the relationship between communities and local government, strengthening the connection with communities and delivering more effective public services. We are committed to building a county where every individual has the power to make a difference in tackling increasing challenges in society such as social cohesion and inequality.

Our vision is a thriving democracy where people shape their places and futures. We will build on what works, testing our approach with Town and Parish Councils and co-designing solutions with the voluntary and community sector.

Transparency and accountability will be at the heart of everything we do. We are committed to inclusive, open dialogue, reaching seldom heard voices and removing barriers to participation. We will invest in community capacity and build confidence, improving how we share information, creating opportunities for people to shape the decisions that affect their lives. Our communities will be empowered to connect, collaborate and flourish, supported by networks that share resources, ideas and assets.

Together, we will make Hertfordshire the place where community empowerment is not just policy, it is how we live, govern and build our shared future. Our approach creates practical mechanisms for individuals to exercise genuine power over the decisions that affect them, while building resilient communities capable of addressing complex challenges through collaborative action.

By creating inclusive, resilient and vibrant communities, supported by a thriving local business base, we will improve quality of life and sustainability outcomes for current residents and attract new people, skills and investment into our county.

We will work in partnership with residents, community groups, businesses and local leaders to co-design services and deliver lasting change. Our approach will be rooted in local identity, transparency and trust. We will also celebrate Hertfordshire's unique history and traditions, building civic pride and a strong sense of belonging.

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[3] Internal projection based on delivery of new homes. ONS estimate is 1.32m based on July 2025 release.

CASE STUDY: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

In 2023 the Connecting Three Rivers Board, formerly the Local Strategic Partnership, agreed the new Community Strategy for the district. This includes creation of a donations platform to generate income for a community fund that is used to support priorities within the area. The income generated has been used to support community-based organisations actively supporting the strategic priorities, and this has strengthened the creation of a shared vision and strategic approach to the area. Examples of funding used include:

Electric Umbrella breaking down barriers between mainstream and SEND schools. This project brought together two mainstream primary schools and two SEND schools for a powerful, creative collaboration rooted in music, representation and connection. The relationships were central to the project's impact of fostering understanding, empathy and friendship between pupils through shared musical experiences.

9 Lives: running an upcycling workroom course for individuals with health and wellbeing issues and learning disabilities. Students learnt to sand furniture, paint, repair, stencil and upholster items, which were then sold in the charity upcycle shop. The confidence and skills gained create significant opportunities for the individuals to develop further connections and live independently.

CASE STUDY: CO-OPERATIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS MODEL

Built on three core principles: coordination of services, clear accountability, and community empowerment, Stevenage Borough Council's Co-operative Neighbourhood's model integrates multi-disciplinary teams across council services and embeds Ward Councillors in local governance.

The model's governance structure, featuring Strategic Boards, operational leads, and councillor involvement, ensures alignment with borough-wide priorities and responsiveness to local needs.

A key initiative involved revitalising a struggling community centre on the edge of the town Facing declining attendance and funding risk, the centre was transformed through collaborative action involving council teams, Elected Members, residents, and external partners. This included physical improvements, inclusive engagement, and sustainability measures such as climate-focused enhancements and volunteer-led place-making.

CASE STUDY: BROXBOURNE'S COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Originally created to tackle the impacts of Covid, the Community Partnership, a network of local organisations that support welfare of residents, has developed and strengthened over the last few years. The partnership is made up of around 150 people from 65 organisations with representation from Broxbourne Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Housing Associations, NHS Integrated Care Board, social prescribers from three Primary Care Networks, local school partnerships, DWP and VCS partners including Citizens Advice, MIND, Churches Together and foodbanks.

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Coming together every fortnight, the partnership shares information about what is happening in Broxbourne, making connections and working collaboratively to resolve local issues. Once a quarter the meeting is led by the County Councils Children's Services, focusing in on early help to support children and young people. The partnership is able to work both strategically, identifying trends and gaps across Broxbourne and also connect on individual cases, collaborating to support residents in a holistic way.

Most organisations in the network are members of Frontline, a publicly available online database of local sources of support. Frontline is used to refer clients, with their consent, to receive support from other local partner organisations; referrals comply with GDPR regulations and progress, and results of the referral can be tracked. Since its inception, the partnership has seen a significant increase in joint working to meet needs of individuals, by using the Frontline referral tool or building on relationships within the partnership to agree joint support for individuals.

In addition, the partnership is able to identify where local needs are not being met. Recently, the partnership identified a shortfall in the availability of benefits advice. A source of cost-effective, reliable training was identified and publicised around the partnership, with colleagues from across different organisations now being trained to enhance capacity and knowledge to give benefits advice to residents in the borough.

Our approach to empowering communities and protecting civic identity and heritage is set out in more detail on page 71 of this document.

OUR AMBITIONS FOR OUR communities

- **Democratic voice**: local Councillors will continue to play a vital role in representing communities, shaping services and holding decision makers to account. They will be enabled to play an expanded role within new Unitary Authorities.
- **Shared prosperity**: targeted investment and support for areas of deprivation, raising aspirations, especially among young people, and ensuring that growth is inclusive, with no communities left behind.
- **Community cohesion**: building cohesion by strengthening local identity, supporting a balanced mix of homes and jobs, and creating opportunities for people to come together through shared spaces, inclusive services and local events. By nurturing civic pride, social connection and a sense of belonging, we will help communities feel more united, resilient and confident in shaping their future.
- **Better quality of life**: improved access to public transport, leisure, high-quality and affordable homes, cultural and green spaces, actively promoting sustainability and climate resilience, delivering healthier homes, lower energy bills and thriving green spaces.
- **Shared decision making** putting the voice of the community at the centre of decision making and empowering residents and businesses to shape the services that affect them.
- **Stronger partnerships: w**orking closely with the voluntary and community sector to support grassroots initiatives, unlock local capacity-, and ensure services are responsive to the needs of all communities.

MAP: EMPLOYMENT DENSITY IN HERTFORDSHIRE

£46bn Gross Value Added – outperforming the East of England and UK average.	66,500 active businesses, including 40,000 in key UK growth sectors (life sciences, creative industries, defence and advanced manufacturing).	Nearly 5,000 businesses identified with high-growth potential.	4 international airports within an hour; strongly connected by road and rail to London and the OxCam Arc.
120,000 new homes allocated in adopted and emerging local plans over the next 10–15 years	Ambition for 100,000 new jobs linked to growth and regeneration programmes.	80.1% of the working aged population employed in either a full or part-time job, compared to 75.4% in England.	World-class life sciences, creative and screen, defence and aerospace, Agri-Tech and sustainable construction industries.

Hertfordshire is an economic powerhouse, generating nearly £50bn for the national economy and outpacing many major UK city regions. We also can demonstrate global capabilities across seven of the eight key sectors identified in the Industrial Strategy (IS-8), as evidenced by recent investment from Google, Airbus and Warner Bros., amongst others. Hertfordshire has 40,000 businesses in these sectors and nearly 5,000 with high growth potential. In the last quarter (April - June 2025), Hertfordshire Film Office created an estimated £6.5m economic impact –

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higher than the annual average for many regions. Our sector strengths span cell and gene therapy, film and TV, precision engineering, AI and digital and space exploration, placing Hertfordshire at the heart of the UK's innovation economy.

Our economic strength is matched by the quality of our natural environment. Hertfordshire is home to one of the highest concentrations of chalk streams in the world - rare, ecologically rich rivers such as the Ver, Beane, Mimram and Lea that support unique wildlife and habitats. These globally significant natural assets, alongside the Chilterns National Landscape and our extensive green spaces, make Hertfordshire not only a place to do business, but a place where people want to live, raise families, and enjoy healthy, active lives. Protecting Hertfordshire's chalk rivers, green belt and landscapes will remain central to place identity, with natural capital recognised as critical infrastructure for climate resilience, health and wellbeing.

Strategically located between London and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, Hertfordshire offers unparalleled access to talent, investment and innovation - with half of the UK economy reachable within an hour and proximity to four international airports. The University of Hertfordshire and Royal Veterinary College are key drivers of research and skills development. Hertfordshire is home to world-class research centres, such as Rothamsted Research, advancing global agricultural science; - BRE, leading innovation in sustainable building and housing; and Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult, bringing cutting-edge therapies to market. Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter enterprise zone is providing 3 million ft^2 of sustainable commercial space, just 30 minutes from London.

The county is also modelling the future of sustainable development, with two new garden towns underway and plans to deliver 100,000 new homes and 100,000 new jobs over the next 15 - 20 years. Planned investment in the retrofitting of existing homes and buildings will also run alongside this new development, to improve energy efficiency, reduce emissions and support green jobs, ensuring that growth is both inclusive and environmentally responsible, and supports long-term community wellbeing. Our approach includes nature-based solutions that enhance climate resilience and protect our natural capital.

Investment in east-west connectivity, housing affordability, infrastructure improvements and water availability will unlock development and future growth. Focused on key transport corridors, this will create new opportunities for investment, housing, jobs and connectivity. The benefits will extend far beyond Hertfordshire, supporting regional and national prosperity while improving the everyday lives of our residents.

As we grow, we will also protect and enhance what makes Hertfordshire special, from our market towns and green spaces to our industrial heritage and strong community spirit. Our people feel proud of where they live, work and study and we want this to continue.

CASE STUDY: Autolus Case Study: Fast-Tracking Innovation in Stevenage

Stevenage is home to the UK's largest and the third largest cell and gene therapy cluster in the world, behind only Boston and San Francisco. It sits at the heart of the UK's Golden Triangle of life sciences – alongside London, Oxford, and Cambridge – and is a magnet for innovation, investment and talent.

Autolus is a leading biotech company developing advanced cell and gene therapies. When they chose Stevenage as the base for their manufacturing and research, they needed fast and flexible support to grow quickly. Stevenage Borough Council played a key role. They worked closely with Autolus and partners to speed up planning approvals and create a supportive environment for development. This meant Autolus could build and expand their facilities faster, helping them move from research to clinical production without delay.

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The Council's proactive approach – alongside support from Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Futures (formerly LEP) – helped unlock investment and co-ordinate infrastructure thus enabling a high growth company to succeed and bring innovation into the town centre.

CASE STUDY: Space East: A Growing Hub for UK Space Innovation

Space East is the UK's newest and fastest-growing space cluster, based in the East of England. It brings together leaders from industry, academia, and government to unlock new opportunities in space technology and drive regional and national growth. At the heart of the cluster is Airbus, whose UK headquarters in Stevenage hosted the launch of the Community for Space Prosperity (CUSP). This initiative supports collaboration across the space ecosystem, including the Airbus Space Accelerator, which helps early-stage companies scale and connect with industry.

The University of Hertfordshire plays a key role in developing the talent pipeline, supported by a £100m investment in its new SPECTRA STEM building. The university works closely with industry to align education with workforce needs and contributes research in satellite communications, space law and sustainability. Hertfordshire Futures, alongside Airbus and North Herts College, also supports the STEM Discovery Centre – a £1m initiative inspires young people to pursue careers in space and engineering. With over 60 space-related companies in the region, Space East is now the third-largest contributor to the UK space economy. Its strength lies in the depth of its partnerships and its ability to connect research, industry and education. This ecosystem is helping deliver the UK's National Space Strategy – creating high-value jobs, attracting global investment and securing the UK's position as a leader in space-enabled technologies.

CASE STUDY: Hertfordshire's Healthy Placemaking Framework

Arising from the Hertfordshire Growth Board's 'Healthy and Safe Places for All' mission, the Hertfordshire Healthy Placemaking Framework (the 'Framework') guides the creation of healthier, safer, and more inclusive environments across the county. The framework was developed through extensive engagement with an office group from HCC, the districts and boroughs, the ICB, NHS and the voluntary sector. It embeds principles of health, wellbeing, and safety principles into planning policy – locally and strategically – ensuring that both new and existing communities support physical, mental and social health. The Framework is a key tool in improving health outcomes and tackling health inequalities, and enabling people to grow, live, move, connect, and thrive within the places they call home.

The Healthy Placemaking Framework provides guidance for Local Planning Authorities – and, in time, any Mayoral Strategic Authority – on how to embed health considerations in local plans and spatial development strategies. It sets out a joined-up and holistic approach to planning for and design of new housing developments and the regeneration of existing communities, providing a consistent approach for planning across Hertfordshire.

CASE STUDY: Delivery of 10,000 new homes and associated infrastructure

Located north of Harlow and across the River Stort in East Hertfordshire, the 'Gilston Area' will deliver 10,000 homes including 2,300 affordable homes and associated infrastructure across seven new villages. The development will benefit from over £1bn in new community infrastructure, such as schools, healthcare, and sports facilities, as well as job creation and improvements to transport links.

With outlined planning permission being given by East Herts Council in January 2025, delivery on new river crossings have started with work on the Central Stort Crossing.

The Gilston Area forms part of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) which was formally designated by the government in 2017. HGGT is a unique public sector partnership of five Local Authorities – East Herts District Council, Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council, Harlow District Council and Hertfordshire County Council, and collectively HGGT captures the New Town principles of bringing together the best of urban and rural, integrating green and open spaces with neighbourhoods and creating high-quality places that embrace and enable sustainable and healthy living.

OUR AMBITIONS FOR PLACE

- **Catalyst for growth**: position Hertfordshire as a powerhouse for innovation, green growth and sector excellence.
- **Accelerated housing delivery**: build quality, affordable and specialist homes, to reduce homelessness, ensure no child grows up in unsafe accommodation and adults can live independently in their own homes.
- **Sustainability**: improve east-west connectivity and promote active, low-carbon travel, making it easier to move around to access jobs and services. Embed sustainability into planning and growth, tackling climate risks, enhancing biodiversity and nature recovery, and supporting local delivery of net zero and resilience initiatives.
- **Infrastructure investment**: align housing and growth with schools, healthcare, policing and digital infrastructure supported by a streamlined, strategic planning process.
- **Integrated neighbourhood health and care services**: supporting the government's 10 Year Health Plan our vision is to deliver models of care that are preventative and better support those most in need.

MAP: HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

1 County Council, 1 City and District Council, 4 Borough Councils, 5 District Councils.	Workforce of over 11,000 excluding schools (FTEs – March 2025) delivering services day to day	28,000 adults supported by adult social care (15,000 receiving long-term care). 5,876 children supported by children's social care (including 1,053 children looked after)	Estimated 120km² of public sector estate (7% of the county's land area).
520,000 tonnes of household waste managed annually, with recycling rates consistently above national average.	3,200 miles of roads, 116,000 streetlights, 179,000 gullies.	226,000 pupils in Hertfordshire schools; 15,000 children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan.	7,000+ approaches for help with homelessness each year; 1,377 households (including 1,841 children) living in temporary accommodation.

The current two-tier system has served Hertfordshire well for many years, but the time is right to consider how it can be strengthened for the future. At times, the overlapping responsibilities of our 11 organisations create friction when coordinating services around the varying needs of communities and places. Residents directly experience these overlapping responsibilities – housing managed locally, Children's Services county-wide, waste collected by Districts but disposed of by the County – leading to duplication, complexity and variable standards. Partners such as the NHS and police must engage across multiple footprints, slowing down joint planning and making it harder to deliver consistent outcomes.

Reorganisation gives us the chance to replace this patchwork with a simpler, more accountable model, simplify how public services are delivered, drive efficiency, reduce emissions and deliver better value for money through integrated, sustainable service models. New Unitary Authorities will provide a single point of responsibility for local services in the areas they serve, making them easier to navigate and more consistent across the county.

We will design services around people's lives, not organisational boundaries, and our workforce will help lead this transformation. This will include better coordination across services such as waste, health, supported living and housing to create cleaner, safer and more connected neighbourhoods. Services will be more responsive to local need, making them more joined up, locally relevant and focused on what matters most to residents and businesses.

OPERATIONAL BLUEPRINT FOR NEW UNITARY AUTHORITIES IN HERTFORDSHIRE

Professionals across Hertfordshire have worked together to develop a set of consistent design principles to inform the shape of new organisations. These are summarised below.

Leadership and governance	234–327 Councillors with appropriate levels of electoral representation. - Leader and Cabinet model with proportionate regulatory and scrutiny arrangements. - Full statutory accountability and officers within each Authority. - Inter-UA collaboration and mutual aid arrangements.
Service delivery	- Delivery and commissioning at Unitary level by default. - Shared/collaborative delivery where economies of scale are available without diluting accountability, or where markets are fragile. - HRAs and trading companies will be inherited 'as is' by new Authorities and reviewed over time.
Community empowerment	- Strong locality/neighbourhood infrastructure. - Councillors empowered to plan expanded roles within new unitary authorities. - Strong partnership with Parish and Town councils in the areas they serve.
Workforce	- c.-11,000 FTE staff transfer under TUPE into new UAs with a principle of minimal disruption to the front line. - Shared workforce planning and training in specialist and hard-to-recruit areas. - Agreement of shared values and leadership expectations and purposeful engagement with organisational culture.
Tech and data	- Cybersecurity - will be integrated into the design of all systems and services. - Technology - prioritise scalability, resilience, and sustainability in all technology solutions. Where feasible, utilise open standards to minimise the risk of vendor lock-in and enable collaboration. Adopt a strategy that considers cloud first for the deployment and management of technological assets. - Business - IT will follow the respective new authority's strategy and service goals. Digital services will be co-designed with users and customer focussed,

	facilitating self-service options. Business needs will inform technology choices. Technology will enable joined up, responsive services that can work better together, avoiding silos. • Data - will be treated as a strategic, accurate, secure, and accessible asset to inform decision making. Data sharing between services will be enabled while maintaining security and privacy. Data sharing with other public sector organisations will be facilitated. Application - duplication of applications and the accumulation of technical debt will be avoided. Preference will be given to applications that demonstrate interoperability and reusability.
Assets and estates	• Local service access points retained. • Planned rationalisation of civic offices/depots. • Partner co-location where it improves access and integration. • Use of public sector estate to deliver new housing. • Sequence disposals and regeneration opportunities against service needs and legal constraints (e.g. any HRA-linked assets) and market timing. • HRAs will cover a larger geographical area, giving opportunity for more social housing to be delivered by local government – building on existing partnerships with Homes England.
Commissioning, procurement and suppliers	• Shared frameworks for fragile/specialist markets and high-value categories when collaboration adds value. • Joint contract mapping and supplier engagement to manage novation and ensure continuity.

CASE STUDY: CONNECT AND PREVENT – TRANSFORMING SERVICES TO SUPPORT COMMUNITIES

The Connect and Prevent programme by Hertfordshire County Council is a leading example of how strategic community empowerment across a mixed urban-rural context is delivering measurable improvements to enable residents to lead independent lives. It combines AI-driven insight, joined-up data, and community-led delivery.

Providing better support to our community carers was identified as the biggest opportunity to delay the need for long-term care. This programme has identified over 58,000 carers and, using predictive analytics with 67% precision is forecasting breakdown events and enabling proactive intervention to prevent this. Through its Carers Hub, it will deliver personalised support via holistic conversations, local outreach and follow-ups to enable carers to feel empowered and supported. This approach has so far led to a 25% measurable improvement in wellbeing and resilience for carers, with 75% receiving community-based support and only one in eight people requiring formal assessment. It is anticipated this approach will generate £1.2m/annum financial benefit.

CASE STUDY: BUILDING RETROFIT AND HEALTHY HOMES IN HERTFORDSHIRE

Hertfordshire has invested significantly in creating healthier, more sustainable homes through a coordinated programme of retrofit, energy, and housing initiatives. This work demonstrates

how local government, and partnerships can de-silo planning, housing and sustainability functions to deliver system-wide benefits. Key strands of this programme include:

- Local Area Retrofit Accelerator (LARA): piloting new delivery models and supporting residents to navigate the retrofit process.
- Hertfordshire Retrofit Strategy: providing a shared framework for Councils, housing providers and partners to scale up retrofit activity across the county.
- Hertfordshire Retrofit Guide for Residents: offering clear, accessible information to households on how to improve the energy performance of their homes.
- Solar Together Hertfordshire: enabling residents to install solar panels and battery storage at scale through group buying, reducing costs and carbon emissions.
- Healthy Homes Agenda: integrating retrofit and housing quality improvements to deliver warmer, safer, more affordable homes that support public health outcomes.
- Alongside delivery projects, Hertfordshire has invested in skills and cross-disciplinary training. Planning Officers have been trained in sustainability principles, while sustainability Officers have gained training in planning processes. This joint approach is helping to embed climate action into housing, planning, and health services, breaking down silos and building shared capacity across disciplines.

Impact so far:

- Thousands of residents supported to access solar PV, retrofit and energy improvements.
- Multimillion pounds of private investment leveraged into local low-carbon housing.
- Improved officer knowledge and collaboration across planning, housing, and sustainability.
- A framework in place to scale up retrofit and healthy homes delivery county-wide.
- This integrated approach shows how local government can lead on both the strategic vision and the practical delivery of healthy, low-carbon homes, demonstrating the importance of partnership working, resident engagement and skills development.

CASE STUDY: HATFIELD RISE, HATFIELD

Hatfield Rise is a £47m regeneration programme that has transformed the heart of South Hatfield from an area that had fallen into disrepair into a thriving, modern development. The area previously comprised a dated neighbourhood shopping parade, low quality public realm, a garage block and vacant industrial units.

The regeneration programme was delivered using private funding over three phases as part of a development agreement between Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Lovell Partnerships Ltd and was designed to ensure local businesses could continue to trade throughout the works.

The new development includes 146 new homes, with a mix of flats and houses, comprising affordable, shared ownership and privately owned units. Each apartment has a number of standout features including full height glazing to show off the spectacular views of the surrounding area from all floors as well as energy efficient design to reduce both utility costs and carbon emissions.

The new retail units have been retained by the Council and provides an income of circa £300K per annum. The majority of the units are occupied by local, independent businesses and they provide residents with a number of essential services including a post office, dentist,

pharmacy, convenience stores, butchers, plumbers, hairdressers, betting shop, takeaways. Terms have also been agreed with the NHS to provide a new GP surgery.

New public realm areas include a brand-new playground in the centre of the development, providing a safe, fun, and inclusive space for children to enjoy in the heart of the community. The new playground is designed not only as a space for play but also as a focal point for families and community members to meet, with seating and benches that offer a space to socialise and relax, while upgraded CCTV aids crime prevention and helps ensure that residents feel safe and secure. The public realm will be maintained to a high standard moving forward thanks to an estates charge made to the leasehold properties.

Existing bus routes have been maintained and improvements made to the local roadway to encourage walking and cycling.

The Council's focus on this area has gone beyond just the redevelopment of buildings and infrastructure. They have introduced a PSPO to fight antisocial behaviour and hold regular meetings with residents to ensure that their voices are heard and any concerns are addressed. This ongoing after care emphasises the Council's commitment to residents and local communities.

Historically, the previous Hill Top shopping parade was considered Hatfield's second town centre, being the biggest of the neighbourhood parades. The new development reinforces that view and it is a vibrant destination location which supports Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's ambitious plans to provide more quality new homes and facilities for local residents.

MANAGING TRANSITION

As a partnership we have been working at pace to plan for transitioning service to new unitary structures to balance the risk, cost and complexity of disruption against the long-term benefits of radical transformation. Page 84 of this document sets out our ambition for critical services and how we will ensure a safe and legal transition to the first day of new Authorities. Each of the three proposals that supports this document brings to life the vision for how services will evolve over time post-vesting.

OUR AMBITIONS FOR SERVICES

- **Efficient and accountable** – structures will minimise duplication and unnecessary complexity, delivering better value for money for taxpayers. Democratic responsibility for services must be clear and visible, ensuring accountability and transparency to residents.
- **Resident-first** – services will be simple to access, responsive and built around the needs of people and businesses.
- **Prevention-led** – investment will shift into early help and community capacity. We will act early to tackle root causes, rather than symptoms – reducing long-term demand and helping people to live more independently. Services will work with housing, the NHS, public health, education, policing, and community partners to tackle root causes, reduce demand for crisis services, and deliver more joined-up support.
- **Strategic and effective place-based partners** – we will act as strong local partners, investing in the right places with the right infrastructure to help communities thrive and enable neighbourhoods to shape their own future. We will work better together across Councils, the NHS, police, businesses and the voluntary sector to deliver better outcomes with neighbourhoods at the heart of our collaborative approach.

- **Empowering places to work** – staff will have the tools, autonomy and support to innovate, with career pathways and development opportunities that help attract and retain talent.
- **Culturally ambitious** – new organisations will foster a culture of collaboration, pride and local identity, celebrating diversity and encouraging continuous improvement.
- **Data- and technology-enabled** – evidence and digital tools will support proactive, personalised and efficient services.
- **Sustainability-led:** we will embed environmental sustainability and climate resilience into service design, delivery and governance.

CONCLUSION: A STRONGER, SMARTER, MORE SUSTAINABLE HERTFORDSHIRE

Through devolution and the creation of new Unitary Authorities, we have a once in a generation opportunity to build a new model of local government that is modern, forward looking and agile, accountable to communities and reflecting local identity.

This transformation will bring powers over housing, transport, skills and economic development closer to the people and places they affect. It will simplify how public services are delivered, strengthen local leadership, and unlock new opportunities for growth, inclusion and sustainability.

Hertfordshire is bold and ready for change. We are working with government to secure the powers, investment and long-term certainty our communities need. By speaking with a single, amplified voice and acting with shared purpose, we can build a system that works better for everyone, now and in the future.

Together, we will create a more responsive, efficient and sustainable future, delivering positive outcomes for our people, our places, and for generations to come.

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OPTIONS APPRAISAL

MHCLG criterion 1: establishing a single tier of local government

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO DELIVER OUR SHARED VISION AND AMBITION?

Our shared ambition is to create simpler, more accountable and more sustainable local government that can deliver better outcomes for residents, strengthen our communities and support future devolution. That ambition is shared by all 11 Councils in Hertfordshire, but there are a range of views on the best structural model to deliver it effectively.

Through extensive joint work we have developed and tested three credible models for unitary local government in Hertfordshire, reflecting different balances of financial scale, efficiency and localism. This options appraisal sets out the evidence base we have developed together, highlighting the relative strengths, risks and trade-offs for each option. It provides government, partners and residents with a transparent account of the choices available, grounded in local data and analysis, and closely framed against the assessment criteria set out by MHCLG.

HOW HAVE WE IDENTIFIED OPTIONS?

Partners in Hertfordshire have been actively and collaboratively considering options for local government reorganisation over a number of years. Since 2020, several independent appraisals have been undertaken to test different structural models, assess financial resilience, and explore implications for service delivery and leadership of place. The current set of proposals builds on this substantial body of evidence and reflects the most up-to-date assessment of what Hertfordshire can unlock through reorganisation.

SYSTEMATIC IDENTIFICATION OF OPTIONS

Hertfordshire Leaders' Group and Chief Executives of each Authority have dedicated their regular meetings since the start of the year to identifying and shortlisting options for reorganisation, following a structured, inclusive, and evidence-led process. A comprehensive longlisting exercise was undertaken at the start of this year to identify all viable configurations for new Unitary Authorities using existing District and Borough boundaries as the starting point. This top-down analysis was complemented by engagement with individual Councils and a deeper dive into local evidence to identify any alternative configurations with a clear rationale that might not emerge through statistical modelling alone.

Building on the resulting longlist of options, the Hertfordshire Leaders Group has worked together to agree a final shortlist of three options for detailed appraisal and decision-making. These options were selected to enable comparative analysis of the relative strengths, weaknesses and trade-offs between different models. All Councils have contributed to this process and are committed to developing a shared understanding of the evidence, while recognising that different preferences remain at this stage for the best delivery model for our shared ambition.

Each option has been reviewed using a combination of local data, national benchmarks, and qualitative insight. The options are compared and evaluated in this document, and then individual detailed proposals for each of the options accompany this document.

WHY HERTFORDSHIRE HAS RULED OUT A SINGLE COUNTY UNITARY OPTION

Following the County Council elections in May 2025, the Leaders of all 11 Hertfordshire Councils jointly ruled out the option of a single Unitary Authority to cover the entire county. The shared rationale is that a single Authority governing approximately 1.2 million residents would

be too remote from communities across Hertfordshire's diverse and distinctive areas and that it would lack the local responsiveness and democratic accountability necessary to maintain high standards of local service and community engagement.

This position has now consolidated, given that we have more recently agreed to plan for a Mayoral Strategic authority on a Hertfordshire footprint. A 1:1 relationship between a Strategic Authority and a single Unitary local government body would not be a coherent model from the public, partners' or government's perspective.

MODIFICATION OF EXISTING BOUNDARIES

The legislation which enables Local Government Reorganisation requires that proposals submitted by local authorities, for consideration by the Secretary of State, must be based on existing district council boundaries. In cases where it is considered that there is a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification and changes to the boundaries are considered to be an improvement on the base proposal it is possible to request the Secretary of State to exercise their power to modify the base proposal to include the desired boundary changes.

In the following sections we set out three original proposals 2UA, 3UA and 4UA. The local authorities who support the 3UA and 4UA models consider that they would be significantly improved if their boundaries were altered and in accordance with the legislation, those local authorities have decided to request the Secretary of State to exercise their power to modify the 3UA and 4UA proposals to include the boundary changes. In summary, the required modifications are thought to be necessary for the primary reasons of aligning boundaries to reflect the realities of the place; to align administrative boundaries with established communities, to position local economic and social areas, and for the financial sustainability of new councils. A fuller explanation of the justification for these modifications this is set out within the accompanying individual proposals for these options.

OPTION A – TWO UNITARY AUTHORITIES FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Note that the two Unitary proposal is based on District and Borough Council boundaries and does not include any requests for modifications to boundaries.

Please see accompanying notes on data sources.

GEOGRAPHY AND POPULATION

Local Authority	Geography (existing Districts and Boroughs)	Population (mid-2024)	Population (2045)	Anticipated no. of Councillors on Vesting Day
2 WEST	Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, Watford	625,622	722,000	117
2 EASTERN	Broxbourne, East Herts, North Herts, Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield	610,569	758,000	117

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Unitary option	Communities			Place and economy		Services (selected measures)			
	% share of population	% share of most deprived areas	% share of tax base	% Gross Value Added	% total children looked after	% total EHCPs	% households on LA housing waiting list	% new requests for adult social care support	% adults in long term care
2 WEST	51%	43%	52%	55%	47%	46%	27%	50%	51%
2 EASTERN	49%	57%	48%	45%	53%	54%	73%	50%	49%

COSTS AND SAVINGS FROM LGR

Unitary option	One-off implementation costs (£m)	Annual recurring saving by year 5 (£m)	Total cumulative savings from LGR in the first 5 years (£m)	Total cumulative savings from LGR in the first 10 years (£m)	Payback for LGR costs and savings in (financial year)
2 WEST	£85 – £102	£25 - £28	£40 - £57	£184 - £210	30/31 - 31/32
2 EASTERN		£25 - £27	£39 - £56	£182 - £208	30/31 - 31/32
Total		£50 - £55	£79 - £113	£366 - £418	30/31 - 31/32

Note: ranges represent higher and lower cost scenarios – see Appendix A

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OPTION B – THREE UNITARY AUTHORITIES FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Option B is built on a "base proposal" that reflects existing District and Borough boundaries. Supporters of this model wish to make a further request to the Secretary of State to use their powers to modify boundaries simultaneously to vesting day – see note in previous section.

BASE PROPOSAL	MODIFIED PROPOSAL
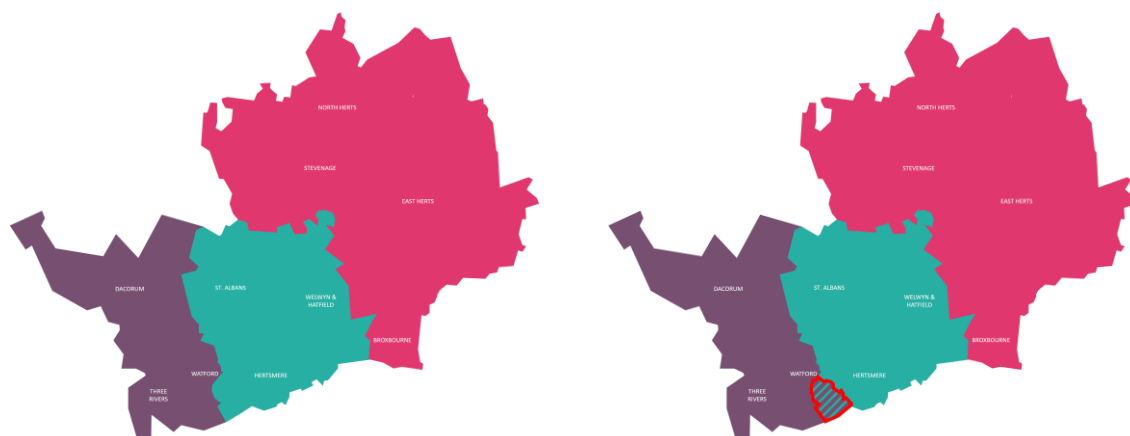
GEOGRAPHY

Unitary option	Base proposal (District and Borough boundaries as building blocks)	Modified proposal (Specific boundary changes requested)
3 WEST	Dacorum, Three Rivers, Watford	*Bushey North and Bushey South County Electoral Divisions, currently in Hertsmere BC, should be incorporated into the 3 West unitary authority.*
3 CENTRAL	Hertsmere, St Albans, Welwyn Hatfield	As above
3 EASTERN	Broxbourne, East Herts, North Herts, Stevenage	No change

POPULATION AND ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Local Authority	Population (mid-2024)	Population (2045)	Anticipated no. of Councillors on Vesting Day
BASE PROPOSAL			
3 WEST	364,398	424,000	66
3 CENTRAL	384,043	453,000	75
3 EASTERN	487,750	603,000	93
MODIFIED PROPOSAL			
3 WEST	392,247	463,000	72
3 CENTRAL	356,193	414,000	69
3 EASTERN	487,750	603,000	93
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF MODIFICATION			
3 WEST	27,849	39,000	+6
3 CENTRAL	-27,850	-39,000	-6
3 EASTERN	0	0	0

CONTEXTUAL DATA (SELECTED MEASURES)

Theme	Communities		Place & economy		Services (selected measures)				
Unitary option	% share of population	% share of most deprived areas	% share of tax base	% Gross Value Added	% total children looked after	% total EHCPs	% house-holds on LA housing waiting list	% new requests for adult social care support	% adults in long term care
BASE PROPOSAL									
3 WEST	29%	28%	29%	34%	30%	29%	21%	32%	32%
3 CENTRAL	31%	26%	32%	34%	30%	29%	25%	29%	29%
3 EASTERN	39%	46%	39%	32%	39%	43%	54%	40%	38%
MODIFIED PROPOSAL									
3 WEST	32%	29%	32%	36%	31%	31%	22%	32%	32%
3 CENTRAL	29%	25%	30%	32%	29%	26%	24%	29%	29%
3 EASTERN	39%	46%	39%	32%	39%	43%	54%	40%	38%
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF MODIFICATION									
3 WEST	3%	1%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%
3 CENTRAL	-2%	-1%	-2%	-2%	-1%	-3%	-1%	0%	0%
3 EASTERN	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

COSTS AND SAVINGS FROM LGR

Unitary option	One-off implementation costs (£m)	Annual recurring saving by year 5 (£m)	Total cumulative savings from LGR in the first 5 years (£m)	Total cumulative savings from LGR in the first 10 years (£m)	Payback for LGR costs and savings in (financial year)
BASE PROPOSAL					
3 WEST	£91 - £111	£9 - £11	(£7) - £9	£48 - £74	2032/33 - 2033/34
3 CENTRAL		£9 - £12	(£5) - £11	£52 - £78	2032/33 - 2033/34
3 EASTERN		£13 - £15	£6 - £22	£81 - £107	2031/32 – 2032/33
Total		£30 - £38	(£6) - £43	£181 - £258	2031/32 - 2033/34
MODIFIED PROPOSAL					
3 WEST	£91 - £111	£10 - £12	(£3) - £13	£58 - £83	2031/32 - 2033/34
3 CENTRAL		£8 - £10	(£9) - £7	£42 - £68	2032/33 - 2033/34
3 EASTERN		£13 - £15	£6 - £22	£81 - £107	2031/32 - 2032/33
Total		£30 - £38	(£6) - £43	£181 - £258	2031/32 - 2033/34
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF MODIFICATION					
3 WEST	No significant additional costs assumed	£1 - £1	£4 - £4	£10 - £9	-1yr – no change
3 CENTRAL		(£1) - (£2)	(£4) - (£4)	(£10) - (£10)	No change
3 EASTERN		No change	No change	No change	No change
Total		No change	No change	No change	No change

Note:
- **Ranges represent higher and lower cost scenarios** – see Appendix A
- **Cumulative savings** – negative numbers indicate a net cost position i.e. payback has not been achieved within specified timescale.

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OPTION C – FOUR UNITARY AUTHORITIES FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Option C is built on a "base proposal" that reflects existing District and Borough boundaries. Supporters of this model wish to make a further request to the Secretary of State to use their powers to modify boundaries simultaneously to vesting day as indicated below – please see note preceding this section.

BASE PROPOSAL	MODIFIED PROPOSAL

GEOGRAPHY

Unitary option	Base proposal (District and Borough boundaries as building blocks)	Modified proposal (Specific boundary changes requested)
4 NORTH WEST	Dacorum, St Albans	*No change*
4 SOUTH WEST	Hertsmere, Three Rivers, Watford	*No change*
4 CENTRAL	North Herts, Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield	• *Royston Heath, Royston Palace, Royston Meridian, Ermine, Weston and Sandon, Arbury wards move from NHDC to the Eastern unitary authority.* • *Northaw and Cuffley Ward move from WHDC to the Eastern unitary.*
4 EAST	Broxbourne, East Herts	*As above*

POPULATION AND ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Unitary option	Population (mid-2024)	Population (2045)	Anticipated no. of Councillors on Vesting Day
BASE PROPOSAL			
4 NORTH WEST	312,432	351,000	84
4 SOUTH WEST	313,190	371,000	79
4 CENTRAL	351,794	429,000	100
4 EAST	258,775	328,000	64
MODIFIED PROPOSAL			
4 NORTH WEST	312,432	351,000	84
4 SOUTH WEST	313,190	371,000	79
4 CENTRAL	320,795	391,000	89
4 EAST	289,774	366,000	75
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF MODIFICATION			
4 NORTH WEST	0	0	0
4 SOUTH WEST	0	0	0
4 CENTRAL	-30,999	-38,000	-11
4 EAST	30,999	38,000	+11

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CONTEXTUAL DATA (SELECTED MEASURES)

Theme	Communities		Place & economy		Services (selected measures)				
Unitary option	% share of population	% share of most deprived areas	% share of tax base	% Gross Value Added	% total children looked after	% total EHCPs	% households on LA housing waiting list	% new requests for adult social care support	% adults in long term care
BASE PROPOSAL									
4 N WEST	25%	19%	27%	23%	24%	23%	10%	25%	26%
4 S WEST	25%	25%	25%	32%	23%	24%	16%	25%	26%
4 CENTRAL	28%	35%	26%	29%	39%	32%	53%	28%	29%
4 EAST	21%	22%	22%	16%	14%	21%	21%	21%	19%
MODIFIED PROPOSAL									
4 N WEST	25%	19%	27%	23%	24%	23%	10%	25%	26%
4 S WEST	25%	25%	25%	32%	23%	24%	16%	25%	26%
4 CENTRAL	26%	35%	24%	26%	37%	29%	49%	28%	29%
4 EAST	24%	22%	24%	19%	16%	24%	24%	21%	19%
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF MODIFICATION									
4 N WEST	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4 S WEST	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4 CENTRAL	-2%	0%	-2%	-3%	-2%	-3%	-4%	0%	0%
4 EAST	3%	0%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	0%	0%

COSTS AND SAVINGS FROM LGR

Unitary option	One-off implementation costs (£m)	Annual recurring saving by year 5 (£m)	Total cumulative savings from LGR in the first 5 years (£m)	Total cumulative savings from LGR in the first 10 years (£m)	Payback for LGR costs and savings in (financial year)
BASE PROPOSAL					
4 N WEST	£97 -£120	£2 - £5	(£23) - (£5)	(£3) - £29	2033/34 - 2038/39
4 S WEST		£3 - £6	(£21) - (£3)	£3 - £34	2033/34 - 2037/38
4 CENTRAL		£5 - £8	(£16) - £3	£16 - £47	2032/33 - 2035/36
4 EASTERN		£1 - £4	(£29) - (£10)	(£17) - £14	2035/36 - unknown
Total		£11 - £23	(£89) - (£15)	(£1) - £124	2033/34 - 2038/39
MODIFIED PROPOSAL					
4 N WEST	£97 -£120	£2 - £5	(£23) - (£5)	(£3) - £29	2033/34 - 2038/39
4 S WEST		£3 - £6	(£21) - (£3)	£3 - £34	2033/34 - 2037/38
4 CENTRAL		£4 - £7	(£18) - £0	£10 - £41	2032/33 - 2036/37
4 EASTERN		£2 - £5	(£26) - (£8)	(£11) - £20	2034/35 - unknown
Total		£11 - £23	(£89) - (£15)	(£1) - £124	2033/34 - 2038/39
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF MODIFICATION					
4 N WEST	No significant additional costs assumed	No change	No change	No change	No change
4 S WEST		No change	No change	No change	No change
4 CENTRAL		(£1) – (£1)	(£2) – (£3)	(£6) – (£6)	No change - +1 yr
4 EASTERN		£1 - £1	£3 - £2	£6 - £6	-1yr – No change
Total		No change	No change	No change	No change

Note:
- **Ranges represent higher and lower cost scenarios** – see Appendix A

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- **Cumulative savings** – negative numbers indicate a net cost position i.e. payback has not been achieved within specified timescale.
- **Payback year unknown** – payback occurs after the end of the model duration (2038/39)

COMPARING SCALE WITH RECENTLY CREATED UNITARY AUTHORITIES

GRAPH: POPULATION VS AREA FOR UNITARY OPTIONS COMPARED WITH RECENT NEW UNITARY AUTHORITIES
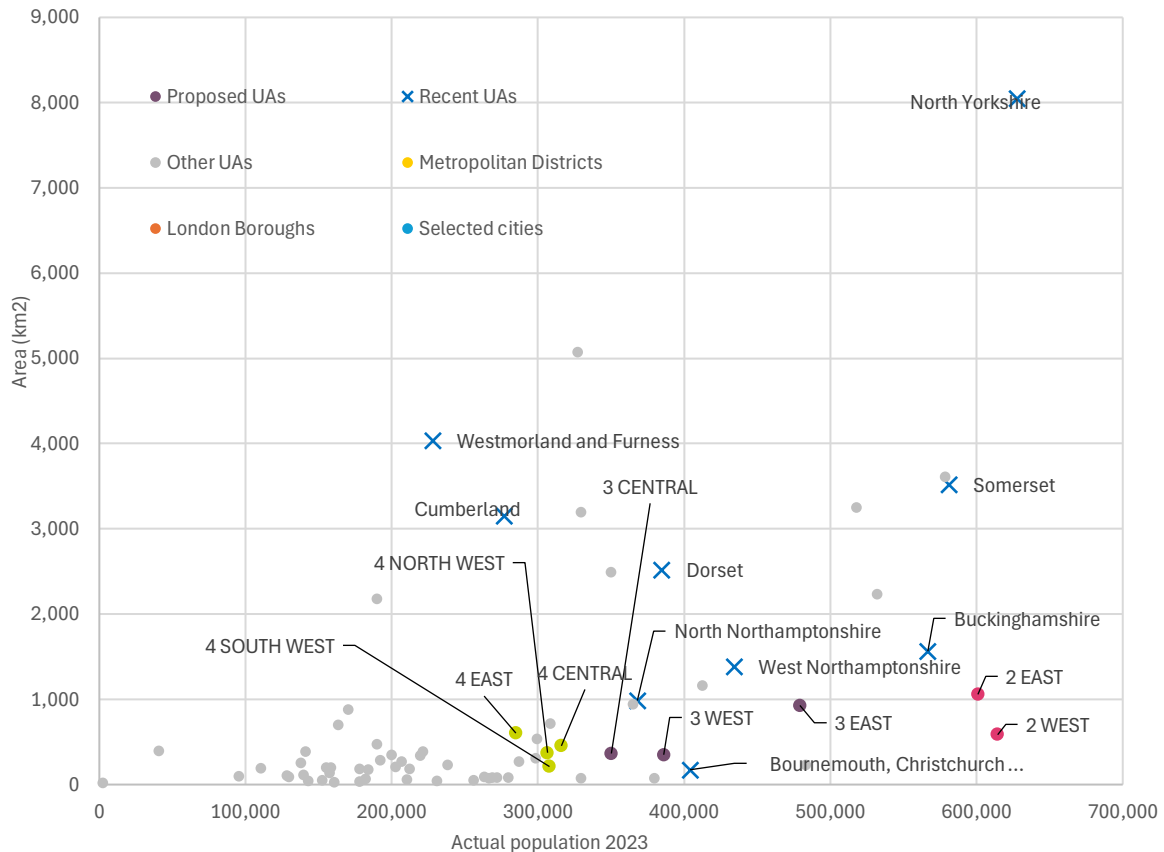
- **Option A** - two new unitary authorities would be amongst the largest non-metropolitan Authorities that exist today, with similar population sizes to Somerset and North Yorkshire but over a much more compact area on periphery of London.
- **Option B** - the West and Central Authorities within the modified three unitary proposal are of a similar scale to Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and North Northamptonshire, whereas the Eastern authority would be larger and of a similar scale to West Northamptonshire.
- **Option C** – all four Authorities will be of a similar size in the modified proposal and relatively small by comparison with recently created Unitary Authorities, although above average by comparison with all other pre-existing Unitary Authorities.

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GEOGRAPHY AND POPULATION

- **Population** – mid-year population estimates for England and Wales, ONS (2024) and HCC modelled figures for 2045 (see below).
- **Councillor numbers** – see Appendix B.

CONTEXTUAL DATA

- **Deprivation** – percentage share of the most deprived decile of LSOAs in Hertfordshire - English Indices of Deprivation, DLUHC (2019).
- **Tax base** – data collated from Hertfordshire Authorities.
- **GVA** – Gross Value Added across all industries - Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry, ONS (2023).
- **Services** – data collated from Hertfordshire Authorities.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- **Annual recurring saving by year 5** – the annual saving generated once all transitional costs have been incurred, all recurring costs have been phased in and all recurring benefits fully realised.
- **Cumulative savings** – the cumulative savings from LGR over time, net of one-off and recurring costs. A negative number means that up-front costs are still being 'paid off'.
- **Payback on LGR investment costs** – the year that cumulative savings become greater than cumulative costs (one-off and recurring).

POPULATION PROJECTIONS – TECHNICAL NOTE

A number of population projections are set out in this submission. below:

1. Internal projection: This projection takes into account ambitious plans across the County to significantly increase the rates of Net New Home Completions. It is based on published 5-year Housing and Land Strategies, where available, with an assumption that completion rates apply on a straight-line basis between 2024 and 2045.
2. Office for National Statistics (ONS) projection: This projection, published July-2025, is based on rolling forward trends in 'natural change' (rates of births and deaths) and net migration (both internal and international).

A summary of both projections is set out below:

Base proposal (without boundary changes):

	2 UNITARY		3 UNITARY			4 UNITARY				COUNTY
	WEST	EAST	WEST	CENTRAL	EAST	NORTH WEST	SOUTH WEST	CENTRAL	EAST	
2024 estimate (n.1)	625,622	610,569	364,398	384,043	487,750	312,432	313,190	351,794	258,775	1,236,191
2038 projection (n.2)										
Internal (n.3)	685,000	702,000	401,000	427,000	559,000	336,000	349,000	400,000	302,000	1,387,000
% vs. 2024	9%	15%	10%	11%	15%	8%	11%	14%	17%	12%
ONS (n.4)	643,000	642,000	373,000	408,000	505,000	322,000	322,000	372,000	271,000	1,286,000
% vs. 2024	3%	5%	2%	6%	4%	3%	3%	6%	5%	4%

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	2045 projection									
Internal (n.3)	722,000	758,000	424,000	453,000	603,000	351,000	371,000	429,000	328,000	1,479,000
% vs. 2024	15%	24%	16%	18%	24%	12%	18%	22%	27%	20%
ONS (n.4)	660,000	660,000	382,000	419,000	519,000	331,000	329,000	381,000	279,000	1,320,000
% vs. 2024	5%	8%	5%	9%	6%	6%	5%	8%	8%	7%

Modified proposal (with boundary changes):

	2 UNITARY		3 UNITARY			4 UNITARY				COUNTY
	WEST	EAST	WEST	CENTRAL	EAST	NORTH WEST	SOUTH WEST	CENTRAL	EAST	
2024 estimate (n.1)	625,622	610,569	392,247	356,193	487,750	312,432	313,190	320,795	289,774	1,236,191
2038 projection (n.2)										
Internal (n.3)	685,000	702,000	438,000	390,000	559,000	336,000	349,000	367,000	335,000	1,387,000
% vs. 2024	9%	15%	12%	9%	15%	8%	11%	14%	16%	12%
ONS (n.4)	643,000	642,000	407,000	374,000	505,000	322,000	322,000	336,000	307,000	1,286,000
% vs. 2024	3%	5%	4%	5%	4%	3%	3%	5%	6%	4%
2045 projection										
Internal (n.3)	722,000	758,000	463,000	414,000	603,000	351,000	371,000	391,000	366,000	1,479,000
% vs. 2024	15%	24%	18%	16%	24%	12%	18%	22%	26%	20%
ONS (n.4)	660,000	660,000	425,000	375,000	519,000	331,000	329,000	342,000	318,000	1,320,000
% vs. 2024	5%	8%	8%	5%	6%	6%	5%	7%	10%	7%

(n.1) ONS estimate for mid-2024; published Jul-2025

(n.2) Coterminous with MTFS

(n.3) Hertfordshire Local Authorities; based on projections of housing completions.

(n.4) ONS projection for mid-2028; published Jul-2025; based on 2022 population estimates.

EVALUATION OF OPTIONS AGAINST MHCLG CRITERIA

The purpose of this options appraisal is to provide all partners in Hertfordshire, and government, with a shared, objective and evidence-led comparison of the three shortlisted models for Unitary structures. The appraisal has been carried out against the criteria set out by MHCLG and is supported by a wide range of evidence as collaborative work across professional and technical leads within all 11 Hertfordshire Councils. The conclusions are agreed by all partners.

For clarity, the base and modified versions of the proposals are compliant with MHCLG criteria. This options appraisal focused on the modified proposals for the 3 and 4 unitary options as supporters of these believe they are superior in what they deliver as compared to the base proposals.

Further details for each model are provided in the accompanying proposals.

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OPTIONS APPRAISAL – OVERVIEW

MHCLG criteria (summarised)	Option A – 2 Unitary Authorities	Option B – 3 Unitary Authorities	Option C – 4 Unitary Authorities
1. Sensible geography and economic area	BALANCED Aligns to existing planning and health partnership areas and uses current boundaries. Contains multiple economic areas.	BALANCED Has a more complex alignment to economic areas shaped by commuter patterns, sector clusters and strategic transport corridors.	BALANCED Aligns to (but subdivides) existing planning and health partnership areas. Requires two significant boundary changes.
2. Right size to generate efficiencies and absorb shocks	MORE ALIGNED Delivers organisations with larger financial scale, highest savings and fastest payback. Creates large authorities with populations above 500,000 on day one. All options will grow rapidly in line with ambitions for delivery of new homes.	BALANCED Delivers savings but still achieves organisations with enough scale to be resilient. Still creates authorities with large populations although comparable with some existing newer unitary authorities. All options will grow rapidly in line with ambitions for delivery of new homes.	LESS ALIGNED Delivers some savings and will require collaboration/support/sharing of resource to protect financial capacity. Creates smaller authorities although comparable with some existing UAs. All options will grow rapidly in line with ambitions for delivery of new homes.
3. Quality and sustainable services	MORE ALIGNED Single split of county services into east and west areas, requiring no realignment due to boundary review. Aligned to key partnership geographies. Services provided larger organisations will need flexibility to respond to local differences.	BALANCED More disaggregation creating higher risk and complexity than 2U. Requires a reset of some strategic partner collaboration geographies. Greater ease in differentiating services according to local needs and priorities within smaller areas.	BALANCED Highest disaggregation and associated risk but create two authorities within each established east and west area. Aligned as subsets of key partnership geographies. Smaller authorities can provide the greatest level of differentiation of services to reflect local need.
4. Meets local needs / local views	BALANCED Preferred by most strategic partners for simplicity, economies of scale, and alignment with existing partnership geographies. Residents had mixed views, with many recognising the potential for financial sustainability.	BALANCED Strategic partners and residents noted that the model could offer a balance between scale and connection to community. A number of residents commenting on this option said the proposed geography 'made sense'	BALANCED Mixed views, with strategic stakeholders concerned about fragmentation, while there was a plurality of support from business and VCS groups in some areas. Residents had mixed views. The main reason given by those expressing support was closeness to communities.
5. Supports devolution	BALANCED All options are capable of partnering effectively with a future Hertfordshire Strategic Authority.	BALANCED All options are capable of partnering effectively with a future Hertfordshire Strategic Authority.	BALANCED All options are capable of partnering effectively with a future Hertfordshire strategic authority. .
6. Stronger community engagement	LESS ALIGNED Risks being perceived as remote and needs strong locality working model but has greatest capacity to invest.	BALANCED Closer to residents but will still need strong locality working arrangements.	MORE ALIGNED Smallest areas: naturally closer to communities and potentially requiring less locality infrastructure.

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OPTION A –

Two Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire

MHCLG criteria	Observations from review of evidence
Single tier of local government • Sensible economic area and geography • Robust analysis and evidence	• Each Authority is aligned to one of Hertfordshire's recognised planning and health partnership areas and transport corridors along the M1 and A1(M), although they cover more than one functional economic market area in each case. • Authorities are broadly balanced on population, tax base and economic strengths although the eastern area includes moderately higher deprivation and likely demand for key services, along with slightly lower taxbase. • This option uses existing District and Borough boundaries with no modification requested.
Right size to achieve efficiency and withstand shocks. • Guidance on population sizes • Generating efficiencies • Covering transition costs	• This option generates the highest level of savings (£366m - £418 over ten years) and will pay back on transition cost the fastest (within 2030-2032) without need for external support. New organisations will be of sufficient financial scale to absorb likely increases in demand and future financial shocks. • Each Authority would serve a population of over 600,000, growing to an estimated 720,000 to 760,000 residents by 2045. They would be amongst the largest non-metropolitan Unitary Authorities that exist today,
Quality and sustainable services • Improving services and avoiding 'unnecessary fragmentation' • Delivering reform • Managing impacts on 'crucial services'	• This model creates the lowest level of complexity in the transition of services currently delivered at county level, with critical services only needing to be split once alongside any retained shared arrangements. However, there is a degree of complexity in aggregating district services. • Each area aligns with one of Hertfordshire's two existing health and care partnerships, two acute hospitals, West Herts Hospitals NHS trust and North Hertfordshire NHS trust, and two operational areas for Hertfordshire Constabulary retaining simplicity and continuity in joint commissioning and service planning. • Financially, this model offers the greatest scope for reinvestment in service improvement and innovation, due to the higher level of projected savings. • There is a risk that the organisations would be perceived as remote from local communities, and additional investment would be needed in developing infrastructure for differentiating services according to the distinct needs of each locality.
Meets local needs and informs local views. • Collaboration between Councils • Local identity and heritage • Evidence of local engagement	• All 11 Councils in Hertfordshire have worked together to produce this submission as part of a single programme using a shared evidence base. We have engaged extensively with local stakeholders and the public, with a summary of views below. • Strategic partners and institutional stakeholders: Most overall support among strategic partners. Health bodies (ICB, NHS Trusts), large employers (e.g. Tarmac, Gascoyne Estates), and business networks generally favoured this model for its simplicity, alignment with existing east-west footprints, and reduced duplication. It was viewed as the most coherent option for cross-system collaboration and economic strategy. • Residents: This option had the second most expressions of support from residents. The main reasons given for support were the potential for efficiencies and financial sustainability. The main concerns expressed were that councils could be too large and remote. • All options will be capable of protecting, celebrating and enhancing local identity and heritage.
Supporting devolution arrangements • Sensible population ratios with an SA • Supportive timeline	• Two Authorities would form a compact and streamlined partnership with the Hertfordshire Strategic Authority. Two large, balanced Councils would each act as a clear delivery partner for county-wide priorities such as transport, skills and net zero. Shared east-west health, planning and police geographies offer strong alignment with likely Strategic Authority programmes. • With only two local partners alongside a Mayor, political diversity could be limited, and debate could risk becoming polarised along east-west lines. • The model is fully supportive of a smooth implementation timeline.
Stronger community engagement	• With each of the proposed Unitary Authorities serving around 600,000 residents, the new UAs would inevitably be perceived as more remote from residents and businesses and would require meaningful arrangements, effort and investment to ensure decisions remain close to

• Enabling strong community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	local communities and that services are visible, accessible and responsive. This could include joint working with Town and Parish Councils in the areas that they cover. • Larger Unitary Authorities would have greater internal capacity to support this kind of community engagement activity.

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OPTION B –

Three Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire

MHCLG criteria	Observations from review of evidence
Single tier of local government • Sensible economic area and geography • Robust analysis and evidence	• This option creates three Unitary Authorities that are compliant with MHCLG criteria. • The remainder of this table reflects the base proposal, with details of the modified proposal including Bushey included in the 3 unitary sub-proposal • The three new Authorities would achieve a good balance of tax base, economic output, deprivation and demand proportionate to their resident population sizes. .
Right size to achieve efficiency and withstand shocks. • Guidance on population sizes • Generating efficiencies • Covering transition costs	• This option delivers £181m to £285m net savings over ten years and is likely to pay back on investment costs in 2031 and 2034. It offers lower economies of scale than the 2U model and increased costs from disaggregating county services three ways. • Modelling indicates that this option remains financially viable over the medium term, with efficiencies likely able to offset growth in demand for services and with sufficient capacity to absorb shocks. • Each of the proposed Authorities falls below the 500,000 population guiding principle set out in the White Paper and are comparable in scale with several recently established Unitary Councils. Population sizes are estimated to grow to between 410,000 and 600,000 by 2045, in line with anticipated housing growth, place identity and the principle that an MSA should have a population of 1.5m,
Quality and sustainable services • Improving services and avoiding 'unnecessary fragmentation' • Delivering reform • Managing impacts on 'crucial services'	• County services would be split three ways alongside any shared service delivery arrangements. This introduces greater complexity during the transition, particularly in areas such as Adult and Children's Social Care, SEND and Highways. • The model aligns with the PCN footprints, which will support the delivery of the NHS 10-year plan. However, none of the three proposed Authorities aligns fully with existing health and care partnership areas or Hertfordshire Constabulary operational footprints, meaning that a reset will be required for collaborative arrangements. However, the Chief Constable has indicated he will change structures post LGR if required. • Despite being large Authorities, they would be perceived as closer to communities than the two Unitary option and would be more able to easily differentiate services according to the different needs of each area.
Meets local needs and informs local views. • Collaboration between councils • Local identity and heritage • Evidence of local engagement	• All 11 Councils in Hertfordshire have worked together to produce this submission as part of a single programme and using a shared evidence base. We have engaged extensively with local stakeholders and the public, with a summary of views below. • Strategic partners: This option attracted limited explicit backing. A few organisations (e.g. Community Action Dacorum, some housing associations) mentioned it positively, describing it as a "balanced" model that reflected existing community linkages. Most public-sector partners were either neutral or inclined toward two Unitaries for operational simplicity. • Residents: While this option received fewer expressions of support than either 2 or 4 unitaries, it was the option viewed most positively for its proposed geographic footprint, with comments that it 'made sense.' Other residents expressed support for the model as a middle ground, large enough for efficiencies but not too remote. • All options will be capable of protecting, celebrating and enhancing local identity and heritage.
Supporting devolution arrangements • Sensible population ratios with a SA • Supportive timeline	• This option would broaden local democratic representation within a strategic authority while keeping the structure manageable. Three unitary leaders alongside a mayor would create a balanced and plural cabinet, avoiding concentration of power or excessive fragmentation and encouraging consensus-building and cross-party working. • Our understanding is that the request for limited boundary adjustment (involving Bushey) is unlikely to present a major timeline risk, although further discussions with government are required to confirm this.
Stronger community engagement • Enabling strong community engagement and	• With populations between 360,000 and 490,000, the three-unitary model brings councils somewhat closer to residents than the two-unitary alternative, while still retaining capacity to invest in community engagement. • This option would still need to invest in infrastructure for locality engagement and empowerment and would have the financial scale and capacity to do so.

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neighbourhood empowerment	

OPTION C –

Four Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire

MHCLG criteria	Observations from review of evidence
Single tier of local government • Sensible economic area and geography • Robust analysis and evidence	• This option creates four new Unitary Authorities, each based on groupings of existing district boundaries, with boundary changes requested to balance population sizes and demand. For further information about requested boundary modifications see proposal for 4UA. The proposed Authorities are designed to reflect local settlement patterns, with two falling within the county's current health and policing operational areas. • The modified areas achieve an even balance of population sizes and tax base, but a disproportionate concentration of demand for key services within the 'central' Unitary Authority.
Right size to achieve efficiency and withstand shocks. • Guidance on population sizes • Generating efficiencies • Covering transition costs	• All four proposed Authorities fall below the 500,000 population guiding principle set out in the White Paper, with each serving between 290,000 and 320,000 people, although they would be larger than average compared with existing Unitary Authorities. By 2045, populations are estimated to grow to between 350,000 and 390,000, in line with ambition for delivery of new homes. • This option delivers lower net savings of up to £124m over ten years, but only just pays back within a ten-year period in the higher cost scenario. This reflects reduced economies of scale and higher costs associated with disaggregating countywide services four ways. • The uneven financial scale and concentrations of demand in this model mean that the central Authority in particular is unlikely to be viable without further redistribution of funding, noting that our analysis does not currently include any future impacts from the Fair Funding Review and the model does not provide a central assessment of transformation, efficiency or additional growth.
Quality and sustainable services • Improving services and avoiding 'unnecessary fragmentation' • Delivering reform • Managing impacts on 'crucial services'	• Four smaller Unitary Authorities will be able to offer more differentiated services to the areas they cover according to the specific needs of residents and businesses. • Smaller Authorities may have less capacity to manage complex demand or high-cost placements independently. Alternative delivery models such as shared service or collaborative models are likely to be required to preserve scale and stability in key services. Supporters of this model argue that smaller Authorities can be more agile and responsive in responding to demand locally and proactively. • This model involves the greatest level of disaggregation of county services, including four separate statutory functions for Adults and Children's Social Care. • Each of the existing police, health and care partnership footprints would contain two Unitary Authorities, avoiding cross-boundary working but potentially requiring partners to duplicate their existing partnership arrangements.
Meets local needs and informs local views. • Collaboration between councils • Local identity and heritage • Evidence of local engagement	• All 11 Councils in Hertfordshire have worked together to produce this submission as part of a single programme and using a shared evidence base. We have engaged extensively with local stakeholders and the public, with a summary of views below. • Strategic partners: This option had the least support amongst strategic partners, particularly public sector partners who mostly favoured larger councils. Some partners (e.g. Lee Valley Park Authority) expressed support, and there was support from some local civic and community organisations who favoured it for a stronger local focus. • Residents: This option received the highest number of positive comments from residents. Reasons given were primarily around valuing local representation and community identity. Supporters argued smaller Councils would be more accountable and 'closer to the people', even if less efficient. • All options will be capable of protecting, celebrating and enhancing local identity and heritage.
Supporting devolution arrangements • Sensible population ratios with an SA • Supportive timeline	• Four smaller Unitary Councils would sit within the Hertfordshire Strategic Authority, maximising political plurality but creating a more complex interface for strategic coordination by comparison to the other two models. • The Mayor would work with four leaders representing distinct and recognisable communities. This enhances legitimacy and local accountability but makes decision-making more deliberative. Achieving consensus could be slower and would require clear constitutional frameworks for voting, resource allocation and scrutiny to prevent duplication or gridlock.

OPTION C –

	• The need for boundary review (e.g. Royston, Northaw and Cuffley) introduces greater complexity into the proposal and the support of government would be required to deliver this model of reorganisation to the most ambitious timelines. See Appendix E for more information on this request.
Stronger community engagement • Enabling strong community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	• This model brings principal Councils significantly closer to communities than the 2U or 3U alternatives. Smaller Authorities are less likely to need to invest in extensive locality working arrangements and can enter into more flexible and responsive local partnerships within their own footprints. • Although tighter financial constraints are expected, smaller Unitary Authorities may have more flexibility to pilot innovative approaches to neighbourhood involvement, including relating to prevention and managing demand.

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EFFICIENCY AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

HERTFORDSHIRE'S STARTING POSITION

Hertfordshire councils are in a better and more sustainable financial position than in many other areas with a consistent track record of good financial management, delivering savings, growing income through efficiency and innovation and of providing value for money. Unlike many other areas undergoing reorganisation, none of the eleven authorities in Hertfordshire is in receipt of exceptional financial support, under government intervention or requiring additional support linked to debt or capital practices.

However, Hertfordshire authorities do share the key challenges facing the local government sector of increasing demand and costs of providing local services rising at a faster rate than their incomes.

GRAPH: COMBINED 2025/26 BUDGET FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Combined 2025/26 budgets and funding for Hertfordshire (£m)

HCC net general fund expenditure	£1,230	
D&B net general fund expenditure	£161	
HRA expenditure	£235	
HRA income	-£235	
HCC settlement funding	-£173	
D&B settlement funding	-£31	
HCC council tax	-£832	
D&B council tax	-£107	
HCC other funding & central items	-£225	
D&B other funding & central items	-£24	
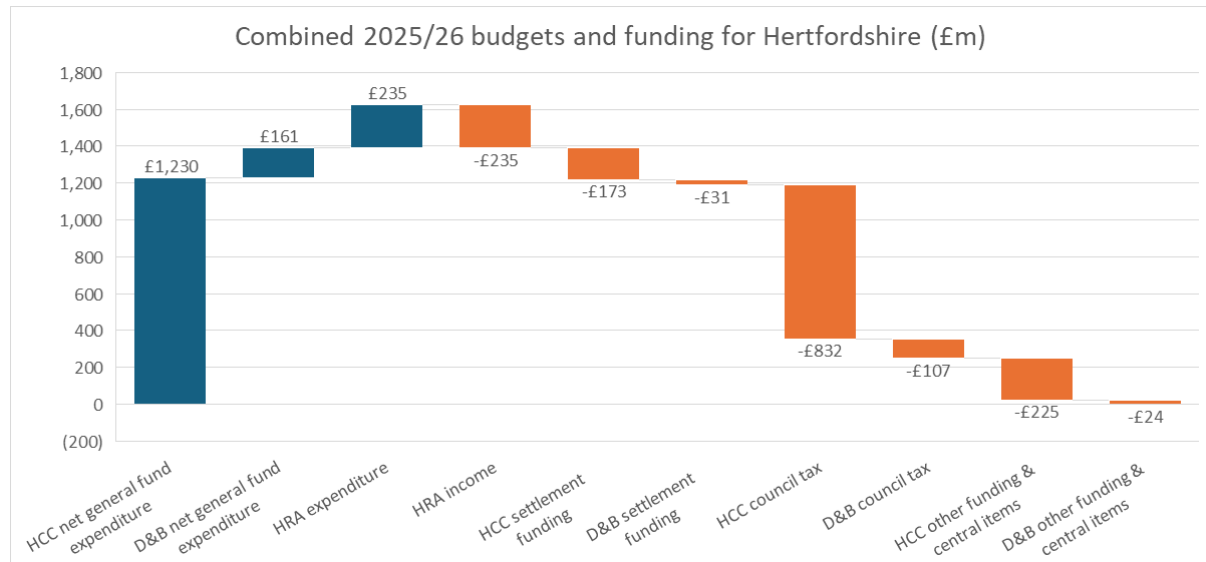
£1.4billion combined net revenue budget	£1.2billion net budget for HCC	£0.16bn combined net budget for Districts and Boroughs	£0.24bn in four Housing Revenue Accounts

MEDIUM-TERM POSITION PRIOR TO VESTING DAY

Our preferred implementation timeline is that new authorities are vested on 1 April 2028. We have aggregated medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) information for all Herts authorities to show the growth assumptions (including inflation) and savings requirements pre vesting day.

GRAPH: SELECTED MTFS ASSUMPTIONS PRE-VESTING DAY

Aggregated MTFS data for Herts authorities - selected assumptions (£m)

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Growth bids (approved)	£59	£30	£19	£17
Inflation	£51	£49	£50	£50
Savings - identified	£0 / -£39	-£19	-£18	-£4 / -£13
Savings - unidentified		-£42	-£18	

Legend: Inflation, Growth bids (approved), Savings - unidentified, Savings - identified
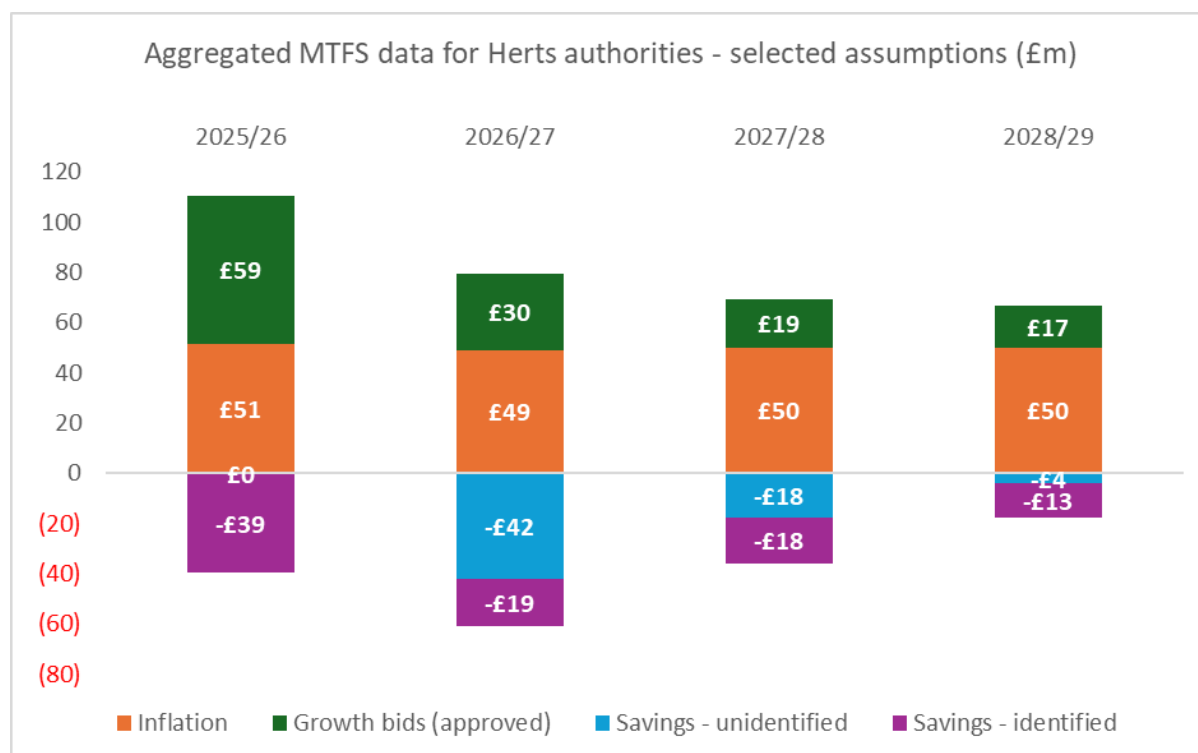
To meet their statutory responsibilities for setting balanced budgets prior to LGR, £154m net savings will need to be delivered across Hertfordshire over the period to 2028/29. To date £90m of savings have been identified leaving a shortfall of £64m.

All councils are committed to deliver these savings required to achieve a balanced opening position for the new authorities in 2028/29, recognising the risk that if this is not achieved new unitary authorities will suffer from a more challenging opening position.

COLLABORATING TO ASSESS THE FINANCIAL IMPACTS OF LGR

The financial case and modelling approach has been developed collaboratively with Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) from all eleven councils with an external consultancy to develop a shared financial model and set of assumptions.

- All of our options have been developed using a single financial model developed as part of a collaborative process.
- All modelling assumptions, including higher and lower cost ranges in two key areas (detailed below) have been accepted by all CFOs and chief executives.

Model accuracy and reliability

Financial models have been prepared using information available and considered reliable at the time of preparation. This includes council budgets, performance and demand data alongside input from each of the Hertfordshire LGR programme workstreams and benchmarking information from other LGR cases. Best endeavours have been made to apply reasonable assumptions, data sources and analysis in the development of assumptions and estimates within the financial model, but these remain subject to high levels of inevitable uncertainty in key areas due to the inherent limitations of available information at this stage prior to the decision and shadow authorities being formed.

Throughout this process, a prudent approach has been applied to avoid potential overstatement of estimated benefits or understatement of estimated costs. Consideration has also been given to materiality, focusing on the assumptions and financial factors most likely to have a significant impact on the overall outcomes of the model.

The modelling assumptions detailed in appendix A, including higher and lower cost ranges in two key areas (detailed below) have been accepted by all CFOs and chief executives.

Future impact of Fair Funding Review

The potential impacts of the Fair Funding Review (FFR) have not been reflected in the financial model. The model also assumes no business rates growth or increases in core government grant funding beyond 2027/28.

Although CFOs conducted extensive due diligence and engaged a third-party organisation to assess likely effects, the findings were unreliable due to conflicting data and government indications that modelling assumptions will change before FFR is finalised. Initial analysis based on current assumptions suggests FFR will likely reduce overall revenue funding and alter its distribution across Hertfordshire over the medium term, potentially affecting the sustainability of future unitary authorities. Hertfordshire County Council have included £50M FFR savings prior to 2028/29.

Council Tax

For the purposes of the financial model, Council Tax increases are assumed to be at 4.99% (2.99% Council Tax + 2% adult social care precept) as per the current referendum limits and in line with the MHCLG approach to funding projections. The model assumes that the District & Borough element of Council Tax will be harmonised at a weighted average and implemented in 2028/29 in line with creation of new authorities. The taxbase is assumed to continue to grow at a rate that is consistent with the current 2025/26 to 2027/28 medium-term period.

In practice within their shadow year, new authorities will need to decide how to harmonise Council Tax across their areas and there are different options as to how this can be done. Future annual raises in Council Tax will then be a decision for new authorities themselves.

Uncertainties and unexpected shocks

Whilst prudent assumptions have been identified and accepted in all cases, the viability of all future unitary authorities will be subject to additional risks and uncertainties, including:
- The significant savings planned in the 25/26 to 27/28 period (pre-vesting day) is not delivered in full, contributing to a more challenging opening position for new authorities.
- Inflation or demand increases at a higher rate than is assumed in our modelling.
- There is any slippage in delivering the anticipated benefits from LGR.

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- Further unanticipated local, national or international events causing economic or financial shocks.

Additional key financial risks and issues are included at the end of this section, and in more detail within appendix A.

SCOPE OF FINANCIAL MODEL

The financial case has been modelled from a 2025/26 baseline to 2028/29 as assumed year one for new authorities, then over a further 10-year period from vesting day in line with best practice recommended by CIPFA. The financial model combines three key sets of assumptions and calculations for each unitary authority option:

Medium-term assumptions	(Dis)Aggregation assumptions	LGR impact assumptions
The net budget requirement for each authority, the resources (including council tax, fees and charges and government grant) available to each area and how these will change over the next ten years.	An assessment of how the HCC and District and Borough budgets would be recombined into specific geographical areas, based on relevant local factors and taking account of potential boundary review for unitary authorities.	Costs and savings from LGR - LGR is an "invest to save" activity, this element estimates the costs of delivering LGR and the savings it delivers.
All assumptions are the same for all options	**All assumptions are the same for all options**	All but two assumptions are the same for all models – a range has been implemented in two key areas (see below).

USE OF RANGES FOR LGR IMPACT ASSUMPTIONS

Assumption area	Upper end of the range	Lower end of the range
Recurring costs from duplication of social care management teams within new authorities	A high scenario was created by the DASS and DCS undertaking an analysis of current management posts down to Head of Service level within the existing county structures to identify which posts are necessary in each council given the TOM approach. Some services within this have been assumed to be shared for the purposes of the modelling. It is assumed that all other front-line roles / costs below Head of Service level are split across the new authorities without duplication.	A low scenario was created by benchmarking the costs of social care management in existing unitary authorities that are of comparable scale to potential unitary authorities for Hertfordshire, using publicly available information. Further detail on the methodology used and limitations are included in appendix A.
One-off costs from disaggregation of HCC ICT estate and ongoing running costs	The high and low scenarios reflect the complexity and uncertainty in relation to future ERP/Finance and HR provision. The range of costs account for the solution/provider landscape, the options relating to the scale of migration and integration activity and the existing highly customised platforms and processes.	

Further detail on assumptions and the rationale for these is included in appendix A.

KEY FINDINGS

The following pages show these assumptions combined to estimate the likely medium-term position of future unitary authorities, focusing on:

- Position in year one (2028/29)
- Budget position after the first five years
- 10-year performance relative to the two-tier baseline

We then consider the specific impacts of LGR and associated costs and savings as a key component of the medium-term position.

Year one – 2028/29

The baseline for the financial modelling is the 2025/26 balanced budget for each individual authority, rolled forward to match existing medium-term financial plans for 2026/27 and 2027/28, leading to a start point for 2028/29 based on a common set of key assumptions agreed by CFOs. Budgets balance in overall terms at start of 2028/29 but opening deficits and surpluses exist as illustrated in the graph and table below.

For the reasons noted above, this illustration of the starting point does not reflect the potential redistribution impact of the Fair Funding Review. It also excludes Housing Revenue Accounts and additional costs and benefits from LGR, which are set out in the next section.

GRAPH: YEAR ONE BUDGETS

Unitary authority options - modelled year-one budgets (2028/29, £millions)
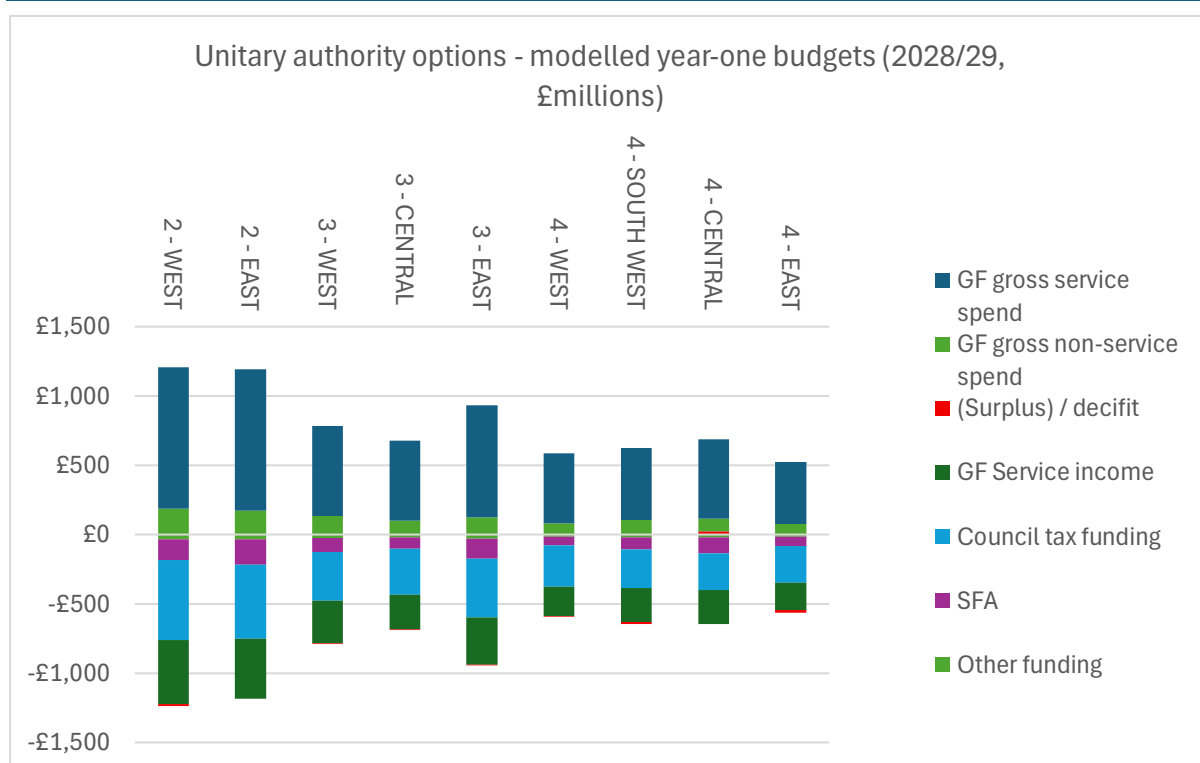
TABLE: YEAR ONE BUDGETS

	Net GF budget (£m)		Funding (£m)				(Surplus) / deficit
	GF gross service spend	GF gross non-service spend	GF Service income	Council tax funding	SFA	Other funding	
2 – WEST	1,019	188	(460)	(576)	(148)	(37)	(14)
2 – EAST	1,019	169	(437)	(531)	(184)	(34)	2
2 – TOTAL	2,039	357	(898)	(1,107)	(332)	(72)	(13)
3 – WEST	653	132	(308)	(352)	(103)	(24)	(1)
3 - CENTRAL	580	99	(250)	(329)	(85)	(19)	(4)
3 – EAST	805	126	(339)	(426)	(144)	(29)	(8)
3 – TOTAL	2,039	357	(898)	(1,107)	(332)	(72)	(13)
4 – WEST	503	82	(214)	(294)	(64)	(16)	(3)
4 - SOUTHWEST	516	106	(246)	(282)	(84)	(21)	(11)
4 – CENTRAL	573	94	(244)	(267)	(116)	(18)	22
4 – EAST	447	75	(194)	(264)	(68)	(17)	(20)
4 - TOTAL	2,039	357	(898)	(1,107)	(332)	(72)	(13)

FIVE YEARS: MEDIUM-TERM POSITION FOR UNITARY AUTHORITY OPTIONS

From 2028/29 onwards (i.e. post-LGR), the baseline forecast is rolled forward using a set of annual indices developed and agreed by Hertfordshire CFOs for the 10-year period to 2037/38 (as detailed in the financial appendix). Estimates of inflation for pay and non-pay costs have been developed and applied differently to each main area of expenditure, linked to historical trends and known forecasts where possible. No additional contingency is built into these assumptions for unexpected shocks, any marked increase in the national rate of inflation, or any failure for authorities to deliver the required medium-term savings in full prior to vesting day for new authorities. To this baseline forecast we then apply:

- **Disaggregation and aggregation assumptions** reflecting underlying local differences between tax bases and budgets and how these drive different starting points for the alternative unitary footprints under consideration (the position for 2028/29 is show in the section above).
- **LGR assumptions** to estimate the costs and savings arising from LGR (as detailed in the next section) at the level of individual unitary authority options.

The combined effect of these assumptions, assuming a balanced budget starting point and the incremental savings delivered smoothly from LGR, is a recurring annual surplus for most authorities with total funding growing slightly faster than net budget requirement. The cumulative budget deficit / surplus is used below as a proxy measure for the overall financial performance of unitary options within the first five years.

GRAPH: BUDGET POSITION AFTER THE FIRST FIVE YEARS
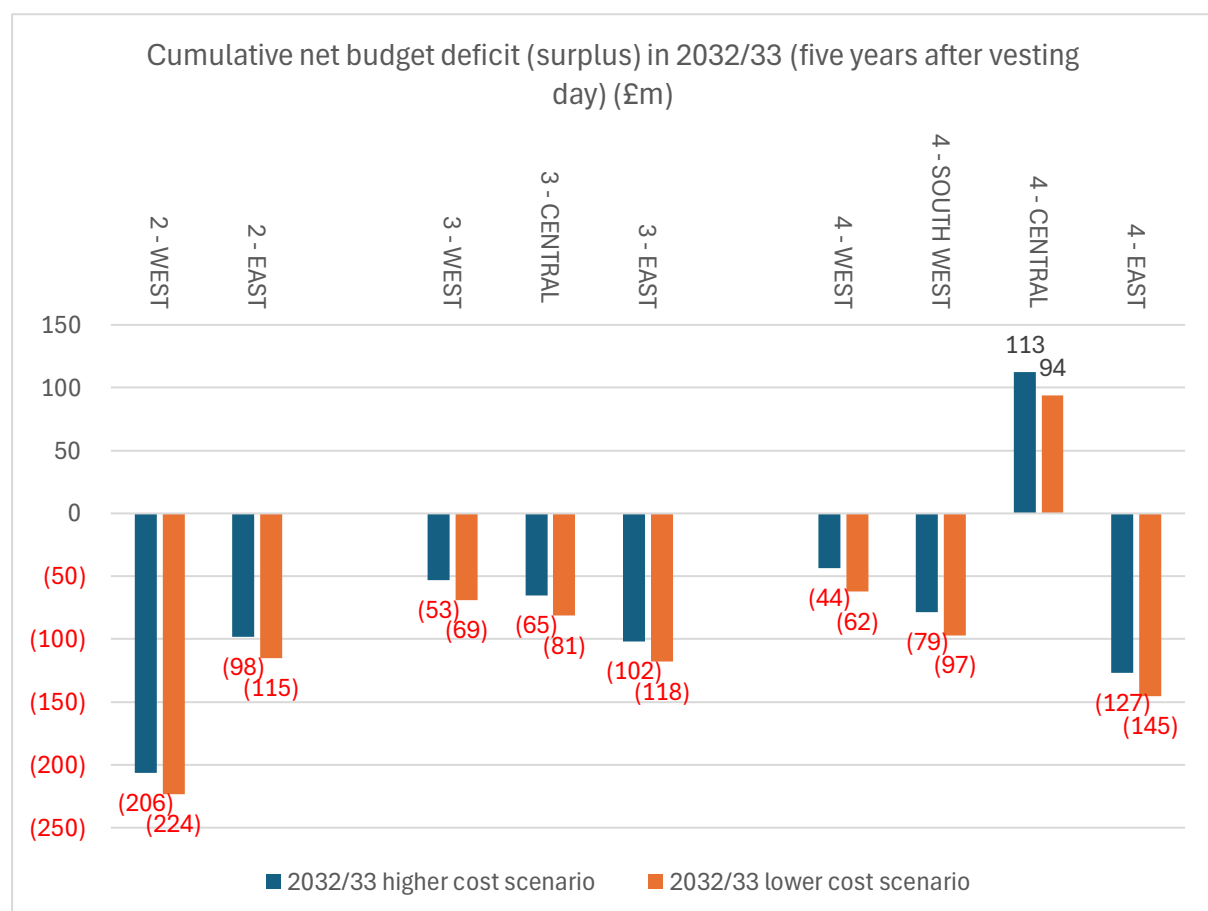
Cumulative net budget deficit (surplus) in 2032/33 (five years after vesting day) (£m)

This graph combines all baseline modelling assumptions including inflation, assumed council tax increases, assumed MTFS savings and the impacts of LGR to show the cumulative net budget position for each unitary authority after the first five years of LGR.

The set of baseline assumptions that we have used indicate that, to different extents, almost all unitary authorities will be in a surplus position after this period.

To the extent that options that generate surpluses using our baseline set of assumptions, these indicate a level of resilience for future authorities in the event that our baseline assumptions prove to be optimistic, or further unexpected shocks occur. Please note the further commentary on this under "important caveats and limitations" set out at the start of this chapter. Further sensitivities have been modelled to test this.

VIABILITY OF OPTION 4 CENTRAL

Option 4 CENTRAL would have 26% of Hertfordshire's population but 35% of Hertfordshire's most deprived decile of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). It also has a disproportionate level of demand for the most cost-intensive services, as identified in the earlier options appraisal chapter.

On current assumptions 4 CENTRAL would begin with a £22m budget deficit driven primarily by a combination of high demand for cost-intensive services which is not balanced by the ability of the area to raise revenue locally alongside the likely level of grant funding. With the additional implementation costs of LGR loaded on top, the net savings delivered by LGR for this authority, alongside assumed council tax raises, would not be sufficient to overcome this challenging opening position within the medium-term, and 4 CENTRAL would be unviable without further redistribution of funding. The proposal for the four unitary model explores what some of these interventions could be.

As noted above:

- This analysis does not estimate the impact of the fair funding review, which may change the distribution and quantum of resource in Hertfordshire and may affect the viability of future unitary authorities. On the hypothesis that FFR moves resources towards more deprived areas, the funding position for 4 CENTRAL may also improve relative to these assumptions.
- This area is also likely to experience significant business rate growth that is not fully reflected in our modelling, which would also support a more positive position over time. In 2025/26 there are £3.27m of expected gains in this area alone.
- In our model, other costs (such as debt financing costs) are allocated to areas based on their overall pro-rata spend, whereas these types of costs may be distributed differently in reality.

TEN YEARS: LONGER-TERM BENEFITS FROM UNITARY MODELS

Over the longer-term, the uncertainties referred to in the previous section are compounded. To test the likely long-term resilience of new unitary models we have applied our baseline and LGR assumptions over the full ten-year period (post-vesting day) of the model.

Relative to the two-tier baseline:

- Additional costs are created through the up-front investment required to deliver LGR and recurring additional costs of duplication in some areas (for example having multiple management teams for social care services).
- Additional benefits are created through the compounding effect of new authorities raising more revenue locally (if they choose to do so) through applying the 2% adult social care precept on a wider basis, in addition to the savings arising from LGR.

The key conclusions are:

- In overall terms and to different extents, all proposed options will eventually result in local government in Hertfordshire being "better off" than it would be in the existing system of local government as a result of delivering local government reorganisation.
- However, the totals for each option mask the distributional differences shown in the previous section, where some individual options may be unviable without further redistribution of funding, which is explored in the proposal for four unitary authorities.

GRAPH: 10-YEAR BENEFITS COMPARED WITH THE TWO-TIER BASELINE

Additional costs / (benefits) from unitary local government models compared with two-tier baseline (£millions)
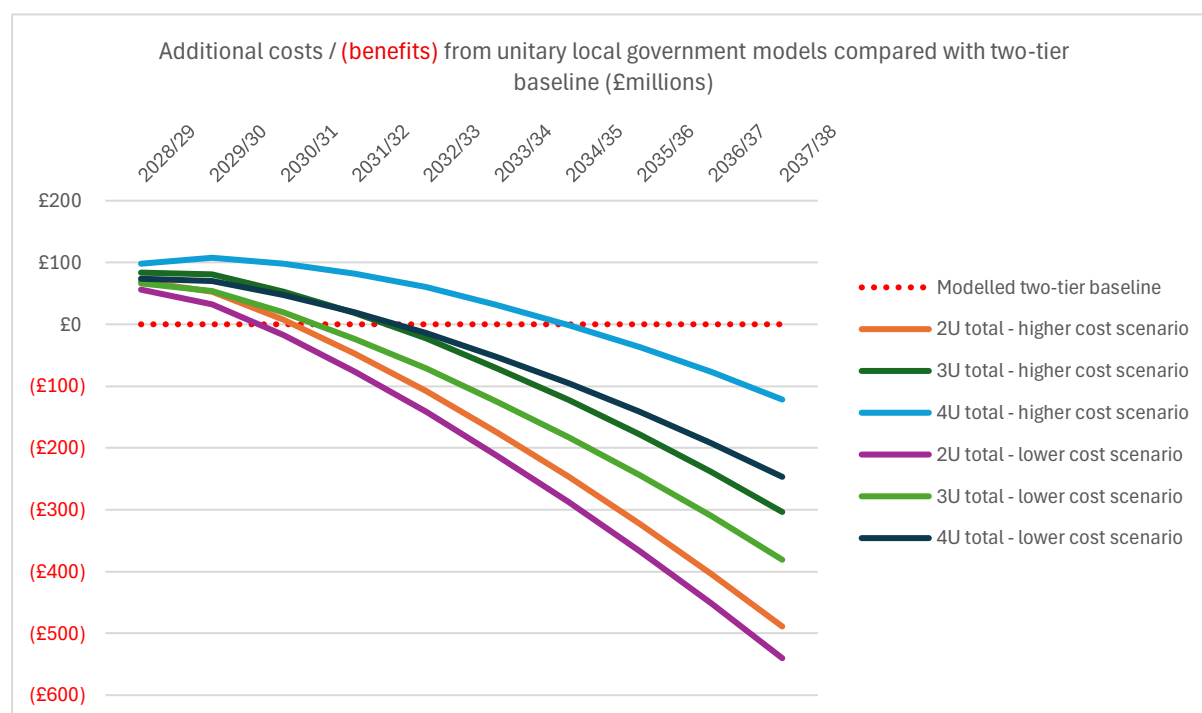
This graph shows the cumulative difference from the two-tier baseline that is delivered by different LGR models. The modelled two-tier baseline is shown as zero, and the estimated costs (or benefits) of LGR are shown as increases or (decreases) from that baseline.

- 2 unitary option – outperforms the two-tier system between 2030/31 and 2031/32, which 2-3 years after LGR.
- 3 unitary option – outperforms the two-tier system between 2031/32 and 2032/33, which is 3-4 years after LGR.

- 4 unitary option – outperforms the two-tier system between 2032/33 and 2034/35, which is 4-6 years after LGR.

DIRECT IMPACTS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

This section focuses specifically on the direct costs and savings caused by local government reorganisation, as distinct from our baseline assumptions on areas like inflation and council tax, and budget aggregation / disaggregation, all of which are reflected in the section above.

IMPACTS OF LGR VERSUS TRANSFORMATION BY FUTURE AUTHORITIES

We have made a clear distinction between benefits achieved as a direct result of LGR, such as removal of duplicate roles, services and systems, versus benefits resulting from additional transformation that could be delivered by future authorities. There are two reasons for this:

- Firstly, decisions on additional transformation will be taken by future authorities themselves.
- Secondly, there are reasonable differences of opinion within our partnership on which of the proposed models is likely to be "more transformational".

As a result, our shared financial model does not estimate any additional financial benefits arising from transformation, although each of the individual proposals provides further information on opportunities relevant to each option.

HOW ARE LGR COSTS AND BENEFITS ASSESSED?

A detailed analysis of all transition costs and savings are attached as Appendix A.

LGR recurring annual savings	Savings in the financial model have been categorised into three key areas: • **Staffing** - estimated savings in relation to the implementation of LGR predicated on consolidation and subsequent efficiencies resulting in a reduced capacity requirement. • **Direct Costs** – estimated savings in relation to increased economies of scale and optimised use of resources. • **Democratic and governance reorganisation** – estimated savings in relation to costs of elections, members allowances and staffing in relation to democratic services as result of fewer authorities in existence.
LGR recurring annual costs	LGR recurring annual costs have been split into two distinct categories: • **Additional costs of scale** – these are recurring costs in relation to the anticipated additional resource requirement to service local democratic arrangements and support locality working and engagement because of aggregation. • **Diseconomies of scale** - covers recurring costs created because of disaggregation in relation to HCC social care services and Information Technology (IT) estate.
LGR one-off costs	• These are the estimated one-off costs that are incurred to support the creation of the new authorities. • These primarily relate to the costs of IT, programme management, specialist advice and support and redundancy costs. • A detailed analysis of all transition costs and savings are attached as Appendix A

For each unitary proposal a higher cost and lower cost scenario has been developed which reflects different approaches and assumptions in relation to costs of IT and the disaggregation of the social care, as outlined earlier in this section.

The following two graphs show the cumulative delivery of net savings (i.e. adding up all one-off and recurring costs and all savings across multiple years) across five and ten years.

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GRAPH: CUMULATIVE SAVINGS FROM LGR OVER 5 YEARS

Cumulative net cost / (savings) from LGR after 5 years (£millions)

	2 WEST		2 EAST		3 WEST		3 CENTRAL		3 EAST		4 WEST		4 SOUTH WEST		4 CENTRAL		4 EAST	
	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost
	(57)	(40)	(56)	(39)	(13)	3	(7)	9	(22)	(6)	5	23	3	21	(0)	18	8	26
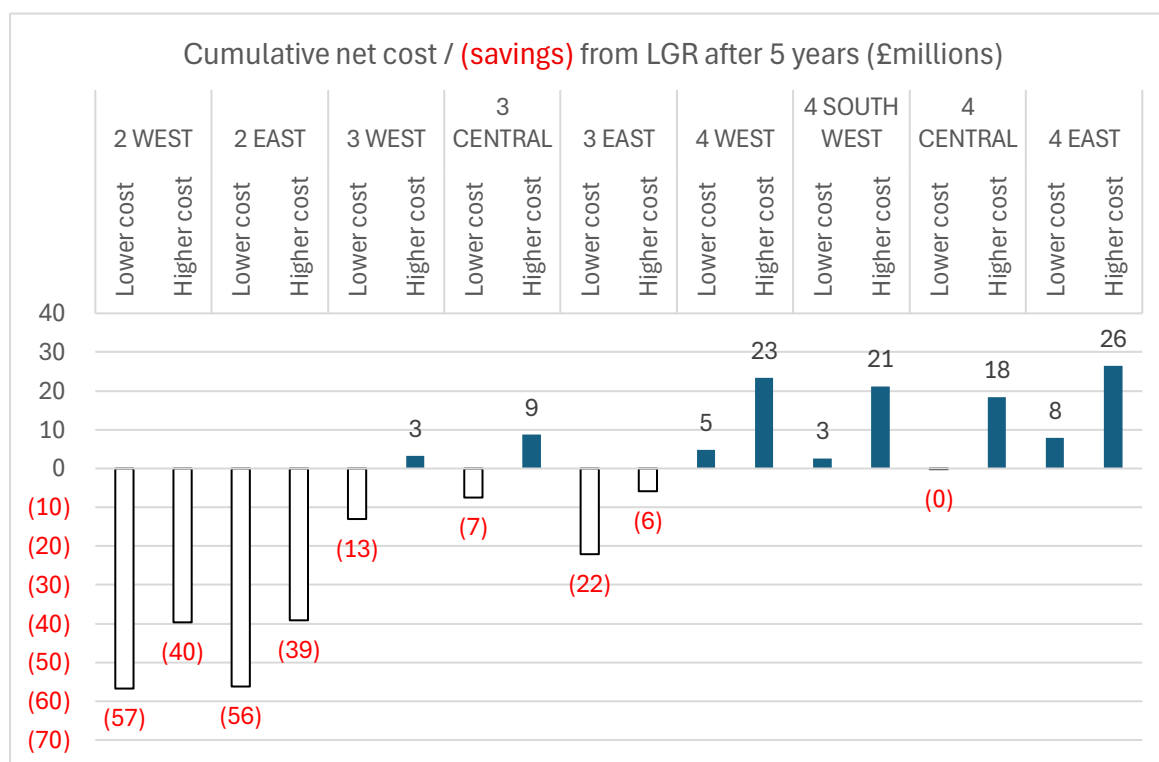
GRAPH: CUMULATIVE SAVINGS FROM LGR OVER 10 YEARS

Cumulative net cost / (savings) from LGR after 10 years (£millions)

	2 WEST		2 EAST		3 WEST		3 CENTRAL		3 EAST		4 WEST		4 SOUTH WEST		4 CENTRAL		4 EAST	
	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost	Lower cost	Higher cost
	(210)	(184)	(208)	(182)	(83)	(58)	(68)	(42)	(107)	(81)	(29)	3	(34)	(3)	(41)	(10)	(20)	11

Note – negative numbers indicate that payback has been achieved and net cumulative savings are being delivered. Positive numbers indicate that payback has not yet been achieved.

For two unitary authority option:

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- Annual recurring savings of £50-£55m (shared between two authorities) will be achieved by year five, once one-off costs have been met.
- After the first five years, total cumulative savings for the two authorities will be in the range of £79-113m.
- After ten years, total cumulative savings will reach £366-418m.

For the three unitary authority option:

- Annual recurring savings of £30-38m will be achieved by year five, shared between three authorities.
- After the first five years, this option would still have £6m of up-front costs to pay off in the higher-cost scenario but would have saved a total of £43m in the lower-cost scenario.
- After the first ten years, total cumulative savings would reach £181-258m, shared between three authorities.

For the four unitary authority option:

- Annual recurring costs by year 5 would be in the range of £11m - £23m, shared between four authorities.
- After the first five years this option would have between £89m and £15m of up-front investment costs still to pay off.
- After the first ten years, this option would save £124m in the lower-cost scenario or would only just be approaching the point of payback in the higher-cost scenario with £1m of investment costs remaining to be "paid off".

Option	Payback period	Annual recurring saving by year 5		Cumulative savings from LGR in the first 5 years		Cumulative savings from LGR in the first 10 years	
		Overall	Individual authorities	Overall	Individual authorities	Overall	Individual authorities
2U	3 - 4 yrs (30/31 - 31/32)	£50m - £55m	£25m - £28m	£79m - £113m	£39m - £57m	£366m - £418m	£182m - £210m
3U	4 - 6 yrs (31/32 - 33/34)	£30m - £38m	£8m - £15m	(£6m) - £43m	(£9m) - £22m	£181m - £258m	£42m - £107m
4U	6 - 11 yrs (33/34 -38/39)	£11m - £23m	£2m - £7m	(£89m) – (£15m)	(£26m) - £0m	(£1m) - £124m	(£11m) - £41m

These financial projections of transition costs, net savings and payback periods are sensitive to modelling assumptions and risk assessments. The full range of assumptions that relate to this overall summary are attached as Appendix A.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS \ KEY MODELLING ASSUMPTIONS

STRATEGIC AUTHORITY

Some existing costs and budgets will transfer to the Strategic Authority such as the Fire service. These have not been included in the financial model at this stage due to the complexities of splitting out budgets and resource. No additional running costs have been assumed for the Strategic Authority within the financial model.

EXISTING MTFS SAVINGS

Prior to vesting day, the existing authorities in Hertfordshire will continue to deliver planned MTFS savings. It is acknowledged that these savings could potentially duplicate or reduce the estimated savings in the financial case.

If the savings assumed to be achieved by vesting day are not delivered, this would reduce the projected baseline position and may require the new authorities to identify additional savings beyond those expected from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

MTFS FORECASTS

The financial models assumes that cost increases – especially in Social Care and SEND, are lower in the years after LGR than in the years preceding it. Council tax increases are also assumed at the 4.99% (2.99% council tax + 2% adult social care precept) level every year in line with government assumptions on funding.

SHARED SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS

Hertfordshire has a track record of successful shared services. It has been assumed for the purposes of the financial case that shared service arrangements will be in place where long-term contractual commitments exist for county wide capabilities including Highways and Waste disposal. Without these, there is a risk that additional costs associated with disaggregation will significantly increase.

SAVINGS

While a prudent approach to savings has been adopted, it is not yet possible to fully determine which savings are cashable and which may be non-cashable—for example, where expenditure is funded by ring-fenced grants. Therefore, although expenditure may be reduced in some cases, there could be limitations on how those savings can be used.

DISAGGREGATION

There is limited recent evidence of unitarisation involving the disaggregation of county-level services at a scale equivalent to Hertfordshire, making it challenging to accurately estimate associated costs. As a result, the financial model's cost projections for IT and social care disaggregation carry a significant risk of variation, either upwards or downwards.

DSG DEFICIT / HIGH NEEDS BLOCK

The High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant funds education for children with SEND, including special schools, independent placements, and additional support in mainstream settings.

Rising demand for SEND provision has led many councils to overspend, as grant funding has not kept pace with costs. The government's 'statutory override' allows councils to exclude these deficits from their accounts, but the financial shortfall remains. The override has been extended to March 2028 while longer-term reforms are developed.

The County Council forecasts a cumulative DSG deficit of £255 million by March 2028, with annual overspends expected to continue at a rate of £130-£160m annually. The outcome of national reforms will be critical to the financial sustainability of all three structural options. Any remaining HNB deficit would need to be divided between the new authorities, creating a risk

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that unless there is significant change in either DSG funding formula, an increase in the overall DSG settlement, Gov fund the deficits, or reform to the SEND system, then there will be a significant cumulative deficit by March 2028, and this would almost certainly be unfunded due to it being bigger than unitary reserves.

PAY HARMONISATION

No assumptions have been made in relation to pay harmonisation within the financial model although noting that any pay harmonisation could affect costs in the future.

BORROWING

If alternative funding sources are insufficient to cover transition costs, borrowing may be required. Borrowing costs have not been included in the financial model at this stage and could reduce projected savings and the baseline funding available.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

Housing Revenue Accounts sit outside of General Fund revenue expenditure. Although the four HRAs in Hertfordshire receive support services / cost of democracy from the General Fund the impact on HRAs for one-off, on-going costs and savings has not been included within the financial business case.

It is important to note that the HRA entails significant costs and scale that will require further consideration as the chosen option becomes clearer.

	Housing Stock	Total Costs (£m)
3 WEST configuration		
Dacorum	10,061	59,033
3 EASTERN configuration		
Stevenage	7.911	37,209
3 CENTRAL configuration		
St Albans	4,899	17,538
Welwyn Hatfield	8,847	48,588
Total	**13,746**	**66,126**
2 WEST / 4 NORTH WEST unitary configuration		
Dacorum	10,061	59,033
St Albans	4,899	17,538
Total	**14,960**	**76,571**
2 EASTERN/ 4 CENTRAL configuration		
Stevenage	**7,911**	**37,209**
Welwyn Hatfield	8,847	48,588
Total	**16,758**	**85,797**

ASSETS DISAGGREGATION

This has not been accounted for within the financial model but this poses risks at a later stage in terms of ensuring the transfer of assets and their corresponding revenue streams and or

liabilities does not inadvertently worsen the financial position and sustainability of the new authorities. Disposal of surplus assets may help to defray the costs of reorganisation.

PRE-EXISTING SHARED SERVICES

Whilst some shared services are already in existence across for example Internal Audit, Fraud, Procurement and Building Control, across Hertfordshire, these may no longer align geographically with the new authority boundaries. This may pose additional costs in relation to disaggregating shared systems or contracts that are no longer aligned geographically, potential duplication of effort or investment if new, separate services are required, and loss of economies of scale once shared arrangements end. Alternatively, these could also be widened to align with new geographies, to create greater economies of scale.

However, in other cases existing shared services will not require disaggregation and there may be opportunities to expand these and create greater economies of scale.

COMPANIES AND OTHER ENTITIES

Where these exist, they may cause additional complexity in aggregating and disaggregating balance sheets and asset valuation or else amending governance and ownership arrangements. As a result, additional specialist support may be required. This is assumed to be covered by the existing allocation of specialist support within the one-off costs.

SHADOW AUTHORITY COSTS

It has been assumed that the costs of the shadow authority can be covered by existing budgets and the contingency allocated to the one-off costs where required. These are unlikely to have a material impact on the financial assessment of alternative unitary options being considered, nor on their ongoing financial sustainability.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

MHCLG criterion 4: collaboration and local engagement

APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

Hertfordshire's 11 Councils undertook a coordinated programme of engagement to inform the development of future options for local government. The purpose was to listen and learn – to understand residents' priorities, gather insights from our partners, and test the principles that should guide reorganisation, rather than to promote any specific structural model.

Starting in July 2025, engagement activity combined targeted discussions with strategic partners, followed by a wider public survey in September 2025. Across the county, participants included senior representatives from health, education, police/emergency services, housing, business, and the voluntary sector, who took part in one-to-one meetings and small roundtables convened by Councils. These sessions provided opportunities to explore how reorganisation could support stronger collaboration, improve outcomes and ensure local government is responsive to the needs of Hertfordshire's communities.

Alongside this work, a county-wide engagement exercise involved targeted roundtables with key stakeholders, and engagement events for residents, to learn about LGR and share their views through a mix of in-person and online activities. 37 local events were held across Hertfordshire, supported by an online survey, coordinated communications, and local promotion through Council and community networks.

The approach emphasised clarity, consistency and inclusion. All 11 Councils worked together to provide balanced information and accessible opportunities for people to take part. The focus was on building understanding, encouraging informed debate, and developing an evidence base grounded in residents' and partners' real experiences of local services and governance, and understanding their aspirations for the future of local governance.

By the end of the engagement period, around 7,600 people had engaged with the survey (4,906 completed the survey in full, with partial feedback still collected) alongside 37 engagement events, which included targeted stakeholder roundtables, public engagement events, and a briefing for MPs. This is comparable to other areas, like Greater Essex, which has a larger population and received 4,070 responses on their survey. Every Council – Broxbourne, Dacorum, East Hertfordshire, Hertsmere, North Herts, St Albans, Stevenage, Three Rivers, Watford, Welwyn Hatfield, and Hertfordshire County Council – hosted engagement events, ensuring perspectives were gathered from across the county, as well as staff and Councillors being encouraged to provide feedback through relevant communication channels.

This process has established a strong foundation for future collaboration and coproduction. It reflects a shared commitment across Hertfordshire's Councils to shape reorganisation through open dialogue, which is rooted in local identity and focused on creating simpler, more joined-up, and accountable local government.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with strategic stakeholders across Hertfordshire provided valuable insight into how LGR could best support improved outcomes for residents, communities and businesses. The purpose was to listen to partners who play a direct role in local delivery, understand their priorities, and identify both the opportunities and the risks that reorganisation might create.

Participants included senior representatives from health and care organisations, education and skills providers, emergency services, business and employer networks, housing associations, voluntary and community groups, and regional and delivery partners. Their contributions helped

to shape early thinking about how new governance arrangements could strengthen collaboration and align services around people and places.

BREADTH OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

Engagement activity also drew on a wide range of institutional and civic partners, including:

- Members of Parliament: all 12 MPs were invited to an online briefing; 10 MPs, or their representatives, attended.
- Health and care: Hertfordshire & West Essex Integrated Care Board, NHS Trust Executives, and Adult Social Care Providers.
- Education and skills: University of Hertfordshire, Step2Skills, local colleges, local schools and education leaders.
- Police and community safety: emergency services, community safety partnerships and other local agencies.
- Voluntary and community sector: Resolve, Citizens Advice, community groups, charities, and a range of local associations and panels.
- Business and economy: Chambers of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts, major employers and investors, including Gascoyne Estates and Tarmac, and sector representatives from film, creative industries and life sciences.
- Other partners: housing associations such as B3Living and Hightown Housing Association, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, and service delivery contractors, including Everyone Active and Veolia.

TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

Town and Parish Councils were recognised as an essential part of local democracy and a key link between communities and principal Councils. To ensure their voices were fully represented, a Parish and Town Council Task and Finish Group was established under the Community Empowerment workstream. This group brought together Officers from County and District Councils alongside Clerks representing the full range of Town and Parish Councils across Hertfordshire.

- Its remit was to develop practical options for how the future structure of local government could work more effectively with Parish and Town Councils and to act as a consultative forum for emerging neighbourhood engagement proposals. This collaborative approach reflected a shared commitment to localism and to ensuring that Smaller Councils are genuine partners in shaping LGR.
- The group produced a set of recommendations that are being considered as part of ongoing design work. These included:
- Establishing clear governance frameworks and partnership charters.
- Enhancing communication and information-sharing through named contacts within new Unitary Councils.
- Setting out transparent arrangements for asset transfers and service agreements.
- Supporting capacity-building and shared service models, particularly for smaller Councils.
- Enabling flexibility for Parishes ready to deliver additional services.
- Protecting local identity and community connection.
- Engagement also took place with Parishes directly by the District/Borough Councils, where applicable, during the wider engagement process.

PROTECTING LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS AND PLACE-BASED DELIVERY

Stakeholders consistently highlighted the importance of maintaining the strong local partnerships that underpin early intervention, community trust, and effective service delivery. There was a clear view that larger Councils must retain a local presence and embed place-based working within new structures.

MINIMISING DISRUPTION TO WHAT WORKS

Many partners expressed support in principle for reorganisation, provided that it builds on existing strengths. They pointed to successful joint commissioning, co-location, and integrated service models that should be preserved and scaled, rather than replaced.

SIMPLIFYING PATHWAYS AND IMPROVING ACCESS

Partners described the current landscape as fragmented and difficult for residents to navigate. Reorganisation was viewed as an opportunity to create more consistent, outcome-focused service journeys through clearer triage routes, shared referral systems and streamlined governance.

MAINTAINING LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND VISIBILITY

Respondents stressed the importance of visible, accessible local government and clarity over who is responsible for decisions and delivery.

SCALING WHAT WORKS THROUGH INNOVATION AND INTEGRATION

Many organisations encouraged Councils to expand on tested models such as local hubs, shared digital platforms, and outcome-based commissioning. Digital integration, in particular, was highlighted as key to delivering both efficiency and responsiveness.

INCLUSIVE AND PHASED TRANSITION PLANNING

There was consensus that successful reorganisation depends on early, inclusive planning. Stakeholders emphasised the need to protect voluntary sector roles, ensure funding continuity, and phase transition activity to allow time for systems and relationships to embed.

ILLUSTRATIVE STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

"Tarmac believes that the move to a single tier of local government, as has happened in many other places, is a positive move that reduces complexity." – Tarmac

"We welcome the opportunity to work with a wider network of partners as a result of local government reorganisation and are enthusiastic about the potential for increased collaboration and shared learning." – Resolve representative

"The present two-tier system has stymied strategic vision across Hertfordshire. The lack of a coherent strategic vision means the county risks losing its competitive position when compared to other counties and regions." – Gascoyne Estates representative

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"More consistency and standardisation across housing, employment and community assets such as leisure services. Working at scale doesn't negate the local. Opportunity for NHS to develop our offer as part of our ongoing reforms." – NHS Foundation Trust representative

"There is also potential for more unified and efficient service delivery, as well as opportunities to take on community asset management and develop new digital services." – Community Action Dacorum

WIDER ENGAGEMENT

Resident engagement used a mix of in-person and digital methods to maximise reach and participation with the process. Local Authorities organised public events across Hertfordshire, creating opportunities for residents to learn about LGR through an informative PowerPoint, ask questions, share views in a face-to-face setting and fill in the survey in person. These events were promoted across various channels and numerous graphics were used to promote each event.

The online survey was launched and promoted through social media, email, posters and Council staff communication channels, to ensure a broad audience. A coordinated press release further amplified awareness. Together, these activities extended the conversation and ensured the voices of local people from across Hertfordshire were heard.

Some additional targeted engagement was also undertaken, including feedback received from the annual meeting of Hertfordshire Parish, Town and Community Councils and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), as well as focus groups conducted by HCC with a Citizens Panel and Youth Council, and a Youth Panel conducted by Watford. Several stock-holding Councils also undertook tailored engagement with housing tenants, which will continue through the planning and implementation process, including in the development of future management models.

It was positive to see the engagement from residents and key stakeholders in Hertfordshire, with residents making up 89% of respondents to the online survey. It was also encouraging to see that 5% were staff members, and the remainder consisted of Councillors, businesses, charities, community groups or other organisations. The respondent profile was skewed towards an older demographic, with 54% aged 55 or over, however, this was expected from a poll on this topic. 19% of respondents reported having a disability or a long-term illness or health condition, demonstrating that perspectives from people with health challenges were captured in the survey.

Awareness of LGR was also high amongst participants: 83% had heard about it, and 2/3 (67%) said they understood it at least a little. Although this result will be skewed due to more engaged residents completing the survey, it is encouraging that the poll reached 17% of people who had never heard of LGR, showing residents who had no prior knowledge of LGR were also captured through extensive promotion of the survey.

RESIDENTS' FEEDBACK AND INSIGHTS

The residents' survey and local engagement events provided valuable insight into public attitudes towards Local Government Reorganisation. While views were mixed, residents engaged thoughtfully with the principles of change, identifying clear priorities for local services, accountability, representation and hopes for greater value, accountability, and coordination.

Overall, the views expressed by residents present a clear and consistent picture. People want local government that delivers the basics well, spends public money wisely, and makes it easy to understand who is responsible for what. They see real opportunity in more joined-up

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services, clearer accountability, and better coordination across the county, provided this does not come at the expense of local connection or community identity. These insights provide a strong foundation for shaping the next phase of work, ensuring that any future proposals reflect residents' priorities and the values they most associate with effective local government.

DAY-TO-DAY SERVICES DOMINATE PUBLIC PRIORITIES

Residents were primarily concerned with the core local services they interact with most frequently. The top priorities identified were:
- Infrastructure: local road repairs, pavement and footpath maintenance, streetlighting (57%)
- Waste and recycling services (46%)
- Parks and green spaces (42%)

Comments repeatedly referenced potholes, waste collection, and visible maintenance as the benchmarks by which Council performance is judged.

MIXED EXPECTATIONS ON IMPACT – CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM OVERALL

Views were divided on the likely outcomes of LGR. A plurality (45%) anticipated improvements in services and value for money, compared with 42% who expected a negative impact and 13% who predicted no change. The tone of open responses reflected cautious optimism: residents recognised the potential for simplification and efficiency but remained alert to risks around disruption or reduced local connection.

EFFICIENCY, CLARITY, AND VALUE FOR MONEY

Many residents viewed reorganisation as an opportunity to cut duplication and simplify local government.

"Clarity that one council is responsible for everything rather than buck-passing between tiers." – Three Rivers resident

"less overlap on service provision, more local responsiveness on services that were previously on a county wide level" – District Council staff member.

"easier to know who to contact for each service." – North Herts resident

Common themes included calls for eliminating duplication, better use of council taxes, and more joined up services. Financial efficiency featured heavily, with residents expecting tangible savings, improved coordination and better use of resources.

STRATEGIC COORDINATION AND PLANNING VALUED

Respondents identified strong potential benefits from improved coordination and long-term planning. The most frequently selected expected benefits were:
- More joined-up services (55%)
- More coordinated strategic planning and infrastructure decisions (43%)
- Better quality services for residents (41%)
- Clearer understanding of who is responsible for what (40%)

Residents linked these benefits to joined-up approaches to transport, housing and infrastructure, with repeated references to the need for more joined-up thinking between departments and a single point of contact.

DIVERGENT VIEWS ON COUNCIL STRUCTURE – NO CONSENSUS MODEL

There was no clear consensus on a preferred structure. While survey responses showed a slight plurality for four Unitary Councils, the two- and three-unitary models also received significant support.

Each option attracted backing for distinct reasons:

- Two-unitary model: favoured for efficiency, scale and strategic coordination; viewed as simple and cost-effective.
- Three-unitary model: seen by some as offering a balanced approach, avoiding both excessive scale and over-fragmentation. Attracted positive comments on the geography.
- Four-unitary model: preferred by those emphasising local identity and representation, with smaller councils viewed as closer and more accountable to communities.

These perspectives contrasted with stakeholder engagement, where the two-unitary option received the greatest number of supportive or cautiously favourable comments.

CONCERNS ABOUT COST, CONNECTION, AND REPRESENTATION

While many residents saw opportunities in LGR, 57% were concerned that Councils could become less connected to their communities. Other frequently cited concerns included:

- Cost of reorganisation (53%)
- Loss of local representation (52%)
- Loss of services (52%)
- Impact on Council Tax (47%)

PROTECTING COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND LOCAL VOICE

A recurring theme was the need to safeguard community identity and ensure that local voices remain heard. Some respondents opposed reorganisation outright on this basis, while others proposed measures such as stronger roles for Parish and Town Councils and clearer communication on how local identity would be protected.

COMMUNICATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND TRUST

Residents consistently linked good governance with clear communication and transparency. Many expressed a desire for a system where they know who is responsible, how decisions are made, and how to contact their Council. Better communication was one of the most common phrases in open responses, reflecting expectations of openness between Councils and with residents themselves.

HOW FEEDBACK WILL SHAPE OUR APPROACH

The insights gathered through this engagement will directly inform the next phase of work on Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire. Residents and partners have helped to define the key tests for success, highlighting what must be protected and what must change.

1. Focusing on outcomes, not structures
Engagement confirmed that what matters most to residents and partners is the quality and accessibility of local services, rather than the specific form of Council boundaries. Future work will therefore continue to emphasise improved outcomes, such as better coordination, stronger accountability, and value for money, as the measure of success.

2. Protecting what already works

Stakeholders were clear that effective local partnerships, particularly those supporting vulnerable residents, must not be disrupted. This feedback underpins a commitment to maintain local delivery relationships and build any future design around tested, place-based models, to protect what works, and improve what doesn't.

3. Strengthening local identity and community voice

Concerns about local connection and representation have reinforced the importance of subsidiarity – ensuring decisions are made as close as possible to the communities they affect. Parish and Town Councils and other community partners will have a role in shaping future engagement structures.

4. Prioritising transparency and communication

Residents and organisations repeatedly emphasised the need for clear communication about roles, responsibilities and accountability. Future engagement will adopt this principle, with open reporting and accessible information about how feedback continues to inform development.

5. Embedding co-production and collaboration

The engagement programme has built a foundation for joint working between the 11 Councils and their partners. As proposals evolve, ongoing collaboration will ensure that reorganisation is designed with – not just for – residents, businesses and institutions across Hertfordshire.

Together, these commitments form a clear framework for the next stage of the process. The approach to Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire will remain evidence-led, inclusive, and grounded in the voices of the people and organisations who make the county work.

CONCLUSION

The depth and quality of insights offered by stakeholders and residents reflect the value of the approach taken – deliberate, collaborative and grounded in open dialogue. By prioritising informed discussion at an early stage, all 11 Councils created space for partners and communities to engage seriously with the principles and practicalities of reorganisation.

Feedback gathered shows broad alignment on several key points. Stakeholders value the strong partnerships and place-based working that currently underpin service delivery and are clear that reorganisation must protect what already works. There is also consensus around the opportunities to simplify pathways, enhance integration and modernise services through digital innovation and co-location. These views offer a compelling case for LGR that is not just structural, but outcome led.

While preferences varied on the number and geography of future Councils, it was clear that success will depend as much on delivery as design. Stakeholders and residents alike want a system that preserves local insight, creates efficiencies and unlocks long-term strategic benefits. Across sectors, there was both realism about the risks and a strong willingness to continue engaging in shaping how change is delivered.

Taken together, this feedback provides a robust and balanced evidence base for the next stage of work. It shows that across Hertfordshire there is shared commitment to improving local services, strengthening local accountability and building a model of local government that reflects both the county's diversity and its shared ambitions for the future.

LOCALISM AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AT THE HEART OF HERTFORDSHIRE'S TRANSFORMATION

MHCLG criterion 6: community empowerment

OUR AMBITION FOR COMMUNITIES: EMPOWERED, CONNECTED AND INCLUSIVE

Our goal is for all Hertfordshire residents to feel connected, valued and safe. Local government reorganisation provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine and renew relationships between local government and residents, to innovate new approaches to participatory decision-making, expanded community governance and direct resident involvement in the matters that are most important to them. By strengthening connections with communities, we will deliver more effective and responsive public services that reflect local priorities.

We are committed to empowering every person to make a real difference, where communities can actively shape solutions to Hertfordshire's most pressing challenges, including strengthening cohesion and improving quality of life. We aim to reorganise local government to strengthen communities and promote empowerment throughout all levels of governance.

Hertfordshire's unique characteristics position us perfectly for this transformation. Our strategic assets include:

GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY

With 88% urban and 12% rural population, we can develop empowerment models across different community types. Our polycentric settlement pattern, with distinct town identities and rural areas, provides natural boundaries for neighbourhood governance, and whilst our strong commuter economy connects local communities to wider economic opportunities.

ECONOMIC STRENGTHS

With specialisms in life sciences, creative industries, defence and advanced manufacturing, a £50 bn GVA economy and strategic location between London and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, our communities are uniquely placed to shape and benefit from inclusive growth. Despite this economic success, notable pockets of deprivation underscore the importance of equal access to opportunity and inclusive growth that benefits everybody.

DEMOCRATIC INFRASTRUCTURE

We start from a position of strength. Our 124 Town and Parish Councils provide an established foundation for local democracy, whilst significant unparished areas create opportunities for democratic innovation. The £856.4m Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector represents a sophisticated civil society, ready for enhanced partnership working.

CIVIC IDENTITY

Our strong civic identity lays firm foundations for the future. This sense of community pride and belonging creates opportunity to further enhance local engagement and participation. Research consistently finds that communities with a strong sense of local identity benefit from

higher levels of social capital, greater economic resilience and improved health outcomes[4]. Various reports from the UK Parliament and Local Government Association confirm that strong identification with one's local community leads to increased civic activity and higher trust in local institutions[5]. Conversely, findings from the *Local Trust: Left Behind* research[6]. reveal that communities with weak civic identities and poor social infrastructure face significantly worse outcomes in employment, health and overall wellbeing.

Place-based identity plays a critical role in attracting investment and talent. According to Centre for Cities research, it is the ability of places to attract and grow innovative, cutting-edge businesses that influences wider prosperity[7]. Areas with distinctive local identities tend to perform better economically, as they are more appealing to businesses, investors and skilled professionals.

PARTNERSHIP READINESS

Mature strategic partnerships already exist across health, business, education, voluntary community and faith organisations. In many areas, co-locating councils with partners has improved access to services and enhanced strategic collaboration. These partnerships offer diversity of thought and experience, promote innovation and enable sharing of resources and expertise. The maturity of relationships allows for honest conversations around risks and opportunities. These partnerships will complement and strengthen the new unitary arrangements, and their proven outcomes provide a blueprint for our future model.

Case study: One Watford Place Board

The One Watford Place Board demonstrates mature cross-sector collaboration in action. Uniting senior leaders from health, housing, education, emergency services, business and the voluntary sector, the Board operates through voluntary collaboration to deliver a bold vision for Watford's future by 2040. At its heart lies a co-created commitment: that a child born today will grow up in a welcoming, vibrant town championing healthier, greener living. The Board's seven missions empower residents and businesses to shape their community whilst celebrating Watford's caring, optimistic character. Its influence extends beyond governance—the 'Watford Actually' place brand, embedded across partner communications, has reshaped the town's identity, attracting investment, talent and visitors, whilst demonstrating how strategic alignment can amplify civic ambition.

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[4] Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) & Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). (2022). *Rapid evidence review of community initiatives*. This review synthesizes over 100 pieces of evidence to explore how community infrastructure and social capital contribute to wellbeing, resilience, and economic outcomes. It was commissioned to inform government policy on community-led initiatives and value-for-money interventions

[5] Local Government Association (LGA). 2025. *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: LGA policy summary*. This publication advocates for place-based approaches to public services, arguing that local identity and trust in communities are essential for effective service delivery and economic resilience.

[6] Local Trust and Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (2019). *Left Behind? Understanding Communities on the Edge*. Available at: https://localtrust.org.uk/insights/research/left-behind-understanding-communities-on-the-edge/

[7] Centre for Cities, *Cities Outlook 2025*. This annual report provides a comprehensive health check of urban Britain's economic performance.

Hertfordshire's boroughs are defined by a rich civic heritage, rooted in centuries-old Royal Charters and Letters Patent that confer unique constitutional status and democratic identity.

These traditions are far more than symbolic; they embody the enduring civic character of our communities. This legacy is preserved through ceremonial practices, historic regalia, Mayoral offices and Rolls of Honorary Freedom, all of which serve as tangible links between present-day residents and their democratic inheritance.

Civic regalia, historic buildings and traditional ceremonies are not only cultural assets, but they are also vital expressions of local identity and pride. Protecting these elements through Charter Trustees ensures that any future reorganisation strengthens, rather than diminishes, the cultural foundations of civic engagement and democratic continuity.

BOROUGH STATUS AND CIVIC HERITAGE

Broxbourne Borough Council holds Borough status, granted by Royal Charter in 1974, with a ceremonial Mayor and Deputy Mayor maintaining strong community connections.

Dacorum Borough Council, formed in 1974, proudly carries the name of the ancient Hundred of Dacorum, a medieval administrative division that unites the historic towns of Hemel Hempstead (granted Municipal Borough status in 1898), Berkhamsted and Tring.

Hertsmere Borough Council achieved Borough status by Royal Charter on 15 April 1977, recognising its importance as a distinct community with a ceremonial Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Stevenage Borough Council received Borough status on 1 April 1974, honouring both its new town heritage and historic roots dating back to King Edward I's 13th-century charter granting market rights to the Manor of Stevenage.

Watford Borough Council traces its market rights back to the 12th century, formally confirmed by King James I in 1609 with exclusive control over market activities. King George V elevated Watford to Borough status by Letters Patent on 18 October 1922, cementing its civic importance.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Borough status was only gained relatively recently in comparison to the other Boroughs. A Privy Council order was issued on 15 November 2005 and entitled the Borough to appoint a Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

St Albans City and District Council exemplifies this legacy, with its Mayoralty and market rights granted in 1553, elevated to full City status in 1877, and extended borough-wide in 1974. This marks nearly five centuries of continuous civic governance, reflecting the fundamental democratic identity that continues to shape local leadership and public life.

Case study: Royal Charters and letters patent

St Albans Charter Market demonstrates how historic civic identity continues to shape contemporary community life. Founded in 860AD to generate income for the Abbey, the market became Crown property during the dissolution of the monasteries before Edward VI granted both market rights and Borough status to local merchants through letters patent in 1553. Nearly five centuries later, St Albans Charter Market remains at the heart of the bustling city, winning Best Large Outdoor Market in Britain at the 2024 Great British Markets Awards. Judges praised its commitment to supporting new traders, modernising infrastructure and active collaboration with local partners – demonstrating how centuries of

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civic governance translate into vibrant, responsive community assets that have the required agility to adapt whilst maintaining deep-rooted identity.

PROTECTING CIVIC IDENTITY

Local government reorganisation presents a unique opportunity, not merely to preserve civic heritage, but to strengthen it for generations to come. We are committed to ensuring that every community's distinctive civic identity, earned through centuries of history and service, remains vibrant, relevant and empowering in our new unitary structure.

St Albans City and District Council are undertaking a Community Governance Review to seek resident feedback on establishing a Town Council to receive City status. In other areas, the establishment of Charter Trustees provides a robust mechanism to uphold these traditions. Both approaches ensure the transfer from Borough Councils to bodies that maintain legal continuity of all historic and ceremonial functions of the new Unitary Authorities from Vesting Day.

Dacorum Borough Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Watford Borough Council and Welwyn Hatfield Council propose Charter Trustees, comprising Elected Councillors with deep local knowledge, to carry forward the ceremonial authority of predecessor Councils. Our proposal to government therefore requests that Charter Trustees be established by order of the Secretary of State under Section 7 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 for these areas.

This approach provides both immediate protection during the transitional period and flexibility for future Unitary Councils to evolve, whilst still maintaining the civic character and identity that defines our communities.

Broxbourne and Hertsmere are still considering their position at the time of preparing this proposal.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Building on our rich network and existing success, we are driven by an ambition to achieve even more through our Five-point Strategic Plan:

Community Transformation
- Sustainable
- Equitable
- Participatory
- Ambitious

Economic Empowerment & Local prosperity
- Business support
- Social enterprises
- Training programs
- Financial literacy

Health Inequalities & Wellbeing
- Social determinants
- Peer networks
- Green spaces
- Mental & physical health

Democratic Participation & Civic Engagement
- Deliberative democracy
- Citizens' assemblies
- Participatory budgeting
- Marginalised communities

Asset Based Community Development
- Asset transfer
- Capacity building
- Local procurement
- Community enterprises

Prevention-Focused Integrated Services
- Community capacity
- Early intervention
- Integrated teams
- Holistic approaches

ENHANCED DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

We are committed to strengthening local democracy by creating more opportunities for residents to shape the decisions that affect their lives. Our approach will ensure that all voices are heard, especially those from marginalised communities, young people, ethnic minorities and those facing socioeconomic disadvantage. We will build on existing forms of civic participation, such as resident assemblies and participatory budgeting, to ensure communities have a meaningful role in setting priorities and deciding how resources are used.

PREVENTION-FOCUSED, INTEGRATED PUBLIC SERVICES

We will equip communities with the necessary data and tools to identify and address issues before they escalate and require costly crisis interventions. Technology will support better outcomes, whilst integrated teams across health, housing, skills, the voluntary sector and social services will respond holistically to complex needs. Local insight will drive innovation that formal services might miss, particularly for culturally specific or place-based challenges.

Case study: Healthy Homes

The Hertfordshire Healthy Homes programme showcases the power of cross-sector collaboration addressing health-related risks of poor housing and fuel poverty. Developed with

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all ten District and Borough Councils, Hertfordshire County Council, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Care Board, the programme has established a county-wide response to housing-related health inequalities. It has successfully established a damp and mould referral pathway, which streamlines identification of needs and access to support from all sectors and a fuel poverty map identifying hotspots for targeted intervention has also been created. We launched the first Healthy Homes webpage providing resources for residents and professionals and the first year of the free *Healthier Homes for Healthier Lives* training upskilled 226 professionals.

Building on these achievements, training continues and ten further *Healthy Homes for Healthier Lives* sessions are scheduled for autumn and winter 2025/26 aiming to train at least 400 professionals. GP referral pathways are being updated and work to embed and improve integration across the public and voluntary support sector continues. These continued efforts reflect the programme's ongoing commitment to improving housing conditions and tackling health inequalities through sustained, strategic partnership working.

ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

We will harness the strengths, resources and passions in our communities to drive positive change and build solutions that reflect aspirations. We will have a catalysing role, focusing on enabling our communities to work together to make the changes that matter most.

Community empowerment will also drive environmental sustainability through initiatives such as biodiversity enhancement, climate adaptation projects and codesign of low-carbon infrastructure. This will help ensure that environmental action is inclusive, locally driven and firmly rooted in civic pride.

REDUCED HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND ENHANCED WELLBEING

We will tackle the social determinants of health – housing quality, economic opportunity, social connection and environmental factors – to improve outcomes. We will support residents to become health advocates and peer supporters, using social spaces, green environments and community activities to promote mental and physical wellbeing. Finally, we will also prioritise areas with poorer health outcomes, building confidence to improve individual outcomes and support system-wide challenges, such as workforce stability in care services.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND LOCAL PROSPERITY

We will champion local businesses, social enterprises and cooperatives that create jobs and retain economic value within the community. Community-led businesses and social enterprises will be empowered to address local needs and generate sustainable income. Our employment support will be tailored to match local opportunities with residents' aspirations. Financial literacy and long-term economic resilience will be strengthened and supported through community-led initiatives.

DELIVERING OUR AMBITION: FOUR PILLARS OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

To bring this vision to life, our approach is built around four connected pillars that support communities at every level. The three sub-proposals provide further information on the choices available for community engagement in each different approach. In principle, these pillars work together to ensure the plan is delivered in a joined-up way, with local voices helping shape local

decisions. They will build stronger local leadership, encourage participation and support communities to take action together. Every neighbourhood can speak up, work together and access the tools and support needed to shape its own future.
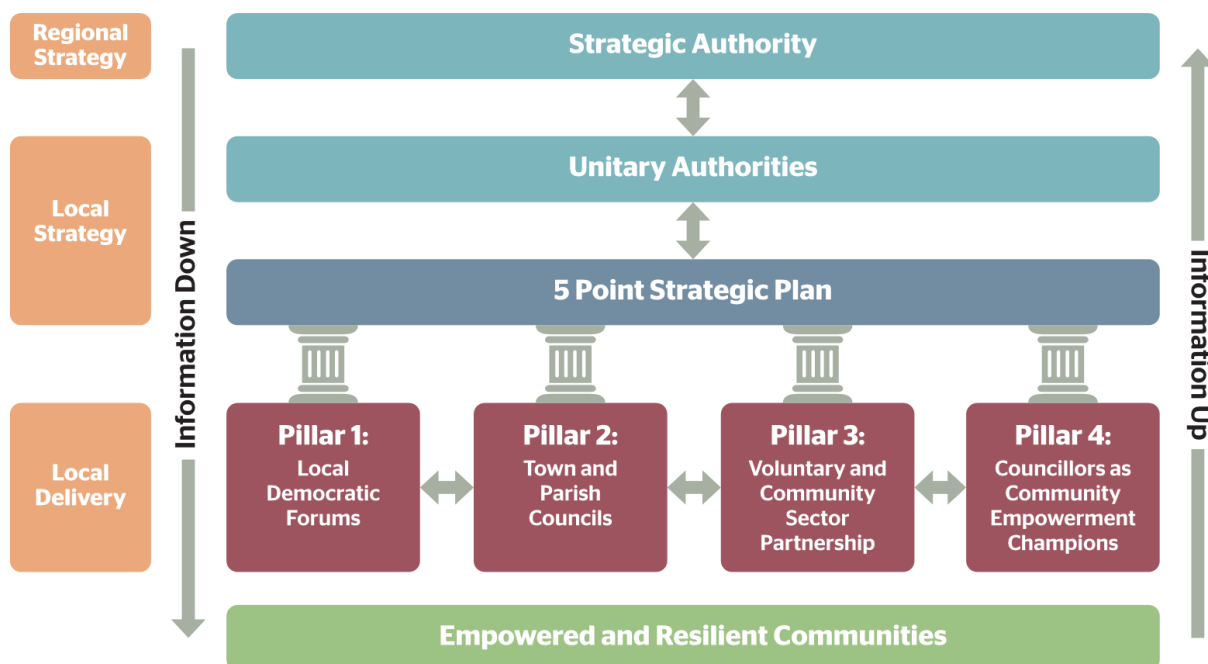
PILLAR 1: LOCAL DEMOCRATIC FORUMS

Drawing on practices from Hertfordshire and other areas, local democratic forums may serve to enhance community involvement in decision-making on local matters. The approach evolves from the traditional area committees and allows communities to influence Council and public sector service delivery. Together with Town and Parish Councils, these forums are designed to structure community engagement within local governance and services. Forums may include members from relevant public sector organisations, such as health, the police, local business leaders, as well as the VCFSE. The approach is intended to support neighbourhood governance and increase democratic participation across communities.

These forums will operate within the framework established by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, which sets out a new legal basis for neighbourhood governance and community empowerment across England.

The forums will use integrated data to identify and address emerging issues early, aligning with the bill's emphasis on locally driven decision making and public service reform.

They will ensure inclusive representation from voluntary and community organisations, public sector partners and local business and education networks, reflecting the government's commitment to strengthening local accountability. Through structured, cross-sector collaboration, the forums will empower communities to lead on decisions that affect their areas.

Under the new legislation the forums will also be able to manage budgets and services delegated by Unitary Authorities, aligning with the ambition to formalise neighbourhood governance and devolve authority closer to residents. New Local have identified several functions local democratic forums can perform.

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Possible functions of Local Democratic Forums:
- Deliberative problem-solving
- Involvement in council decision making
- Participatory budgeting
- Council-led Information and Consultation
- Supporting community leadership
- Hearing resident voice
- Service improvement
- Accountability
- Civic education / knowledge building
- Strengthening relationships (councillors, officers or intra-community)

Due to its polycentric geography, there is no universal solution for Hertfordshire. Our approach recognises that communities differ fundamentally in their characteristics, needs and existing democratic infrastructure. A framework appropriate for a historic market town with an active Parish Council will differ from what works in an unparished suburban area, or a rural cluster of small villages. This flexibility is not a weakness, but a strength. It acknowledges the reality that effective community empowerment cannot be imposed through uniformed structures but must emerge from authentic engagement with the specific character and aspiration of each individual area.

Our transition work will identify common elements that should apply across all local democratic forums whilst also creating space for local adaptation and innovation.

PILLAR 2: TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Hertfordshire's civic landscape is enriched by a diverse range of Town and Parish Councils. Each local Council offers a unique blend of local knowledge, adaptability and community connections, bringing value to the people and places they serve. Where they exist, these local Councils are embedded within Hertfordshire's communities, providing direct insight into local priorities and needs.

The government has confirmed that reorganisation will not alter the structure or functions of existing Town and Parish Councils. This continuity means that local Councils will remain part of Hertfordshire's governance framework.

The extent of Town and Parish Council coverage, and their influence differs significantly across the county. In areas where they are well established, these local Councils have the potential to support and contribute to emerging governance arrangements.

HERTFORDSHIRE'S CONTEXT

Hertfordshire's 124 Town and Parish Councils form one element of local democracy. Covering 85% of the county's land, but serving under half its population, they collectively raise £20.7m in precept for 2025/26.

The distribution varies considerably: whilst some districts are fully parished, others are only partially parished, and some, such as Watford and Stevenage, have no Town or Parish Councils at all, highlighting the diversity in local governance structures. Councils range in scale from those serving just 79 residents to Bishop's Stortford Town Council with over 31,000, allowing tailored local approaches that reflect strong community identities.

These local Councils deliver a range of services, from allotments and public conveniences to events and markets. They also provide community representation, support local projects with grants and manage assets, such as community buildings and street lighting, all contributing to local life in their areas. Engaging with Town and Parish Councils supports our commitment to community empowerment, recognising them as one of several ways to ensure our communities are engaged and our neighbourhoods empowered.

Case study: Kimpton Parish Council

Kimpton Parish Council exemplifies how local Councils foster connection, wellbeing and pride. Serving the village for nearly 120 years, the Council actively maintains local areas whilst also taking care to preserve rural character. Through volunteer dedication, the Council supports regular community events. The hand-delivered Welcome Pack – a decade-long partnership with Kimpton Parish Church – helps newcomers settle in and helps build and reflect strong village ties. The Council's purchase and maintenance of 56 public benches across public land and rights of way demonstrates thoughtful enhancement of everyday life for residents and visitors. This proactive approach, grounded in deep understanding of community needs, makes Kimpton not just a place to live, but a place to truly belong.

CODESIGNING OUR APPROACH

We have taken a structured approach to engaging with Town and Parish Councils, establishing a task and finish group with local Council Clerks to consider the opportunities reorganisation offers Hertfordshire. This has resulted in a series of recommendations, designed to support effective local governance and robust community engagement.

Theme	Recommendation
Governance	New Unitary Authorities may wish to adopt charters or frameworks to provide a foundation for collaboration and transparency with Town and Parish Councils. These frameworks would establish clear roles and shared objectives. Where devolution is being considered, Unitary Authorities would, in accordance with best practice, seek assurance on governance arrangements, including evidence of qualified staff, a strong electoral mandate and comprehensive training programmes for both Members and Officers.
Decision-making	As part of the Unitary Authorities' commitment to community empowerment, they would explore mechanisms to ensure that Town and

Theme	Recommendation
	Parish Councils can be appropriately involved in decision-making processes that affect their communities, particularly where services or assets may be devolved in future.
Communication	Protocols for information sharing and designation of key contacts within each Authority to enhance communication, transparency and responsiveness with Town and Parish Councils.
Asset transfers	If asset transfers to Town and Parish Councils are pursued, ensure a transparent approach supported by clear service agreements to guarantee continuity and accountability in service provision. Unitary Authorities should seek financial assurance through detailed business cases, adequate precept levels for ongoing service delivery and robust risk management arrangements.
Capacity and shared services	Where appropriate, invest in capacity building, particularly focusing on technology, systems and the development of relevant skills, to enable local Councils to work more effectively with Unitary Authorities in collaborative arrangements for mutual benefit.
Service delivery and devolved assets	Where devolution to Town and Parish Councils is being considered, explore flexible models of service delivery, ensuring that any devolved responsibilities are matched by adequate funding and resources. The new Unitary Authorities would seek appropriate assurance, such as a demonstrable track record of successfully managing existing responsibilities, clear service continuity plans and a commitment to quality standards that deliver genuine value for money and improved outcomes for local residents.

We will consider these recommendations and refine our approach during transition, but it will be for the new Unitary Authorities to implement changes as part of their community empowerment plans. They will also determine whether to conduct community governance reviews under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

PILLAR 3: VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Hertfordshire's voluntary and community sector (VCFSE) is a vital force in shaping an inclusive and empowered county. From established charities to grassroots groups, these organisations bring support, connection and creativity in responding to community needs. We are committed to unlocking the full potential of their skills, knowledge and lived experience, creating the conditions for every organisation to thrive and contribute to Hertfordshire's shared future.

Strategic engagement with public sector partners, alongside key representatives from the VCFSE has been central to shaping our proposals for local governance and community empowerment. All partners involved share a unified ambition to support and expand the capacity and influence of the voluntary and community sector. There is a strong consensus that delivering services at the neighbourhood level, in ways that empower and actively engage community members, will deliver better outcomes.

This collective commitment is grounded in the belief that by strengthening the voluntary and community sector, partners can build more resilient, connected and empowered communities. By focusing on neighbourhood-level service delivery and placing emphasis on empowerment

and active community participation, the approach aims to ensure that services are not only effective but also aligned with the unique needs and aspirations of local residents.

Partners are committed to reinforcing the role of the voluntary and community sector, recognising the crucial role it plays in driving positive social change within local communities. The central aim through the process of reorganisation of local government is to harness the sector's resources, skills and established community connections to secure improved outcomes for residents. By leveraging the unique strengths of voluntary and community organisations, partners seek to ensure that future service delivery is both impactful and tailored to the specific needs of each area.

To maintain effectiveness, there is a clear focus on preserving local expertise and sustaining the trust that communities have placed in these organisations. As new frameworks and approaches are developed, they will be carefully constructed to build on existing partnerships and proven services. This ensures that service delivery continues to be efficient, responsive and closely aligned with the priorities of local people.

Case study: VCFSE Alliance

Hertfordshire is home to the VCFSE Alliance, made up of a range of organisations across Herts and West Essex and funded through the ICB. This established group coordinates, improves and shares the wealth of experience and expertise within the health, care and wellbeing sector. Steering group representatives often form part of other partnership structures to ensure communication and opportunities flow between and within these structures.

CODESIGNING OUR APPROACH

Our engagement with the VCFSE has resulted in a series of recommendations for the new Unitary Authorities, which are designed to support effective local governance and robust community engagement.

Theme	Recommendation
Strengthening and resourcing partnerships	To enable success, new Unitary Authorities should invest in the capacity of the VCFSE sector and existing partnerships, ensuring new governance arrangements build on current successful networks. Provide practical support including training opportunities and dedicated liaison roles.
Clarifying roles and accountability	Clarity and guidance on roles, responsibilities and decision-making powers from the new Authorities, to avoid confusion and overlap. Establish transparent frameworks for accountability and reporting.
Embedding prevention and co-production	Make prevention and coproduction fundamental to all locality governance plans, with defined milestones and success measures. Encourage the sharing of best practices and learning across localities, including the VCS and public services.
Maintaining local knowledge and expertise	Map and value existing relationships and expertise at the neighbourhood level. Ensure these assets are preserved during reorganisation through robust transition plans that minimise disruption and support continuity.
Monitoring impact and adapting	During reorganisation establish mechanisms for regular feedback and evaluation, enabling the approach to be refined based on what works well. Engage communities in reviewing progress and shaping future developments.

We will review these recommendations and refine our strategy during transition. The new Unitary Authorities will be responsible for implementing changes in their community empowerment plans. With support from the new Unitary Authorities the VCFSE sector will have stable funding and long-term planning support, helping organisations in the future achieve greater impact in support of our communities.

PILLAR 4: COUNCILLORS – BEYOND REPRESENTATION TO TRANSFORMATION

Elected Members are the foundation of local democracy. With local government reform, there is a significant opportunity for Councillors to champion change, build capacity and empower residents to shape their own futures. Their deep local knowledge and ability to facilitate local problem solving will be instrumental in enabling communities to influence decision making and connect with wider opportunities.

Hertfordshire's Councillors will:

Role	Description
Community engagement and facilitation	Spend time in neighbourhoods attending events, hosting conversations and creating dialogue opportunities. They will convene diverse voices to identify priorities, facilitate discussions and support communities to develop their own solutions, whilst building relationships with residents, organisations and schools.
Leadership within local democratic forums	Ensure community voices are present in structured governance, work collaboratively with partners to address challenges and help communities understand decision-making processes, whilst holding services accountable for delivering local priorities.
Managing resources for community impact	Manage delegated budgets for local projects, work with neighbourhood teams to align Council resources with community priorities and make transparent decisions about funding, whilst being honest about constraints and trade-offs.
Building bridges and enabling collaboration	Connect communities with the resources, expertise and networks they need. Link residents with opportunities, help groups access support, facilitate partnerships and translate community needs into policy priorities whilst explaining strategic decisions in accessible terms.
Prevention and early intervention	Work with neighbourhood teams to identify emerging issues before escalation. Support community-led prevention initiatives, ensure data informs early action and champion investment in preventative approaches that build resilience, rather than simply managing crises.
Advocacy and accountability	Advocate for communities within strategic governance, challenge decisions that overlook local needs and champion investment. Maintain transparency about deliverability, explain difficult decisions honestly and ensure communities can hold Councillors and services to account.
Supporting skills and capacity development	Nurture community leadership by helping residents develop skills in organising, advocacy, project management and governance. Support community groups, encourage young people's engagement and build pathways for residents to progress to leadership roles.

The new Unitary Authorities will support and enable all Councillors to play critical roles in enabling communities to do things for themselves, sharing power and celebrating community achievements. This will support communities to be more resilient and connected.

OUR TRANSITION COMMITMENT: FROM VISION TO OPERATIONAL REALITY

OUR COMMITMENT TO DELIVERY

Transforming community empowerment from vision to reality requires structured transition work that establishes the foundations for effective local democratic forums. Between 2026 and 2028, we will develop the frameworks, funding mechanisms, capacity-building programmes, and accountability systems that enable our four pillars to deliver meaningful change from Vesting Day.

Notwithstanding that decisions will be taken by the new Unitary Authorities, we are proposing that during 2026 – 27, we will work with our key partners and communities to define forum boundaries and governance models, map services suitable for local management; develop business cases for sustainable funding, including a Community Investment Fund; design training and support programmes; and establish data and evaluation frameworks. In 2027 – 28, we will roll out Councillor training and test approaches with pilot areas to refine our model before wider implementation.

This transition work will be shaped by working groups, bringing together Councillors, Parish representatives, VCFSE leaders and residents. Regular community consultation through multiple channels will ensure broader input beyond these working groups. Pilots will test what works in practice, generating learning that improves the county-wide model.

By committing to this approach, we ensure that in April 2028 our approach to community empowerment has clarity of purpose, genuine authority, skilled people and robust accountability – delivering empowerment residents can see and experience from day one.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Hertfordshire's approach represents a practical evolution of democracy – placing genuine power in community hands yet also maintaining accountability. This creates the right conditions for transformation, where community members become co-creators of their local environment, developing skills, connections, capacity and agency that improve both individual and collective outcomes. Communities build resilience, celebrate identity and address challenges through collaborative action, supported by professional expertise and adequate resources.

Critically, public services shift from deficit-based intervention to asset-based partnership, improving outcomes and reducing long-term costs through prevention and community ownership.

Councillors, along with Town and Parish Councils, play a vital role in helping communities realise their ambitions. Alongside them, the voluntary and community sector offers independent, agile support – responding quickly to emerging needs and building trust through deep community connections that encourage participation and amplify the voices of those who might otherwise go unheard.

Local democratic forums provide the innovation needed to connect Unitary Authorities with hyper-local democracy, supporting government reorganisation and community empowerment in a practical and inclusive way.

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This is not just local government reorganisation. It is democratic renewal that puts residents at the heart of the decisions that affect their lives, building the foundation for thriving, self-determining communities.

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QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE SERVICES

THE STARTING POINT

Hertfordshire's 11 councils deliver a very wide range of services day to day - from social care, housing and planning, to environmental health, waste, leisure, culture, transport, and support functions such as finance and governance. Each organisation has naturally developed its own mix of structures, systems and partnerships to meet local needs. This diversity is one of Hertfordshire's strengths, but it also means services have evolved in different ways, with varied policies, contracts and delivery models. To develop our proposal and increase our readiness to deliver local government reorganisation in practice, all Councils have worked together to make sense of this landscape. We have created a single 'service catalogue' and shared datasets around existing demand, delivery models and performance levels. Using this common framework, professional leads across all Councils have identified key risks, issues and opportunities associated with re-shaping services, drawing on learning from other areas that have undergone reorganisation and disaggregation of services previously provided at County Council scale. For each major service area, partners have worked together to describe:

- What needs to be in place on Vesting Day to ensure continuity and compliance.
- Where there are opportunities for collaboration, sharing or alternative delivery models.
- How services could evolve over time to improve outcomes and efficiency.

Through this collaborative approach we have built a robust baseline position, enabling us to set out our proposals with confidence and make a fast start on delivering reorganisation in practice. We are clear on what work we can undertake prior to a decision from the Secretary of State, and we are ready to step up delivery in practice once a decision on a preferred option is made.

DELIVERING OUR AMBITION FOR COMMUNITIES AND SERVICES

Earlier in this document we set out our shared ambition for services that are integrated, efficient and people-centred, simple to access, focused on prevention, and designed around the needs of residents and communities. The service design process has been the mechanism for turning that ambition into practical plans and moving swiftly into delivery in practice.

Through joint work across all 11 councils, we have brought together professional leads, managers and specialists to start the process of determining how existing services could be reshaped within new Unitary Authorities and begin preparing for the complex work involved.

This has included mapping how statutory functions would transfer safely, identifying opportunities to integrate related services, and testing alternative delivery models that could help to manage the risks, cost and complexity of transition or improve quality and resilience.

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GROSS SERVICE EXPENDITURE (2025/2026 BUDGET)

Gross spend on services (2025/26 budget, £millions)

Legend: Welwyn Hatfield, Watford, Three Rivers, Stevenage, St Albans, North Herts, Hertsmere, East Herts, Dacorum, Broxbourne, Hertfordshire CC
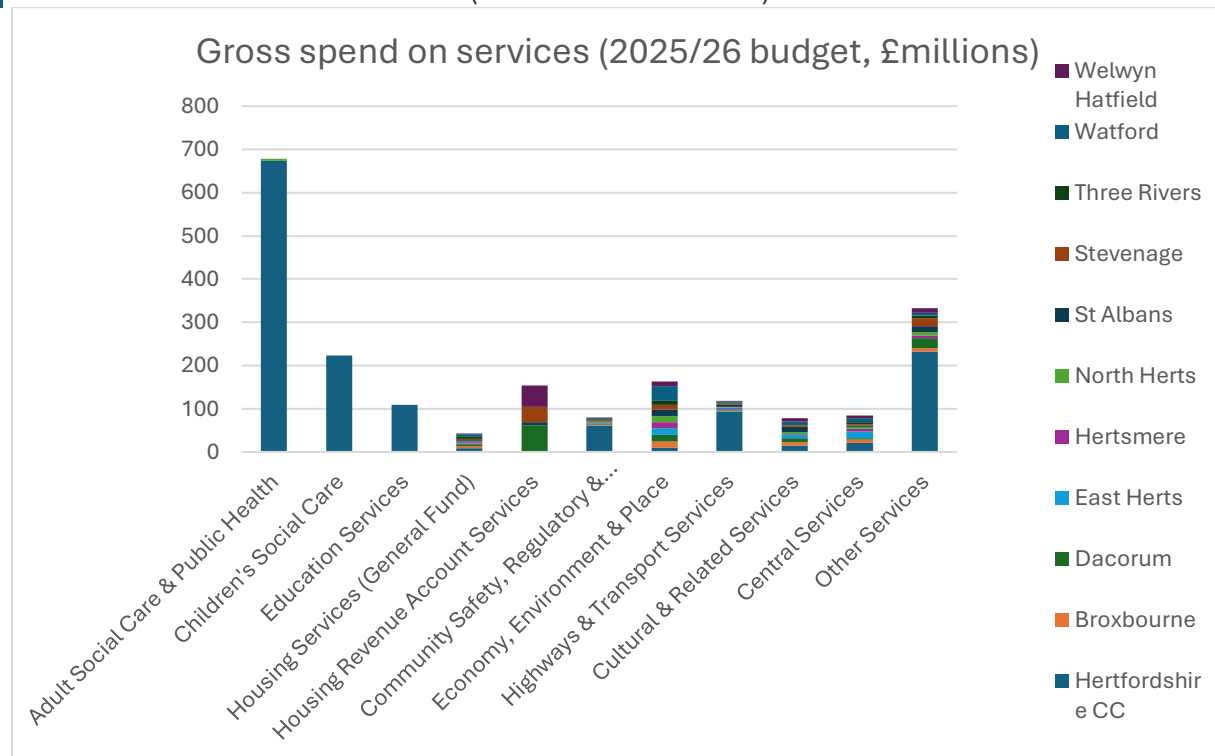
WORKFORCE - FULL TIME EQUIVALENTS (APRIL 2024)

No employees (FTEs)

Legend: Welwyn Hatfield, Watford, Three Rivers, Stevenage, St Albans, North Herts, Hertsmere, East Herts, Dacorum, Broxbourne, Hertfordshire CC

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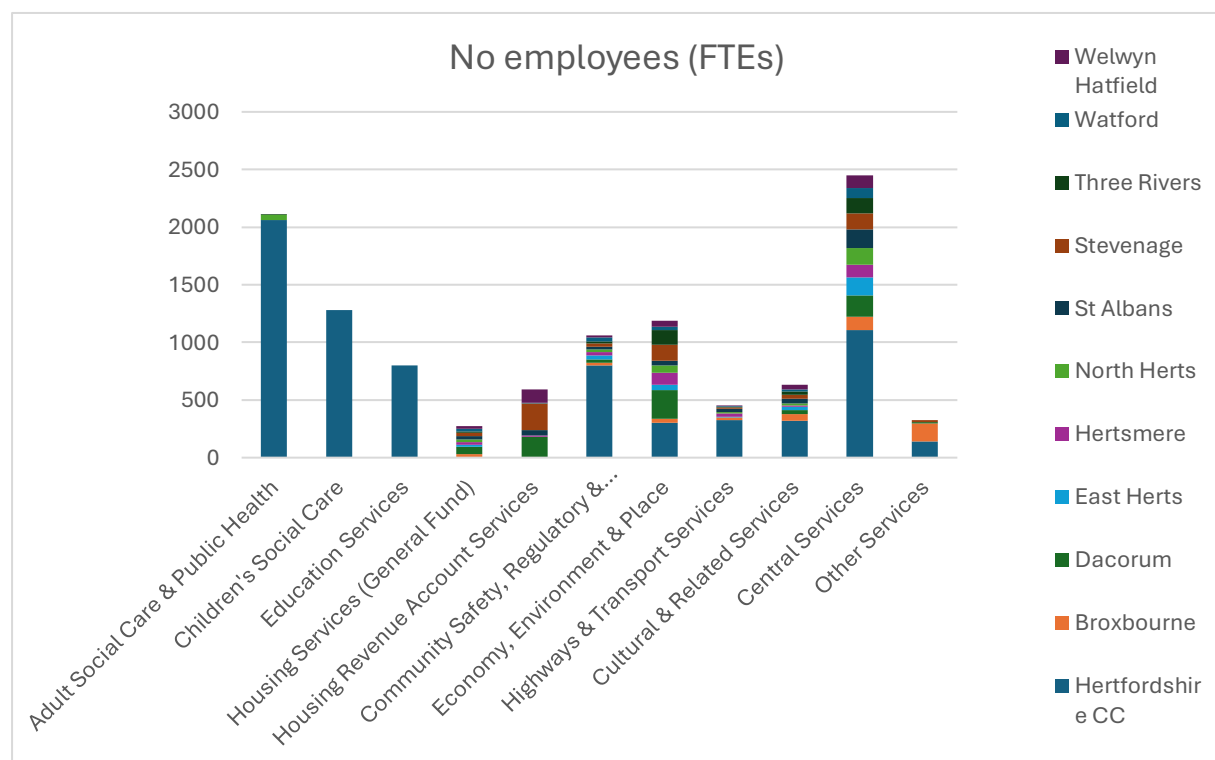
CRITICAL ENABLING FUNCTIONS

We have convened groups of professional leads from across all eleven councils to examine the systems and infrastructure that will enable safe transition and long-term improvement. These critical enablers—workforce, assets and property, digital and technology, and contracts and suppliers—are summarised below.

Enabler	Our starting point	Transformational opportunities for new authorities
Workforce	Around 11,000 FTE staff (excluding schools) employed across 11 Councils under separate pay, grading and policy frameworks. TUPE and HR systems vary; cultures and structures differ between county and district tiers. Recruitment pressures in key professions (social care, planning, procurement, ICT).	• Establish a shared workforce vision and consistent people policies across new Councils. • Work towards alignment of HR and payroll systems. • Invest in leadership, digital skills and workforce wellbeing. • Consider collaborative approaches to recruitment, retention and organisational development. • Design a new inclusive Workforce Strategy to ensure we have the right skills aligning talent with business objectives.
Assets and property	11 Councils hold substantial and varied estates portfolios, including investment properties, 22 civic offices, 32 waste depots/transfer centres, 31 leisure centres and 181 car parks. Asset records and information systems are inconsistent with some duplication and under-utilisation across sites.	• Rationalise and modernise the estate to improve efficiency and service access. • Ensure accurate shared data on our collective asset base. • Consolidate office accommodation and co-locate frontline services. • Embed sustainability and net-zero standards in asset management.
Digital and technology	Councils operate multiple legacy systems, with duplication in case management, CRM, finance and HR platforms. Across the 11 organisations c.1300 applications are currently used. There are varying levels of cloud adoption and digital maturity; separate cybersecurity and network arrangements.	• Implementation of single CRM and case management systems to streamline all customer interactions and provide seamless access to services. • Integration of finance, HR, and procurement systems featuring real-time reporting to inform strategic decisions. • Development of a unified data platform equipped with advanced analytics and AI capabilities to support ongoing improvement initiatives. • Utilisation of AI and automation to enhance productivity and support service delivery • Adoption of a cloud-first infrastructure designed to ensure scalability, security, and environmental sustainability. • Incorporation of digital inclusion principles into service design, ensuring equitable access for all customers. • Enhancement of workforce digital skills through collaborative tools and agile delivery models. • Establishment of governance structures comprising digital leadership roles and cross-functional transformation boards.
Contracts and suppliers	c.400 live £1m+ contracts worth more than £1bn collectively, managed under differing rules and cycles. Fragmented procurement and limited aggregation of spend. Overlaps in facilities management, IT and professional services contracts, many expiring around 2027–28.	• Map and rationalise contracts ahead of transition. • Develop a unified Procurement Strategy and contract management framework. • Increase use of joint frameworks to secure better value and consistency. • Embed social value, sustainability and local supply-chain priorities. • Modernise procurement processes through e-systems and spend analytics.

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MANAGING TRANSITION AND DISAGGREGATION FOR CRITICAL SERVICES

Transition to new Unitary Councils will be the largest public sector organisational change programme undertaken in Hertfordshire since 1972. It will be challenging to deliver and will require sustained effort and investment from a very large group of professionals.

Our shared goal is to deliver a transition to new authorities in a way that ensures continuity of vital services, safeguards residents and staff and creates the conditions for longer-term transformation.

The 11 councils have worked together to begin detailed planning for service areas identified by MHCLG as bringing the highest risk, cost and complexity in disaggregation:

- Adult Social Care
- Children's Social Care
- SEND and education
- Housing and homelessness
- Transportation and highways (not specified as a high-risk service by MHCLG but added to the list at the request of the 11 leaders).

These areas reflect approximately 50% of the collective budgeted expenditure of Hertfordshire authorities in 2025/26 and around 40% of the workforce; but they are also likely to cause the most significant financial risks to future authorities.

Whilst recognising that key decisions will be made by future Unitary Authorities in shadow form, for each of these critical areas, cross-council professional teams have developed initial transition blueprints describing how we foresee a day one position for new authorities in a way that manages risk, minimises disruption and ensures continuity for users of services. These have been informed by lessons from other areas that have undergone LGR, and specifically disaggregation of services provided at county scale, but have also been shaped by the professional and technical judgement of experienced leaders across the partnership.

TRANSITION BLUEPRINTS FOR CRITICAL SERVICES

These plans recognise that while reorganisation brings opportunities to simplify and integrate, it also carries risk. The disaggregation of county-wide services, the aggregation of District and Borough functions, and the need to migrate data, systems and contracts all create complexity. Transition costs will need to be carefully managed and phased to avoid disruption to frontline delivery.

The following sections detail our transition blueprints for each area. The blueprints for day one are illustrative planning tools, developed to show what safe and legal service delivery could look like at the point of vesting. They are not final operating models. Their purpose is to minimise risk during transition, provide assurance that statutory functions can continue without interruption, and create a stable platform for new Councils to review and evolve services once established.

Each of the day-one blueprints has been developed to a common set of principles that ensure consistency, safety and flexibility across all critical service areas.

| **Shared or collaborative delivery on a transitional basis** | Where it is not practical or cost-effective to disaggregate specialist or county-wide functions immediately, Councils are anticipating shared or collaborative service arrangements at least on a transitional basis. These will provide resilience through transition while allowing future |

	Authorities to review and decide their long-term operating models once stable.
Statutory separation and clear accountability at the level of new Unitary Authorities	Every new Unitary Authority must be able to discharge its own statutory duties from Vesting Day. The blueprints therefore set out the minimum structures, roles and systems required for safe and legal operation within each authority, ensuring clarity of accountability and responsibility.
Maintenance and integration of local provision	At the same time, continuity for residents and staff is paramount. Services that already operate on District or neighbourhood footprints will remain locally delivered, with an intention to integrate with housing, health and community partners to preserve existing relationships and local knowledge.

Further due diligence will be required on these proposals as detailed design progresses during our transition phase. As that work continues, specific arrangements may change to reflect emerging evidence, local priorities and national guidance, while the underlying principles of safety, continuity and service improvement will remain constant.

NOTE ON TECHNOLOGY, SYSTEMS AND TRANSFORMATION

The technology and systems design principles set out in the "ambition" chapter for the new unitary authorities are intended to guide a comprehensive transformation; however, it is important to recognise that the critical actions such as ensuring operational continuity, legal compliance, and baseline cybersecurity will be prioritised for vesting day, the broader transformation, subject to funded business cases, will be phased over time.

The service blueprints that follow, set out clear and ambitious direction for future technology and systems integration which will be achieved over time building on the strong technological foundations set in place for a safe and legal vesting day.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Adult Social Care services in Hertfordshire have a budgeted gross expenditure of £679m for 2025/26 and directly employ over 2,100 people, as well as relying on and part funding a much larger care provider external workforce. There were almost 34,000 new requests for support in 2024/25, a significant 20% rise from pre-COVID levels. Nearly 14,000 Needs Assessments for Adults were completed together with a further 2,500 new Carers Needs Assessments. Over 27,800 adults were supported with services in 2024/25 with 15,210 of those adults receiving long-term care. 8,800 safeguarding concerns were received with 2300 progressing to formal enquiry. 10,300 financial assessments were carried out. Demand is rising with demographic change.

Our ambition for Adult Social Care, through LGR reorganisation, is to place people at the heart of care, ensuring that every individual is supported to live a safe, healthy and independent life with genuine choice and control over the care and support they receive.

We aim to build on a preventative, place-based care model that is proactive, personalised and firmly based in the strengths of our local communities.

We will achieve this through stronger integration and partnership with health, housing, voluntary and community services, and supported by excellent practice and robust quality assurance.

New unitary structures will allow Adult Social Care, Housing, Public Health and Community Wellbeing to be managed within one organisation for the first time. The two key opportunities are:

- **Stronger prevention and early help models**, using data and community insight to identify and support people before crisis.
- **Closer alignment of housing and care**, ensuring that supported housing, adaptations and homelessness prevention are planned jointly with social care and public health teams.

Under all options, each new Authority will deliver its own statutory Adult Social Care functions, ensuring compliance with the Care Act, with clear political and officer leadership within each organisation.

We anticipate that at least on a transitional basis new authorities will coordinate and share some elements of service provision on day one through an "alliance model" as described below. To begin with, the purpose of this alliance model will be as a shared vehicle for managing the risks, costs and complexity of disaggregation, with the model subject to progressive review by new authorities over time, with services eventually evolving to a steady state in different ways depending upon the unitary model ultimately selected and the decisions of the new authorities themselves.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE – DAY ONE BLUEPRINT

SHARED / STRATEGIC PROVISION	ALLIANCE MODEL	**Direct provision** • Day opportunities • Transport • Supported Living • Shared Lives • Short Breaks • Herts at Home	**Integrated services with health** • Herts Equipment Service • Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust • Hospital Transfer of Care (Discharge) • Prevention of Admission • Early Intervention Vehicle • Reablement Homecare • Integrated Mental Health Commissioning • Provider Monitoring • LD Nursing • Continuing Health Care	**Small and specialist services** • Approved Mental Health Professional function • Sensory Services • DoLs function • Client Finance • Money Advice Unit • Safeguarding Out of Hours • Herts Home • Improvement Agency/Disabled Facilities grant • Workforce development • 0 - 25 & transforming care • Assistive Technology & Telecare • Drug & Alcohol specialism • Capital & Infrastructure • Proactive prevention (AI platform)	**Commissioning partnership** • Market management • Development and procurement for residential • Nursing and domiciliary care • Supported living • Daycare • Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise • Herts Care Providers Association • Carers' support • Advocacy & user voice • Herts Help • welfare support	TRANSITIONAL JOINT GOVERNANCE	• Joint Local Adult's Safeguarding Partnership • Health and Wellbeing Board (and sub boards including Better Care Finding Board) • Strategic Co-Production Board • Delegated Social Care Duties for Mental Health • Herts Mental Health, Learning Disability & Neurodiversity Health & Care Partnership
UNITARY AUTHORITY PROVISION	STATUTORY SEPARATION	**Statutory roles** • Statutory Director of Adult Social Services • Principal Social Worker • Safeguarding and Care Act roles • Approved Mental Health Professional Warranting, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding Supervisory Body • Caldicott Guardian • Lead for Autism	**Core operational functions (front facing) including** • Gateway Service, Information, Advice and Guidance, Care Act assessments and reviews • Safeguarding • Post hospital follow-up • Case management • Specialist assessments (Best Interests Assessor/Mental Capacity Act 2005/HRA, etc) • Occupational Therapy • Direct payments • Carers' assessments and offer (including young carers) • Financial assessments, charging and income collection • Mental Health Act assessments • Provider safety and assurance		**Specialist core support and managerial functions specific to Adult Care** • Safeguarding governance and practice standards • Quality assurance, audit and complaints handling • Provider payments and queries; direct payment transactions • Inspection readiness • System support • National data monitoring, returns and performance • Improvement and transformation • Practice and workforce learning and development, professional CPD • Brokerage service • Resilience and business continuity • Policy development and review • Business Support including Debt Collection		
NEIGHBOURHOOD OR LOCALITY PROVISION	LOCAL PROVISION	**Locality Teams** • Operational social work teams on district footprints • Place-based integrated services with health • Development of multi-disciplinary teams e.g. with Housing, Health or community functions	**Prevention Hubs** • Carers Hub and further expansion • Development of falls prevention hub • Development of other prevention interventions • Using AI platform		**Direct Provision** • Day opportunities • Transport • Supported Living • Shared Lives • Short Breaks • Herts at Home (Local Authority Trading Co.)		

ADULT SOCIAL CARE – MANAGING TRANSITION

Operational planning for Adult Social Care will be phased in three stages:

- During the **shadow period**, councils will prepare the groundwork – confirming statutory roles, mapping systems and determining how these will be delivered on day one, creating the shared service models and cataloguing contracts. Workforce instability is a key risk, and it will be vital to support teams with early information about the changes they can expect to minimise the risk of loss of staff. Stakeholders including people who draw on care and support services, care providers and VCSFE partners will need to be engaged.
- On **day one**, the priority is to be safe and legal: governance and safeguarding structures will be live, people who need care and support or information and advice will be able to contact us, and we will be able to take and progress referrals. Case management and payment systems will be functioning, and staff and provider contracts transferred under clear accountability.
- Over the **longer term**, the new Authorities will use this stable platform to consolidate systems, harmonise or differentiate policies, and embed integrated, prevention-led models of care with partners.

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
Leadership and governance	• Appoint statutory Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and Principal Social Worker for each future Authority. • Establish a joint Adults Transition Board with ICB, HPFT and co-production and provider representation. • Map existing safeguarding, quality assurance and decision-making frameworks.	• Each new Authority has a functioning leadership team, DASS and governance structure in place. • Local Safeguarding Adults Boards re-constituted and operational on a shared basis as a transitional arrangement. • Clear scheme of delegation and accountability for Care Act duties.

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
	• Determine shared functions and define governance arrangements for these • Begin workforce engagement and communications.	• Shared framework and Care Act operational practice standards maintained across Hertfordshire. • Shared functions operational.
Workforce	• Complete workforce profiling (roles, grades, skills, retirement and turnover risk). • Identify critical posts and interim capacity requirements. • TUPE mapping and consultation. • Early confirmation to staff of which organisation they will work for as far as possible. • Staff communications and well-being support.	• All staff transferred under TUPE with business-as-usual rotas. • Line management and HR systems operational. • Continuity plans in place for key teams (e.g. hospital discharge, safeguarding). • Clear signposting for staff and residents on service contacts.
Systems and data	• Catalogue all systems (case management, finance, payments, BI). • Define cloning/hosting approach to minimise disruption. • Establish GDPR-compliant data-sharing agreements between new Authorities. • Test data migration pathways for provider payments.	• Continuity of operational case management and finance systems for each Authority. • Functioning 'front door' and advice portals. • Tested payment mechanisms for care providers and direct payments. • Shared reporting to ensure statutory returns continue. • Statutory returns and reporting continue without break.
Contracts and commissioning	• Map and review all care contracts, frameworks and SLAs. • Identify contracts due for renewal near Vesting Day and agree continuity plan. • Engage providers on transitional arrangements.	• All contracts novated or extended to ensure continuity of care. • Central register of providers and spend in place. • Business-as-usual commissioning and payments maintained. • Joint escalation process for market or safeguarding issues.
Finance and charging	• Model service budgets and apportion funding to new Authority footprints. • Review and align charging and financial-assessment policies. • Set up interim finance processes and controls. • Understand and define approach for Ordinary Residence.	• Live budget and accounting structures in place. • Tested processes for provider payments, client contributions and debt management. • Consistent charging policy applied to all residents.
Operations and service delivery	• Define operating model for information, advice, assessment, reablement, safeguarding and community teams. • Confirm pathways with ICBs for hospital discharge and prevention hubs. • Map local offices and estate dependencies.	• Each Authority has an operational 'front door' for advice, assessment and safeguarding. • Core services – assessment, reviews, safeguarding, brokerage, direct care services (day Services and Supported Living), finance teams – fully staffed and functioning.

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Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
		• Business continuity plans activated.
People, Provider and market engagement	• People who can draw on care and support services have the opportunity to understand any impact of LGR to how we communicate with them or are assured that they will not experience any change. • Communicate regularly with co-production groups, providers and care associations. • Confirm financial assurance and contact routes during transition. • Establish shared quality-monitoring process across new UAs.	• People continue to access ACS support with no disruption. • Providers have single, clear points of contact. • Market oversight and quality assurance processes functioning. • Joint risk management arrangements across Authorities and ICBs.

LONGER-TERM DIRECTION

Once safe and legal operation is achieved, each new Authority will have the space to review and refine its Adult Social Care arrangements as it moves towards a steady state. Whilst design and delivery model may vary in the individual sub-proposals for the 2, 3 and 4 unitary options, there are several common priorities are already emerging.

Over the longer term, Authorities are expected to:

- **Consolidate systems and processes**, moving from interim hosting arrangements to their own preferred case management, finance and business intelligence platforms.
- **Develop integrated support with housing and health**, aligning Adult Social Care more closely with housing, public health, alongside community partners to create multidisciplinary neighbourhood teams focused on prevention and wellbeing.
- **Strengthen joint commissioning and market management**, working with Integrated Care Boards to shape a sustainable, diverse provider market and expand community-based options for care and support.
- **Review workforce and practice models** in ways that best support their own staff and enable effective recruitment and retention of professionals.
- **Embed prevention and technology**, scaling initiatives such as telecare, digital monitoring and the Connect and Prevent programme to reduce demand for long-term care.
- **Review and differentiate policies**, including charging, eligibility and direct payment arrangements, to ensure relevance, fairness and transparency for residents across each new Authority.

FOCUS ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Public Health is a statutory responsibility of upper-tier and Unitary Authorities. It will therefore transfer to the new Councils on Vesting Day, together with the Public Health Grant and associated contracts. To inform this, the Director of Public Health (DPH) has led an options appraisal setting out how statutory and specialist functions could be configured across the new Authorities.

Four broad models have been tested:

- **Option 1 – Disaggregated:** each Unitary Council has its own Public Health team and Director of Public Health.
- **Option 2 – Shared/hosted:** a single county-wide Public Health team led by one DPH, hosted by a unitary authority and accountable to all.
- **Option 3 – Hybrid (single DPH):** Deputy DsPH embedded in each council, reporting to a single DPH, with shared specialist functions.
- **Option 4 – Hybrid (separate DsPH):** separate DsPH in each Council supported by a joint specialist service.

Each model has been evaluated for its ability to:

- Maintain statutory compliance and national professional standards.
- Sustain specialist capacity and training functions.
- Align with local leadership, place-based prevention and health inequality priorities.
- Secure efficient commissioning and equitable service coverage.

This exercise has concluded that:

- Options 1 and 4 (disaggregated or separate DsPH) are most suitable for a two-unitary model but would be costly and hard to staff if there were 3–4 Councils.
- Options 2 and 3 (shared or hybrid models) are more viable for 3–4 unitary structures, because they preserve specialist capacity and reduce duplication.
- The DPH sees integration with related services (such as Housing, Environmental Health, Community Safety) as beneficial under any model.
- A final recommendation will depend on which LGR structure government selects and how the Public Health Grant is handled.

Further work will continue through the transition period to refine governance and funding arrangements once a preferred local government structure is confirmed. The assessment will inform the 'safe and legal' day-one plan and longer-term integration of Public Health with related services such as Housing, Community Safety and Environmental Health.

Case study: Herts Careline

Herts Careline is a longstanding service area of North Herts Council, proudly celebrated its 40th anniversary in July 2022. Renowned for its award-winning assistive technology and telecare solutions, Careline empowers individuals both locally and nationwide to live independently with confidence. Since 2014, Careline has partnered with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to deliver an extensive suite of services including community alarms, GPS pendants for outdoor safety, advanced telecare for complex needs, and automated welfare calls. These offerings currently support over 16,000 people.

Each year, Careline responds to more than 7,400 medical emergencies, alongside thousands of calls addressing physical and mental health concerns, safeguarding, domestic violence, care breakdowns, housing repairs, out-of-hours support, and homelessness. By collaborating with HCC and organisations such as The British Red Cross, a first responder service, Careline makes a meaningful difference to health and social care across Hertfordshire. The latest customer satisfaction survey reflects this impact, with 100% of respondents feeling reassured and 99% willing to recommend Careline to a friend.

Case study: Hertsmere Cancer Screening Uptake Project

Hertsmere's award nominated Cancer Screening Uptake Project brought together local Primary Care Networks and wider system partners to collectively target the health inequalities in cancer screening uptake and diagnosis which was very low. With funding from Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health team, the project tackled the low rates of breast, cervical and prostate cancer screening. Hertsmere has the lowest rates in Hertfordshire and a lower uptake than the England average.

The project adopted the principles behind the NHS's Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, bringing together the wider system to build a culture of collaboration, pride and the time and space needed within the partnership to problem solve, build relationships and trust between primary care, other system partners and our local communities.

The project identified patients who have not responded to screening invites and those with increased cancer risk. Proactively contacting these patients has allowed the team to fully address any concerns that the individual might have, whilst also offering the option of booking in for an appointment while on the call. This approach builds on the vaccination tracing work during the pandemic and has been extremely well received by both partners and patients.

Increase in screening rates has been seen across all parts of the project, with

- The cervical screening rate for the borough increasing from 63.45% to 76.16%, since March 2023. The project has booked over 3000 cervical screening appointments.
- The breast cancer screening rate increasing from 63.62% to 75%, with over 450 appointments booked. Outcome data shows that 2% of women who took up screening after contact with our project, received an 'other than normal' result and of these 11% have received a breast cancer diagnosis. These women may not have been experiencing symptoms but contact with our project has meant that they have been able to access treatment at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The prostate cancer screening rate increasing from 18.5% to 66.22% for Black men over 45 who are at a greater risk of developing prostate cancer. Outcome data shows that 17% of men who engaged with this strand of the project have been referred to hospital for further investigation and of these 26% have received a prostate cancer diagnosis. It's important to note that these men were not experiencing any symptoms and therefore have been able to access treatment earlier, a potentially life-saving measure.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES: SOCIAL CARE, SEND AND EDUCATION

CONTEXT

Children's Services in Hertfordshire have a budgeted gross expenditure of £335m for 2025/26 and employ around 2,100 full-time equivalent staff.

Within this, Children's Social Care services budgeted gross expenditure of £223m with 1,280 full-time equivalent staff. These services span safeguarding, statutory assessments, support for looked-after children, fostering and adoption, and youth justice. Demand pressures are increasing, particularly in relation to complex needs, out-of-area placements, and growth in Education, Health and Care Plans. While Hertfordshire overall has relatively low numbers of children in care compared with England as a whole, need is unevenly distributed – with higher demand concentrated in areas such as Stevenage, Watford and Hatfield.

Education and SEND services in Hertfordshire have budgeted gross expenditure of £109m, and around 800 full-time equivalent staff. The services oversee a school population of around 226,000 pupils. Demand for specialist support has risen sharply: there were 14,473 children and young people supported with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) by July 2025, with annual growth between 12% – 15%. Meeting the ongoing increases in requests for EHC Needs Assessment is challenging and, although performance is above comparators and national performance, 56% were completed within the statutory 20-week period in 2024. Demand for SEND provision is growing, complex and misaligned with current capacity creating an unsustainable system: there are 3,114 special school places currently in Hertfordshire including the 10% of additional places created in the last academic year. Work continues to manage and mitigate these pressures through programmes to increase provision capacity, recognising that current demand outstrips potential capacity. Pressures on the High Needs Block continue, with a forecast spend of £263m in 2025/26, £52m above available funding and increasing the overall cumulative DSG deficit to c£80m. Home-to-school transport costs are also a major Authority budget driver, supporting more than 3,100 pupils at a total annual cost of nearly £40m.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES: WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE THROUGH LGR

Our ambition for **Children's Social Care** through reorganisation is to create safe, stable systems with clear local accountability and sufficient scale to invest in prevention and early help so that more children stay safely cared for by their families. The aim is to support more children and families earlier, reducing escalation to statutory intervention. For children who need to be in our care and care leavers, our ambition as corporate parents is to ensure they have homes and trusted relationships that offer love, care, protection and stability. The aim is that children in care and care leavers receive the help they need to address experiences of adversity and trauma and develop the foundations for a healthy, happy life.

Integrating Children's Social Care more closely with housing, health and community services supports these prevention and corporate parenting ambitions and aligns with our wider goals of tackling health inequalities, supporting family resilience, and ensuring every child has the best start in life.

At the same time, our ambition for **Education and SEND through** reorganisation is to build a more inclusive system that identifies and meets need earlier, reduces reliance on out-of-area placements, and ensures children with SEND can thrive in local schools and communities. The goal is to strengthen place-based support, integrate better with health and social care, and provide parents with simpler, more transparent processes. We also aim to grow local specialist provision, modernise systems and case management, and maintain Hertfordshire's strong track record in traded school support.

Reorganisation provides a chance to reset relationships between education, social care and health partners around new localities that reflect natural communities and school catchments. This will enable:

- **Integrated early-help and family hub models**, combining youth, education and community services in multidisciplinary teams.
- **A single accountability framework for safeguarding and SEND**, into the new unitary authorities.

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- **More coherent engagement with schools**, especially through locality-based SEND and inclusion partnerships that strengthen early identification and reduce reliance on out-of-area placements.
- **Improve coordination of home-to-school transport, admissions and SEND provision**, supporting inclusion and improving efficiency.

Reorganisation will not in itself resolve financial pressures in education and SEND, but it offers the opportunity to align policy, simplify access, and design services around families and communities.

Under all options, each new Authority will deliver its own statutory Children's Social Care functions, led by a Director of Children's Services and supported by local safeguarding and corporate parenting arrangements.

We anticipate that at least on a transitional basis new authorities will coordinate and share some elements of service provision on day one through an "alliance model" as described below. To begin with, the purpose of this alliance model will be as a shared vehicle for managing the risks, costs and complexity of disaggregation, with the model subject to ongoing review by new authorities over time, and services eventually differentiating to a steady state in different ways depending upon the unitary model selected and the decisions of the new authorities themselves.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

SHARED / STRATEGIC PROVISION	**ALLIANCE MODEL**	**Coordinated management of critical assets and resources**, including: • In-house residential accommodation • In-house foster carers (including recruitment)	**Shared and hosted services**, including: • Emergency Duty / Out of Hours • LADO / FGC support • Fostering & Adoption Recruitment & retention	**Commissioning and procurement partnership**, including: • Continuity of major / block care and support contracts • Joint frameworks • Tactical collaboration and market-shaping	**TRANSITIONAL JOINT GOVERNANCE** — • Joint Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership • Inter-authority leadership forum

UNITARY AUTHORITY PROVISION	**STATUTORY SEPARATION**	**Statutory DCS, leadership roles and decision-making** sit within each UA (inc. corporate parenting) Case management system	**Core social work disaggregated to each UA**, including: • Front door / MASH • Targeted Early Help • Safeguarding and Children with Disabilities • Children in care, care leavers and SMCs • Fostering & adoption • Specialist Interventions: Edge-of-care, reunification • IRO function	**Core oversight functions:** • Independent reviewing • Quality assurance • Commissioning and sufficiency • Inspection readiness • Statutory reporting • Performance & Finance • Business support

NEIGHBOURHOOD OR LOCALITY PROVISION	**LOCAL PROVISION**	**Family Hubs** continue open access and under joint commissioning arrangements. Review in line with contract schedule.	**Early Help System** Partnerships, CVFS and LSPs to continue within UA geography with transitional arrangements for transfer of strategic support and Early Help Strategy to UAs.

SEND AND EDUCATION

SHARED / STRATEGIC PROVISION	**TRANSITIONAL SHARED PROVISION**	**Special and alternative provision -** capital programme	**Educational psychology –** shared on a transitional basis under 3U or 4U option	**Herts for Learning Herts SEND partnership Improvement / Transformation**	**Home-to-school transport operations Services for Young People -** if under 3U or 4U	**Other specialist services:** • SENDSAS • SENDIAS • Herts Music Service • CLEAPSS

UNITARY AUTHORITY PROVISION	**STATUTORY SEPARATION**	**Leadership roles and decision making** sit within each UA **Schools Forum**	**Statutory education functions** • School improvement • Admissions • Attendance • Exclusions • Education standards and accountability • Interim provision • Outcomes for children looked after • Missing from education and electively home educated	**Statutory SEND functions** • EHCP assessment and review • Tribunals and provision • SEND local offer • Parent/carer forum	**Core managerial functions:** • Commissioning • Complaints, mediation • Case management system • Inspection readiness • Statutory reporting • Performance & Finance • Business support

NEIGHBOURHOOD OR LOCALITY PROVISION	**LOCAL PROVISION**	**Partnerships with schools, SENCO forums, DSPLs**	**Youth centres** transfer to individual authorities based on geography

CHILDREN'S SERVICES – MANAGING TRANSITION

Operational planning for Children's Services is being phased in three stages:

- During the **shadow period**, Councils will prepare the groundwork – confirming statutory roles, mapping systems, cataloguing contracts and engaging the workforce.

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- On **day one**, the priority is to be safe and legal: governance and safeguarding structures will be live, case management and payment systems functioning, and staff and providers transferred under clear accountability.
- Over the **longer-term**, the new Authorities will decide how to use this stable platform to review and either maintain shared provision, or else differentiate systems, policies, and practice models.

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
Leadership and governance	• Appoint statutory Director of Children's Services (DCS) and supporting senior management for each future Authority. • Establish joint Children's Services Transition Board with ICB, schools and police representation. • Map existing governance for safeguarding, corporate parenting, and SEND improvement to avoid gaps. • Draft new Terms of Reference for Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Youth Justice Boards.	• Each new Authority has a functioning DCS, statutory roles and capable senior leadership team in place. • Corporate parenting and safeguarding boards reconstituted in transitional shared form and operational. • Clear decision-making and accountability for statutory Children and Education Act duties. • Single reporting lines and localised arrangements for performance and inspection readiness.
Workforce and culture	• Undertake workforce profiling by team and role in order to allocate core social work to new areas. • Identify and mitigate risks in relation to critical roles and hard-to-recruit areas (e.g. social workers, educational psychologists). • Agree TUPE and ring-fencing arrangements. • Develop staff briefings and wellbeing support. • Create joint training and induction plans for new leaders and front-line teams.	• All staff transferred safely with continuity of supervision and management. • Caseload allocations stabilised and held intact during the transition. • HR and payroll systems live and staff communications channels operational. • New Authorities continue core practice model (e.g. Family Safeguarding).
Systems and data	• Identify and develop transition plans for all critical case management and line-of-business systems (Liquidlogic, EHM, EYES) and education platforms in partnership with suppliers. • Agree data sharing protocols with ICB and police.	• Continuity of case management and education systems for each authority with tested access and reporting. • Statutory returns and Ofsted reporting capabilities in place. • Provider payments and SEND funding processed accurately
Contracts and commissioning	• Map and review all contracts (fostering, residential, SEND transport, therapy services). • Engage providers and regional frameworks on transition plans. • Identify contracts needing novation or extension near Vesting Day and develop strategies in collaboration with suppliers. • Assess market capacity and risk of cost inflation and develop market management approach through alliance model.	• All active contracts novated or extended; payment systems tested. • Shared procurement arrangements for high-cost placements and adoption services in place. • Single market oversight and provider escalation routes operational.
Finance and resources	• Apportion Children's Services budgets and High Needs Block funding by agreed formula.	• Budgets live within each new authority's finance system. • Payment mechanisms for providers, schools and care leavers operational.

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
	• Review and align grants and school funding streams. • Set up interim financial controls and reporting.	• Consistent financial delegations and controls in place.
Operations and service delivery	• Define differentiated operating model for front door, MASH, Early Help and Family Hub networks for each UA. • Map SEND assessment and EHCP workflows. • Confirm continuity plans for Youth Justice and Virtual School functions.	• Each Authority has a live front door for referrals and safeguarding concerns. • Statutory services – assessment, children in care, SEND and Early Help – fully operational. • Family Hubs and commissioned Early Help services functioning under transition agreements.
Partnerships and market relationships	• Maintain joint working arrangements with health, police and schools through the transition and put in place transitional joint governance. • Engage schools on future locality governance and SEND planning.	• ICB and police partnership arrangements continue seamlessly. • School engagement structures in place within each Authority (e.g. education partnership boards). • Clear communication with voluntary sector and providers on service continuity.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES: LONGER-TERM TRANSFORMATION

Once stable day-one arrangements are in place, each new Authority will have the opportunity to progressively review, and re-shape shared and localised services over time.

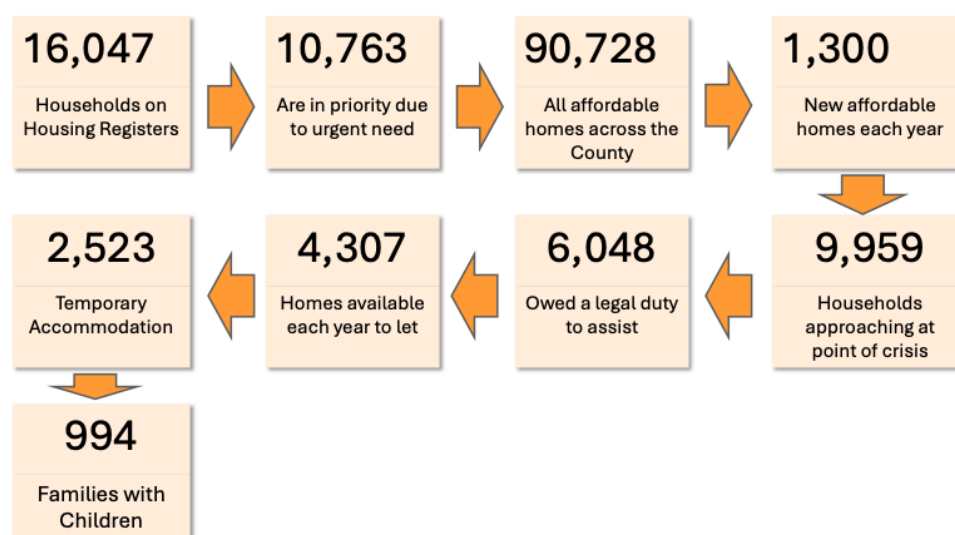Over the transformation period, new Councils can be expected to:

- **Embed a locality-based model of support.** Family Hubs, Early Help teams, SEND services and youth provision are expected to operate as integrated neighbourhood networks, aligned with hosing services, schools, Primary Care and community partners. Local teams will share data and intelligence to identify need earlier and provide joined-up help to families. Co-located locality teams will focus on the wider determinants of health, tackling inequalities and supporting children with complex needs.
- **Re-set the relationship with schools and education settings.** Education and SEND services will work with redefined clusters of schools to codesign inclusive practices, build local sufficiency of specialist places, and ensure children with additional needs can thrive in mainstream settings wherever possible. The Virtual School will continue to champion the attainment and wellbeing of children in care across the new Authorities.
- **Strengthen prevention and Early Help pathways.** Using a 'whole-family' approach, new Councils will build on the existing track record of Early Help access through Family Hubs, community outreach and digital tools. This will continue to reduce escalation to statutory intervention and allow investment to shift from crisis management to prevention.
- **Stabilise and diversify placement provision.** Through joint commissioning and regional collaboration, Authorities will expand local residential, fostering and supported-lodgings options, reducing reliance on external and distant placements and improving continuity for children.
- **Continue the SEND improvement journey.** Building on progress since the 2023 inspection, Councils will implement the SEND Strategy with consistent standards, streamlined processes for EHCP assessment, and transparent co-production with families.

- **Invest in workforce capacity and culture.** Differentiated People Strategies will underpin professional development, recruitment and retention within each new authority. Leaders will build a confident, learning culture where practitioners are empowered, supported and connected across disciplines.

Housing Services provided through the General Fund relate to the provision of statutory and mandatory services that enable some of the most vulnerable members of our communities to access safe, secure and habitable accommodation. In Hertfordshire this means working with more than 150 partners to coordinate, plan, deliver and monitor a range of services, support and provision. Each year, around 4,200 vulnerable households are provided with new homes. Alongside this, over 18,000 households remain on Housing Registers, requiring ongoing assessment, monitoring and support to ensure that those in greatest need are prioritised for the new homes that become available. More than 7,000 households approach the council each year at a point of homeless and crisis – a number that continues to rise. Councils have a duty to assist more than 90% of these cases. At the end of last year, 1,377 vulnerable households were living in temporary accommodation, including 1,841 children.

Housing Key Stats

16,047 Households on Housing Registers	10,763 Are in priority due to urgent need	90,728 All affordable homes across the County	1,300 New affordable homes each year
2,523 Temporary Accommodation	4,307 Homes available each year to let	6,048 Owed a legal duty to assist	9,959 Households approaching at point of crisis

994 Families with Children

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced account for the management and development of social housing that a Council may own. Within Hertfordshire specifically, Dacorum, St Albans, Stevenage and Welwyn Hatfield have this provision and together they provide more than 32,000 homes to approximately 65,000 people. This brings a total annual income of £215m but carries debts of £1.13 bn.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES – WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE THROUGH LGR

Our ambition for housing and homelessness through reorganisation, is to deliver a consistent, prevention-first approach across Hertfordshire. New Unitary Authorities will be able to

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strengthen links between Housing, Social Care and Public Health, reduce variation in local policies, and better manage demand pressures.

The goal is to prevent homelessness earlier, make better use of temporary accommodation, sustain and support all households and achieve this through our partnerships with the private rented sector, Housing Associations and the voluntary sector, whilst aligning our Housing Strategy more closely with growth, planning and regeneration.

Stronger joint commissioning, procurement and development of temporary accommodation (TA) and other housing, combined with place-based housing and wellbeing services, will improve outcomes for families and reduce costs.

At present, homelessness, temporary accommodation and private sector regulation sit with Districts and the County oversees Adult Social Care and Public Health. Unitary Councils will be able to join them up, achieving:

- **Prevention-led, multi-agency housing support**, aligning housing options, welfare advice and social care.
- **Consistent homelessness and allocations policies** across wider areas, reducing inequity and cross-boundary competition for temporary accommodation.
- **Unified commissioning of supported and specialist housing**, ensuring provision matches care and health needs.
- **Integrated landlord services for HRA councils**, combining tenancy management, repairs and community wellbeing in a single accountable structure.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES – DAY ONE BLUEPRINT
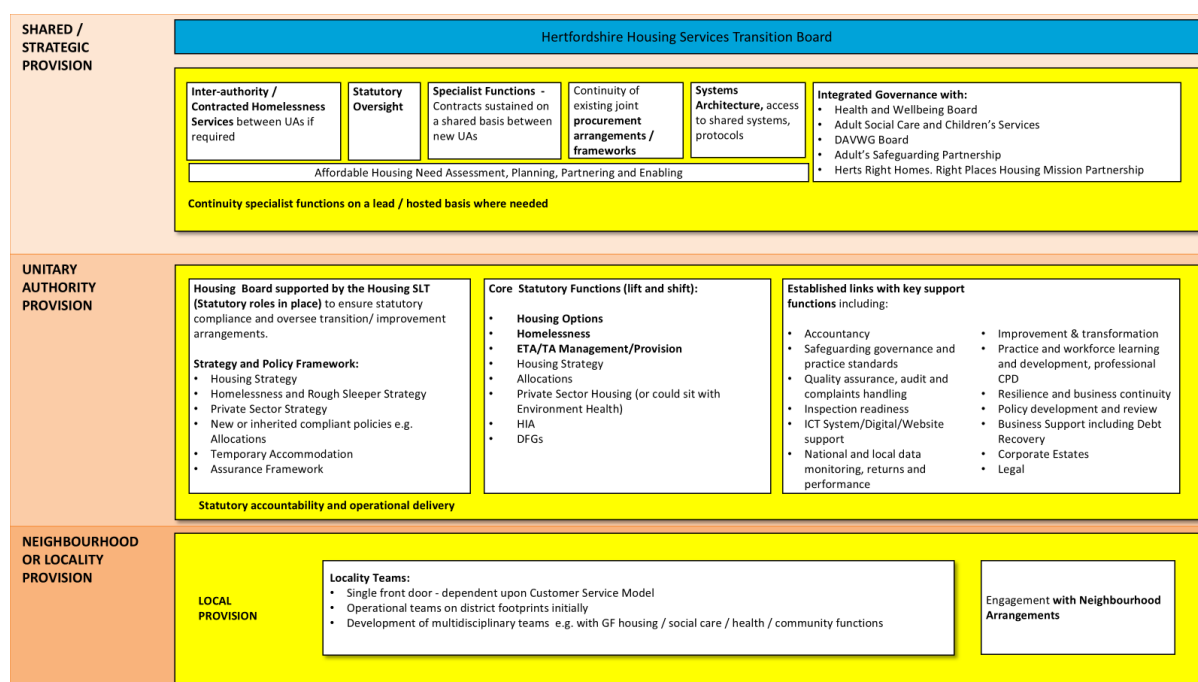
HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES – HOW WE INTEND TO DELIVER TRANSITION

New Unitary Authorities must be legally ready to deliver housing and homelessness services from Vesting Day, this includes:

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- Ensuring compliance with regulatory standards and requirements, including statutory reporting.
- Establishing robust governance structures and statutory leadership to oversee Part 7 homelessness duties, allocations, enforcement, and temporary accommodation.
- Avoiding premature fragmentation of complex statutory functions before new local delivery models are fully designed and operational.

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
Leadership and governance	- Appoint Senior Housing Lead within each future UA. - Create Housing Transition Board with representation from ASC, Public Health and the VCS. - Map statutory duties (Housing Act 1996 Parts 6 and 7, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) and identify inter-dependencies with Social Care and Community Safety.	- Statutory accountability and leadership in place. - Housing Board and Senior Officer oversight established. - Clear governance for allocations, homelessness and private-sector enforcement.
Workforce	- Profile staff and caseloads across all ten districts. - Identify roles to transfer under TUPE and confirm interim structures. - Joint workforce briefings and training on new policies.	- All staff transferred safely. - Contact points for housing options and homelessness queries live in each UA. - Continuity of rotas and case ownership for open homelessness cases.
Systems and data	- Catalogue IT systems (e.g. Jigsaw, Locata, Civica). - Agree approach for shared hosting to avoid service disruption. - Data-sharing protocols for cross-boundary placements.	- Continuity of case-management systems with tested data and payments functions. - Case management and statutory return capabilities maintained.
Policies and processes	- Compare and align allocations, TA and private-sector enforcement policies. - Prepare interim standard operating procedures for Officers.	- Compliant homelessness and allocations policies in place. - Consistent approach to duty assessment and TA placement decisions.
Contracts and partnerships	- Map temporary accommodation and support contracts. - Engage providers on continuity arrangements and payment processes.	- All TA and support contracts novated or extended. - Provider payments and void management continuing seamlessly.
Integration with social care and health	- Align planning with ASC and Public Health on prevention and move-on pathways. - Identify opportunities for joint assessment and commissioning.	Operational links between housing, ASC and Public Health in place (e.g. hospital discharge and supported housing pathways).

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES – LONGER-TERM TRANSFORMATION

As new Unitary Authorities move beyond transition, they will implement a medium-term integration plan to consolidate and modernise housing and homelessness services. This plan

will focus on achieving consistency, strengthening partnerships, and embedding prevention as the organising principle of future delivery.

As part of this medium-term integration plan there will be a need to:

- **Agree a transitional operating model** with appropriate oversight to manage continuity while enabling local adaptation and improvement.
- **Align allocations, homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment policies** within each new Authority, creating a fair, transparent and consistent offer for residents.
- **Improve data sharing** to identify cross-border demand, inform targeted joint commissioning, and assess opportunities to rationalise services and assets.

In parallel, longer-term transformation will:

- **Integrate housing, social care and public health** functions to deliver prevention-first approaches, reducing crisis homelessness and supporting independence.
- **Create a single homelessness prevention system**, combining welfare advice, private-rented access, and targeted support within one coordinated pathway.
- **Strengthen strategic housing leadership**, aligning housing strategy with local plans, growth and infrastructure programmes.
- **Consolidate temporary accommodation and supported housing procurement**, achieving better value and improved outcomes through joint commissioning.
- **Invest in digital tools and analytics** to monitor trends, predict demand and target resources more effectively.
- **Work with voluntary, faith and community partners** to build local capacity, expand early intervention and strengthen place-based responses.

FOCUS ON HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SERVICES

Four District Councils in Hertfordshire currently operate Housing Revenue Accounts (HRAs): **Dacorum**, **St Albans**, **Stevenage** and **Welwyn Hatfield**. Together they manage more than **32,000 homes**, providing affordable rented housing to around **65,000 residents**. The combined annual HRA income is approximately **£215m**, supporting ongoing investment in stock management, repairs, tenant services and new-build development.

The collective debt across these accounts is around **£1.13bn**, with each council maintaining its own business plan, borrowing strategy and reserves to meet regulatory requirements.

Regulatory context

Under national regulations, each stock-holding Authority must maintain a **ring-fenced HRA**, ensuring that income and expenditure on council housing are accounted for separately from the General Fund. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) oversees compliance, consumer standards, and inspection every four years.

Following reorganisation, **each new stock-holding Unitary Council** will automatically become a registered provider of social housing in its own right. The RSH will not recognise predecessor Councils, meaning new registrations, governance frameworks and compliance systems must be in place from day one.

Transitional and day one arrangements

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During the shadow period, Councils will:

- Confirm which of the new Unitary Authorities will inherit housing stock and therefore operate HRAs.
- Review existing **business plans, borrowing and reserves** to identify the baseline financial position and any need for debt restructuring.
- Establish an **HRA Transition Board** including housing, finance and tenant representatives to oversee readiness.
- Support the Hertfordshire Shadow Authorities to appoint Chief Housing Officers who will be tasked with making preparations for the safe transition of housing services to the new unitary authorities.
- Map key contracts (repairs, maintenance, compliance, housing management) and plan for novation or extension.
- Begin engagement with tenants to explain governance changes and continuity of service.

On Vesting Day:

- Each new stock-holding Authority will hold a unified HRA covering all inherited housing assets and liabilities.
- All active landlord and compliance functions – tenancy management, rent collection, repairs, and safety checks – will continue under a '**lift-and-shift' operating model** to guarantee safety and regulatory compliance.
- Existing policies (rent setting, tenant engagement, complaints) will remain in force until reviewed and harmonised post-vesting.
- Business-critical IT systems for housing management and finance will be live and tested.
- Early assurance reporting will be provided to the Regulator confirming that governance, financial viability and health-and-safety requirements are met.

Longer-term direction

- Once the new HRAs are stabilised, authorities will develop unified **30-year business plans** aligned to corporate priorities and local housing strategies. The focus will be on:
- Modernising landlord services and digitalising repairs, tenancy and engagement functions.
- Achieving full regulatory compliance under the new Consumer Standards and Building Safety Regulator regime.
- Expanding **affordable and specialist housing delivery** through new-build, acquisition and partnership schemes.
- Aligning HRA investment with the wider regeneration and net-zero programmes of each Authority.
- Taking opportunities created by having a larger footprint to work in.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

Hertfordshire manages a highway network of around 3,200 miles of roads, alongside 116,000 streetlights and 179,000 gullies. Traffic volumes are among the highest in the East of England, with 7.4 billion vehicle-miles driven on Hertfordshire's roads in 2024. The Council spends around £120m annually on highways maintenance and transport operations, supported by a directly employed workforce and extensive contracted services. Hertfordshire's Bus Service Improvement Plan has resulted in a 3 million increase in residents travelling by bus since 2023, with data from the DfT showing 23.3 million passenger trips annually. Home-to-school transport now accounts for £39m of annual spend.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION – WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Our ambition for Transport and Highways through reorganisation is to create a safe, reliable and sustainable network that is better aligned to local priorities. New Unitary Authorities will have the opportunity to bring transport decisions closer to communities, strengthen accountability and embed innovation.

Key ambitions include; reducing congestion and improving road safety; delivering on climate and net-zero goals through active travel and electric vehicle infrastructure; modernising asset management and maintenance with digital tools; and reshaping bus services through Enhanced Partnerships and demand-responsive transport.
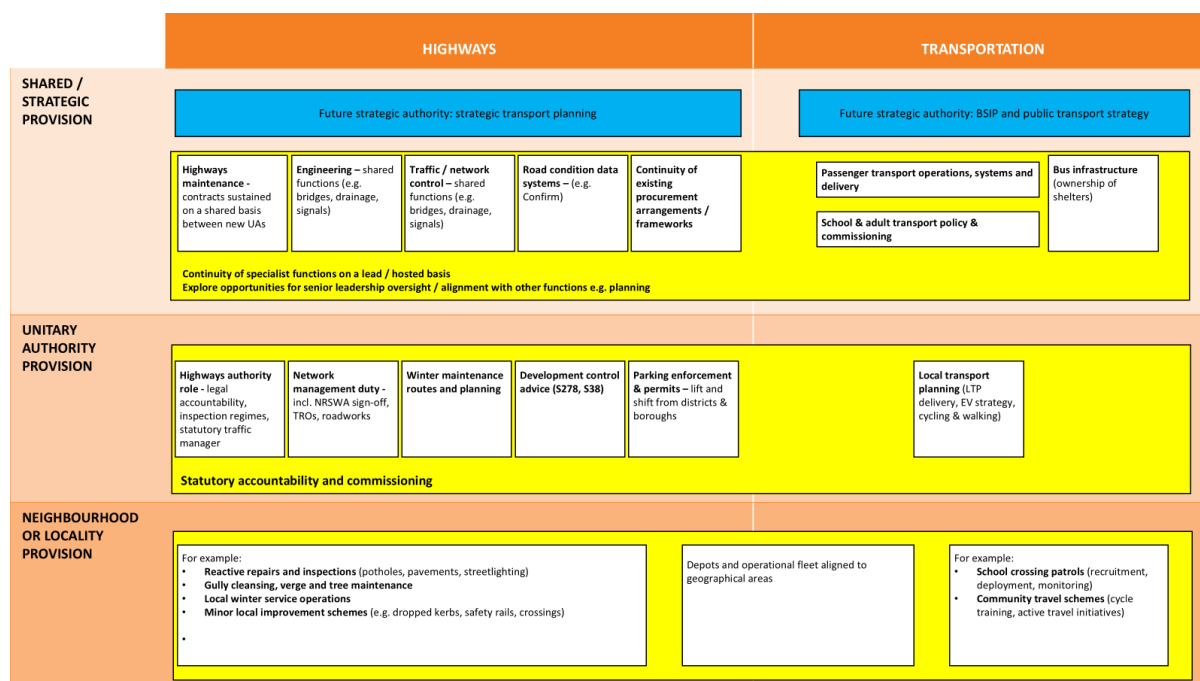
Reorganisation will remove long-standing fragmentation between County-level highways and District-level planning. This opens up opportunities to:

- **Integrate transport planning with local growth and regeneration**, enabling housing, infrastructure and active-travel schemes to be designed together.
- **Align highways maintenance, parking and enforcement under one Authority**, simplifying customer contact and improving local responsiveness.
- **Create a consistent approach to climate, EV and modal-shift programmes**, linking to the emerging Strategic Authority for large-scale transport planning.

HIGHWAYS | **TRANSPORTATION**

SHARED / STRATEGIC PROVISION

Future strategic authority: strategic transport planning | Future strategic authority: BSIP and public transport strategy

- Highways maintenance - contracts sustained on a shared basis between new UAs
- Engineering – shared functions (e.g. bridges, drainage, signals)
- Traffic / network control – shared functions (e.g. bridges, drainage, signals)
- Road condition data systems – (e.g. Confirm)
- Continuity of existing procurement arrangements / frameworks
- Passenger transport operations, systems and delivery
- School & adult transport policy & commissioning
- Bus infrastructure (ownership of shelters)

Continuity of specialist functions on a lead / hosted basis
Explore opportunities for senior leadership oversight / alignment with other functions e.g. planning

UNITARY AUTHORITY PROVISION

- Highways authority role - legal accountability, inspection regimes, statutory traffic manager
- Network management duty - incl. NRSWA sign-off, TROs, roadworks
- Winter maintenance routes and planning
- Development control advice (S278, S38)
- Parking enforcement & permits – lift and shift from districts & boroughs
- Local transport planning (LTP delivery, EV strategy, cycling & walking)

Statutory accountability and commissioning

NEIGHBOURHOOD OR LOCALITY PROVISION

For example:
- Reactive repairs and inspections (potholes, pavements, streetlighting)
- Gully cleansing, verge and tree maintenance
- Local winter service operations
- Minor local improvement schemes (e.g. dropped kerbs, safety rails, crossings)

Depots and operational fleet aligned to geographical areas

For example:
- School crossing patrols (recruitment, deployment, monitoring)
- Community travel schemes (cycle training, active travel initiatives)

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION – HOW WE WILL MANAGE TRANSITION

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
Leadership and governance	• Appoint a lead Director for Highways and Transport in each future Unitary Authority. • Establish a single Transition Board with representatives from Engineering, Transport, and Planning. • Map statutory functions of the existing County Council as Highway Authority and confirm which elements (e.g. strategic transport planning) may move to a future Strategic Authority.	• Each new Authority formally designated as Highway Authority under the Highways Act 1980. • Statutory responsibilities for network management, inspections and enforcement transferred safely. • Continuity of senior leadership, delegated powers and emergency response arrangements.
Workforce and operations	• Map current operational teams, depots and contractor arrangements. • TUPE planning for staff in County, District and Borough Authorities, currently working in highways and transport related roles• • Confirm which depot assets transfer to each new Authority.	• To ensure operational continuity the highways contractor workforce remains as a shared service. • Local operational depots active and equipped. • Emergency call-out and winter-maintenance teams in place.
Contracts and assets	• Catalogue all contracts (term maintenance, professional services, transport operations). • Identify renewal points clustered and options for joint reprocurement. • • Review ownership of plant, fleet and depots.	• Existing contracts and frameworks novated or extended to ensure service continuity. • Appropriate asset and contract management capabilities and data in place.
Systems and data	• Audit Confirm and related road-condition and inspection systems.	• Operational systems for asset inspection, fault reporting and permitting live in each Authority.

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	• Develop approach for shared hosting to minimise disruption.	• Data flows for network management and performance reporting functioning.
Passenger transport and school travel	• Map responsibilities for home-to-school transport, SEN transport and local bus operations. • Engage bus operators and community-transport providers.	• All statutory transport services operating with tested payment and scheduling systems. • Transitional arrangements for shared commissioning with the Strategic Authority for BSIP delivery.
Integration with place and planning	• Identify interfaces with Planning, Housing growth and Climate teams. • Prepare protocols for handling Section 278/38 agreements and planning consultations.	• Local development control and transport-planning functions aligned; continued coordination with Planning and Housing teams.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION - LONGER-TERM DIRECTION

In the longer term, new Unitary Councils will have the opportunity to modernise how transport and infrastructure are planned, funded and maintained. The direction of travel will vary by geography, but key priorities are expected to include:

- **Integrated planning of transport, housing and growth**, linking major developments with active-travel, EV and public-transport investment.
- **Stronger local accountability**, enabling residents to influence local highways priorities and capital programmes directly through Elected Members.
- **Shared procurement and specialist services**, such as traffic control, bridge and drainage engineering, and intelligent transport systems, to maintain resilience and value for money.
- **Digital transformation**, using asset-management data and predictive analytics to improve efficiency and target maintenance.
- **Decarbonisation and modal shift**, expanding active-travel infrastructure, EV charging, and demand-responsive transport to meet local net-zero targets.
- **Alignment with the future Strategic Authority**, which will lead county-wide transport strategy, the Bus Service Improvement Plan and major capital programmes.

OTHER SERVICES

The five critical services detailed above reflect approximately 50% of the collective budgeted expenditure of Hertfordshire authorities in 2025/26 and around 40% of the workforce, but do not fully reflect the wide variety of other services provided by all 11 organisations, with partners, that underpin community wellbeing, economic growth, environmental quality and civic life. Many of these are already delivered collaboratively through shared services, joint committees and county-wide partnerships.

Through our collaborative review of service provision, Councils have reviewed this wider portfolio using a single service catalogue to map current delivery, identify dependencies and consider future governance. The shared ambition is to preserve what works, transfer statutory functions safely, and use reorganisation to simplify structures and strengthen collaboration. In

some areas, responsibilities are expected to align with a future Strategic Authority, ensuring coherence on county-wide or regional issues such as infrastructure, climate, and waste.

Service area	What it includes	Existing examples of shared or collaborative delivery
Community Safety, Regulatory and Public Protection	Environmental Health, Licensing, Trading Standards, Community Safety partnerships, Emergency Planning, Resilience, Building Control.	• *Herts Building Control* (shared between several districts). • *Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum* for emergency planning.
Economy, Environment and Place	Planning and Development Control, North and East Herts Shared Service, Waste Collection and Disposal, Street Cleansing, Economic Development, Environmental Management, Sustainability and Climate Change.	• *Hertfordshire Waste Partnership* coordinating waste policy. • *Hertfordshire Growth Board* linking economic development and infrastructure planning. • *Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP)* aligning local climate action.
Culture and Related Services	Museums, libraries, leisure and sports facilities, parks, cultural events, tourism and heritage.	• *Creative Hertfordshire* network. • Joint leisure-management contracts such as *Everyone Active* and *Herts Sports Partnership*.
Central and Enabling Services	Finance, HR, ICT, legal, democratic services, procurement, audit, fraud, communications, customer contact.	• *Herts Legal* shared legal service between Hertfordshire and Stevenage. • *SIAS* (Shared Internal Audit Service). • *SAFS* (Shared Anti-Fraud Service). • *Hertfordshire Public Sector Network* providing shared ICT infrastructure.
Public Health and Wellbeing	Health improvement, prevention and protection programmes, drug and alcohol services, Healthy Hubs, community wellbeing initiatives.	• *Healthy Hubs Hertfordshire* partnership model. • *Herts Sports Partnership* promoting physical activity.

All of these service areas will be worked through systematically as part of our forthcoming transition programme, as set out within the next chapter. For each area, Councils will:

- Document existing arrangements and contractual commitments.
- Engage professional leads and staff to identify dependencies and opportunities.
- Assess where collaboration or shared delivery already adds value and where existing arrangements can be built on.
- Consider whether future delivery is best organised at local, shared or strategic scale, guided by statutory duties, cost, and the needs of residents.

In all of this work, a critical guiding principle will be to ensure that the professionals leading services and those closest to the front line have a guiding voice in determining how our services will evolve for the benefit of residents.

This process will ensure that no service is overlooked, that existing collaboration is preserved where it works, and that new Unitary Authorities inherit a complete, safe and well-understood operating model.

The readiness plans outlined here form the operational foundation for implementation. The final chapter sets out how the partnership will manage transition, governance and programme delivery to ensure these blueprints are realised on Vesting Day.

CASE STUDY: Dacorum's strategy and advocacy on domestic abuse and violence against women and girls

Dacorum Borough Council are currently working to achieve accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance: a framework that is nationally recognised as the 'gold standard' of Housing domestic abuse response. The framework is based on a victim-centre approach that prioritises seeking opportunities to empower and encourage participation and collaboration with those who have lived experience of domestic abuse.

Dacorum work collaboratively with the local Community Safety Partnership and Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse and VAWG Partnership to deliver engagement and awareness raising activity across the borough to increase visibility of the services. This includes hosting events in local libraries and engaging with residents and tenants during other engagement events such as Housing Open Days, and community events like the Grovehill Community Day.

Dacorum's domestic abuse policies were developed in collaboration with victims and survivors of domestic abuse. This included, during the 16 Days of Activism 2024, arranging a 'Feelings of safety' walkabout and invited local women to attend. Attendees welcomed the opportunity and were candid in providing suggestions and feedback.

Based on this engagement Dacorum Borough Council have;

Increased security camera presence in the areas identified; Secured funding to set up 'Safe Community Spaces' in Dacorum:

Safe Community Spaces will be provided by local businesses where visitors can seek refuge and contact emergency or support services.

Providers will be given domestic abuse and VAWG training and hold up-to-date information about the support services that are available in the local area. Presence at broader Council engagement events – Providing access to specialist domestic abuse services at our events has created increased opportunities for disclosure and support. As a result of this presence at Housing Open Days, we have been able to provide risk assessment and support for two victims that were at that time, at high risk of harm.

CASE STUDY: HERTFORDSHIRE MENTAL HEALTH, LEARNING DISABILITY AND NEURODIVERSITY HEALTH AND CARE PARTNERSHIP

The Hertfordshire Mental Health, Learning Disability and Neurodiversity Health and Care Partnership is our inclusive partnership established to improve the lives of people with mental

illness, people with learning disabilities and neurodivergent. It convenes statutory and non-statutory organisations, including NHS, local government and the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VSCFSE) sectors.

The partnership builds on 16 years of integrated working between local government and the NHS and ensures that services and support for these residents are joined up, effective and commissioned effectively.

Recognising the specific needs of this cohort, the partnership will work with the new Unitary Authorities to continue to coordinate and deliver activity across Hertfordshire to meet their needs.

SUSTAINABILITY

MHCLG criterion 3: quality, sustainable services

A DEFINING MOMENT FOR HERTFORDSHIRE'S FUTURE

This is a defining moment for Hertfordshire to reimagine how we live, move, build and grow. By embedding sustainability into local government functions and decisions, we can create a county that is resilient, inclusive and regenerative, a place where prosperity and environmental wellbeing can advance together. This reorganisation creates the conditions for transformative change. Every community could benefit from cleaner air, greener neighbourhoods and stronger local economies.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AS CATALYST

All Hertfordshire Councils have declared climate emergencies and have collaborated effectively to make progress. However, the two-tier structure has created challenges in coordinating action at the scale and pace required Reorganisation can remove duplication across Councils, better integrate planning and delivery, and enable more strategic investment. This creates the opportunity for sustainability to develop as a shared endeavour, with each Authority accountable to its communities, while benefiting from coordinated support.

The county's emissions graph shows strong progress, but we need accelerated action.
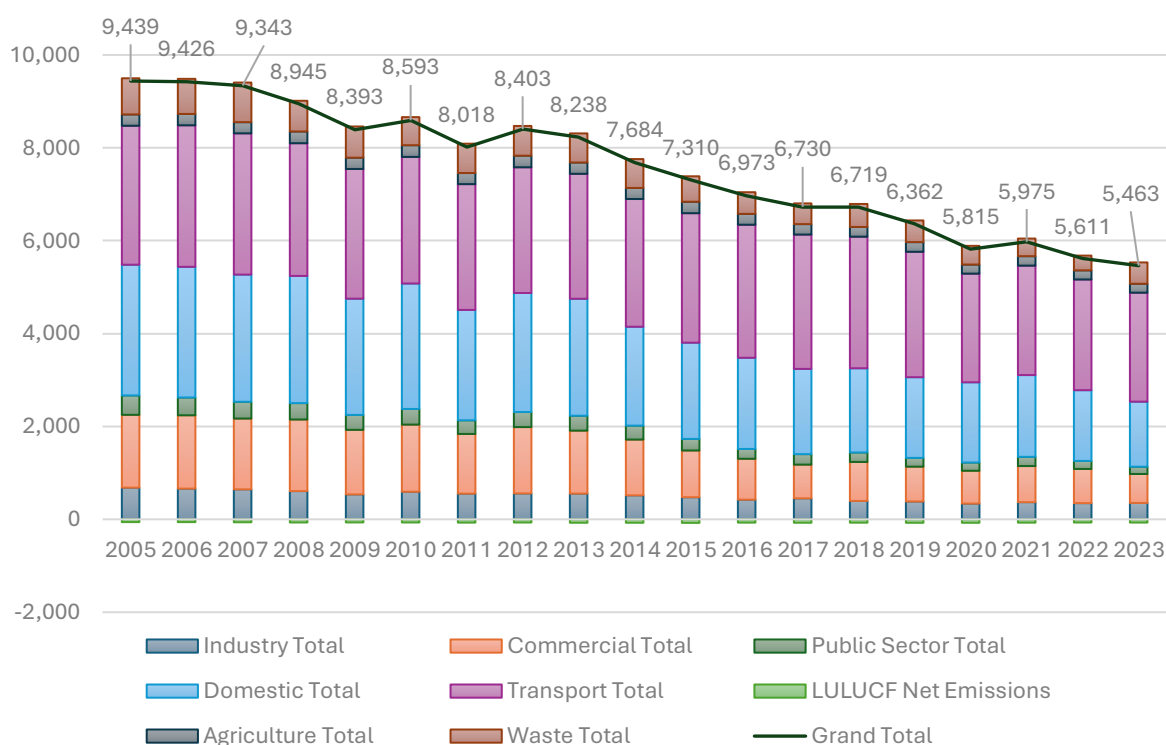
Hertfordshire's territorial greenhouse gas emissions estimate 2005 – 2023 (kt CO_2e).

Building on these foundations, and working with unified metrics across fewer Authorities, will enable Hertfordshire to act more decisively and achieve the step change needed to meet climate, nature and green growth targets.

ENABLING SUSTAINABILITY AT SCALE

Environment and climate change are areas of competence for the Strategic Authority, putting sustainability on a firmer footing. The Strategic Authority will provide regional leadership, co-developing a climate strategy for Hertfordshire, managing strategic natural capital, coordinating major infrastructure decarbonisation, aligning data and monitoring, and securing strategic funding.

Understanding that Unitary Authorities will determine their own approach, reorganisation brings opportunities to deliver sustainability interventions tailored to distinctive geographies, economies and communities. The single-tier structure eliminates coordination challenges, integrating planning, housing, transport, economic development, waste and environmental services.

CASE STUDY: Established collaborative foundations – Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP)

Formed in 2020, HCCSP is jointly funded by Hertfordshire's 11 Local Authorities and Hertfordshire Futures. It delivers exceptional value: securing consultancy support, funding for Retrofit Strategy delivery and has delivered savings per Council through shared training. Key achievements include Solar Together (£17m investment, 29,900 tonnes CO_2e savings),

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biodiversity baseline work, Healthy Homes integration, and transport decarbonisation alignment. A Gold Award winner at the 2025 iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards, HCCSP demonstrates what aligned governance can achieve and is a vital part of our shared future.

DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH

Embedding sustainability represents a strategic economic opportunity. Our life sciences sector can pioneer sustainable biotech; our creative industries can lead low-carbon production; and local data centres can boost energy efficiency. Advanced manufacturing in Hertfordshire can adopt circular economy principles, while our universities and colleges support green skills development. This focus on sustainable development also improves health outcomes, reducing public service pressure through energy-efficient homes, active travel, green spaces, cleaner air and urban greening.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Building on strong foundations, we can deliver sustainable growth through our six-point strategic plan:

NET-ZERO HOUSING AND RETROFIT AT SCALE

The domestic built environment emits 35% of the county's CO_2e emissions with the opportunity to implement a 'retrofit-first, green new-build second' approach as standard practice.

CASE STUDY: Retrofit Hubs

A pilot in Three Rivers supported 24 homeowners to install 53 energy-efficiency measures in 18 months. The hub provided tailored advice, grant navigation, vetted contractors and ensured quality assurance for all income levels. Savings vary by measure type, from £70/year for floor insulation to £580/year for boiler upgrades. This award-winning model will be scaled countywide by 2028, with every Unitary Authority able to operate a Retrofit Hub, providing a consistent, trusted service.

For new developments, Unitary Authorities can set energy standards above national minimums, requiring renewable energy, battery storage, sustainable drainage, biodiversity net gain and active travel access from the outset.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT AND ACTIVE TRAVEL

With transport accounting for 36% of emissions, measures that the Unitary Authorities could take include; expanding cycle lanes and walking routes; enhancing bus services and demand-responsive transport; integrating ticketing; electrifying fleets; managing car use through parking policies and EV charging infrastructure; and reducing car dependency in planning.

The Strategic Authority will coordinate strategic corridor investment; lead national rail engagement; develop behaviour change programmes delivered at unitary level; and monitor modal shift progress.

CLEAN ENERGY AND DECARBONISATION

Unitary Authorities will have the ability to develop Local Area Energy Plans; accelerate renewable energy through streamlined planning and community schemes; and address fuel poverty through targeted retrofit and advice services.

The Strategic Authority will coordinate county-scale energy planning; lead county-wide grant funding bids; engage network operators; procure renewable energy for public estates; and develop heat network frameworks.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

The Strategic Authority will lead development of a countywide adaptation plan, providing a blueprint for integrating climate resilience into infrastructure and policy. Unitary Authorities can audit and manage operational preparedness collaboratively, through shared approaches, protecting people and infrastructure.

Sustainable drainage, catchment-scale water planning and chalk river protection will address flooding, water stress and ecosystem health.

NATURE RECOVERY AND BIODIVERSITY

Unitary Authorities could prioritise enhancing biodiversity through rigorous biodiversity net gain; managing public land for nature; supporting nature-friendly farming; prioritising urban greening and improving rights of way access.

The Strategic Authority will lead the Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Partnership, coordinate environmental partnerships and develop project pipelines.

CASE STUDY: Chalk River Restoration

85% of the world's chalk streams are in southern England, making Hertfordshire's chalk rivers, the Ver, Chess, Beane, Lea, Mimram and Colne, which support unique wildlife, some of the rarest ecosystems in the world. But decades of over-abstraction and degradation have left reaches running dry. Local Authorities, water companies and community groups have delivered transformative results: abstraction reduction has restored year-round flow in the river Ver; habitat restoration in the river Chess has increased brown trout populations; and improved water quality in the river Beane saw the return of water voles in 2022, after being extinct from the area since the 1980s. These globally important ecosystems will be enhanced through reorganisation, enabling strategic, catchment-wide coordination for funding bids, and facilitating strategic prioritisation.

GREEN JOBS AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

With forecast housing and employment growth, the green transition must create inclusive opportunities. Unitary Authorities can enable development of green-skills pathways; support transition from carbon-intensive sectors; link employment support with retrofit and renewable programmes; and ensure youth access to green sectors. The Strategic Authority will coordinate skills planning, engage employers and secure funding.

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Reorganisation enables aligned procurement policies, using economies of scale to embed sustainability into contracts and supply chains. Adoption of circular economy models helps

reduce waste and retain value at a local level. Coordinated approaches improve standards, signal unified markets which both drives innovation and creates leverage for competitive prices. It also gives suppliers a consistent set of requirements that they can invest in to meet.

DELIVERING OUR AMBITION: COORDINATED GOVERNANCE

Our approach is built around clear responsibilities across governance levels. Strategic coordination by the Strategic Authority and place-based delivery by Unitary Authorities work in harmony, ensuring sustainability moves from ambition to action.

COMMUNITY-LED SUSTAINABILITY

CASE STUDY: St Albans Greener Together

Building on behaviour-change research and Innovate UK funding, this community-focused campaign brought residents together to co-create solutions, including: The Green House community eco-hub; the Share St Albans library of things; community panels on energy and rewilding; business support through the Net Zero Fund; and a sustainability festival. The project engaged hundreds of residents across multiple touchpoints. This model will be scaled countywide through Unitary Community Sustainability Forums using shared toolkits, training and national funding, with the Strategic Authority coordinating the sharing of best practice. Environmental action will be co-created with communities, not delivered to them.

Community sustainability forums will be able to link to Local Democratic Forums, ensuring sustainability is woven into community governance from day one. Trusted local messengers, voluntary networks and Town and Parish Councils are ideally positioned to engage residents, shape behaviour change and ensure fairness of access.

CODESIGNING OUR APPROACH

Strategic engagement with HCCSP partners has underscored the ambition to embed environmental action and empower communities. These partners will continue to inform delivery through recommendations across key themes:

- **Mainstreaming sustainability:** sustainability embedded in all Council functions through training, impact assessments and dedicated officers with environmental considerations integrated across services.
- **Empowering community-led action:** Community Sustainability Forums to link to Local Democratic Forums, scaling successful models countywide. Partnerships with the voluntary sector and local Councils will ensure broad reach.
- **Treating nature as infrastructure:** nature can be systematically planned and funded. Each Council will be able to develop Nature Recovery Plans, enforce biodiversity net gain, and prioritise urban greening in deprived areas.
- **Scaling retrofit and tackling fuel poverty:** Retrofit Hubs are planned to operate in every Authority by 2028, targeting 10,000 homes by 2030 and prioritising fuel-poor households.
- **Creating alternatives to car dependency:** protected cycle lanes, improved bus services, and demand-responsive transport are all key opportunities for delivery. EV charging points will be rolled out with campaigns supporting modal shift.
- **Building green skills and opportunities:** a Green Skills Partnership could support workers and create apprenticeships in retrofit, renewables and nature recovery. Social

value in procurement will support local jobs, and a Youth Green Jobs Programme could link education with green employers.

- **Ensuring transparency and accountability:** a unified carbon accounting system would enable annual public reporting and an open data portal for shared learning.
- **Prioritising climate justice:** climate risk mapping could guide targeted interventions for vulnerable communities. Urban greening and active travel could be prioritised in deprived areas, integrated with Public Health.

OUR TRANSITION COMMITMENT

HCCSP is well placed to work as strategic convenor, supporting the transition to vesting structures. It is committed to facilitating the development of a Climate Change Strategy, grounded in community needs, to defining success metrics, building carbon literacy and establishing data-sharing protocols. This strategy will provide the golden thread of sustainability woven through all services from day one of the new Authorities.

Having a Climate Change Strategy ready will position Unitary Authorities and the Strategic Authority to maximise inward investment, delivering significant projects at scale and supporting housing and growth targets.

TIMELINE AND GOVERNANCE

During 2026–27, it is envisaged that we will identify the priority projects central to reorganisation projects that span transition, pilot projects and future projects enabled by reorganisation.

During transition, we are planning to develop thematic working groups, pilot communities of practice and a single shared evidence base integrating carbon, nature and resilience metrics. This ensures sustainability governance is fully operational from Vesting Day, enabling other teams to focus on statutory duties.

CONCLUSION

The joining together of Hertfordshire's geography, growth pressures and climate risks through reorganisation makes the county ideal for integrated sustainability. This restructure of local government will create the scale, capacity and integration essential for ambitious delivery through our six-point strategic plan, led by the new Unitary Authorities, whilst the Strategic Authority will ensure coherence, without constraining innovation.

By fully embedding sustainability, we will demonstrate that environmental ambition and economic growth are mutually reinforcing, and that place-based delivery and county-wide coordination can work in harmony.

Through strategic coordination and place-based delivery, sustainability will move from ambition to action, delivering cleaner air, greener neighbourhoods, stronger local economies and resilient communities. The tools at our disposal, including unified strategic planning, integrated service delivery, concentrated capacity and enhanced funding leverage, will enable Hertfordshire to lead nationally on environmental action at scale and pace, delivering for our communities, economy and environment, and for generations to come.
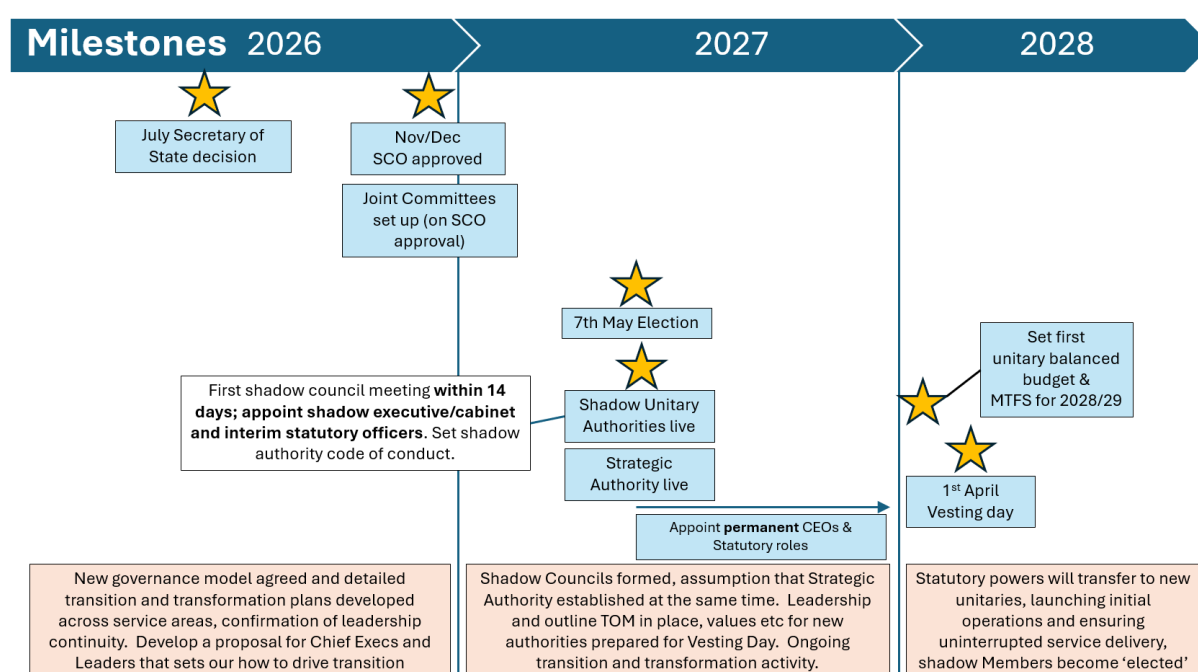
IMPLEMENTATION

A detailed implementation plan to secure Vesting Day will be critical to safeguarding statutory service delivery and laying the foundations for ambitious future transformation.

We are carefully considering the governance arrangements, as well as the programme planning required to deliver a successful transition by Vesting Day. This is underpinned by our commitment to minimise disruption to service delivery. While we recognise the new Councils will need to take their own decisions about the pace and scale of change, the plans set out here provide a clear indication of our commitment to accelerate implementation and lay the foundations for future benefits.

TIMELINE

We envisage the programme will take place in line with the milestones for the decision by MHCLG, subsequent establishment of Shadow Authorities, and then establishment of a Strategic Authority and Vesting Day itself on 1st April 2028, as set out below.

| Milestones 2026 | 2027 | 2028 |

July Secretary of State decision

Nov/Dec SCO approved

Joint Committees set up (on SCO approval)

First shadow council meeting within 14 days; appoint shadow executive/cabinet and interim statutory officers. Set shadow authority code of conduct.

7th May Election

Shadow Unitary Authorities live

Strategic Authority live

Appoint permanent CEOs & Statutory roles

Set first unitary balanced budget & MTFS for 2028/29

1st April Vesting day

New governance model agreed and detailed transition and transformation plans developed across service areas, confirmation of leadership continuity. Develop a proposal for Chief Execs and Leaders that sets our how to drive transition

Shadow Councils formed, assumption that Strategic Authority established at the same time. Leadership and outline TOM in place, values etc for new authorities prepared for Vesting Day. Ongoing transition and transformation activity.

Statutory powers will transfer to new unitaries, launching initial operations and ensuring uninterrupted service delivery, shadow Members become 'elected'

PHASING

We anticipate delivering the new Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire through three phases of activity. The Preparation Phase will ensure a smooth step up of activity into the Transition Phase in early 2026.
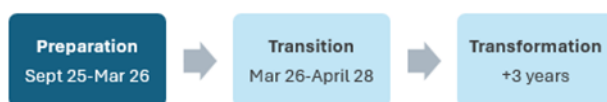
Transition will incorporate opportunities to improve where possible, but this will not get in the way of developing safe and legal new Councils that are able to deliver good business-as-usual services. It will also manage the impact of the decision on which option to implement and the introduction of shadow authorities.

After Vesting Day some Transition Phase activities will continue to integrate services and teams and more wide-reaching Transformation Phase steps will be mobilised.

Preparation (Sept 25–Mar 26)	Transition (Mar 26–April 28)	Transformation (+3 years)
During this stage, we will continue to engage widely with	Successful transition to the future Authorities will be	We will review and optimise our services, so that we realise the

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our communities and partners, establish robust programme management and set up a Transition governance structure in order to progress implementation quickly and confidently.	critical to protecting Hertfordshire's most vulnerable residents, safeguarding statutory service delivery and laying the foundations for ambitious future transformation. We will establish governance, skills, processes and workstreams to ensure leadership, teams and infrastructure are in place, before formal go live.	full benefits of transformation, to modernise our approach and improve outcomes for our residents.

PREPARATION PHASE

Based on learnings from other Local Authorities that have gone through LGR, we are of the view that starting the Preparation Phase work as soon as possible is key to success and as such this phase is already underway. We are focusing on getting the right programme structure, teams and resourcing and ensuring appropriate governance is in place to enable efficient decision making. This phase lays the foundations for a successful Transition Phase by establishing clarity, building readiness and ensuring that the programme is positioned to 'hit the ground running' from early 2026.

KEY ACTIVITIES IN THE PREPARATION PHASE:

- Agree programme governance and delivery approach for transition (including phasing, decision making, etc.).
- Scope transition resourcing, capability and funding requirements and own decisions to recruit expertise.
- Develop transition staff / stakeholder strategy supporting engagement and change readiness.
- Complete risk and organisational readiness assessments.
- Develop transition data strategy and approach.
- Identify initial workstream transition priorities to support more detailed delivery planning.
- Agree programme roles and responsibilities and appoint to those positions.

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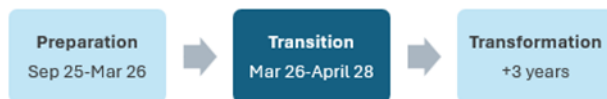
TRANSITION PHASE

The anticipated Transition Phase approach is to deliver new Unitary Councils through a number of key workstreams which are likely to include Finance, Workforce, Legal and Governance, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement. These will be refined during the Preparation Phase to ensure the structure is optimal and aligned to delivery). This phase will also require us to adapt to the decision about which option is being taken forward and managing the shift to shadow authorities.

Critically, we will be required to work to a shared set of values and principles through the Transition Phase with strong leadership, clear and effective decision making, careful planning, investment in capacity, and with an emphasis on proactive change management. We will retain a strong focus on day-one activities to mitigate the risk of cost and time overrun and negative impact on service delivery. Our suggested principles for a successful transition to the new model are shown below, though these will be refined over the coming months.

PRINCIPLES FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

- A shared commitment to work together to deliver a successful transition to a new Unitary Council model, regardless of the final decision from MHCLG.
- A recognition that we will be working in an ambiguous environment until the final decision from MHCLG is received the Transition Implementation Plan will be refined over time to enable resources to be deployed flexibly. Agreement that transition will need to be a shared priority and will require the skills, experience, and dedication from colleagues across all Councils in order to succeed.
- Agreement that there is distinction between Transition Phase and post-Vesting Day activities, enabling focused delivery during the transition process while preparing for longer-term transformation with the new Council's leadership (i.e. safe and legal focus).
- A shared responsibility to maintain service continuity and public confidence, ensuring that residents and communities continue to receive high-quality services throughout the transition.
- An understanding that some transition activity may require detailed discussion and different perspectives will be heard to support final decision making.

TRANSITION PHASE PRIORITIES

As part of the Preparation Phase the 11 Councils have collectively identified a set of pre-vesting day priority areas. These will be subject to further analysis and discussion but provide an indication of the early activity within the Transition Phase. These include;

1. Where possible, aligning policies and processes to ease the transition across service areas pre-vesting day.
2. Establishing a shared vision and set of values for the workforce, to effectively support staff through transition.
3. Where possible, aligning technology and data, establishing shared data and analytics protocols across organisations and with other public services.

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4. Establishing a shared approach to customer experience, emphasising the importance of the day one interface with customers.

TRANSITION PHASE GOVERNANCE

We will approach the transition to new Unitary Councils with clear, decisive leadership, disciplined programme management, and a strong focus on collaboration and risk management. Our implementation programme is supported by a governance framework that ensures strategic direction, coordinated operations, and effective delivery at every stage of the transition.

Options being considered include a Member-led Board at the top of the governance structure, with representatives from each Authority, ensuring political leadership and inclusive decision making throughout. This would mirror the collaborative foundation laid during the development of the business case, could provide collective political challenge, direction and assurance on the programme's overall objectives.

We note that whilst we need decisive leadership and representation from across all existing Authorities to begin the process of transition, we are guardians of this process to the point at which Shadow Authorities are established and take up the decision-making powers on the future of these new Authorities.

We are also considering a central Programme Management Office (PMO) to lead the delivery, working alongside dedicated workstreams to develop a detailed transition implementation plan. The PMO would also be responsible for ensuring that the overall progress is met on the agreed timescale, as set out in the plan.

Finally, we are considering a Programme Board made up of all Chief Executives, to oversee the work of the PMO as well as provide strategic direction and manage cross-organisational risks. The Programme Board would also oversee and agree the resources required to deliver the implementation plan.

TRANSFORMATION PHASE

| **Preparation** September 25 – March 26 | → | **Transition** March 26 - April 28 | → | **Transformation** +3 years |
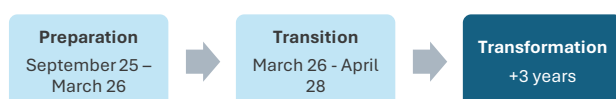
Whilst the Transformation Phase will follow Vesting Day of the new Unitary Authorities and will ultimately be designed by the new administrations, the benefits of unitarisation and transformation opportunities to improve services and outcomes for residents across Hertfordshire are already being identified. Reorganisation presents the opportunity to take the best of what we already do across Hertfordshire's 11 Councils and learn from our peers across the country to rethink how we work with system partners and with communities to transform the way we work and deliver services. As detailed throughout our submission, professionals and communities have shared their ideas on how reorganisation can drive transformation. This includes opportunities; to align and integrate key functions to deliver place-based preventative services that help people live healthy, happy and independent lives; design our cultural and community offers in a way that drives community wellbeing, economic growth and strengthens local identity; and develop modern, digital-first support services, reducing duplication, unlocking shared value, and improving efficiency.

These are ambitious areas for transformation, and we will work with the Shadow Authorities to take a pragmatic approach to developing their plans for transformation post-vesting day, recognising that priorities will need to be identified.

KEY RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

A full and detailed risk assessment has been undertaken and is being reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis as work is planned and delivered. Strategic transition risks have been summarised as follows:

Risk	Mitigation
Stakeholder support: The proposals have an impact on staff, leaders, residents, partners and other stakeholders. If these stakeholders are not effectively informed and engaged in the transition and transformation process, then the new Authorities may lack support and be hindered in their ambition.	We have a strong commitment to widen engagement across our communities, workforce, partners and other stakeholders throughout the transition process. We will establish a detailed Communications Strategy to keep all stakeholders informed and involved as we plan, design and implement changes.
Effective leadership: if there is a lack of clarity and efficiency on the leadership and decision-making arrangements during the transition process, this may delay implementation activities, increase costs and prevent effective oversight.	We will move swiftly to establish a transition structure, capacity and decision-making process to oversee and direct the implementation stage. Early appointment of Interim Chief Executives, statutory roles and senior teams to the UAs will provide clear leadership and allow for new organisation cultures and values to be developed.
Service continuity: the existing Authorities deliver many vital services, often to vulnerable people. If transition and transformation do not minimise disruption, it may prevent the effective delivery of services and harm public confidence in the new Authorities.	We aim to minimise disruption to service delivery by early and ongoing engagement with staff and the community. We will focus on critical day-one requirements, ensuring the technology and systems required for a smooth transition are maintained to minimise impact and reduce risk. To help maintain focus on the delivery of this significant programme, alongside the delivery of business as usual services, Transformation will be delivered after Vesting Day
Complexity and pace of change: lessons learnt from other similar programmes show that it is critical to start early, plan effectively and demonstrate strong leadership. Failure to do so will lead to time delays, cost overrun and an impact on service quality.	Our proposal establishes clear foundations for us to accelerate into transition as soon as the full proposal is submitted in readiness for the Secretary of State decision. We will establish robust programme management arrangements, informed by our existing good practice, to deliver in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

Risk	Mitigation
Workforce capacity and morale: the proposal will lead to significant changes for people across the existing organisations. While we believe the future offers significant opportunities, we recognise that if change is not managed effectively and the workforce not sufficiently engaged – this may damage staff morale, disrupt services and limit retention of the relevant skills and roles for the new organisation.	The workforce across all existing organisations will be kept informed and engaged in future designs where possible through a dedicated Workforce workstream. While recognising our differences, it is critical that all our people contribute to shaping the purpose, identity and culture of the new organisation. While some uncertainty for staff is unavoidable, the dedicated workstream will ensure all concerns and issues are proactively addressed.
Financial Risk: changes in the financial context either through wider economic changes, or specific changes in areas such as council tax base or transition costs result in the cost of LGR being higher than planned.	We will continue to track the local and national factors that will impact the cost of LGR on a regular basis. This will inform programme decision making an enable us to adjust plans, wherever possible, to mitigate financial risks.

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APPENDIX A – FINANCIAL MODELLING ASSUMPTIONS

OVERALL APPROACH

The financial case and modelling approach has been developed collaboratively with s151 statutory officers (Chief Financial Officers) from HCC and all Districts and Boroughs with an external consultancy to develop a shared financial model and set of assumptions.

These have been prepared using information available and considered reliable at the time of preparation. This includes Council budgets, performance and demand data, alongside input from each of the Hertfordshire LGR workstreams and benchmarking information from other LGR cases. Best endeavours have been made to apply reasonable assumptions, data sources, and analysis in the development of assumptions and estimates within the financial model, but these remain subject to high levels of inevitable uncertainty in key areas due to the inherent limitations of available information at this stage prior to the decision and shadow authorities being formed.

Throughout this process, a prudent approach has been applied to avoid potential overstatement of estimated benefits or understatement of estimated costs. Consideration has also been given to materiality, focusing on the assumptions and financial factors most likely to have a significant impact on the overall outcomes of the model.

 The modelling assumptions detailed below have been accepted by all eleven organisations, including the use of ranges in key areas.

The financial model considers three key areas for each unitary authority option:

- Medium-term financial assumptions-the net budget requirement for each authority, the resources (including council tax, fees and charges and government grant) available to each area and how these will change over the next ten years.
- Budget aggregation and disaggregation - an assessment of how the HCC budget would be split into specific geographical areas, recognising local demand and tax base, and how district and borough budgets would be aggregated "up" to new unitary footprints, taking account of areas in which boundaries have been reviewed.
- Costs and savings from LGR - LGR is designed to be an "invest to save" activity, this element estimates the costs of delivering LGR and the savings it delivers. It excludes transformational savings and costs that may arise because of LGR, except in relation to managing social care cost pressures, as these are deemed to be a decision for the new authorities.

The financial case has been modelled over a 10-year period from vesting day in line with best practice recommended by CIPFA. However, it is recognised that costs will be incurred pre-vesting day but for the purposes of the model and ensuring the full cost of LGR is being considered within the payback period these are assumed to be incurred post vesting day. Two scenarios have been modelled for two key areas of costs, one-off IT disaggregation costs and ongoing social care management costs resulting from disaggregation. The financial model has been applied to higher and lower end.' costs in relation to IT and social care.

FUNDING

FAIR FUNDING REVIEW (FFR)

A consultation has been conducted on the proposed approach to reforming local authority funding through the Local Government Finance Settlement starting in 2026–27. This covers key

areas that may impact the financial case, including funding allocations for local authorities and long-term plans for business rates retention.

The potential impacts of the Fair Funding Review (FFR) have not been reflected in the financial model. The model also assumes no business rates growth or increases in core government grant funding beyond 2027/28.

Although CFOs conducted extensive due diligence and engaged a third-party organisation to assess likely effects, the findings were unreliable due to conflicting data and government indications that modelling assumptions will change before FFR is finalised. Initial analysis based on current assumptions suggests FFR will likely reduce overall revenue funding and alter its distribution across Hertfordshire over the medium term, potentially affecting the sustainability of future unitary authorities.

LOCAL TAXATION

For the purposes of the financial model, Council Tax increases are assumed to be at 4.99% (2.99% Council Tax + 2% adult social care precept) as per the current referendum limits and in line with the MHCLG approach to funding projections. The model assumes that the District & Borough element of Council Tax will be harmonised at a weighted average and implemented in 2028/29 in line with creation of new authorities. The taxbase is assumed to continue to grow at a rate that is consistent with the current 2025/26 to 2027/28 medium-term period.

In practice within their shadow year, new authorities will need to decide how to harmonise Council Tax across their areas and there are different options as to how this can be done. National rules apply to these options, including remaining within the 2.99% CTAX + 2% ASC referendum limit for the area in line with government assumptions for increases which link into the overall funding position.

UNCERTAINTIES AND UNEXPECTED SHOCKS

Whilst prudent assumptions have been identified and accepted in all cases, the viability of all future unitary authorities will be subject to additional risks and uncertainties, including:
- The significant savings planned in the 25/26 to 27/28 period (pre-vesting day) are not delivered in full, contributing to a more challenging opening position for new authorities.
- Inflation or demand increases at a higher rate than is assumed in our modelling.
- There is any slippage in delivering the anticipated benefits from LGR.
- Further unanticipated local, national or international events causing economic or financial shocks.
-

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS

APPROACH

The baseline for the financial modelling is the 2025/26 balanced budget for each individual authority, rolled forward to match existing medium-term financial plans for 2026/27 and 2027/28, leading to a start point for 2028/29 on a common set of key assumptions. Budgets balance in overall terms at start of 2028/29 but opening deficits and surpluses exist.

From 2028/29 onwards (i.e. post-LGR), the baseline forecast is driven by a set of annual growth indices (detailed below).

The following key assumptions were made in relation to the baseline:

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- 2025/26 original budget data was taken from each authority and split by individual service areas and then further by:
- Employee costs, direct costs (non-staffing) and income for each authority
- Expenditure outside service area including for example but not limited to capital financing, housing benefit payments
- Funding split by streams e.g. Business rates, grants and Council Tax

This has then been scaled for the first three years based on three sets of scaling factors defined for each authority to cover:

- Net budget.
- Council Tax; and
- all other funding sources

These are used to scale the 25/26 budget data to make the future MTFS values so that the total net budget in the financial model matches the total in the original 2025/26 MTFS for each authority

Proportions of various service areas remain same for first three years – service areas are scaled in proportion

POST LGR BASELINE ASSUMPTIONS

The assumptions below drive the baseline forecast post LGR from 2028/29

Item	Assumptions	
Pay inflation	2.00%	Based on current government targets and consistent with existing MTFS assumptions across authorities.
Non pay inflation	2.00%	Based on current government targets and consistent with existing MTFS assumptions across authorities.
Service Income	2.00%	Based on current government targets and consistent with existing MTFS assumptions across authorities.
Council Tax	4.99%	Based on current maximum allowable Council Tax increases as set by MHCLG
Tax base growth	0.80%	Based on the weighted average growth across each of the existing authorities
ASC – direct costs only	4.00%	Lower than existing MTFS assumptions and recent trends – assumes further transformation savings (over next 4 years gross cost pressures average 8% per annum and transformation savings will reduce that to nearer 6%) and tapering down of cost increases over decade post LGR
CSC – direct costs only	5.00%	Lower than existing MTFS assumptions and recent trends – assumes further transformation savings and tapering down of cost increases over decade post LGR
Education – direct costs only	3.00%	Lower than existing MTFS assumptions and recent trends – assumes further transformation savings and tapering down of cost increases over decade post LGR
SEN home to school transport – direct costs only	3.00%	Lower than existing MTFS assumptions and recent trends – assumes further transformation savings and tapering down of cost increases over decade post LGR
Waste Disposal – direct costs only	3.00%	Consistent with existing MTFS assumptions across authorities.
Highways – direct costs only	2.00%	Based on current government targets and consistent with existing MTFS assumptions

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Capital financing	4.20%	Based on current HCC MTFS assumptions

BUDGET AGGREGATION AND DISAGGREGATION

CFOs have accepted methodologies (for financial modelling purposes) for disaggregating the HCC budget and funding (and aggregating D&B budgets) to specific geographical areas and adjusting this for boundary review variants where required.

HCC undertook an exercise to disaggregate its 2025/26 budget to specific geographical areas using metrics that reflect underlying patterns of activity and demand across the County.

Further apportionments were then undertaken to reflect unitary options involving boundary reviews. These affect the individual proposed new authorities but not the overall quantum of costs and savings for each option.

COSTS AND SAVINGS FROM LGR

LGR RECURRING ANNUAL SAVINGS

When modelling, a clear distinction between benefits directly resulting from LGR, such as removal of duplicate roles, services and systems, versus benefits resulting from additional transformation that could be delivered by future authorities. There are two reasons for this:

- Firstly, decisions on additional transformation will be taken by future authorities themselves.
- Secondly, there are reasonable differences of opinion within our partnership on which of the proposed models is likely to be "more transformational".

As a result, our shared financial model does not estimate any additional financial benefits arising from transformation, although each of the individual proposals provides further information on opportunities relevant to each option.

Savings have been categorised into three key areas:

- Staffing - estimated savings in relation to the implementation of LGR predicated on consolidation and subsequent efficiencies resulting in a reduced capacity requirement.
- Direct Costs – estimated savings in relation to increased economies of scale and optimised use of resources.
- Democratic and governance reorganisation – estimated savings in relation to costs of elections, members allowances and staffing in relation to democratic services as result of fewer authorities in existence.

The staffing and direct cost savings are net i.e. there will be some increases in costs from disaggregation/duplication – but these will be offset by wider savings from consolidation and efficiency.

Income from fees and charges is excluded from the estimated savings, with no assumptions about future changes. However, harmonising fees and charges across existing services where there are differences could affect income levels either increasing or decreasing, though this will be decided by future authorities and so is not included at this stage.

All authorities within Hertfordshire will continue to deliver Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings between now and vesting day, and savings accepted within this financial model will be in addition to these. It should be noted this may impact the ability of the new unitary

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authorities to realise the estimated savings within the financial model as where savings are made in advance of vesting day there may be potential duplication.

STAFFING

Staffing savings in relation to the implementation of LGR are predicated on efficiencies through consolidation and therefore a reduced capacity requirement. Staffing has been split into three key areas (excluding HRA staffing):

- Statutory Officers,
- Tiers 1-3 (excluding statutory officers) and
- General fund - all other staff.

The General Fund employee costs budgets 2025/26 for each of the authorities were used to inform and calculate benefits and costs. These have been scaled using the growth assumptions to 2028/29 to reflect the estimated staffing levels and budgets at this time. A percentage reduction has then been applied to the estimated employee budget as at 2028/29 for each of the areas detailed varied for the different options.

The following key assumptions have been made:

Item	Assumptions	
Statutory Officers – 2U	81.3%	Statutory officers are defined as those legally mandated roles responsible for ensuring proper governance, legal compliance, and financial integrity within a local authority.
Statutory Officers – 3U	71.9%	The officers included for the purposes of the financial model are:
Statutory Officers – 4U	62.5%	Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) Monitoring Officer S151 Officer (Chief Financial Officer)
		Statutory officer savings are derived from an estimated percentage reduction of officers required in the new unitary authorities because of fewer authorities existing under LGR. The percentage reduction is taken from the Pixel model[1] and has been benchmarked against other LGR business cases and existing unitary authorities of a similar size. Within the model percentage reductions decrease the greater the number of unitary authorities to reflect the reduced opportunities for consolidation and a greater capacity requirement as a result. These are prudent estimates based upon reasonableness, achievability and high-level application
Tier 1 – 3 (excl stat officers) – 2U	49.1%	Tiers 1-3 have been taken to be the current leadership and senior management for each authority.
Tier 1 – 3 (excl stat officers) – 3U	42.2%	Statutory officers have been excluded to prevent any duplication of potential savings.
Tier 1 – 3 (excl stat officers) – 4U	38.3%	
		Tiers 1-3 savings are derived from an estimated percentage reduction of officers required in the new unitary authorities because of fewer authorities existing under LGR. The percentage reduction is taken from the Pixel model and has been benchmarked against other LGR business cases and existing unitary authorities of a similar size. Within the model percentage reductions decrease the greater the number of unitary authorities to reflect the reduced opportunities for consolidation and a greater capacity requirement as a result.

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		These are prudent estimates based upon reasonableness, achievability and high-level application
Other general fund staff costs – 2U	2.90%	Statutory officers and Tiers 1-3 are excluded from these calculations.
Other general fund staff costs – 3U	2.20%	All other staff savings are derived from an estimated percentage reduction of officers required in the new unitary authorities resulting from consolidation of services through LGR. The
Other general fund staff costs – 4U	1.40%	percentage reduction is taken from the Pixel model and benchmarked against other LGR business cases.

Within the model, percentage reductions decrease the greater the number of unitary authorities to reflect the reduced opportunities for consolidation as a result.

It should be noted that the percentage reduction is recognised as being low and is likely to be of a higher level as there will be significant consolidation of services particularly the back office and across corporate functions.

This, however, has been left at a prudent lower level to reflect that for example in the back office there will be significant consolidation but there will also potentially be additional resource requirements in relation to disaggregating services such as social care. These disaggregation costs that have not been specifically included or estimated at this time due to the complexities of estimating the requirements before detailed service design has been undertaken.

These are prudent estimates based upon reasonableness, achievability and high-level application

DIRECT COSTS

These savings are expected to arise from economies of scale and optimised resource use through LGR, including eliminating duplicate contracts and consolidating office space resulting in reduced property costs.

An efficiency percentage has been applied to the non-staffing baseline for 2028/29, scaled from the 2025/26 direct costs budgets. To avoid overstating potential savings, a contingency percentage reduction has also been applied.

Item	Assumptions	
Direct Cost – 2U (D&Bs)	3.00%	*District and Boroughs*
Direct Cost – 3U (D&Bs)	2.25%	Overall, a percentage reduction has been applied through benchmarking of other cases to the total estimated budgeted District and Borough Direct Costs in 2028/29.
Direct Cost – 4U (D&Bs)	1.50%	Percentage reduction is applied against the estimated total Direct Costs in 2028/29 less a 10% reduction contingency to the baseline to prevent overstating of the potential saving.
		The 10% contingency reduction is derived from a prudent and reasonable estimate, supported by benchmarking against other LGR cases.
		It is assumed that savings for a 4 unitary model will be half of those for a 2 unitary and in the middle of both for 3 Unitary Authorities

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reflecting a decreasing saving with a greater number of unitary authorities through reducing economies of scale.

These are prudent estimates based upon reasonableness, achievability and high-level application

Direct Cost – 2U (HCC)	1.38%	*HCC*
Direct Cost – 3U (HCC)	1.04%	Overall percentage reduction has been applied through benchmarking of other cases to relevant service Costs in 2028/29
Direct Cost – 4U (HCC)	0.69%	Percentage reductions are deemed to be less for the County as it is assumed that many of the Direct Cost benefits from LGR will result from consolidation of District and Borough services although there will be some efficiency from services such as waste where functions are currently split across HCC and the District and Boroughs and from benefits of having housing and Adult social care within the same organisation

Percentage applied against the estimated total Direct Costs 2028/29 less a 10% reduction contingency to the baseline to prevent overstating of the potential saving.

The 10% contingency reduction is derived from a prudent and reasonable estimate, supported by benchmarking against other LGR cases.

It is assumed that savings for a 4 unitary model will be half of those for a 2 unitary and in the middle of both for 3 Unitary Authorities reflecting a decreasing saving with a greater number of Unitary Authorities

These are prudent estimates based upon reasonableness, achievability and high-level application

DEMOCRATIC AND GOVERNANCE REORGANISATION

Savings derived for Democratic and Governance assume a reduction in costs of elections, Members' allowances and staffing in relation to democratic services due to fewer authorities being in existence.

Item	Assumptions	
Democratic and governance – 2U	£4.743m	A percentage reduction has been applied to the democratic budget across the District and Boroughs using Pixel assumptions. The Pixel model assumptions are based on other LGR cases as a percentage reduction, these are: 2U – 40% 3U – 30% 4U – 20% A validation exercise was undertaken by CFOs to ensure the reasonableness of the Pixel figures. This included reviewing input from the Democratic workstream and calculation of estimated costs and savings. Following this exercise, it was deemed that the figures were representative of the estimated savings anticipated.
Democratic and governance – 3U	£3.557m	
Democratic and governance – 4U	£2.371m	

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PHASING

Each individual LGR recurring saving has been phased over the years according to the expected timing of when they will be realised or incurred.

Phasing in profiles	FY 2028/29	FY 2029/30	FY 2030/31	FY 2031/32	FY 2032/33
Statutory officers	60%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Tiers 1 -3 staffing	30%	60%	100%	100%	100%
Other general fund staff	30%	60%	100%	100%	100%
Direct costs	20%	40%	80%	90%	100%
Democratic and governance reorganisation	30%	60%	100%	100%	100%

Phasing in profiles	Assumptions
Statutory officers	It is assumed that 60% of statutory officer posts will be reduced in Year 1 to reflect the revised capacity requirements of the new authorities and fewer in existence. However, some capacity will need to be maintained in Year 1 to accommodate a safe transition and the closing of the previous authorities.
Tiers 1 -3 staffing	It is assumed that 30% of Tiers 1 -3 officer posts will be reduced in Year 1 to reflect the revised capacity requirements of the new authorities and fewer in existence. However, capacity will need to be maintained in Year 1 to accommodate a safe transition and the closing of the previous authorities. Remaining consolidation of services and posts will take place over Years 1 and 2 to further reflect the revised capacity requirements.
Other general fund staff	It is assumed that 30% of other general fund staff posts will be reduced in Year 1 to reflect the revised capacity requirements of the new authorities and fewer in existence. However, capacity will need to be maintained in Year 1 to accommodate a safe transition, and consolidation of services and posts will take place over Years 1 and 2 to further reflect the revised capacity requirements.
Direct costs	Direct costs have been phased over a 5-year period to reflect some immediate savings will be able to be achieved through, for example cessation of duplicated third-party contracts and spend, but it will take longer to drive out savings from service restructuring through consolidation and for example property maintenance and running costs due to reducing office space. Some savings will also depend on end dates of existing contracts.
Democratic and governance reorganisation	It is assumed the creation of new authorities and election of new councillors will require a smaller reduction in democratic resources in the first 2 years until a steady state is reached. Therefore, savings have been phased to maintain capacity in Year 1.

LGR RECURRING ANNUAL COSTS

LGR recurring annual costs have been split into two distinct categories:

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- Additional costs of scale – these are recurring costs in relation to the anticipated additional resource requirement to service local democratic arrangements and support locality working and engagement because of aggregation.
- Diseconomies of scale - cover recurring costs created because of disaggregation in relation to social care and Information Technology

Additional Leadership and Management capacity required because of disaggregation are accounted for within the differing savings and staffing level reductions for Statutory Officers and Tiers 1 -3.

Additional back-office staff capacity requirements because of disaggregation are accounted for within the reduced staffing reductions against the general fund staff for each of the unitary options as it is not possible to accurately estimate the resource requirements at this stage prior to detailed service design.

There is limited recent evidence of unitarisation involving the disaggregation of county-level services at as scale equivalent to Hertfordshire, making it challenging to accurately estimate associated costs. As a result, the financial model's cost projections for IT and social care disaggregation carry a significant risk of variation, either upwards or downwards and as a result a higher and lower end range has been modelled.

Item	Assumptions		
Additional Costs of Scale – 2U	£1.000m		These are recurring costs in relation to the anticipated additional resource requirement to service local democratic arrangements and support locality working and engagement because of aggregation. These assumptions have been taken from the Pixel model and are based on other LGR cases. Additional benchmarking has been undertaken of recently released LGR cases.
Additional Costs of Scale – 3U	£0.400m		
Additional Costs of Scale – 4U	£0.000m		No costs are assumed for the 4U option as it is assumed there are no additional resource requirements in relation to locality working.
Diseconomies of Scale – 2U	High	£6.405m	**IT**
	Low	£2.966m	The high and low scenarios reflect the complexity and uncertainty in relation to future ERP/Finance and HR provision. The range of costs account for the solution/provider landscape, the options relating to the scale of migration and integration activity and the existing highly customised platforms and processes.
Diseconomies of Scale – 3U	High	£12.600m	
	Low	£6.956m	
Diseconomies of Scale – 4U	High	£18.255m	No savings in ongoing costs outside of IT have been assumed to arise from the adoption of a single ERP.
	Low	£8.079m	

It should be noted that it will be the decision of the shadow authority to determine and decide the approach to and procurement of IT systems and services (subject to transition planning requiring decisions to be made prior to this) and therefore these costs are highly likely to change.

The additional running costs are in relation to Social Care systems and ERP / Finance and HR systems. All other running costs are assumed to be accounted for within current budgets.

Ongoing running costs of the social care systems are assumed to be the same for each the high and low scenario as there are assumed to be no differences in approach.

Social Care Management Staffing costs

Two scenarios (high and low) have been modelled to reflect the complexities and difficulties of estimating additional costs in relation to staffing because of disaggregation at this stage prior to detailed service design.

A high scenario was created by the DASS and DCS undertaking an analysis of current management posts down to Head of Service level within the existing county structures to identify which posts are necessary in each council given the TOM approach. Some services within this have been assumed to be shared for the purposes of the modelling.

It is assumed that all other front-line roles / costs below Head of Service level are split across the new authorities without duplication. Using current county pay grades.

A low scenario was created by benchmarking the costs of social care management in other existing unitary authorities that are of comparable scale to potential unitary authorities for Hertfordshire, using publicly available information.

As this was based on publicly available data, HCC have noted the following caveats.

Comparator Quality and Sample Size
The analysis uses a relatively small sample, which may limit its ability to fully reflect variations in management costs across different authorities. Some comparators have Ofsted ratings below "Good," which might suggest a relationship between cost levels and service quality.

Structural Assumptions and Scope Differences
The cost modelling may not fully capture Hertfordshire's investment in integrated partnership models. These differences in approach could affect the accuracy of cost and complexity estimates.

Data Reliability and Regional Relevance
There are some variations in the data, such as salary differentials. Additionally, the analysis does not fully account for regional factors like cost of living, population demographics, and geographic differences, which are important when comparing similar-sized authorities with different local circumstances.

PHASING

Each of the recurring annual costs for both the additional costs of scale and diseconomies of scale have been phased by year, based on when it is anticipated these would be incurred.

Phasing in profiles	FY 2028/29	FY 2029/30	FY 2030/31	FY 2031/32	FY 2032/33
Additional costs of scale	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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Diseconomies of scale	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Phasing in profiles	Assumptions				
Additional costs of scale	These are assumed to be fully incurred from vesting day to support the successful implementation of new locality and democratic working arrangements.				
Diseconomies of scale	These are assumed to be fully incurred from vesting day as systems will be required to be in place from this day to enable effective running and administration of the new authorities.				

LGR ONE OFF COSTS

These are the estimated one-off costs that are incurred to support the creation of the new authorities. These are split into three distinct areas:

- IT Disaggregation – costs related to the process of separating and dividing existing IT systems, infrastructure, data, and services that were previously shared or centralised as well as the implementation of new systems and processes where duplication is required.
- IT Consolidation - process of combining and consolidating existing IT systems, infrastructures, and services from predecessor councils into a single, unified IT environment for the new authority.
- Transition costs – these are one-off, short-term costs incurred to move from the existing council structures to the new authorities.

IT COSTS

Item	Assumptions		
IT Disaggregation Costs – 2U	High	£32.940 m	Two scenarios have been modelled for IT disaggregation (high and low) to reflect the complexities and uncertainties of estimating disaggregation costs at this stage.
	Low	£17.540 m	
IT Disaggregation Costs – 3U	High	£43.540 m	It should be noted that it will be the decision of the shadow authority to determine and decide the approach to and procurement of IT systems and services (subject to transition planning requiring decisions to be made prior to this) and therefore these costs are highly likely to change.
	Low	£25.290 m	
IT Disaggregation Costs – 4U	High	£54.240 m	
	Low	£33.040 m	Both the high and low scenarios assume disaggregation costs will be incurred in relation to social care case management systems. Each new authority will require access to a case management system from vesting day; this could be either through an existing or new system. The estimated cost included covers the potential duplication of the existing systems and the migration and configuration required. These costs increase the greater the number of authorities.

Each new authority will need access to an HR and Finance system. This can take two forms which is to implement separate systems or to implement what is known as an ERP which is effectively a combined and integrated HR and Finance system.

The range of costs account for the solution/provider landscape, the options relating to the scale of migration and integration activity and the existing highly customised platforms and processes.

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An external company was commissioned to review the initial estimated costs provided in relation to the implementation of an ERP system. As a result, costs were amended to reflect feedback and validation provided.

Other potential disaggregation costs in relation to IT include:
Disaggregation of existing server hardware
Repackaging of existing HCC applications to make available across the new unitary authorities
Migration of existing WAN infrastructure sites across HCC and all District and Boroughs
Migration of records management systems
Replication and disaggregation of other systems across the new authorities.

IT Consolidation Costs – 2U	£17.000m	The following key IT consolidation costs have been included within the financial model; these are assumed to remain the same regardless of the option chosen:
IT Consolidation Costs – 3U	£17.000m	Estimated technology costs for establishing network infrastructure, Alignment of the baseline for cyber security and incident response, Alignment of Microsoft agreements,
IT Consolidation Costs – 4U	£17.000m	single landing page for public websites, Email & communication (including telephony) set up, finance and payroll systems, CRM Estimated resources /skills required for transition activities.

No assumptions have been made on vendor price increases because of reorganisation both locally and nationally.

GENERAL

Item	Assumptions	
Programme Management	£15.000m	These cover the programme management costs required in the setting up coordinated planning, governance, delivery, and control of all the activities required to implement structural changes in creating new unitary authorities. Based on resource requirements provided by the Transition workstream, it is estimated this will require the following programme resource:

Role	FTE
Programme Director	20
Senior Project Managers	13
PMO Lead	14
Project Officers	10
Programme SME Leads	17
Functional Leads	15
Project Managers	12
Change Managers	12

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		Analysts	12
		Operating Model Leads	14
		Total	72

		A 15% reduction has been applied to the overall cost of the estimated resources which is assumed to reflect use of current internal resources and capacity across all authorities. Each unitary option is currently assumed to incur the same costs, as the number of authorities will not influence the resource required as it would be run as an overall programme. These have been reviewed in line with other business cases and the Pixel model and accepted as a reasonable prudent high-level assumption.
Contract novation / renegotiation	£4.000m	These one-off costs cover the legal, commissioning and procurement costs of novating and renegotiating contracts because of LGR. These are taken from the Pixel model and benchmarked against other LGR business cases and has been accepted as a reasonable and prudent high-level assumption.
Communications and Rebranding	£1.200m	These costs are expenditure incurred by councils to manage public, stakeholder, and staff communications and to develop and implement the visual identity, branding, and messaging for the new unitary authorities. This is an estimated figure taken from the Pixel model and benchmarked against other LGR business cases and has been accepted as a reasonable and prudent high-level assumption.
Estates & Facilities - reconfiguration	£2.500m	These costs refer to the one-off or transitional expenses associated with changing, consolidating, or adapting the property and accommodation portfolio of existing councils as part of reorganisation and the new unitary authorities. This is an estimated figure taken from the Pixel model and benchmarked against other LGR business cases and has been accepted as a reasonable and prudent high-level assumption.
Relocation	£1.700m	These costs refer to the reasonable and necessary expenses paid to employees who are required to move their home or place of work as a direct result of LGR. This is an estimated figure taken from the Pixel model and benchmarked against other LGR business cases and has been accepted as a reasonable and prudent high-level assumption.
Specialist support and advice	£5.000m	These include activities related to but not limited to: Closedown activities - dissolving what will be the former authorities including completing final accounts, external audit, plus legal and other costs. Creation of a new council - covering legal costs and development of new constitutions. Audit - covering specialist support and assurance for detailed design. This is an estimated figure taken from the Pixel model and benchmarked against other LGR business cases and has been accepted as a reasonable and prudent high-level assumption.

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Redundancy Costs	2U	£13.080m	Estimated redundancy costs per FTE have been calculated for:
	3U	£10.072m	Tiers 1-3 (including Statutory officers) Other General Fund staff
	4U	£8.046m	These are based on a weighted average redundancy cost across the existing authorities adjusted to take into account a 5% vacancy factor (reducing the total) and the addition of a 20% increase on this total to account for pension strain. These have then been applied against the resulting average FTE reduction calculated as part of the staffing savings detailed above.
Contingency	10%		It has been considered prudent to include a contingency for transition costs due to the estimated nature of the costs and to account for unexpected costs arising. This has been included at 10% for each of the scenarios modelled to reflect the significant amount of one-off costs already included and benchmarking of other LGR business cases. A lower contingency of 5% has been applied to the high IT disaggregation costs due to high amount already included.

DISTRIBUTION PROFILES

Phasing in profiles	FY 2028/29	FY 2029/30	FY 2030/31	FY 2031/32	FY 2032/33
IT Disaggregation Costs – 2U	58.49%	17.06%	9.68%	7.38%	7.38%
IT Disaggregation Costs – 3U	58.49%	17.06%	9.68%	7.38%	7.38%
IT Disaggregation Costs – 4U	58.49%	17.06%	9.68%	7.38%	7.38%
IT Consolidation Costs – 2U	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
IT Consolidation Costs – 3U	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
IT Consolidation Costs – 4U	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Programme Management	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Contract novation / renegotiation	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Communications and Rebranding	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Estates & Facilities - reconfiguration	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Relocation	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Specialist support and advice	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Redundancy Costs	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
Contingency	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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Phasing in profiles	Assumptions
IT Disaggregation Costs – 2U	These costs have been phased over a 5-year period to reflect when they are likely to occur and be realised.
IT Disaggregation Costs – 3U	These costs have been phased over a 5-year period to reflect when they are likely to occur and be realised.
IT Disaggregation Costs – 4U	These costs have been phased over a 5-year period to reflect when they are likely to occur and be realised.
IT Consolidation Costs – 2U	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.
IT Consolidation Costs – 3U	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.
IT Consolidation Costs – 4U	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre and post vesting day.
Programme Management	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre and post vesting day.
Contract novation / renegotiation	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.
Communications and Rebranding	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.
Estates & Facilities - reconfiguration	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.
Relocation	These costs are assumed to be over the first two years of the new authorities being in place
Specialist support and advice	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.
Redundancy Costs	It is assumed that redundancy costs will follow the phasing of staffing savings
Contingency	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.

COMPARATORS AND BENCHMARKING

Other LGR business cases used as comparators and benchmarks include those undertaken in Surrey, West Sussex, Essex, East Sussex, Hampshire, North Yorkshire and Cumbria. It should be noted, however, that these areas do not always share the same population size, geography, or demographic characteristics as Hertfordshire. Accordingly, while reliance has not been placed upon these examples, they have been used as a reasonableness test to help inform and validate the assumptions within this business case. Every effort has been made to ensure that comparisons are drawn from the most relevant and comparable examples available.

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Strategic Authority – some existing costs and budgets will transfer to the Strategic Authority such as the Fire service. These have not been included in the financial model at this stage due to the complexities of splitting out budgets and resource. No additional running costs have been assumed for the Strategic Authority within the financial model.

Existing MTFS savings – If the savings assumed to be achieved by vesting day are not delivered, this would reduce the projected baseline position and may require the new authorities to identify additional savings beyond those expected from LGR.

It should also be noted that, while annual savings are included in the MTFS up to 2027/28, no non-LGR savings (to address underlying funding gaps) have been incorporated into the financial model.

Savings – while a prudent approach to savings has been adopted, it is not yet possible to fully determine which savings are cashable and which may be non-cashable—for example, where expenditure is funded by ring-fenced grants. Therefore, although expenditure may be reduced in some cases, there could be limitations on how those savings can be used.

MTFS forecasts – as outlined earlier the financial models assume that cost increases – especially in Social Care and SEND, are lower in the years after LGR than in the years preceding it. Council tax increases are also assumed at the 4.99% (2.99% council tax + 2% adult social care precept) every year in line with government assumptions on funding.

Shared service arrangements – Hertfordshire has a track record of successful shared services. It has been assumed for the purposes of the financial case that shared service arrangements will continue where long-term countywide contracts exist, such as for Highways and Waste Disposal. Without these arrangements, the additional costs linked to disaggregation could rise significantly.

DSG Deficit /HNB – the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant funds education for children with SEND, including special schools, independent placements, and additional support in mainstream settings.

Rising demand for SEND provision has led many councils to overspend, as grant funding has not kept pace with costs. The government's 'statutory override' allows councils to exclude these deficits from their accounts, but the financial shortfall remains. The override has been extended to March 2028 while longer-term reforms are developed.

The County Council forecasts a cumulative DSG deficit of £255 million by March 2028, with annual overspends expected to continue. The outcome of national reforms will be critical to the financial sustainability of all three structural options. Any remaining HNB deficit would need to be divided between the new authority or authorities, creating a risk that an unfunded deficit could be transferred.

Pay Harmonisation – no assumptions have been made in relation to pay harmonisation within the financial model although noting that any pay harmonisation could result in significantly increased costs.

Borrowing – If alternative funding sources are insufficient to cover transition costs, borrowing may be required. Borrowing costs have not been included in the financial model at this stage and could reduce projected savings and the baseline funding available.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – the HRA sits outside of General Fund revenue expenditure. Although the four HRA's in Hertfordshire receive support services / cost of democracy from the General Fund the impact on HRA's for one off, on-going costs and savings has not been included within the financial business case.

It is important to note that the HRA entails significant costs and scale that will require further consideration as the chosen option becomes clearer.

	Housing Stock	Total Costs (£m)
3 CENTRAL configuration		
St Albans	4,899	17,538
Welwyn Hatfield	8,847	48,588
Total	**13,746**	**66,126**
2 WEST / 4 NORTH WEST unitary configuration		
Dacorum	10,061	59,033
St Albans	4,899	17,538
Total	**14,960**	**76,571**
2 EASTERN/ 4 CENTRAL configuration		
Stevenage	**7,911**	**37,209**
Welwyn Hatfield	8,847	48,588
Total	**16,758**	**85,797**

Assets disaggregation – has not been accounted for within the financial model but this potentially poses risks at a later stage in terms of ensuring the transfer of assets and their corresponding revenue streams and or liabilities does not inadvertently worsen the financial position and sustainability of the new authorities. Disposal of surplus assets may help to defray the costs of reorganisation.

Shared services – whilst some shared services are already in existence across for example Audit, Fraud, Procurement and Building Control, across Hertfordshire, these may no longer align geographically with the new authority boundaries. This may pose additional costs in relation to:

- Disaggregating shared systems or contracts that are no longer aligned geographically.
- Potential duplication of effort or investment if new, separate services are required.
- Loss of economies of scale once shared arrangements end.

However, in other cases existing shared services will not require disaggregation and there may be opportunities to expand these and create greater economies of scale.

Companies and other entities – where they exist this may cause additional complexity in aggregating and disaggregating balance sheets and asset valuation or else amending governance and ownership arrangements. As a result, additional specialist support may be required. This is assumed to be covered by the existing allocation of specialist support within the one-off costs.

Shadow authority costs – it has been assumed that the costs of the shadow authority can be covered by existing budgets and one-off costs and the contingency where required. These are unlikely to have a material impact on the financial assessment of alternative unitary options being considered, nor on their ongoing financial sustainability.

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

Regardless of the option chosen, implementing the new authorities will involve significant costs. The programme will likely need to operate on an 'invest to save' basis, with funding secured either from within the councils or through government support. All potential local funding sources to support this investment will be reviewed and considered. However,

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outcomes from the Fair Funding Review could further restrict these sources — for example, by limiting the use of reserves or the ability to generate capital receipts.

This risk requires careful management to cover transition costs without compromising service delivery or financial stability. While multiple funding options are available, their impacts have not yet been included in the financial model.

Savings – savings generated through the programme can be used to help fund the costs, acknowledging that there is a time lag between expenditure and savings.

Reserves – council's hold a range of specific and general reserves. Although many are earmarked for specific commitments, a review may reveal opportunities to release or reallocate some—either temporarily or permanently—to support the investment requirement.

Capital Receipts - due to LGR, office space requirements are expected to decrease, potentially generating capital receipts. These funds could help cover transition costs; however, they have not yet been estimated because it is currently too complex to predict which buildings might be sold.

Capital Directives – these are provisions that allow the Government to authorise councils to classify certain revenue expenditures as capital (long-term investment) spending. This classification enables councils to use capital funds, such as those from capital receipts, or to borrow,

[1] This model was created by Pixel Financial management to help estimate the savings and costs in relation to Local Government Reorganisation in 2028-29

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED COUNCILLOR NUMBERS FOR THE PROPOSED MODELS

2UA	3UA BASE	3UA MODIFIED	4UA BASE	4UA
2 WEST – 117	3 WEST - 66	3 WEST - 72	4 NORTH WEST - 84	4 NORTH WEST – 84
2 EASTERN- 117	3 CENTRAL – 75	3 CENTRAL – 69	4 SOUTH WEST - 79	4 SOUTH WEST – 79
	3 EAT - 93	3 EASTERN- 93	4 CENTRAL – 100	4 CENTRAL – 89
			4 EASTERN– 64	4 EASTERN– 75

INTRODUCTION

To develop the set of proposed councillor numbers for the models described in Hertfordshire's LGR submission, colleagues from across our legal and democratic services, have come together to develop a methodology for modelling these numbers.

The methodology was based on guidance set out by The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), alongside professional judgement of the requirements each of the three models described would need to be effectively run and serviced.

Our methodology for proposing these councillor numbers is described below. Our approach for each model has flexed based on the requirements of the new Unitary Authority model being proposed. While the 117 councillor representation number for the 2UA model exceeds the LGBCE guidance, we believe we have set out a strong and compelling case, for this as an interim measure pending a full LGBCE review that will be commissioned shortly after vesting of the two authorities. We are open to other options if the Secretary of State deems this necessary.

The assessment below has focused on the modified proposals for ease of reference but has been reviewed with the base proposals. The base proposals would result in changes to the ratios noted in the report but do not materially change any of the assessments and conclusions made.

METHODOLOGY

LGBCE issued guidance in February 2025 for local authorities going through LGR and described local government *'as diverse as the communities it services, providing services, leadership and representation tailored to the characteristics and needs of individual areas. Our aim in an electoral review, is to recommend electoral arrangements, including a council size, which is right for the local authority in question.*

The guidance further states "While we have no set limits, our view is that an extremely strong and compelling case would be needed for an authority made up of more than 100 members or less than 30 members: too many members and the structure potentially becomes unwieldy and accountability is diluted; too few and the authority may not be able to fully discharge its functions and effectively represent local communities.

Therefore, whilst LGBCE gave guiding principles for setting the councillor numbers for new unitary authorities, it did not prescribe a given formula or methodology for determining the number of councillors required.

It is also predicated on these options being the proposed interim arrangements in recognition that an LGBCE review will automatically follow the vesting of the new Unitary Authorities.

LGBCE gave three core areas that should be considered when determining councillor numbers for a new Unitary footprint.

1) **Strategic leadership:**
   o How many councillors are needed to give strategic leadership and direction to the authority in the long-term?
   o How many councillors will be needed to manage the business of the council and take decisions effectively?
   o How will decision making, delegation and the governance of service provision be delivered?
   o What are the plans for devolution of powers down to the parish tier?

2) **Accountability:**
   o How many councillors are needed to scrutinise council decisions?
   o How many councillors are needed to support the regulatory functions of the authority, such as planning and licencing?
   o How many councillors are needed for representation on outside bodies and partnerships?

3) **Community leadership:**
   o How many councillors are needed to represent and engage with local people and communities?
   o How will casework be handled and what support will be in place to help councillors fulfil this role?

The LGBCE guidance also includes additional areas to considered, including wider local and national policy context; local geography, demographic and community characteristics and understanding of the Councillor's roles and responsibilities within the local area. In addition, the guidance goes into detail about the factors that are relevant to the number of councillors. These include considerations around the governance arrangements of the council, committee numbers, arrangements for scrutinising the council and the number of parish councils and external bodies with which it expects the Councillors to engage. In addition, it recommends consideration of the ratio of electors to councillors. This guidance, along with the technical guidance included within the LGBCE documentation was reviewed and considered as part of this process.[8]

APPLYING THE LGBCE GUIDANCE TO HERTFORDSHIRE LGR

Our approach for applying this guidance to the Hertfordshire proposals, was as follows;

1) We designed the base governance structure of the proposed unitary models.
   o It was agreed that the number of committees and panels would remain consistent whether there are 2, 3 or 4 Unitary Authorities established.
   o Area Committees will increase in number where there are fewer, larger unitary authorities.
   o Differences will occur where a greater number of committees are required to cover a larger geographical area for regulatory matters, which will need to be split into Area Committees, as well as dealing with local representation such as Area Boards and other agreed structures.
2) We reviewed the changes that the new configurations will cause on the role of the councillor, including;
   o The new structures will include both County and District functions with wider geographical areas and increased population and electorate, changing the role and remit of the councillors.

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[8] The Local Government Boundary Commission for England, *LGR guidance note* (2025), https://www.lgbce.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/lgbce_lgr_guidance_note_21052025_1_0.pdf

o Ratio of electors to councillors will significantly increase for the councillors in the new Unitary Authorities

3) We conducted a benchmarking exercise (table C) against recently created unitary councils, to illustrate the fairly broad range of councillor numbers established and to understand how these increase as the electorate they represent increases. We took an average ratio for 4,016 electors per councillor from this benchmarking exercise and used it as a reference point for our analysis.

4) We agreed the building blocks that would be used for the basis of electoral areas. LGBCE advised using the existing division or borough ward boundaries to simplify the process. We assessed options using existing County Council division boundaries and District/Borough ward boundaries (table A).

5) Considered the existing number of councillors across the existing 11 councils;
   o The total number of Cllrs is 517 which equates to: 439 District Cllrs and 78 County Cllrs
   o The number of electors is 895,832 which equates to: - 2,040 per district/borough Cllr and 11,485 per County Cllr.

6) Consulted on our approach at meaningful intervals with Hertfordshire Leaders Group and Chief Executive's Coordinating Group to share options, analysis and outputs. The proposed councillor numbers for each of the three models have been agreed by these two groups.

MODELLED SCENARIOS

We modelled the following scenarios for the 2UA and the modified 3UA and 4UA models.

Scenario 1: 2 councillors per County division

Scenario 2: 3 councillors per County division

Scenario 3: 1 councillor per borough / district ward

Scenario 4: 2 councillors per borough / district ward

Scenario 5: Using district/borough wards and reducing all multi-councillor wards by 1 councillor e.g. a three-councillor ward becomes a two-councillor ward, a two-councillor ward becomes a one-councillor, but one councillor wards stay as they are.

Table A – Cllr numbers from each modelled scenario

Option	Electors	Scenario 1 - 2x cllrs per County division			Scenario 2 - 3x cllrs per County division			Scenario 3 - 1x cllr per ward			Scenario 4 - 2x cllr per ward			Scenario 5 - 2 and 3-cllr wards reduced by 1 cllr				
		No. divisions	No. cllrs	Ratio	No. divisions	No. cllrs	Ratio	No. wards	No. cllrs	Ratio	No. wards	No. cllrs	Ratio	1-member district wards	2-member district wards	3-member district wards	No. Cllrs	Ratio
2b.1	443,148	39	78	5,681	39	117	3,788	90	90	4,924	90	180	2,462	13	25	51	141	3,143
2b.2	452,684	39	78	5,804	39	117	3,869	86	86	5,264	88	172	2,632	6	25	55	141	3,211
2b TOTAL	895,832	78	156	5,743	78	234	3,828	176	176	5,090	176	352	2,545	19	51	106	282	3,177
3g.1	259,713	22	44	5,903	22	66	3,935	50	50	5,194	50	100	2,597	5	14	31	81	3,206
3g.2	358,738	31	62	5,786	31	93	3,857	74	74	4,848	74	148	2,424	13	26	35	109	3,291
3g.3	277,381	25	50	5,548	25	75	3,698	52	52	5,334	52	104	2,667	1	11	40	92	3,015
3g TOTAL	895,832	78	156	5,743	78	234	3,828	176	176	5,090	176	352	2,545	19	51	106	282	3,177
3j.1	236,198	21	42	5,624	21	63	3,749	42	42	5,624	42	84	2,812	0	9	33	75	3,149
3j.2	286,134	25	50	5,723	25	75	3,815	64	64	4,471	64	128	2,235	13	26	25	89	3,215
3j.3	373,500	32	64	5,836	32	96	3,891	70	70	5,336	70	140	2,668	6	16	48	118	3,165
3g TOTAL	895,832	78	156	5,743	78	234	3,828	176	176	5,090	176	352	2,545	19	51	106	282	3,177
4a.1	189,109	16	32	5,910	16	48	3,940	36	36	5,253	36	72	2,627	8	12	16	52	3,637
4a.2	228,865	20	40	5,722	20	60	3,814	45	45	5,086	45	90	2,543	6	16	23	68	3,366
4a.3	223,819	19	38	5,890	19	57	3,927	41	41	5,459	41	82	2,730	0	9	32	73	3,066
4a.4	254,039	23	46	5,523	23	69	3,682	54	54	4,704	54	108	2,352	5	14	35	89	2,854
4a TOTAL	895,832	78	156	5,743	78	234	3,828	176	176	5,090	176	352	2,545	19	51	106	282	3,177

Table B – Assessment of pros and cons for each scenario modelled.

Scenario	Pros	Cons
Scenario 1: 2 councillors per County division	• All 3 options are within LGBCE 30-100 guidance for a UA. • Consistent/simple structure using existing boundaries. • 2 Councillor divisions give a good balance to manage constituency work.	• Ratio for elector/councillor are high at between c5,600-5,900. • The number of councillors particularly for the 3 & 4 proposals is low for running council business.

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Scenario 2: 3 councillors per County division	• 3 & 4 UA models are within LGBCE 30-100 guidance, but 2 UA goes above to 117 per UA - this could be positive for transition to have more councillors noting that numbers will likely be reduced on review. • Consistent/simple structure using existing boundaries. • Lowers the elector/councillor ratio to between c3,600-3,900, which would be positive for local representation. • Number of councillors for running the unitary is improved compared to 2 councillor version.	• 117 councillors per UA for the two unitary models is quite high and would very likely be reduced by LGBCE on review. • However, note Buckinghamshire started at 147 and was then reduced to 97 so there is precedent for starting higher for the transition period. • If 117 was deemed too high, consider reverting to 2 councillor division for 2 unitary proposal and 3 councillor division for options 3 & 4.
Scenario 3: 1 councillor per borough / district ward	• All 4 options are within LGBCE 30-100 guidance. • Consistent/simple structure using existing boundaries. • Wards would more closely reflect local identities as they have been assessed through district reviews	• Numbers of councillors in 3 and 4 unitary options are low. • Because some districts have lower numbers of wards, distribution of councillors would be unbalanced. • Elector/Councillor ratios are relatively high 4,400-5,600
Scenario 4: 2 councillors per borough / district ward	• Wards would be more closely reflect local identities as they have been assessed through district reviews. • Consistent/simple structure using existing boundaries. • Elector/Councillor ratio is low at between c2,300-2800	• All 4 options have at least one of the unitary authorities above LGBCE 30-100 guidance. • Councillor numbers in the 2 and 3 unitary options are high, although it is more balanced in the 4 unitary options with only one being above the 100 Councillor LGBCE guidance.
Scenario 5: Using district/borough wards and reducing all multi-councillor wards by 1 councillor	• Consistent/simple structure using existing boundaries. • Wards would more closely reflect local identities as they have been assessed through district reviews. • Allows a better geographical balance of councillors. • Councillor/elector ratio is improved at between c2,800-3,600	• The 2 unitary option has 141 councillors, and a case would need to be made to justify this number similar to the 3 member per division in the County division option. • 3 UA option include at least one authority above LGBCE 30-100 guidance, although the 4 unitary option is within the LGBCE guidance

It was agreed that the preferred option for the 2UA and 3 UA model was to use existing County Divisions with 3 councillors per division (scenario 2 above).   In respect of the 4UA it was agreed to use existing District/Boundary wards as the base model utilising scenario 5 above. However, the ward-by-ward analysis of the 4UA (scenario 5 model) highlighted high variations of electorate to councillor ratios in some wards. Further modelling was carried out to reduce those ratios by adding back in councillors to most 2 members wards where they had been previously removed.

The agreed numbers for each unitary proposals are set out at the top of this appendix.

Based on the options above, we did further analysis, testing;

1) **Ratio of Electors to Cllr**

As table C shows, the 9 most recent new unitary councils had a broad range of Cllr numbers from 46-110 and the Cllr numbers tend to increase in line with the elector numbers. The elector Cllr ratio ranges from

2718 – 5373 (N.b. 2718 is an outlier and most are significantly higher). The average for elector/Cllr ratio is 4016.

The role of the councillor will change significantly with the new structure covering both County and District functions with wider geographical areas and increased population and electorate. Inevitably, this will mean that the ratio of electors to councillors will increase for Councillors in the new Unitary Authorities and as such these have been assessed in the light of other recently created Unitary Authorities so that officers and Councillors can visualise the ratios for different options, as shown in table A.

Table C – Most recent new unitary councils

Council	Created	No. of Wards	No. of Councillors	Population	Population/ward	Population/ Councillor
BCP	2019	33	76	301183	9127	3963
Dorset	2019	52	82	295195	5677	3600
Buckinghams hire	2020	49	97	410789	8383	4235
North Northamptons hire	2021	31	78	261970	8451	3359
West Northamptons hire	2021	35	76	299118	8546	3936
Cumberland	2023	46	46	216592	4709	4709
Westmorland and Furness	2023	33	65	176693	5354	2718
North Yorkshire	2023	90	90	483576	5373	5373
Somerset	2023	55	110	446703	8122	4061
Overall	-	-	-	-	**6820**	**4016**

2) **Ratio of Cllrs to Committees**

The base governance structure, for each unitary will have more elements than the two-tier councils due to the merger of most functions into single unitary councils. As between the 2, 3 and 4 UA models it is envisaged that there would be a similar number of committees but there may be a marginal increase in the number of Area Committees required by fewer larger unitary authorities which cover a larger area and population.

The same may be the case in respect of regulatory committees such as planning and licencing required to cover a larger geographical area for regulatory matters, but this could be covered by committees with a wider geographical coverage coupled with broader delegation to officers.

Governance structures should be designed to ensure that the committee seat ratio to the number of available councillors is appropriate to ensure that councillors are able to discharge their duties, including committee attendance, constituent case work and engagement, effectively.

Based on analysis of the likely committees that each unitary authorities will need, exclusive of Local Community/Strategic Partnerships Boards, it is estimated that the unitary options under consideration will have the following numbers of committee seats:

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Two unitary authority - 171 committee seats.

Three unitary – 167 committee seats

Four unitary – 154 committee seats

Table D - Ratio of Councillor to Committee Seats

Unitary option	Scenario option	Councillor Number	Ratio (Committee seat/Cllr)
2 WEST	County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division	117	1.46
2 EASTERN	County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division	117	1.46
MODIFIED 3 WEST	County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division	72	2.3
MODIFIED 3 CENTRAL	County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division	69	2.4
MODIFIED 3 EAST	County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division	93	1.8
MODIFIED 4 NORTH WEST	District / Borough wards, minus 1 Cllr (from wards with 2 or 3 existing Cllrs.)	84	1.83
MODIFIED 4 SOUTH WEST	District / Borough wards, minus 1 Cllr (from wards with 2 or 3 existing Cllrs.)	79	1.94
MODIFIED 4 CENTRAL	District / Borough wards, minus 1 Cllr (from wards with 2 or 3 existing Cllrs.)	89	1.73
MODIFIED 4 EAST	District / Borough wards, minus 1 Cllr (from wards with 2 or 3 existing Cllrs.)	75	2.05

It is acknowledged that the role of the councillor in the new unitary authorities will change as functions are combined and they have a larger electorate to represent, but for the purposes of comparison, we have benchmarked against all eleven Hertfordshire authorities which together, have an average committee seat to Councillor ratio of 1.76.

It will be noted that under the two unitary model (3 Cllr per division), the ratio is improved when compared against existing Hertfordshire authorities, but this is due to the relatively high councillor numbers under that option (117 Cllrs). This could benefit earlier transition planning and may well be reduced following the initial electoral review. Modelling for three and four unitary increases the ratio from the average currently across Hertfordshire but is arguably proportionate to the new functions and populations of those authorities.

In addition to the committee membership and political meetings, there are circa 250 outside bodies across Hertfordshire for which there will be some requirement for councillors to engage and attend. There are also 112 Town/Parish Councils across Hertfordshire, many unitary authority councillors are likely to be dual-hatted members, but even if they are not, unitary authority councillors will frequently attend Town/Parish Council meetings. The additional workload from outside bodies and Town/Parish Councils also needs to be considered when finalising councillor numbers to ensure that councillors have sufficient capacity to carry-out their roles effectively.

AGREEING PROPOSED CLLR NUMBERS FOR THE PROPOSED MODELS

The team assessed the proposals for 2UA, 3UA and 4UA in table F, against the LCGBE criteria and are confident that each of the proposals does adhere to the guidance whilst acknowledging that a full electoral review carried out post vesting day will mean that further changes will likely be required.

These were reviewed and agreed by Hertfordshire's Leaders Group and the Chief Executive Leaders Group

Table F. Summarising the observations of the chosen Cllr numbers, as against the LGBCE Core Factors

Unitary Option	Strategic Leadership	Accountability	Community Leadership
2UA (County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division)	117 councillors will provide a large pool of councillors which will help to ensure that there is a balance of experience to help set the strategic direction for the council. There will be enough councillors to carry out the business of the council and a high number during the initial transition period will assist.	The committee seat per councillor ratio at 1.46 is lower than the current average in Hertfordshire of 1.76 so committee workload will be manageable and allow councillors to effectively carry out their scrutiny and regulatory functions. A lower ratio will allow more capacity for councillors to work on outside bodies and other roles such as town and parish councils.	The 2UA model returns 117 councillors per unitary. Whilst this is above LGBCE guidance, it keeps the elector to councillor ratio c,3800 reasonable and enables councillors to effectively carry out their representative roles. 3 member wards also allow sharing of representation and improved resilience.
3UA (County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division)	Councillor numbers proposed are 72, 69 and 93. This should be sufficient to set the strategic leadership for the council and carry out the day-to-day business of the council.	Committee seat ratio is 2.2 on average between the three UAs which is higher than current Hertfordshire average but proportionate to the change in functions covered.	All councillor numbers remain under the 100 guidance. Councillor/elector ratios average c3800 which is appropriate for local representation.
4UA District / Borough wards minus 1 Cllr (from wards with 2 or 3 existing Cllrs.)	As a result of the manual adjustments, the councillor numbers proposed are 84,79,89 and 75. The councillor numbers proposed should be sufficient to set the strategic leadership for the council and carry out the day-to-day business of the council.	The committee seat ratio is improved (1.8) compared to the 3UA model and with a lower electorate to represent this should make committee attendance for scrutiny and regulatory functions manageable.	All councillor numbers remain under the 100 guidance. Councillor/elector ratios average c2,700 is lower, but this will only help local representation and time to spend on outside bodies and other roles.

FOOTNOTE: BIRD'S ESTATE

Watford and Hertsmere Councils have been in discussion about the appropriate location of the Bird's Estate on the border of the two councils in a three unitary model. It is noted here that this is not included in this submission, but should be considered post-LGR.

APPENDIX C – EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

See Separate Document

INTRODUCTION

Local government reorganisation in Hertfordshire presents a unique opportunity to reshape public services and governance for a more sustainable future. As the county embarks on this significant transition, it is vital to ensure that environmental, social, and economic sustainability are embedded at every stage.

This assessment evaluates the potential impacts of LGR across ten key sustainability criteria, using a structured framework informed by local data, best practice, and stakeholder engagement. The findings highlight substantial opportunities to enhance sustainability governance, delivery, and outcomes, with benefits outweighing risks in most areas. Where risks are identified, particularly during the transition period, targeted mitigation measures are proposed.

This document is designed to support informed decisions and the implementation of effective strategies. It includes a summary table, detailed analysis, and clear recommendations to guide Hertfordshire towards a resilient and sustainable future.

Climate adaptation and resilience	Benefits outweigh risks	Enhanced strategic capacity for climate risk assessment and adaptation planning. Improved coordination of emergency planning and incident response Single-tier accountability enabling integrated infrastructure investment. Greater scale and resources for accessing national climate adaptation funding. Ability to align adaptation planning with development and transport strategies.	Potential loss of local climate risk knowledge during transition Risk of adaptation planning being deprioritised during implementation	Conduct comprehensive climate risk mapping and vulnerability assessments. Embed adaptation planning in strategic risk assessments. Establish joint financial mechanisms and reserves. Develop cross-authority learning on adaptation approaches. Link adaptation planning to statutory duties
Community awareness and behaviour change	Benefits outweigh risks	Unified sustainability messaging improving clarity and impact. Greater scale enabling investment in communications and engagement. Consistency in approaches to waste reduction and energy efficiency Enhanced capacity for targeted campaigns	Potential disruption to ongoing campaigns Risk that unified messaging lacks local resonance. Possibility that dissenting voices are amplified	Develop aligned messaging framework during transition. Ensure consistent language with local adaptation. Invest in segmented communications. Establish protocols for community feedback. Maintain focus on trusted local messengers
Community engagement and empowerment	Finely balanced	Strategic coherence enabling alignment with county-wide priorities. Greater resources for engagement and participatory approaches Potential for enhanced support to community initiatives	Perceived or actual distance between communities and decision-makers Loss of established relationships and community trust Reduction in responsiveness to hyperlocal initiatives Confusion about authority engagement during transition	Conduct audit of key community contacts and relationships. Systematically transfer relationship information Establish neighbourhood-level engagement mechanisms.

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		Opportunity to develop sophisticated engagement infrastructure		Maintain dedicated community sustainability officers. Invest in community capacity building. Provide clear information about new structures. Establish community advisory groups
Data, monitoring, and accountability	Benefits outweigh risks	Unified key performance indicators and data systems enabling consistent measurement across county. Enhanced capacity for sophisticated data analysis, modelling, and evidence-based decision-making Improved transparency and accountability through consistent reporting frameworks Greater ability to track progress, identify what works, and adapt approaches based on evidence. Economies of scale in data infrastructure investment and specialist expertise	Potential loss of legacy data or inconsistent baselining if not systematically managed Risk of gaps in time-series data during transition affecting ability to track trends Possibility of incompatible data systems requiring costly integration Temporary reduction in data quality or availability during transition	Develop shared data platforms and standards during transition, ensuring compatibility with existing systems. Conduct systematic data audits mapping all existing sustainability datasets, baselines, and time-series. Establish clear protocols for data transfer, ensuring no loss of historical information. Agree consistent baseline approaches for new authorities whilst maintaining continuity with previous data where possible. Invest in data infrastructure and specialist capacity. Publish transparent methodologies and ensure data is accessible to communities, businesses, and researchers. Establish independent sustainability monitoring and reporting arrangements
Biodiversity and natural capital	Benefits outweigh risks	Aligned implementation of Local Nature Recovery Strategy ensuring coherent, landscape-scale approach. Consistent application of Biodiversity Net Gain across all development, removing current inconsistencies. Single-tier responsibility enabling integrated management of planning, highways, public estate, and natural capital. Strategic Authority coordination of county-wide ecological networks and priority habitats Clearer messaging to landowners, farmers, and developers about expectations and support Greater capacity for ecological expertise, monitoring, and enforcement	Potential loss of local ecological knowledge and site-specific understanding during transition Risk of established conservation partnerships and volunteer networks being disrupted Temporary reduction in capacity or focus on nature recovery during implementation period	Use LNRS development to embed consistent approaches whilst capturing local ecological knowledge. Develop shared ecological data platforms building on existing biodiversity baseline work. Conduct systematic mapping of conservation partnerships, volunteer networks, and key relationships. Ensure ecology specialists and conservation teams maintained during transition with clear responsibilities. Establish biodiversity indicators and targets from day one, with transparent monitoring and reporting. Invest in community engagement on nature recovery, ensuring local communities remain active partners
Green growth and employment	Benefits outweigh risks	Enhanced capacity for strategic planning of green skills pipelines aligned with economic development.	Risk that green skills planning not sufficiently connected to economic development in new structures.	Align green skills planning with economic development and retrofit strategies from day one.

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		Greater scale enabling significant investment in retrofit, renewable energy, and sustainable transport programmes creating local jobs. Consistent messaging to businesses about sustainability expectations, support, and opportunities Single tier planning and economic development enabling clearer links between growth sectors and skills provision. Strategic Authority coordination with universities, colleges, and employers on county-wide skills strategy Potential to position Hertfordshire as attractive location for green businesses and investment	Potential that early focus on reorganisation delays green growth initiatives. Possibility that green job creation concentrated in some areas rather than distributed equitably	Clarify economic development responsibilities and ensure sustainability embedded throughout Establish clear mechanisms linking strategic employment support, skills provision, and major sustainability programmes. Monitor green job creation geographically to ensure inclusive distribution. Engage businesses, training providers, and employment support organisations early in transition. Maintain momentum on key programmes (retrofit, EV infrastructure, renewable energy) during transition
Sustainable consumption and circular economy	Benefits outweigh risks	Unified sustainable procurement policies, standards, and contracts across authorities Greater purchasing power enabling influence over supply chains and leverage for sustainability requirements. Consistent recycling and waste reduction approaches creating clearer messages to residents and businesses. Enhanced capacity for circular economy initiatives including repair, reuse, and sharing scheme. Potential for bulk procurement of sustainable products and services reducing costs	Risk of disruption to existing sustainable procurement relationships and contracts during transition Potential that lowest-cost procurement takes precedence over sustainability in early period. Possibility that successful local circular economy initiatives lost in larger structures.	Apply learning from regional sustainable procurement research to set standards across authorities from day one. Engage suppliers early about transition, emphasising continuity of sustainability expectations. Conduct audit of existing sustainable procurement practices, contracts, and supplier relationships. Establish sustainability criteria in all procurement from outset, with clear weighting and evaluation. Develop social value frameworks ensuring local economic benefit and environmental standards. Support community sector circular economy initiatives through grants, space, and partnerships
Built environment and energy	Benefits outweigh risks	Aligned housing, planning, and energy strategies enabling integrated approaches to net-zero development. Single-tier planning removing two-tier conflicts and delays in delivering sustainable development. Strategic coordination of energy infrastructure including renewable generation, heat networks, and EV charging Greater capacity for area-based retrofit programmes and innovative financing models	Potential disruption to ongoing retrofit schemes, energy projects, and development during transition Risk of inconsistent application of sustainability standards across former district areas during early implementation Possibility that housing delivery pressures override sustainability requirements	Conduct comprehensive audit and benchmarking of current approaches, schemes, and standards during transition. Maintain momentum on key retrofit and energy programmes, using them as demonstration projects for new approaches. Trial Retrofit One Stop Shop model to test integrated service delivery and maintain programme continuity. Establish robust sustainability standards for new development from day one,

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		Enhanced ability to influence development quality through unified planning and housing functions. Potential to establish exemplar net-zero housing standards across all new development		with clear monitoring and enforcement. Ensure planning and housing teams have sustainability expertise and capacity. Develop Local Area Energy Plans providing strategic frameworks for investment decisions. Link retrofit programmes to fuel poverty reduction and decent homes standards, strengthening delivery case
Statutory duties and prioritisation	Finely balanced	Single-tier accountability creating clarity about sustainability responsibilities. Opportunity to embed sustainability across all statutory functions rather than treating as separate agenda. Potential for sustainability to become core to service delivery, not optional extra. Greater strategic capacity enabling both statutory compliance and ambitious sustainability action	Risk that unitary authorities prioritise immediate statutory duties over longer-term sustainability transformation, particularly during early implementation period. Potential for sustainability initiatives to be seen as "nice to have" rather than essential. Possibility of sustainability capacity and budgets being reduced if seen as non-statutory Danger that performance management focuses on statutory indicators rather than sustainability outcomes	Embed sustainability in all statutory duty delivery from day one, not as separate workstream. Link sustainability programmes to statutory requirements wherever possible. Maintain and build on successful programmes during transition, acknowledging inevitable "settling in" period but demonstrating continuity and commitment. Establish clear sustainability targets, indicators, and reporting from outset, ensuring accountability. Ensure sustainability expertise represented in senior leadership and embedded across all service areas. Develop business cases demonstrating how sustainability investment supports statutory duty delivery and reduces long-term costs. Engage elected members on sustainability priorities and secure political commitment
Transport and mobility	Benefits outweigh risks	Single-tier responsibility for spatial planning, transport planning, and development enabling genuinely integrated approaches. Clear accountability for active travel infrastructure, EV charging, public transport, and highways Strategic Authority coordination of strategic corridors and engagement with national rail network Enhanced capacity for transport modelling, behaviour change programmes, and investment in sustainable alternatives. Removal of two-tier conflicts that currently	Potential disruption to Local Transport Plan development and delivery during transition Risk of established relationships with transport operators and stakeholders being disrupted Possibility that car-focused approaches dominate if sustainable transport not prioritised	Prioritise aligned spatial planning and transport stakeholder engagement during transition to maintain momentum. Ensure continuity of Local Transport Plan development with clear sustainability ambitions. Conduct audit of transport programmes, partnerships, and commitments, ensuring systematic handover. Establish sustainable transport targets and monitoring from day one. Invest in active travel and public transport infrastructure early, demonstrating commitment and building public confidence.

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		hamper delivery of ambitious sustainable transport programmes. Greater ability to link transport planning with housing, employment, and education, reducing need to travel		Engage transport operators, community transport providers, and advocacy groups throughout transition. Link transport planning with major development sites, ensuring sustainable access designed from outset. Develop cross-authority learning on what works in sustainable transport delivery

CONCLUSION

This assessment demonstrates that local government reorganisation presents significant opportunities to enhance sustainability governance and delivery across Hertfordshire, with benefits substantially outweighing risks for eight of ten criteria assessed. The two finely-balanced criteria—community engagement and statutory duties—require particular attention to mitigation measures but do not undermine the overall positive assessment.

The assessment reveals a transformative opportunity to embed sustainability at the heart of public service delivery. Across environmental, social, and economic dimensions, the analysis demonstrates that the move to a single-tier authority can unlock significant benefits, ranging from enhanced climate resilience and unified data systems to strategic green growth and integrated transport planning. For eight out of ten criteria, the advantages of reorganisation clearly outweigh the risks, provided that transition is managed proactively and mitigation measures are robustly implemented.

However, the assessment also highlights the value of proactive focus in two finely balanced areas: community engagement and statutory duties. The risk of diminished local responsiveness and the potential for sustainability to be deprioritised during statutory compliance must be addressed through targeted actions, such as maintaining dedicated community officers, embedding sustainability in statutory functions, and ensuring transparent reporting and accountability.

A successful transition will depend on clear communication, continuity of key programmes, and the preservation of local knowledge and relationships. Strategic investment in data infrastructure, ecological expertise, and green skills will be essential to realise the full potential of reorganisation. Furthermore, the creation of advisory groups, segmented communications, and inclusive engagement mechanisms will help maintain public trust and empower communities.

Hertfordshire stands at a pivotal moment. By embracing the opportunities presented and committing to sustained leadership in sustainability, the county can set a benchmark for integrated, resilient, and equitable local governance. The recommendations outlined in this assessment provide a roadmap for maximising positive impacts, mitigating risks, and ensuring that sustainability remains a core priority throughout and beyond the reorganisation process.

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Local Government Engagement Feedback Report Appendix - Data

The below appendix includes the data and feedback collected from key stakeholder events and resident engagement survey responses.

The following questions were asked to strategic stakeholders:

1. Which local government services are a priority for you?
2. What is working well in Hertfordshire in terms of local government structures?
3. What most needs improvement in Hertfordshire?
4. What partnerships or collaborations are working well that must be preserved or scaled up?
5. What opportunities do you see arising from this change?
6. What innovations or changes would you like to see in how services are delivered?
7. What concerns or risks do you see with Local Government Reorganisation?
8. Do you have a specific recommendation with regard to reorganisation?

The following questions were asked in the widely distributed survey:

1. What are you responding as (resident of Hertfordshire, member of staff etc.)?
2. What council area do you live in?
3. If you work for a council, which one do you work for?
4. How much do you know about the Government's plans to make changes to local councils, called Local Government Reorganisation?
5. Which of these services are most important to you (infrastructure, waste services etc.)?
6. How much do you know about the Government's plans to make changes to local councils, called Local Government Reorganisation?
7. Do you have a view on which option of 2, 3, or 4 new councils, you would prefer and what are your reasons?
8. What overall impact, if any, do you think would come from councils in Hertfordshire being joined with other neighbouring councils, in regard to services and value for money?
9. What potential benefits of this reorganisation would be most important to you?
10. What opportunities and improvements would you like to see come from Local Government Reorganisation?
11. What concerns you the most when thinking about Local Government Reorganisation?
12. Would you like us to keep you informed about progress?
13. Do you have any additional comments?
14. What is your gender?
15. What is your age group?
16. What is your ethnic group?
17. Do you consider yourself to have a disability, long-term illness, or health condition?

Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Data

For reference, the organisations engaged included (but were not limited to):

Ashbourne Insurance (Broxbourne)	B3Living	BIDs/Partnership
Bishops Stortford Town Council	Box Moor Trust	Buntingford Chamber of Commerce
Buntingford Town Council	Citizens Advice (multiple districts)	Community Action Dacorum
Community Alliance Broxbourne & East Herts	DENS	East & North Herts NHS Trust
Everyone Active (leisure contractor)	Gascoyne Estates	Hertford Regional College
Hertford Town Council	Hertfordshire & West Essex ICB	Hertfordshire Futures (LEP)
Herts Care Providers Association	Herts Community NHS Trust	Herts Partnership (Mental Health) Trust
Hightown Housing Association	Hitchin BID	Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
Letchworth Heritage Foundation	Love Hoddesdon BID	North Herts and Stevenage CVS
North Herts College	Oaklands College	Oxygen Studios (Hertsmere)
Sawbridgeworth Town Council	Sunnyside Rural Trust	VCFSE Alliance
Ware Town Council	Watford & West Herts Chamber/Businesses	Watford Cultural Leaders Group
Welwyn Garden City	West Herts College	

Q1. Which local government services are a priority for you?

Stakeholders highlighted a wide range of service priorities, with the most commonly cited themes being **housing, social care, public health**, and **community services**. Priorities varied across different areas and sectors.

Other Notable Mentions

- **Policing and public safety**

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- **Leisure**

- **Road maintenance / Highways**

- **Education**

While other local priorities such as services to help businesses grow, community safety, environmental health, and education were noted, the overwhelming emphasis was on the continuity and expansion of core front-line services that address need at individual, family, and neighbourhood levels.

Stakeholders highlighted a broad but consistent set of service priorities, with housing, social care, and public health emerging as the most frequently cited themes. These priorities reflect both the strategic role of county-wide systems and the operational significance of borough-level partnerships. Voluntary sector organisations, including various Citizens Advice stakeholders, gave detailed breakdowns of service areas most critical to their client base. DENS highlighted housing, food, and basic financial support as essential services that "must not be compromised or fragmented." They emphasised the importance of coordinated referrals and long-standing relationships with borough councils. Health stakeholders and housing providers reinforced the centrality of safeguarding, adult care, and planning.

Alignment was evident around the importance of housing-linked services, not only as a function of shelter, but also as a lever for wider wellbeing, including mental health and family cohesion. Stakeholders called for stronger integration between service domains and for greater consistency in delivery and access. This theme was pronounced in the feedback from service delivery partners who work across organisational boundaries.

Q2. What is working well in Hertfordshire in terms of local government structures?

Stakeholders offered reflections on the current system, highlighting strong relationships, clear delineation of responsibilities, and well-established collaborative structures. Many responses showed stakeholders reflecting positively on their relationship with their District/borough council.

Collaboration and Governance Mechanisms
Stakeholders repeatedly referred to strong joint working between councils. Citizens Advice, businesses, and public sector partners referenced forums like the Hertfordshire Leaders' Group, the Hertfordshire Growth Board, and various cross-council working groups as examples of embedded and effective collaboration. These structures were described by Citizens Advice Broxbourne as enabling "unified strategies and pooled expertise," particularly across areas like economic development, planning, and devolution proposals.

Further Education leaders also underlined the importance of relationships at the County Council level, with one principal remarking, "It is hard to imagine Hertfordshire without the County Council" and stressing the value of economic development leadership at this level. Stakeholders valued HCC's ability to operate while maintaining relationships with sectors spanning the entire county footprint.

Relationships and Local Accessibility
Relationships at the district level were seen as a major strength. Many respondents, particularly from the voluntary and community sector, described district councils as accessible, responsive, and willing to collaborate. This was evident in places like St Albans, Dacorum, Broxbourne and Three Rivers, where stakeholders pointed to co-designed initiatives, practical partnerships, and mutual trust. Local offices, familiar points of contact, and continuity of officer relationships were all cited as factors underpinning strong joint work.

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Strategic Economic Focus and Business Engagement

Local government was widely credited with playing a proactive role in shaping the local economy. Initiatives like the Business Pledge and regeneration partnerships were seen as evidence of meaningful collaboration. Watford Chamber of Commerce noted that "these touchpoints ensure local business voices are heard and considered." Hertfordshire-wide structures such as Hertfordshire Futures were recognised as offering a business-led but council-supported focus on long-term growth.

Effective Service Delivery and Joint Planning

Core services were described as effective including waste collection, social care, education, and health partnerships. In Dacorum and Broxbourne, for example, refuse and recycling were praised as *"efficient"* and *"reliable"* by respective stakeholders. The alignment of local government and health boundaries was also noted as enabling better coordination of services, particularly in the Health and Care Partnerships.

Analysis

Stakeholders described Hertfordshire's local government structures positively, underpinned by a combination of clear roles, trusted relationships, and embedded governance.

Critically, much of what is working well was attributed not just to structure but to culture - officers and elected members across Hertfordshire were described as willing to work with partners, take a pragmatic approach, and form trusting relationships. These working relationships are helping to maintain service continuity, foster innovation (especially in social care and place-based initiatives), and build a foundation for reform as structural changes proceed.

While not without areas for improvement, stakeholders largely viewed the existing frameworks as a strong platform from which to evolve. Whether through collaboration with the business community, targeted local delivery, or coordination across complex systems like health and housing, the structures in place are supporting effective, trusted local government in Hertfordshire.

Q3. What most needs improvement in Hertfordshire?

Key areas identified for improvement were referral processes and service integration, housing supply, access to services, and infrastructure and coordination.

Joined up Working and Referral Pathways

Several stakeholders flagged the need for stronger integration between services. Sunnyside Rural Trust emphasised the gap between adult social care and social enterprise, calling for *"better integration."* At a Hertsmere roundtable, attendees noted *"differences between district and county levels"* in transport coordination. Communities' 1st echoed this, warning that *"fragmentation between tiers causes confusion… [and] conflicting priorities,"* and pushed for greater consistency and equity in commissioning.

Housing Supply and Affordability

Multiple stakeholders raised concerns about housing access. The Watford Chamber described *"a pressing need for more affordable housing,"* alongside the need for flexible commercial space; Box Moor Trust also stressed that *"more affordable housing options are needed"*. These views reflect a broader concern that current local housing strategies fall short of meeting demand.

Digital Inclusion and Online Access

Digital exclusion emerged as a concern. Welwyn Garden City BID said that *"a more user-friendly system"* is needed, particularly for older residents without online access. Citizens Advice Broxbourne echoed this, warning that services had *"moved online without parallel support for clients lacking digital skills or devices,"* and proposed a joined-up inclusion programme via libraries, hubs, and drop-ins.

Transport and Service Accessibility

Multiple stakeholders highlighted the need for improved transport links, particularly east to west. At the HCC Business Forum, Richard Ward stated, *"Transport infrastructure, particularly east to west"* requires improvement. The St Albans District Chamber of Commerce also flagged the lack of east/west connectivity in particular. During a panel for Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, it was said that *"There is a need for better connectivity between towns… to improve accessibility and reduce travel barriers for residents."*

Other Issues Noted

- **Road maintenance**
- **Bureaucracy**
- **Access to social care for complex cases**

Analysis

While stakeholders recognised many strengths in current service structures, they also identified clear areas for improvement. Stakeholder feedback highlights fragmentation between county and district responsibilities and need for more joined up and coherent service delivery across Hertfordshire. Housing remains a major pressure point, with repeated calls for more affordable options and better alignment with social care and public health provision. Transport was also flagged, with a lack of connectivity between towns and east to west, creating barriers to accessing services, especially in rural and peripheral areas. Stakeholders also criticised bureaucratic inefficiencies, citing overly complex processes around community assets and SEND transport.

Taken together, the feedback suggests that while core services are generally viewed positively, there is appetite for improvements in access, consistency, and collaboration, particularly at the operational interface between councils and communities, and an appetite for streamlined systems that prioritise fairness, reduce duplication, and enable faster, more accessible support for residents.

Q4. What partnerships or collaborations are working well that must be preserved or scaled up?

Stakeholders consistently highlighted the value of local partnerships, especially between councils and the voluntary or health sectors. These relationships were often described as critical to maintaining service delivery, local knowledge, and community trust.

Borough and District Council Relationships

Strong local partnerships were repeatedly praised. Sunnyside Rural Trust described the working relationship between Watford, Three Rivers, and Dacorum as *"particularly effective,"* with *"natural links and shared approaches that benefit service delivery."* A Herts and West Essex ICS stakeholder reinforced this point, citing *"strong place-based partnerships with good engagement from District and Borough Councils"* as critical to achieving neighbourhood health goals. Meanwhile, Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult emphasised that

local government had supported high-growth businesses, noting that *"local start-ups… have thrived with local government contributing to success."* Everyone Active, a Three Rivers DC stakeholder, highlighted *"strong leisure partnerships across seven of the local councils"* and advocated for these to continue.

County-wide Relationships

County-wide partnerships were also highlighted, with health and care leaders at HCC's Health and Care Providers roundtable citing *"good work at scale / county-wide on things like the Better Care Fund Board"* and warning against losing the benefits of this coordinated approach. Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust stakeholder said at the HCC roundtable that there was a *"risk that we are unable to hang on to what works, and successful partnerships are undone by structural changes."*

Voluntary and community Partnerships

There was praise for the strength and value of voluntary sector relationships with local councils, noting their impact on trust, service delivery, and community engagement. Citizens Advice St Albans District mentioned the strong relationships with St Albans City and District Council, and Community Action Dacorum (CAD) praised its strong ties with both Dacorum Borough Council and county adult social care, noting these relationships *"foster trust"* and enable the voluntary sector to contribute to *"service delivery and policy discussions."* A stakeholder from HCC added that *"lots of community leaders are already linked in with parish and town councils,"* so they should be part of the strategic picture. Watford Town Centre BID reflected positively on its multi-agency collaborations, stating that there was benefit from partnerships that *"bring together different skills, perspectives, and resources"* to deliver.

Education and Community Engagement Links

North Herts College said they had *"spent time building good relationships with Stevenage Borough Council,"* calling it *"a good example of partnership working."* They warned that LGR must not *"scupper existing strategies and development plans."*

Analysis

Stakeholders were clear that the success of services across Hertfordshire depends on maintaining and scaling the partnerships that already work. Various sector organisations emphasised their strong relationships with borough councils. There was a consensus that these partnerships are built on trust, responsiveness, and local knowledge, and that they would be difficult to replicate quickly under a new structure if disrupted. Several stakeholders also flagged more formalised partnerships, such as those under the Hertfordshire Growth Board and business improvement districts (BIDs), as valuable mechanisms that blend strategic alignment with local adaptability. Beyond organisational links, several stakeholders identified joint commissioning, co-location of services, and shared use of community assets as practical aspects of partnership. Views shared included that reorganisation should not start from scratch but must take care to retain the partnerships that already deliver outcomes for residents.

Q5. What opportunities do you see arising from this change?

Responses to this saw stakeholders often balancing potential benefits with risks. Key themes included streamlined service delivery, opportunities for growth and scale, and enhanced cross-area collaboration.

Streamlining and Efficiency

Many stakeholders viewed reorganisation as a route to more coherent and joined up public services. DENS described it as *"a chance to unify and align services and funding streams,*

reducing duplication", stating that services should be *"better linked with adult social care and public health,"* due to the complex, multi-agency needs of clients. At a meeting in North Herts, stakeholders stressed the opportunity of services becoming *"preventative rather than reactive, due to being able to pool resources."* The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority pointed to "streamlined planning processes," while an ICB representative noted the potential for *"working more effectively with available resources"* and co-located delivery models. A Business stakeholder in Watford also welcomed the idea of *"quicker decision-making politically."*

Improved Use of Data and Digital Opportunities

Stakeholders also hoped for a smarter, more data-driven approach. B3Living wanted greater emphasis on *"using data to drive understanding"* and *"working on outcomes."* One NHS Trust representative hoped for *"more / better shared data,"* and an HCC business stakeholder noted opportunities in *"detailed cost modelling"* and *"using data to identify efficiencies."*

Digital transformation was also highlighted. At a Welwyn panel, residents wanted "improved use of digital tools and communication" to enhance sustainability and service tracking. Welwyn Garden City BID saw value in *"smarter town centre management using real-time data (e.g., footfall, parking usage)"* to shape decisions and enhance the visitor experience.

Inward Investment and Wider Strategic Planning

In North Herts, there was optimism about *"creatively"* regenerating towns and unlocking *"local regeneration opportunities."* In Watford, stakeholders said the town's *"proximity to London"* meant cross-border growth and population trends must be actively considered.

Other Opportunities Noted
- **Expanded Reach and Growth for the Voluntary Sector**
- **Enhanced Community Empowerment and Local Models**

Analysis

Stakeholders identified a range of opportunities arising from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). These were generally pragmatic and focused on service design, delivery, prevention instead of reaction and system integration, rather than structural reform alone. The most consistently cited opportunity was the chance to streamline services, reduce duplication, and create more coherent referral and casework pathways. It was noted that these benefits would only be realised through thoughtful implementation and sustained local partnership. Central among the opportunities was the potential to streamline services and integrate delivery across housing, health, and social care, particularly for residents with complex or overlapping needs.

Looking ahead, some stakeholders saw the reorganisation as a catalyst for economic renewal and local empowerment. While some views were cautious, there was an aspiration that if reorganisation is shaped well, it could create a more connected, responsive and forward-looking local government for Hertfordshire.

Q6. What innovations or changes would you like to see in how services are delivered?

Stakeholders proposed a wide range of innovations, often focused on digital transformation, co-location, community involvement, and streamlined access. The voluntary sector made the most detailed contributions.

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Digital Access and Integrated Systems

Digital transformation was again a strong theme across stakeholder input. Community Action Dacorum proposed *"shared service platforms"* and *"online social meeting opportunities."* *"Streamlining of portals for residents to use"* was also noted at a North Herts roundtable, with a comment that the current system is *"too many and probably confusing."* At a Welwyn panel, participants saw potential in *"a single, user-friendly digital platform"* to support housing and council services. Watford stakeholders suggested *"greater use of digital tools and real-time data,"* while one St Albans respondent said changes could *"release the investment needed"* to deliver better digital services at scale.

Co-location and Shared Delivery Hubs

Some stakeholders backed physically aligning services and systems to improve delivery. DENS advocated for *"shared data protocols and systems,"* citing INFORM CRM from the homelessness sector. A North Herts roundtable supported aligning *"front and back end of services,"* currently split across tiers. In East Herts, co-location was suggested for benefits systems, noting that *"revs and bens being in one place will be more accessible."*

Simplification and Standardisation

Several stakeholders sought clarity and consistency in the system. A Three Rivers stakeholder from the MoD said they wanted *"a simpler system – confusing if you don't work in the council."* At an HCC education roundtable, it was noted that *"working with fewer councils would be more straightforward."* At the HCC Health roundtable, a stakeholder called for *"more consistency and standardisation across housing, employment and community assets such as leisure services."*

Analysis

Stakeholders proposed a wide-ranging and at times detailed set of innovations they would like to see in future service delivery, regardless of governance structure. Stakeholders saw the proposed reorganisation as a chance to introduce more integrated, responsive, and community-led models of delivery. Across the board, there was interest in using digital innovation to streamline access and unlock real-time coordination between services. Some envisioned a unified *"front door"* model, underpinned by shared platforms and data protocols that reduce duplication and support proactive outreach. This was particularly important to voluntary organisations working with vulnerable residents.

Q7. What concerns or risks do you see with Local Government Reorganisation?

Concerns covered loss of local accountability, disruption to services and financial strain.

Loss of Local Accountability and Knowledge

Some stakeholders stated that reorganisation could erode local insight and relationships. B3Living questioned whether the *"loss of personal relationships and hyper-local knowledge"* would reduce service effectiveness. Everyone Active in Watford echoed this, warning of the *"loss of local inputs",* and Watford BID raised fears that local distinctiveness might be diluted as decision-making becomes *"more centralised or less connected."* A Dacorum Public Service stakeholder similarly expressed concern that larger structures might result in *"risk of losing local community connection and decision-making as structures become larger and more distant."*

Service Disruption During Transition

Transition periods were seen as a risk. A stakeholder from LSH Investment Management warned of a *"pause in decision making/investment"* during restructuring and stakeholders in

North Herts warned against a *"period of inertia."* Sunnyside Rural Trust stressed the danger of *"potential disruption to adult social care services… which could negatively affect vulnerable people."* Citizens Advice services, including from St Albans and Broxbourne likewise cautioned that *"reorganisation demands significant officer time for governance, IT integration and policy harmonisation, diverting capacity away from casework."*

Financial Strain and Unexpected Costs

Some stakeholders questioned whether LGR would deliver long-term savings. A Dacorum stakeholder said, *"promised savings… may be short-lived,"* and expressed concern that there could be *"rapidly increasing council tax bills"* for town councils. Three Rivers stakeholders worried that the focus would shift *"on cost savings and not on services."* Broxbourne stakeholder B3Living questioned whether savings would *"be fed back into the new authorities or… reduced by the government."*

Analysis

Stakeholders raised concerns about reorganisation, with common themes including the potential loss of local insight, disruption to services during transition and financial uncertainty. Many stressed the importance of preserving local insight and relationships, noting that these could be harder to maintain within larger structures. The transition period was seen as a time of potential disruption, with risks of paused investment, diverted officer capacity, and short-term challenges for services such as adult social care. While not seen as insurmountable, these issues were flagged as areas requiring clear planning and coordination.

There were also questions around whether financial savings would be realised in practice, with concerns that cost reductions could come at the expense of service quality or lead to higher pressures on town and parish councils. Looking ahead, many stressed the need to support collaboration across any new boundaries, with early relationship-building and coordination seen as key to maintaining effective local services.

Q8. Do you have a specific recommendation with regards to reorganisation?

Stakeholders were invited to make specific recommendations in relation to Hertfordshire's proposed Local Government Reorganisation. While plenty of respondents declined to express a view, others provided direct preferences between the potential models for reorganisation, including two-unitary, three-unitary, or four-unitary structures, or reflected on specific design and delivery principles that any model should accommodate.

Resident Engagement Data

1. Are you responding as a

| Responding as	Respondents (By number)	Respondents (By percentage)
Resident in Hertfordshire	6342	89%
Member of staff for district, borough or county council within Hertfordshire	357	5%
Councillor (District/Borough)	57	>1%
Member of staff for a town or parish council within Hertfordshire	53	>1%
Charity	53	>1%
Councillor (Parish)	40	>1%
Community group	29	>1%
Voluntary organisation	24	>1%
Other public body	221	>1%
Micro business (0–9 employees)	20	>1%
Councillor (Town)	17	>1%
Small business (10–49 employees)	13	>1%
Councillor (County)	11	>1%
Large business (250+ employees)	8	>1%
Other	93	1%

2. Which council area do you live in?

council area of respondent	Respondents (By number)	Respondents (By percentage)
Broxbourne Borough Council	353	5%
Dacorum Borough Council	846	12%

East Hertfordshire District Council	680	10%
Hertsmere Borough Council	378	5%
North Herts District Council	691	10%
St Albans City and District Council	1073	15%
Stevenage Borough Council	388	5%
Three Rivers District Council	810	11%
Watford Borough Council	727	10%
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council	1048	15%
I live outside Hertfordshire – (Please specify your relationship to Hertfordshire, if you have a role/business within Hertfordshire please note in which council area this resides)	159	2%

3. How much do you know about the Government's plans to make changes to local councils, called Local Government Reorganisation?

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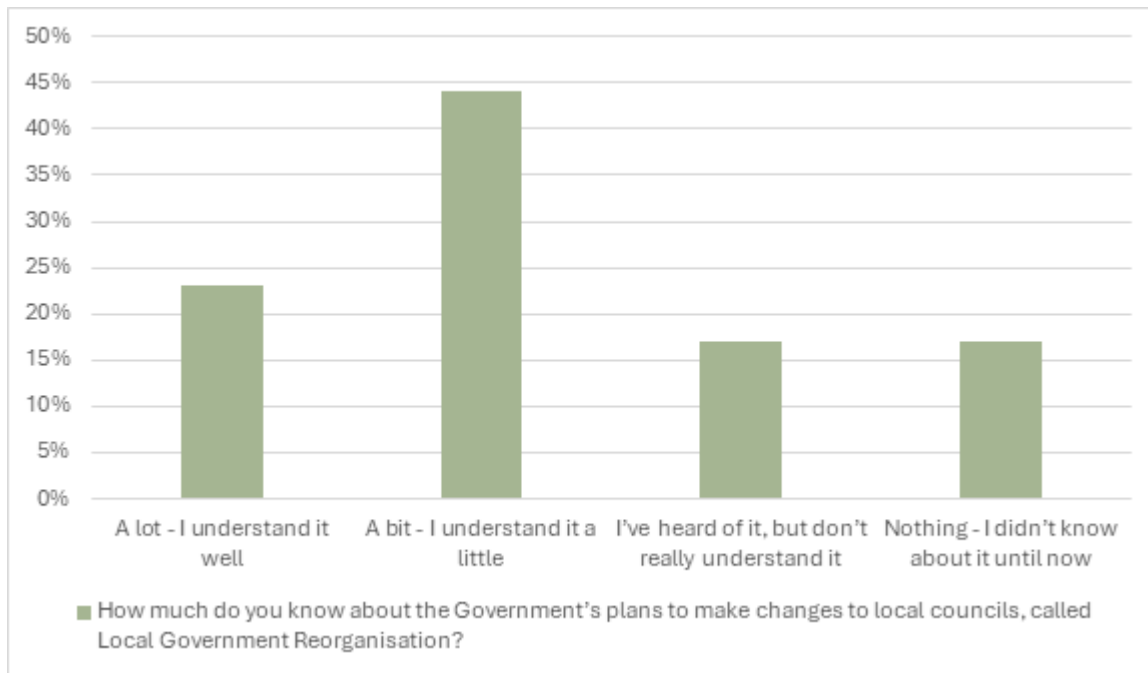
Results: 23% (1558): A lot – I understand it well, 44% (3067): A bit – I understand it a little, 17% (1148): I've heard of it, but don't really understand it, 17% (1141): Nothing – I didn't know about it until now

Most Hertfordshire residents came into the survey with at least some awareness of the Government's Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) plans, but detailed understanding was limited. When asked about their knowledge of these proposals, a large majority had heard of them, though many admitted they didn't grasp the specifics. In the survey, over four in five participants (around 83%) indicated they had heard about LGR in some form. This suggests that general publicity or word-of-mouth about the reorganisation had reached a broad number of respondents, with the caveat that those answering the survey are much more likely to have been informed, especially if they came to the survey on their own accord.

However, familiarity did not always equate to understanding. In fact, only about 23% felt they knew "a lot" about the plans, saying they understood LGR well. A further group, roughly 44%, said they knew "a bit" and understood it a little. This was the largest group, indicating that while most people knew of LGR, their knowledge was still limited. They might have been aware that some kind of council changes were being discussed but not the details of the options or implications. Given that submissions on specific plans are yet to take place, this is unsurprising; however, 67% having at least some knowledge of LGR shows a decent awareness across respondents.

Meanwhile, a significant minority confessed to very low awareness. Approximately 17% of respondents answered "Nothing – I didn't know about it until now." An additional group of around 17% had only heard of it and "don't really understand it." Taken together, roughly a third of respondents had little to no prior knowledge of LGR before engaging with the survey. This does show a success in the survey reaching those who were not previously engaged by promoting it through various channels.

It's worth noting that those responding as council staff had a notably higher knowledge base for LGR in Hertfordshire, as might be expected, with just 1% of staff members saying they didn't know anything about it and 95% saying they had at least some understanding of LGR, showing a good level of staff engagement.

4. Which of these services are most important to you?

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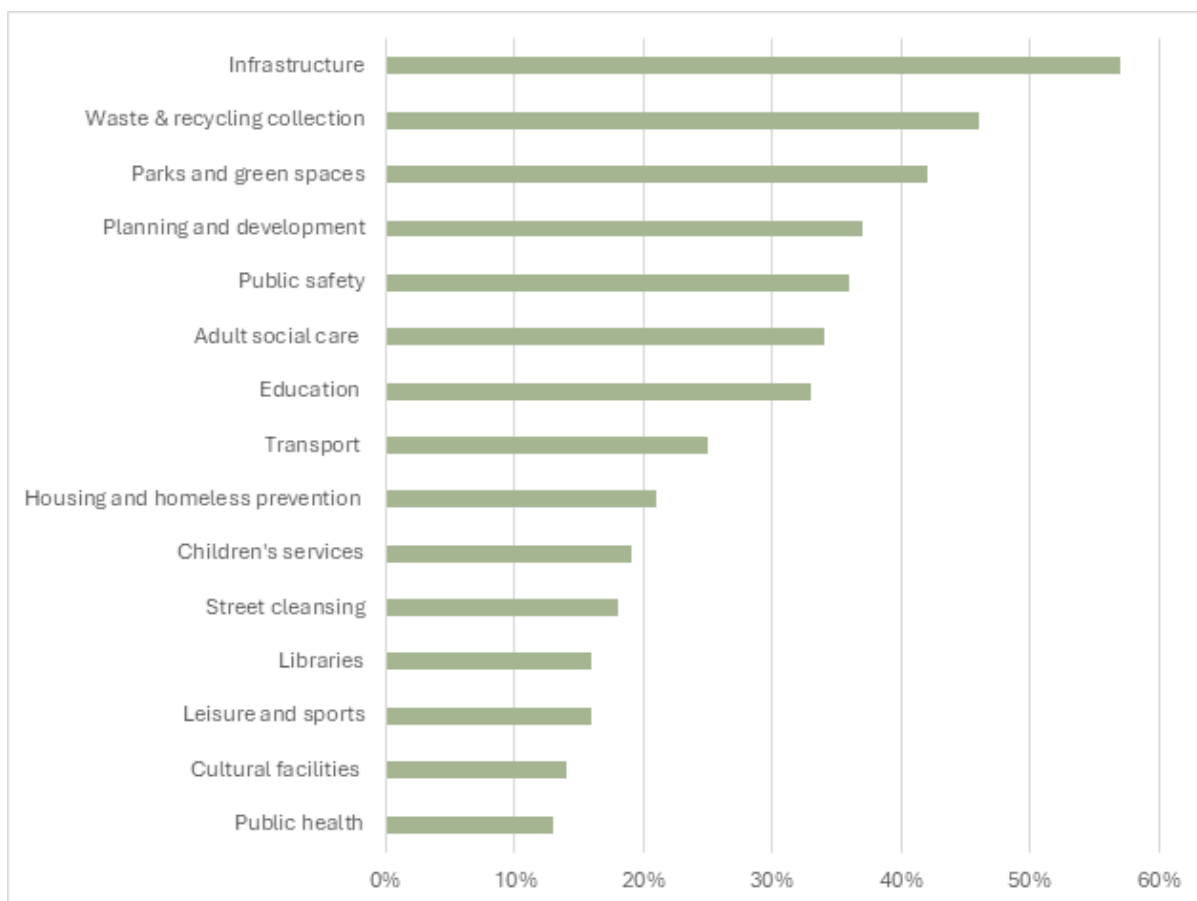
Results: 57% (3735): Infrastructure (e.g. local road repairs, pavement/footpath repairs, streetlights), 46% (2970): Waste and recycling collections, 42%(2765) Parks and green spaces, 37% (2433): Planning and development (e.g. planning applications, planning enforcement, building control/safety, protecting old buildings, local development plans), 36% (2378): Public safety (e.g. Fire and rescue, Community Safety, Neighbourhoods), 34% (2217): Adult social care (e.g. support for older people, adults with physical or learning disabilities, mental health needs, or long-term conditions; residential care; home care; supported living), 33% (2179): Education (e.g. school admissions, transport, special educational need provision, 25% (1611): Transport (e.g. buses), 21% (1391): Housing and homeless prevention (e.g. affordable/social housing), 19% (1246): Children's services (e.g. looked-after children, those with special educational needs or disability, fostering or adoption), 18% (1147): Street cleansing, 16% (1072): Leisure and sports (e.g. leisure centres), 16% (1062): Libraries, 14% (884): Cultural facilities (e.g. theatres, museums), 13% (875): Public health (e.g. drug or alcohol dependency support, sexual health services, health improvement programmes)

When residents were asked to select *which, local services are most important to them*, several clear priorities emerged. The survey allowed people to pick up to five services from a list covering the broad range of council responsibilities. The results show that residents gravitate toward the fundamental, day-to-day services that affect all communities. Maintaining local infrastructure and cleanliness, and core people-focused services, topped the list of priorities.

Infrastructure (e.g. local road repairs, pavement/footpath repairs, streetlights) was the most frequently selected service, with 57% of respondents selecting this. Alongside this, public transport (such as bus services) also featured, though slightly less prominently, with 25% of respondents selecting it. This suggests that while residents value transport, they placed even more weight on the physical upkeep of roads and highways that councils manage. Comments in the consultation echoed this emphasis: numerous respondents mentioned fixing roads as a key improvement they want to see, underscoring infrastructure's top-tier importance.

Another top service priority was waste collection and recycling. "Waste and recycling collections" was one of the most commonly chosen options by residents, selected by 46%. This reflects that refuse collection is a universal service everyone relies on weekly. People tend to notice immediately if bins aren't collected or if recycling services change, so it makes sense that this service was front-of-mind. In open-text feedback, residents frequently brought up waste services. The high ranking of waste management in the survey results confirms that residents view this as essential to their quality of life and the image of their neighbourhoods.

It's also worth noting which services were less commonly selected as top tier. More specialised services, for example public health and leisure facilities, were chosen by fewer respondents. This doesn't mean they're unimportant, but in a prioritisation exercise, average residents likely view them as more peripheral to their daily lives. Leisure and cultural facilities (parks, libraries, museums, sports centres) received a moderate level of interest. Many did pick parks and open spaces as important, ranking third at 42%, but these tended to rank just below the critical infrastructure and care services. Various comments from people who directly engaged with more specialised services did show that for those who use them they do remain important functions of local government in Hertfordshire, for example culture and leisure facilities attracted a number of mentions in open text answers.

5. What overall impact, if any, do you think would come from councils in Hertfordshire being joined with other neighbouring councils, in regard to services and value for money?
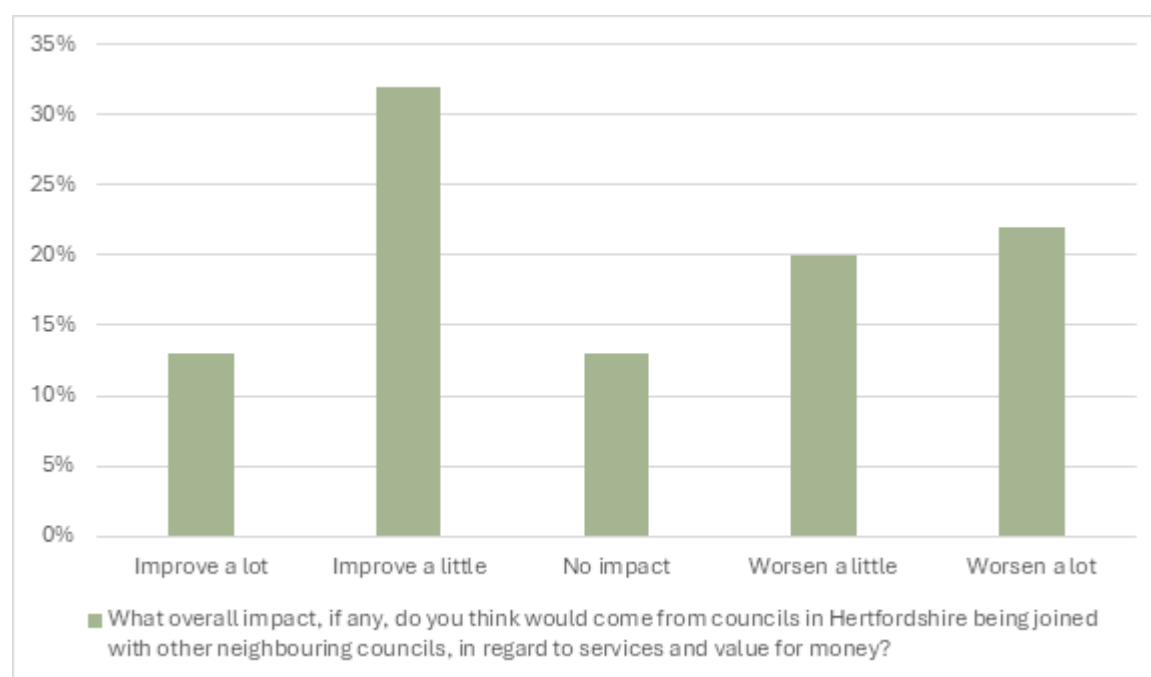
Results: 13% (670): Improve a lot, 32% (1723): Improve a little, 13% (684): No impact, 20% (1074): Worsen a little, 22% (1153): Worsen a lot

Opinion is divided on the likely overall impact of joining Hertfordshire's councils together, especially regarding service outcomes and value for money. When residents were asked whether merging councils would improve or worsen services and value, responses spanned the spectrum. However, the largest single group was cautiously optimistic, and a plurality anticipated an improvement, which is a positive early sign for views on LGR in Hertfordshire. At the same time, a substantial portion feared a negative impact. This split viewpoint underscores the community's uncertainty and the balance of hope vs. concern regarding reorganisation.

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In quantitative terms, about 45% of respondents expected some level of improvement in services and value for money if councils were merged. Within this, more people leaned to mild optimism rather than dramatic gains – the most common answer was "Improve a little." Residents choosing this option seem to think there would be efficiencies or service enhancements, but not major improvements. On the other side, roughly 42% of respondents anticipated a negative impact on services and value for money. The concerns driving these views mirror the earlier question on worries: people are concerned about bureaucratic upheaval, loss of local focus, and transitional pains leading to service decline.

Meanwhile, about **1 in 10 residents predicted no impact**. These individuals presumably feel that services might continue at status quo levels, and any financial efficiencies could balance out against implementation costs, resulting in a net neutral effect.

Overall, these results, with a plurality expecting improvements, show cautious optimism, which is a hopeful outcome in the current political climate where residents can lean to being sceptical or dismissive.

6. What potential benefits of this reorganisation would be most important to you? Please select your top three priorities?
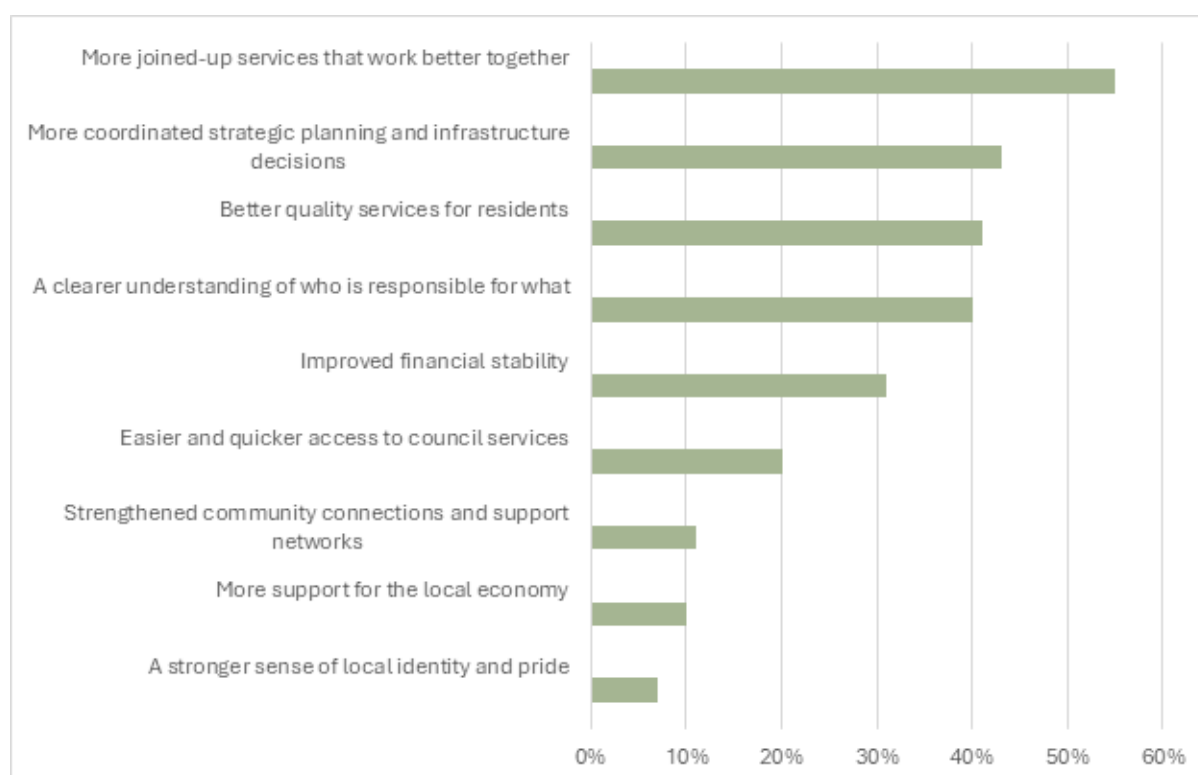
Results: 55%(2721): More joined up services that work better together, 43%(2120): More coordinated strategic planning and infrastructure decisions, 41%(2013): Better quality services for residents, 40%(1976): A clearer understanding of who is responsible for what, 31%(1536): Improved financial stability, 20%(996): Easier and quicker access to council services, 11%(528): Strengthened community connections and support networks, 10%(489): More support for the local economy, 7%(365): A stronger sense of local identity and pride

When asked to select the most important potential benefits of LGR, residents' choices shed light on what they value most in the prospect of change. The survey invited people to pick their top three potential benefits from a list, and the pattern of responses reveals a clear emphasis on practical improvements for residents and communities. In particular, benefits related to service quality, coordinated planning, and financial prudence ranked highest, alongside a desire for clearer governance.

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The top priority benefit, chosen by a 55% of respondents, was the prospect of "More joined up services that work better together." Residents appreciate that a unitary council could coordinate services seamlessly. This was reflected also in the second most chosen priority "More coordinated strategic planning and infrastructure decisions." The idea that housing, planning, and social services could collaborate more easily under one roof, or waste collection and street cleaning could be managed in tandem, was seen as a priority for residents. The importance of "joined up" working reflects frustrations with the current siloed system. By selecting these as the top potential benefits, people are saying they value integration and coordination, they hope to see less fragmentation leading to smoother service delivery.

Better quality services for residents was also a priority for 41% of residents. This echoes the qualitative feedback: many people will judge the reform on whether day to day services like road maintenance, waste collection, social care, etc. actually get better. The importance of service quality came through strongly; it was a principal yardstick for many respondents when envisioning benefits.

Another major potential benefit identified by 40% of respondents was "a clearer understanding of who is responsible for what." This was one of the most popular picks on the list and explicitly mentioned in a number of comments which stated this could both help residents and improve accountability. "Improved financial stability" was listed by 31% of respondents with many referencing efficient use of funds in comments as well as economies of scale and reduced duplication.

Benefits related to community and local identity were further down the priority list. "A stronger sense of local identity and pride" was selected by 7% of respondents, and "strengthened community connections and support networks" being selected by 11%, suggesting a focus by respondents on practical improvements on service delivery, coordination and efficiency in the LGR process.

7. What opportunities and improvements would you like to see come from Local Government Reorganisation?

This question offered respondents the opportunity to use an open text box to encourage respondents, even if sceptical of LGR, to say what they would want to see from the upcoming reorganisation. Residents offered a wide range of aspirations for how reorganising local government might improve public services and governance in Hertfordshire. Feedback to this question revealed several key themes covering both aspirations for tangible benefits in day-to-day services as well as broader structural gains. Many respondents hoped reorganisation would lead to more efficient delivery of services, elimination of duplication, and better value for money. Others highlighted the chance to simplify the system, making councils easier to understand and access, while still preserving local identity and accountability under any new structure. The following analysis explores these themes in turn, using respondents' own words to illustrate their expectations.

Most common words from answers to above question

Improved Service Delivery and Quality

A prominent theme was the expectation that services would be better integrated and improved under a new unitary system. Residents envisage councils working in a more joined up way, ending the current fragmentation of responsibilities. The idea of reducing the postcode lottery came up: by reorganising councils, residents believe service standards could be made more consistent across the county. One St Albans resident said they hoped for *"Better and more integrated services being available to local communities - less of a postcode lottery for services,"* likewise a Three Rivers resident said they wanted *"Aligned services, without 'postcode lottery' imbalances"* and a Dacorum resident said they wanted *"Less postcode lottery"* but caveated that they don't expect *"much to take effect until 3+ years post reorganisation as it will take time for the new structure to bed in and deliver services to a wider audience."*

This demonstrated a hope shown by various respondents that a streamlined council structure could direct resources to enhance service quality, with larger unitary authorities better able to coordinate improvements across multiple areas. In this line of thinking, some also felt that services could become more accessible, for instance, by pooling resources; new councils might offer a single point of contact for various services. Overall, residents' comments show optimism that reorganisation could *"enhance community services due to larger budgets – even if you have to travel further to access them"*, as one St Albans resident noted, believing bigger councils could deliver a more consistent level of services county-wide. A number of respondents used the word 'equity' to describe what they hope can be done on service delivery across Hertfordshire, like East Herts resident who envisioned *"Greater equity of services across the county."* Naturally, some felt they might be on the other side of a levelling of service delivery, like a St Albans resident who opposed LGR because they believed *"taxes raised locally should only be spent locally. Not redistributed."*

A Watford resident who formerly worked at HCC said success would look like *"financial efficiency to avoid so much of our taxes are spent on providing services by the current 10 local councils repetitively. including by expensive 3rd party providers with less than effective contract management"*. By simplifying the structure, residents hoped they would no longer be bounced between county and district authorities when seeking help.

Simplification, Accountability and Communication

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Another clear opportunity in respondents' eyes is the simplification of local government. People welcomed the prospect of a more straightforward system replacing the current two-tier (county/district) arrangement, which some described as confusing or inefficient. A common refrain was that having fewer councils could eliminate redundant bureaucracy. One Broxbourne resident advocated to *"eliminate duplication to cut waste to improve efficiency."* This desire to remove overlapping functions and departments was echoed across few submissions that see the merger of councils as a chance to streamline back-office operations and administration. In turn, they expect this to make the council easier to deal with. As a Three Rivers resident in the survey said, *"clarity that one council is responsible for everything rather than, as now, buck-passing between tiers."* This was reflected in a number of respondents' comments who hoped for a *"less confusing structure"* (Welwyn Hatfield resident), *"lines of responsibility would be less confusing and more straightforward making access to services easier and more efficient"* (Dacorum resident), *"At present, it can be confusing for people to know whether [HCC] or their local district/borough council is responsible for certain services. Under a unitary model, I would hope to see clearer accountability and more resources made available to different departments across the council, leading to more efficient and effective service delivery."* (Broxbourne resident).

In line with a better understanding of responsibilities in local government, respondents mentioned improved accountability as a hoped-for outcome. Some are frustrated by the diffusion of responsibility in the two-tier system, described by many respondents as *"passing the buck"* between county and boroughs/districts. Reorganisation is seen as a chance to establish clear lines of accountability. This came through in numerous comments, like a Hertsmere resident who called for *"Clearer accountability – one council responsible for all services, so residents know who to contact."* This clarity of responsibility is hoped to not only reduce confusion but also to drive better performance: if one authority can be held to account for outcomes, it has stronger incentives to deliver. One Stevenage resident termed this as an opportunity for *"One council responsible for everything so no arguments on who's responsible for what."* This shows a desire for transparency and straightforward governance. In addition, a few respondents connected accountability with better communication, one Watford resident hoping that LGR *"will make communication…better."* Communication was mentioned in various contexts:

- **Communication from local government to residents** (*"Improved listening to, consultation with, and communications with individual residents and communities by the Unitary Authorities."* - St Albans resident)
- **More uniform messaging across authorities** (*"More joined up communication generally"* - Watford resident)
- **Communication between councils** (*"Better communication and access between all services and Councils"* - Three Rivers resident)
- **Communication between the Unitary Authorities and Town and Parish councils** (*"better communication with Parish and Town councils perhaps through Neighbourhood Committees"* - Three Rivers resident)

Financial Efficiency and Value for Money

Financial improvements were at the forefront of some residents' minds. A large number of respondents hope that reorganisation will produce cost savings and better value for money in local government. The prospect of reducing overheads by combining councils was frequently mentioned. *"Significant savings over time. More joined up services for residents,"* one Dacorum resident commented, linking financial efficiency with service integration. Others spoke in terms of cutting waste: by merging structures, councils could spend less on management and administration, freeing up funds for frontline services or allowing a reduction in council tax. Indeed, lower council tax was an improvement some unsurprisingly, wished to see. A number of respondents explicitly wrote that they hoped for their council tax bill to decrease if duplication is eliminated. *"a big cost saving that is then passed on to*

residents as a reduction of council taxes" (Hertsmere resident) *"Efficiency in delivery of services and reduced Council taxes"* (Stevenage resident) *"Reduced council taxes"* (North Herts resident).

Many respondents raised taxes in the context of them being spent more efficiently rather than being decreased, or both in tandem, showing that for many, taxes and services were tied together; and it isn't just a case of wanting less taxes or less tax increases, but wanting to see their money used more effectively. *"A lowering of council taxes, and a more efficient use of funds"* (Dacorum resident) *"Better use of council taxes and avoid…increasing it. Speedy delivery of projects and streamline decision making and approval processes."* (Watford resident), *"Better management of the council taxes collected."* (St Albans resident). Some respondents explicitly mentioned reducing bureaucracy: *"A reduction in bureaucracy and better-quality services for residents"* was the hope of one St Albans respondent, tying streamlined governance to service outcomes.

Strategic Planning and County-Wide Coordination

Many residents said one benefit that should be aimed for would be 'joined up' service, sometimes naming specific services they want to see a more collaborative approach to. Many comments named infrastructure, often in tandem with other public services, and notably transport, as an area they would like to see LGR bring about joined up planning: *"More joined up working i.e. between housing and care services"* (staff member in Local government from Stevenage), *"More joined up services with better communication so things run smoother"* (Watford resident*), "more joined up thinking between departments i.e. councils and highways"* (North Herts resident), *"Better joined up services and better transport links throughout Hertfordshire"* (Watford resident), *"Better joined up infrastructure planning and new developments"*(Welwyn Hatfield resident), *"More joined up services i.e. recycling and waste"* (Broxbourne resident). *"More joined up working with social services and trading standards for the benefit of services and residents"* (local Government staff member*) "Joined up thinking, pooled resources and talent. Joined up ideas on infrastructure, planning and development for housing and town planning development."* (North Herts resident) *"Better joined up services. and fix the infrastructure."* (Welwyn Hatfield resident), *"More joined up planning for housing, health services and the infrastructure to support this, schools, roads, doctors etc"* (Hertsmere resident), *"unitised management of roads (parking, highways, transport all joined up)"* (St Albans resident). *"More joined up planning for large housing and infrastructure. Make sure there are enough Transport staff."* (Local government staff member from Dacorum). *"More joined up working with the highways and planning teams in the planning application process."* (Three Rivers resident).

In the above comments, respondents also looked at the reorganisation as a chance to improve long-term planning and coordination across the whole of Hertfordshire. In the current system, planning for infrastructure, housing, transport and other cross-boundary issues can be seen to be fragmented among different councils. Residents see value in having larger authorities that cover wider areas, believing this would enable *"More coordinated strategic planning"* (Dacorum resident). This reflects an expectation that big challenges, from road networks and public transport to housing development and environmental management, could be addressed more effectively when dealt with at a larger geographic scale. The feedback included comments about consistency in planning and policy: with fewer councils, policies could be aligned so that neighbouring communities work toward common goals instead of potentially pulling in different directions. A resident from Watford (in a different question) argued that planning at a broader scale is essential to avoid *"fragmented or siloed approaches."*

Community Identity and Local Representation

Some residents also stressed that reorganisation must respect community identities and maintain local representation, and some saw opportunities for improvement on this front as well. Some said the new councils should be designed around natural communities and be

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able to work in *"functional areas,"* (North Herts resident) and wanting the aim to be to foster *"A strong sense of local identity and pride"* (Three Rivers resident). On the other hand, some respondents were concerned about losing the very local touch they value; hence, they noted that systems should be put in place to preserve local input, for example on Dacorum resident who opposed LGR as they didn't want to lose *"local identity."* Some suggested empowering or creating more town and parish councils more, under the new structure, to ensure grassroots voices are heard – effectively using reorganisation to improve the democratic link to communities. A Dacorum resident called for *"Devolution of genuinely local low level services to town & parish level,"* a sentiment reflected in a few comments; *"Formation of Parish Council for St Albans"* (St Albans resident), *"Parking is very much a local issue and should be devolved to the town/parish council level"* (St Albans resident), *"Parish councils having broader responsibility"* (Hertsmere resident), *"Better funding for each parish and town councils to administer. More power to Parish and town councils for planning decisions"* (East Herts Town Councillor), *"More power and funding devolved to local parish councils"* (Three Rivers resident), *"better communication with town and parish councils who know how our local residents feel"* (East Herts Parish Councillor), *"devolution of more services to the lower tier (town/parish councils) making them easier to access"* (St Albans resident).

8. What concerns you the most when thinking about Local Government Reorganisation?
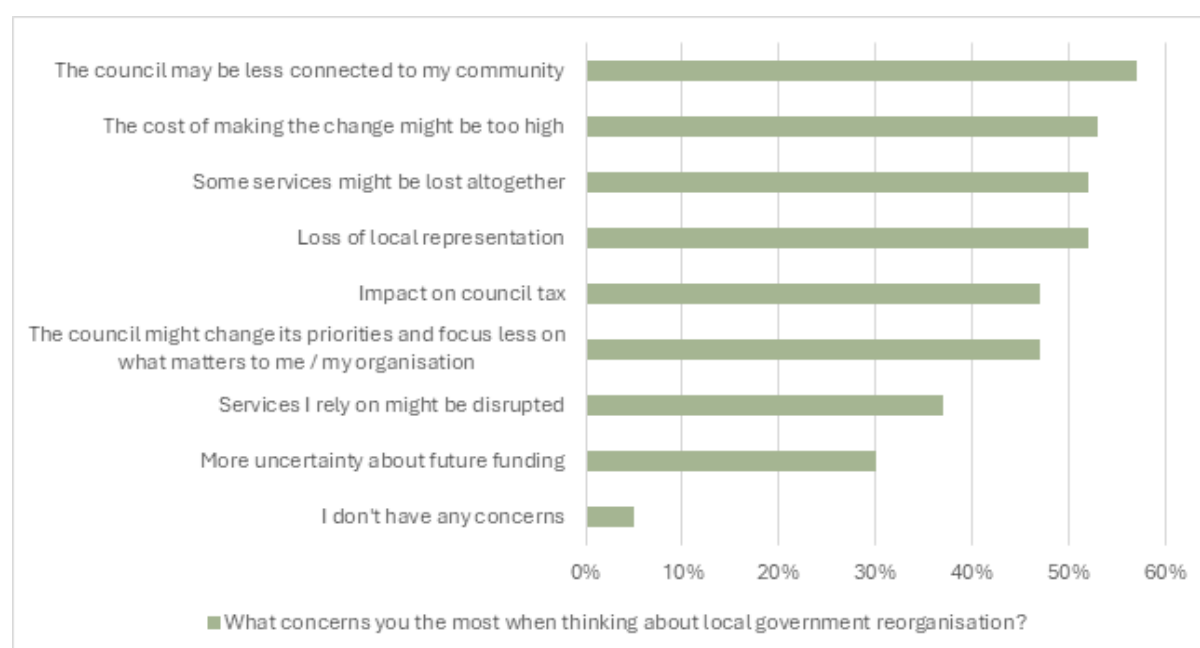
Results: 57% (2855): The council may be less connected to my community, 53% (2671): The cost of making the change might be too high, 52% (2600): Some services might be lost altogether, 52% (2595): Loss of local representation, 47% (2344): Impact on council tax, 47% (2369): The council might change its priorities and focus less on what matters to me / my organisation, 37% (1829): Services I rely on might be disrupted, 30% (1486): More uncertainty about future funding, 5% (245): I don't have any concerns

When asked to choose their top concern, respondents spread their concerns somewhat evenly across the given options, although concern about council being less connected to communities (57%) was the most selected concern, with loss of local representation (52%) and that council might change its priorities and focus less on what matters to the respondent (47%) also being a notable concern. Currently, with district and borough councils, residents have councillors who focus on relatively small communities. If those councils are merged into large unitary authorities, people worry that their town or village might have fewer councillors or be a smaller fish in a bigger pond.

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A concern registered by the majority (53%) of respondents was also the financial cost of implementing the change. People are concerned that millions could be spent on merging councils would ultimately come out of taxpayers' pockets without commensurate benefit. In other words, residents fear wasting money on the process itself. This concern often came paired with scepticism about the promised savings. This was also evident in the 47% who were concerned of the impact on council tax.

Loss (52%) and disruption (37%) to services were registered as concerns, although it should be noted people were more concerned over losing services rather than the disruption of services. Residents fear that in the process of merging councils, with new structures, staff changes, essential services might falter or disappear, even if temporarily. For example, one Dacorum resident in a free-text comment voiced anxiety that a complicated reorganisation will mean *"There will be a huge cost to implement the reorganisation and I don't think any one of the benefits above is more important than the others that would justify the cost and disruption."*

It's notable that only a small minority, around 5%, said *"I don't have any concerns"* about reorganisation. The vast majority do have at least one significant concern, underlining that while people see opportunities, and the plurality of respondent expect improvements, they are also quite apprehensive and do expect some cost, temporary or permanent, to reorganisation.

9. What is your gender?

Gender	Male	Female	Prefer not to say	Prefer to self-describe
Respondents (By number)	2146	2406	252	20
Respondents (By percentage)	44%	50%	5%	0%

10. What is your age group?

Age Group	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Prefer not to say
Respondents (By number)	12	108	377	695	920	1059	959	554	246
Respondents (By percentage)	0%	2%	8%	14%	19%	21%	19%	11%	5%

11. What is your ethnic group?

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Ethnic group	Asian or Asian British	Black, African, Caribbean or Black British	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	White (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, or British)	White (Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Roma, or other White group)	Other ethnic group	Prefer not to say
Respondents (By number)	135	58	79	3807	245	92	483
Respondents (By percentage)	3%	1%	2%	78%	5%	2%	10%

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE

PROPOSAL FOR TWO UNITARY AUTHORITIES

V3 draft - last saved 6th November 2025

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Proposal for two unitaries

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Foreword:

Hertfordshire is a county defined by its vibrant communities, rich heritage, and a shared ambition for a better future. From dynamic towns to tranquil villages, residents take pride in where they live and care deeply about the public services that support their wellbeing. Yet, for many, the current structure of local government feels complex and remote leading to confusion over responsibilities, duplication of effort, and delays in accessing support.

This proposal sets out a clear and confident vision for change. By transitioning from eleven councils to two new unitary authorities—East and West Hertfordshire—we can create a system that is simpler to navigate, more responsive to local needs, and better equipped to deliver high-quality services.

This is not merely a structural reform; it is a people-centred transformation. It is about ensuring that children receive the support they need to thrive, that older residents can live with dignity and independence, and that families facing hardship are not left behind. It is about preserving what works, addressing what doesn't, and building a system that places residents at its heart.

We have listened carefully to our communities, businesses, and partners. They have told us they want councils that are rooted in their local areas, that understand the unique needs of their residents, and that work collaboratively to solve problems. They want services that are joined-up, accessible, and fair. And they want change that is safe, not disruptive.

The two-unitary model delivers on these expectations. It simplifies governance, generates financial efficiencies that can be reinvested in frontline services, and strengthens the connection between councils and the communities they serve. It is a model built on local identity, shared ambition, and a deep commitment to making Hertfordshire the best it can be—for everyone who lives here.

This is a pivotal moment for Hertfordshire. A moment to shape a future that is easier to understand, more responsive to local priorities, and ready to meet the challenges ahead. We believe this proposal offers the clearest, safest, and most resident-focused path forward—and we are proud to present it on behalf of the people of Hertfordshire.

Overview of Proposal: Two new councils, a fresh start for Hertfordshire

This proposal, backed by solid evidence and local insight, makes a clear case for change: creating two new councils is the best way to deliver a stronger, simpler and more sustainable future for Hertfordshire. This includes extensive engagement[1] with residents, stakeholders and partners across Hertfordshire, where the two unitary authority (2UA) model received broad support for its simplicity, strategic coherence and alignment with existing service footprints.

Framed around three core principles – Stronger, Safer, Simpler - the model sets out how two unitaries working alongside a new Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA), will best deliver key services and act as a catalyst for bold public service reform to improve them further. By simplifying and unifying services, this will deliver simpler access and navigation by residents and enable greater integration and innovation, building on the strengths of the current 11 councils and other public, voluntary and community sector partners.

The two new unitaries will work closely with the communities they serve, harnessing their knowledge, skills and lived experiences to better understand and respond to the issues that matter most to residents. Together they will provide the scale, resilience and sustainability to act efficiently and consistently across their places.

With lower overheads and much greater economies of scale compared to the other models, the two new unitary model will cost significantly less to run, releasing £50m-£55m each year to protect frontline services and keep council tax down. This provides the only realistic means of funding ambitious improvements in services (particularly investing in prevention and early intervention) and strong community engagement. Minimising disruption will also reduce the risks of transition and deliver transformed services more quickly.

Two unitaries will be stronger, safer and simpler

Residents across Hertfordshire consistently express a desire for a local government that is easier to navigate, more responsive to local needs, and better equipped to deliver high-quality public services. The establishment of two new unitary councils offers a clear and effective solution to these concerns.

This model simplifies the current complex structure of local government, providing residents with greater clarity and accountability. It ensures that services are delivered by councils that are closer to the communities they serve, deliver more tailored and timely responses to local priorities.

Importantly, the two-unitary approach achieves this transformation with minimal disruption, preserving the financial efficiencies of reform while enhancing the ability of councils to work collaboratively with residents, partners, and stakeholders. It creates a governance framework that is stronger in capacity, safer in service delivery, and simpler in structure—ensuring that every resident benefits from a system designed to meet their needs effectively and sustainably.

Stronger

Safe and legal services from day one
Our top priority is ensuring that services delivered by the new councils are safe, legal and uninterrupted

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[1] *Source: Local Government Engagement Feedback Report on Unitary Options*

from day one. The disaggregation of County Council services into two unitaries is the lowest level of disaggregation and will transition to the current operational footprint that is already well established. We will ensure the division into two unitaries does not undermine the good and outstanding Adult and Children's Services hard-won improvements and the hard-won improvements in our SEND services that our most vulnerable residents rely on. As we transition to two new unitaries, every resident currently receiving support will continue to do so - no one will fall through the gaps. This commitment to continuity and safeguarding is central to our approach and underpins the design of the 2UA model.

Clear strategic priorities

The two unitary authorities will set clear, long-term strategic visions working in partnership with the Mayoral Strategic Authority and other local stakeholders. The two unitary authority model best supports strategic development and delivery at county scale, effectively delivered through the two authorities working together with business and partners – reducing fragmented and duplicated relationships that may slow down strategic direction and delivery. The Mayoral Strategic Authority and two unitary authorities will work together at pace to identify and respond to the priorities that matter most to residents and businesses, coordinating investment and action across the county to ensure equal opportunities to thrive.

The collaboration between two unitary authorities, working in close partnership with the strategic authority, will create a more resilient and capable governance structure. This alignment strengthens the collective ability to address complex environmental and climate challenges, leveraging the general power of competence to act innovatively and decisively in the public interest. By pooling resources, expertise, and strategic oversight, the two unitary authorities, will be better positioned to deliver ambitious sustainability outcomes, support commitments to reduce emissions, and respond effectively to the evolving needs of communities and ecosystems across the county.

Resilience to financial shocks

The two unitary authority model provides the strongest and most financially resilient organisational model. Covering a range of rural and urban areas and meeting the Government's minimum population criterion of 500,000 residents, the two unitary authorities will have the strongest council tax base and so will be better equipped to absorb demand shocks and manage pressures such as government funding changes or additional demand for key services, such as Social Care and Homelessness.

Insight and intelligence

Two councils operating at scale will work with the new Mayor and key partners to build a shared, countywide picture of Hertfordshire. This breadth of insight will enable smarter, evidence-led decisions and more preventative interventions, tackling issues before they escalate. It also unlocks new opportunities for collaboration and innovation both within and between the new authorities that would be harder to achieve with a more fragmented model.

Safer

Better support for vulnerable children and young people

Children's Services provides compelling evidence is a clear example of where integration adds real value. By aligning county level services with district and borough functions, such as Leisure, Early Help and Housing - the two new councils will be able to deliver a stronger, more preventative early help offer. Our priority is to ensure Hertfordshire children and young people are supported to achieve and live happy fulfilling lives. the two unitary model ensures parity of service access across the county from education to provision as well as ensuring, through minimal disaggregation, that we protect the current operational

service delivery model on the ground that protects our most vulnerable children and that no child falls through any boundary change or is disadvantaged through differing service offers across the County.

Stronger partnership working

Alignment with the Police's two operational areas will simplify partnership working to keep residents safe. Two unitaries will provide the most streamlined structures for our businesses to engage with, minimising bureaucracy and enabling them to focus on growing and setting the conditions for employment and prosperity.

Hertfordshire's existing East/West health geography aligns with the proposed two-council model, supporting integrated services and strong partnerships across health and adult social care that are vital for continuity and resilience. Maintaining this structure will minimise disruption during transition, enhance collaboration, and enable further progress in delivering joined-up care that supports the NHS 10-Year Plan.

Simpler

Economies of scale in commissioning
Two councils operating at scale will unlock significant financial efficiencies through smarter commissioning. Services currently procured separately across 10 districts can each be consolidated into more efficient and coherent contracts, reducing duplication, increasing buying power and improving outcomes. The two unitaries will also have the scale, capacity and capability to negotiate good value for money on the critical, high-volume contracts for care of our elderly and vulnerable young people. Contracts will be tailored to each council's needs while delivering wider efficiencies, particularly in high-cost areas such as waste collection.

Maximising use of income and funding
Two councils with stronger strategic oversight will be better placed to make the most of available funding. Development contributions, such as the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements, can be allocated more consistently and transparently. This simplifies prioritisation of infrastructure needs and ensures investment is targeted where it delivers the greatest impact.

Creating commercial opportunities
Bringing services together will open up new opportunities to generate income. In addition to council tax and business rates, the new councils will adopt a commercial mindset, making bold yet risk informed decisions to support long-term sustainability through shared, hosted or traded ventures with each other or other organisations.

Leaner workforce
Executive roles and responsibilities are currently replicated across 11 councils. Moving to two unitary authorities will reduce overheads through streamlined staffing structures and build strategic capacity across both geographies. This creates the conditions to embed best practice, shape new career pathways and attract and retain talent, while delivering significantly more financial efficiencies than other models.

Savings in property and assets
Moving to two unitary authorities creates maximum opportunities to rationalise the local government estate. By reducing the number of buildings needed for corporate services but maximising the public estate to deliver local services in the heart of the community, this may include family hubs, day centres, youth centres and libraries to maximise touch points for local communities to access services. Joined-up

approaches to regeneration, procurement and capital investment will further enhance financial efficiencies.

Clearer responsibilities

Residents consistently say that the current two-tier structure of local government in Hertfordshire is confusing. By transforming from 11 councils to two, it will be much clearer for residents which organisation is responsible for council services in their places and best equip them to hold the council to account.

Better resident experience

The two unitary model will make it clear to residents who to contact for support and services, the two unitary model also protects and ensures parity of services across the East and West of the County. The two unitary model being the most cost efficient due to lower overheads and higher efficiency will be able to implement new operating models which prioritise simplicity, accessibility and inclusion, using digital technology to enhance this wherever appropriate.

Maintaining a clear digital and physical presence

Residents that can will expect to interact with our services through digital communication by default. At the same time, physical service access points will be geographically spread to ensure clear points of contact for protecting the most vulnerable, and especially for those who are homeless. This will be possible as a result of the lower overheads and greater efficiency of the two unitary model.

Joined-up processes

From day one, the two new councils will improve resident experience by joining up key processes such as social care assessments, grants, benefits, housing and planning applications. Aggregation of district council services and limited disaggregation across critical large scale services will support a swifter transition to the new unitary model enabling faster transition and greater capacity for transformation and service improvement and innovation. Services will be designed around what residents say matters most, creating simpler, more responsive pathways and a better overall experience.

Strong local democracy

The new two new unitaries will have clear democratic structures, making it easy for residents to know who is responsible for services and hold them to account. 117 councillors in each council will provide visible, local leadership. Transparent decision-making will build trust and confidence in their ability to deliver. Robust scrutiny will ensure services focus on the right outcomes and offer value for money. Plans for whole council elections every four years will bring consistency and predictability to the democratic cycle.

Climate resilience and sustainability

Hertfordshire faces increasing environmental pressures, including flood risk, biodiversity loss, and the need to transition to net zero. The 2UA model enables coordinated climate adaptation and mitigation strategies across both geographies, embedding sustainability into infrastructure, planning, and service delivery. This approach strengthens long-term resilience, supports green growth, and ensures communities are better protected from the impacts of climate change.

VISION

Hertfordshire is growing fast - with 1.2m residents, a dynamic economy and globally leading sectors. To meet this scale and ambition, it needs local government that is bold and built for the future.

This proposal sets out a clear vision for two councils:

- **West Hertfordshire**: Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, Watford

- **East Hertfordshire**: Broxbourne, East Herts, North Herts, Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield

Together, they will deliver:

- **Stronger leadership** with clear strategic priorities and visible accountability

- **Strong, safe and legal services from day one** that are joined-up, preventative and rooted in place

- **Simplified governance** that is easier to navigate for residents and partners

- **Financial resilience** through scale, efficiency and commercial innovation

These priorities reflect the themes raised during public and stakeholder engagement, where the East/West model was seen as the most coherent and least disruptive configuration. Hertfordshire has also historically operated well across these two geographical footprints in the areas of strategic planning and social care delivery.

Working alongside a new Mayoral Strategic Authority, the two councils will unlock the benefits of devolution on a countywide footprint - enabling decisive action on shared challenges across health, policing, transport, planning and housing.

This creates **healthier, safer and more inclusive places**, where public services delivery partners work together to prevent harm, support independence and respond quickly to emerging needs. By formalising what is already working on the ground, it provides the clarity, coherence and capacity to meet fluctuating demand pressures with financial sustainability.

In summary, the East/West Hertfordshire model is:

- **Ambitious in scale, locally rooted**: large enough to drive system-wide change yet designed to reflect local identities and stay close to communities.

- **Focused on prevention**: prioritises early intervention and addresses the root causes of demand.

- **Responsive and forward-looking**: built to adapt to changing needs and technologies with two equally sized populations enabling fair and effective service planning across both areas.

- **Resilient and future-ready**: structured to withstand pressures and deliver over £360m long-term savings which will be required to enable these improvements in frontline services.

- **Inclusive and growth-oriented**: with all parts of the public sector working more effectively together to support the vulnerable, and streamlined structures to support our businesses, it will drive prosperity and positively benefit communities.

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CORE STRENGTHS

1. High quality, consistent services

Two financially sustainable councils will deliver faster, better, and more affordable services across the county. A single-phase transition will minimise risk and protect those most in need. **Services will remain rooted in place**, with locality teams and community hubs ensuring that delivery is tailored to the needs and character of each area. This approach supports clearer service pathways, faster responses to local issues and stronger relationships between residents and their councils.

2. Strong local leadership and oversight

Streamlined structures will put in place visible leadership, clearer accountability for residents, businesses and partners and more effective advocacy. Councillors will play a central role in shaping services and championing place-based innovation, supported by robust governance and neighbourhood-level forums that **ensure decisions reflect the voices of local people.**

3. Smarter Use of Resources

This model unlocks significant efficiencies by reducing duplication across systems, consolidating service footprints and enabling joined-up recruitment, commissioning and data sharing. This will **generate savings which can be reinvested in services including early intervention and preventative services**. It also supports more strategic use of public assets and infrastructure, enabling better planning across housing, transport, health and education, reducing the tax burden on residents over time.

4. Future-readiness and innovation
The scale and coherence of the 2UA model creates the conditions for long-term transformation. It creates the financial headroom and officer capacity to deliver digital innovation, smarter use of data, and more agile service design - allowing both councils to thoughtfully spearhead public service reform. Distinct sector strengths across East and West Hertfordshire also support targeted economic growth, aligning strategic planning with national policy and unlocking new opportunities for residents and businesses.

Why this is the right model for Hertfordshire

The East/West Hertfordshire model is more than a transition framework - it provides a **future-ready platform for public service reform**. It combines **strategic coherence with operational agility**, bringing about smarter, leaner and more responsive delivery.

By aligning council boundaries with NHS-led Health and Care Partnerships and Hertfordshire Constabulary's operational structures, the model strengthens joint working, provides integrated service delivery and delivers better outcomes for residents. This integrated approach provides wraparound support for the most vulnerable residents and reduces demand for critical services. It reflects how the vast majority of public services already operate across the county, preserving what works while creating the conditions for innovation and system-wide transformation.

The 2UA model supports joined-up planning and delivery across housing, transport, skills, health and public safety, aligning with Government ambitions for devolution and place-based reform. It is strongly backed by key partners and offers the **lowest risk** pathway to reform, safeguarding continuity in high-risk services while unlocking long-term benefits.

Only the size and geography of two unitaries is sufficient to support both strategic delivery and the safe and legal delivery of critical services from day one.

Alignment with national policies

The 2UA delivers place-based delivery of national programmes and strategies including:

10-Year Health Plan: Greater alignment across health and local government in the two unitary model supports more joined up care and targeted health interventions.

Get Britain Working: Two coherent economic geographies facilitate better integration of employment, health and skills initiatives, improving access to work and delivering locally tailored support to help those facing barriers to employment.

10-Year Infrastructure Strategy: Coordinated planning across housing, transport, energy and digital infrastructure is made more possible with two councils operating across wider areas. One of the key constraints to Hertfordshire's economic growth (and housing growth) is the poor east-west connectivity, particularly by public transport. Addressing this is a key priority for our businesses. The 2UA model will be best placed to do this as it minimises fragmentation and unlocks maximum savings and embeds long-term sustainability to fund infrastructure investment to unlock growth.

Modern Industrial Strategy: With distinct sector clusters in each unitary - such as life sciences and advanced manufacturing in the East, and creative industries and professional services in the West - this model promotes cluster-based growth, innovation and alignment with national economic priorities. Each unitary will be small enough to understand and engage with its businesses, while also being sufficiently large to address some of the key barriers they face and be a strong voice championing them.

Strategic Coherence and Partnership Delivery

The two new councils will act as equal partners, collaborating closely with the Mayoral Strategic Authority to deliver countywide priorities while retaining distinct local leadership. They will share responsibility for joint planning, commissioning and delivery in areas such as transport, housing, skills and community resilience, underpinned by aligned service footprints, integrated governance structures and shared data systems.

This approach reduces duplication, reduces overheads, and enhances operational efficiency. These recurring savings can be reinvested into frontline services, community infrastructure and place-based innovation. Resources can be targeted to local priorities, ensuring improved outcomes for residents and businesses. Locality teams and community hubs will ensure services remain accessible and responsive to the distinct needs of each place. This boosts public confidence, strengthens civic identity and unlocks new opportunities for community-led innovation.

While all LGR options carry complexity, this model presents the **lowest risk** during transition. By minimising disruption to the 80% of local government services in Hertfordshire that are currently delivered by the County Council, the 2UA model reduces fragmentation and protects continuity in high-risk services such as adult social care, Children's Services, SEND and waste. In so doing, it mirrors how 'always-on' services already operate across the county, creating the **safest environment** for transition.

The 2UA model is designed to meet Hertfordshire's most pressing challenges through scale, coherence and local responsiveness. It will tackle:

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- **Complex service demands:** Rising pressures in Children's Services, adult social care, SEND and homelessness require a model that enables early intervention and integrated planning to tackle deficits in sufficiency and quality of provision, ensuring consistent safeguarding across the county.

- **Inequality and inclusion:** With pockets of deprivation, health inequalities and economic inactivity, the model supports targeted, place-based responses built on strong partnerships and a prevention-first approach.

- **Infrastructure delays:** Rapid population increases and housing demand place strains on transport, schools and social care and health services. The 2UA model delivers long-term strategic planning across both geographies.

- **Recruitment challenges and rising costs:** Rising demand and workforce shortages, particularly in social care, education and regulatory services, are driving up costs and straining service resilience. The 2UA model delivers stronger workforce planning, smarter use of public assets and more coordinated recruitment, helping to stabilise costs and retain skilled professionals.

By aligning resources with local need, it creates the conditions for faster implementation, better use of public assets and more joined-up support for communities, making it the most **practical, resilient and cost-effective option** to meet Hertfordshire's future needs.

Mitigating Risks and Strengthening the Case for Change

The 2UA model mitigates key risks associated with reorganisation:

- **Operational disruption**: By aligning with existing service footprints (e.g. East/West health trusts, Joint Strategic Plans), the model reduces the need for major service redesign.

- **Democratic disconnect:** Two councils of around 600,000 residents each retain strong local representation through ward-based governance and neighbourhood forums.

- **Financial and delivery risk:** The model avoids the fragmentation of smaller units, striking a balance between strategic capacity and local accountability.

- **Transition complexity:** Fewer authorities mean simpler aggregation/disaggregation of services, lower implementation costs, and faster realisation of benefits.

SCALE, EFFICIENCY AND CAPACITY (MHCLG CRITERION 2)

Balancing Strategic Scale with Community-Centred Services

2UA Model Map [2]
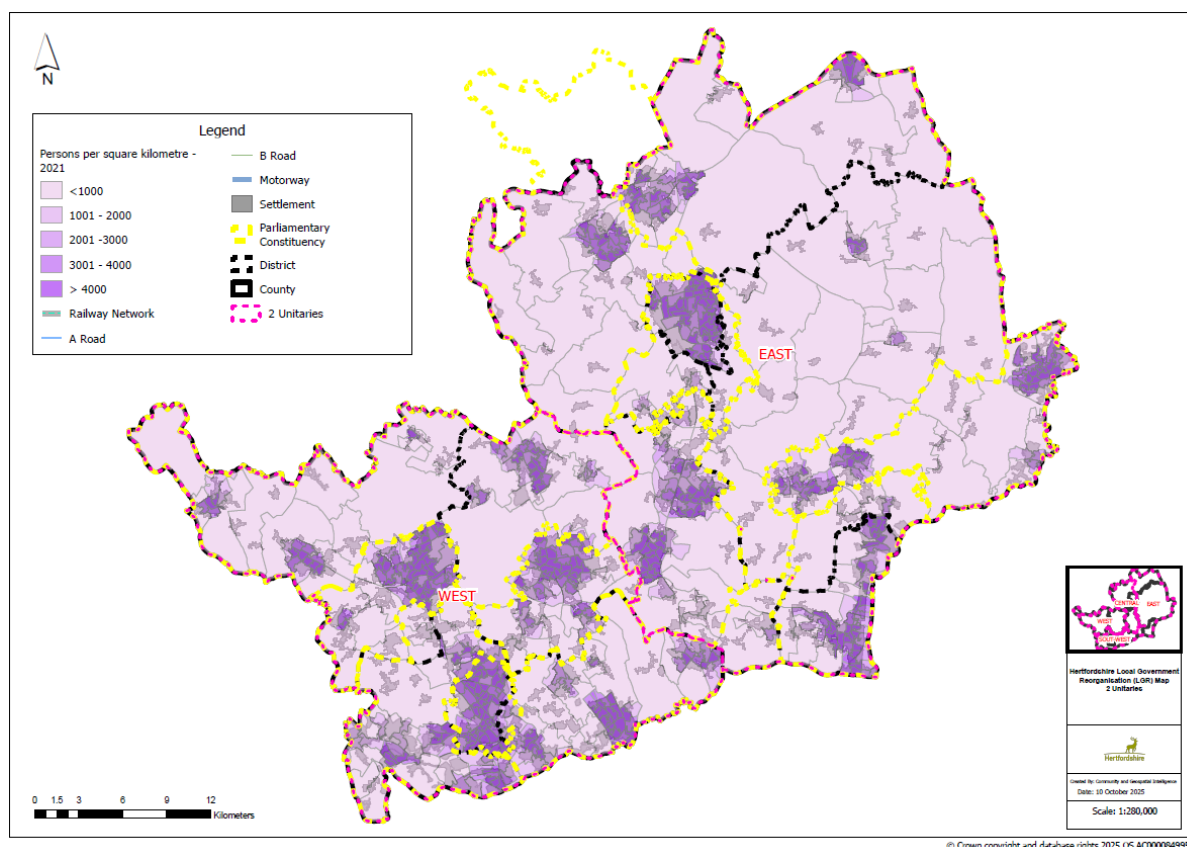
The 2UA model creates two coherent authorities - **West Hertfordshire** and **East Hertfordshire** - each reflecting distinct geographies, economies and communities yet with the **scale, strategic capacity** and **operational readiness** to deliver high quality services and shape local growth.

Strategic Scale and Population Sizes

The 2UA model creates two authorities that both meet MHCLG guidance on a minimum size of 500,000 to ensure robust strategic capacity to deliver at scale, services that can operate at scale but tailored to the community and will be financially resilient as demand continues to increase. **Indeed, the 2UA model is the only one that meets this minimum criterion for Hertfordshire. As shown in *Table 1*, East and West Hertfordshire are closely matched in population size, supporting equitable service planning and avoiding volatility.**

This demographic scale is matched by economic weight. Hertfordshire's Gross Value Added (GVA), as shown in **Table 1,** exceeds Liverpool City Region, is close to Oxford and Cambridge combined and is on a par with Surrey. The county is home to over 61,000 enterprises and 720,000 jobs, with nationally

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[2] *Source: 2UA map (HCC)*

significant strengths in life sciences (cell and gene), defence, aerospace, digital technologies and film and TV production. [3]

These sectors are not only critical to Hertfordshire's future but also to the UK's global competitiveness and national security. The scale and complexity of Hertfordshire's economy demand a governance model that reflects its strategic importance. Two unitary authorities of equal weighting will provide the operational capacity, strategic coherence and democratic accountability needed to support this level of economic ambition - aligning Hertfordshire with other high-performing regions and enabling it to fulfil its role as the UK's innovation heartland.

Both counties have opted for an East/West configuration that aligns with existing service footprints, supports balanced growth and enables the formation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority. Surrey's model reinforces the viability of the 2UA approach, demonstrating how two large, strategically aligned councils can deliver financial resilience, simplify governance, and maintain continuity in high-risk service - principles that underpin Hertfordshire's own proposal.

Table 1: County Total GVA (2023)[4]

Bedfordshire	£16.93 billion
Buckinghamshire	£22.95 billion
Cambridgeshire	£32.89 billion
Essex	£47.16 billion
Liverpool City Region	£38.5 billion
Hertfordshire	£45.72 billion
Oxfordshire	£23.5 billion
Surrey	£45.6 billion

The East and West Hertfordshire model delivers:

- **Equitable service planning:** Closely matched population sizes reduce volatility and ensures fair distribution of resources.

- **Targeted place-based interventions:** Distinct deprivation profiles across East and West Hertfordshire allow each authority to respond to local needs with tailored strategies.

- **Operational simplicity:** Fewer unitaries mean lower transition risk, clearer governance and more coherent commissioning -reducing duplication and ensuring continuity.

- **Supports innovation in globally significant employment sectors**: delivering strategic planning and investment across nationally important sector clusters.

Scale is underpinned by **local responsiveness**. The 2UA model embeds Local Democratic Forums, community hubs and neighbourhood-level commissioning, ensuring services remain rooted in place and responsive to the communities they serve.

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[3] *Source: Hertfordshire Economic Strategy 2025-20235*
[4] *Source: ONS, Regional Gross Value Added (Balanced by Industry)*

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Table 2[5]

	West Hertfordshire	East Hertfordshire
District areas covered	Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, Watford	Broxbourne, East Herts, North Herts, Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield
Total population (2024 estimate)	**625,222**	**610,569**
Population projection 2045 (ONS)	660,000	660,000
Population projection 2045 (internal est.)	722,000	758,000
Population density (people per km2)	1,043	562
Parliamentary constituencies	Harpenden and Berkhamsted; Hemel Hempstead; Hertsmere; South West Hertfordshire; St Albans; Watford	Broxbourne; Herford and Stortford; North East Hertfordshire; Hitchin; Stevenage; Welwyn Hatfield
Gross Value Added (GVA) per £m	27,301	22,439
Business count	34,200	26,865
Employment Rate (16-64 years)	80%	81%
Council tax base	52%	48%
Share of most deprived areas in Hertfordshire	43%	57%

Efficiency and Transition Costs

The 2UA model delivers the **highest financial savings** and **fastest payback period**, supporting long-term sustainability. It builds on existing collaboration and functional geographies, where districts already work together through **Joint Strategic Plans (JSPs)** that reflect shared housing markets, infrastructure priorities and economic linkages.

This coherence is already visible in practice:

- **Emerging JSPs in both East and West Hertfordshire** show strong spatial alignment on housing and growth.

- **Shared footprints** across health, care, policing and joint commissioning deliver integrated public service delivery and more effective early intervention.

As shown in *Table 2*, both areas have **strong economic foundations** - reflected in their Gross Value Added (GVA) figures of £27.3bn (West) and £22.4bn (East) - and comparable council tax bases (East 48%, West 52%), which provide a stable platform for financial resilience. Crucially, the scale of the model allows resources to be targeted in response to local needs and service pressures - supporting equitable outcomes without overstretching smaller unitaries.

The 2UA configuration also ensures better alignment of housing, employment land and infrastructure planning. This is critical to meeting housing demand, reversing the loss of commercial floorspace[6] (over **771,000 sq. m. lost** county-wide) and supporting place-based regeneration. The choices made in a

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Source 4: ONS, Regional Gross Value Added (Balanced by Industry)
Source 5: Local Government Reorganisation Statistical Selection Model (HCC)
[6] *Loss of Employment Space in Hertfordshire: Lambert Smth Hampton, 2019*

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) can be delivered more effectively through two coherent unitary local plans.

Functional Economic Geography and Employment Patterns

Employment patterns and travel-to-work patterns reinforce the place-based case for two authorities. As shown in *Table 1*, West Hertfordshire has the highest job density, particularly around Watford, while East Hertfordshire has more dispersed employment, with key clusters in Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City.

Commuting flows also differ significantly:

- **West Hertfordshire** towns such as Watford, Hemel Hempstead and St Albans have strong commuting links into London and a high level of inflow to Watford and St Albans and the surrounding areas.

- **East Hertfordshire** areas including Stevenage, Broxbourne and North Hertfordshire show more intra-county and regional commuting. This area also sees a high level of commuting into London, with Broxbourne and East Herts seeing primary flows into London and across to Welwyn Hatfield.

The employment density map (Map 2) provides further evidence for the 2UA model by visualising job concentrations across Hertfordshire. It shows high-density employment zones in Watford, Hemel Hempstead and St Albans in the West, and more dispersed but significant clusters in Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City and Broxbourne in the East. These patterns align closely with the proposed East/West boundaries, reinforcing the strategic coherence of the model.

The map highlights the **polycentric nature of West Hertfordshire**, with multiple high-density employment zones that benefit from proximity to London and major transport corridors. In contrast, **East Hertfordshire's employment is more dispersed**.

This spatial pattern supports the case for two unitary authorities by:

- Preserving functional labour markets and commuting flows

- Delivering tailored infrastructure and transport planning

- Avoiding fragmentation of economic clusters and anchor institutions

- Supporting strategic planning aligned to distinct economic geographies

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

MAP 2: Employment Density[7]
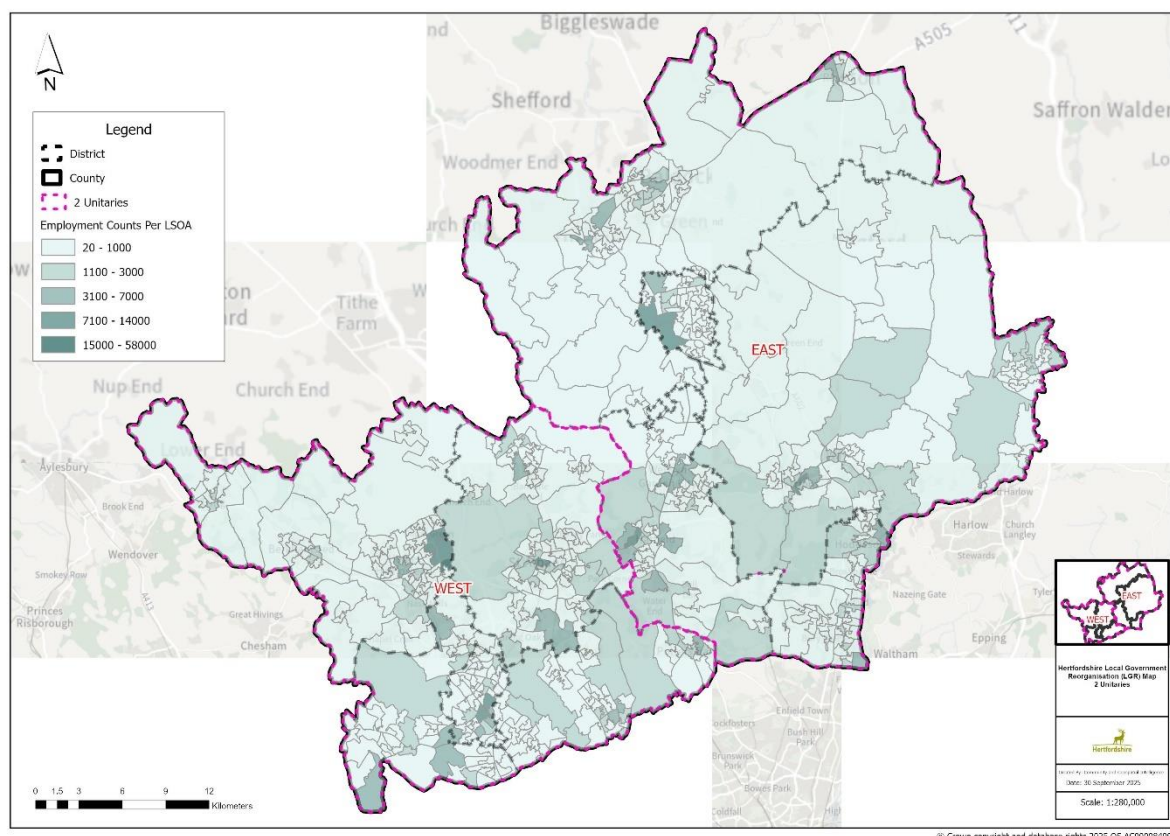
This model allows each authority to respond to these dynamics through locally tailored transport and infrastructure planning. It also supports strategic coherence by ensuring shared planning led by the Mayoral Strategic Authority, while allowing each unitary to focus on its distinct economic geography.

The sectoral strengths across East and West Hertfordshire, as shown in **Figure 1**, further justify the East/West configuration. These maps clearly demonstrate that Hertfordshire's economic strengths are concentrated in **distinct clusters** that align with the proposed East/West geography. This evidences the 2UA model as the most coherent and least disruptive configuration for strategic planning, economic development and partnership working. In contrast, more unitaries would fragment these clusters, dilute strategic focus and complicate engagement with anchor institutions and investors.

- **East Hertfordshire** shows high concentrations in **life sciences**, **advanced manufacturing**, **defence** and **digital technologies**, particularly around Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield and Broxbourne. These sectors are nationally significant and closely linked to the **Cambridge sub-region**, reinforcing East Hertfordshire's role in the Oxford–Cambridge Growth Corridor.

- **West Hertfordshire** is characterised by strong clusters in **creative industries**, **professional and business services**, and **clean energy**, with key hubs in Watford, St Albans and Dacorum. These sectors are more London-facing and benefit from proximity to the capital and strategic transport corridors like the M1 and M25.

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[7] *Source: HCC*

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Figure 1: Concentrations of IS-8 sectoral employment by district across Hertfordshire (2021-23) [8]
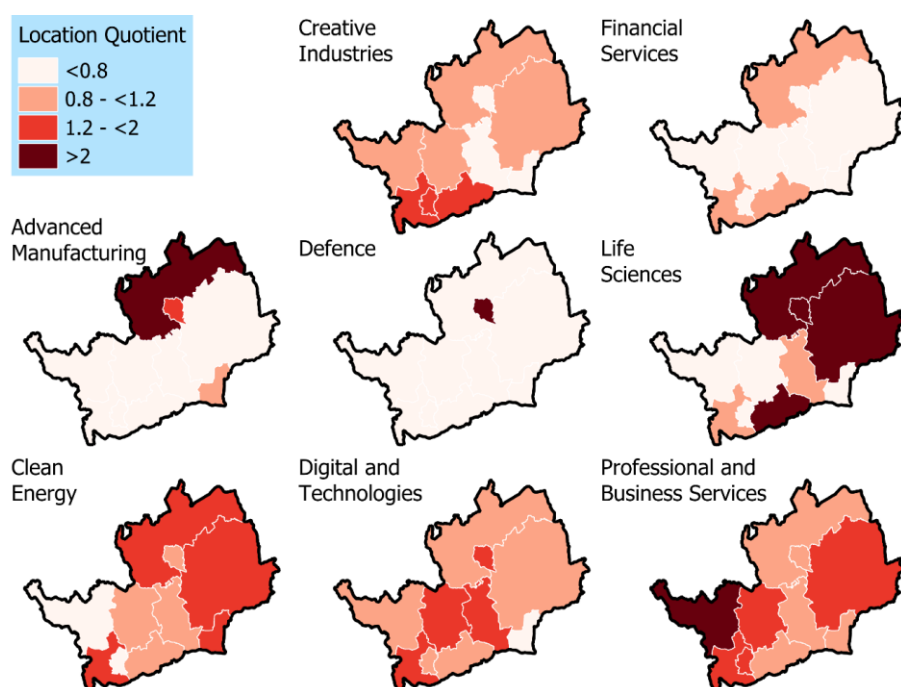
Housing Market Variation and Lifestyle Differences

Housing market variation across Hertfordshire further evidences the place case for two unitary authorities. West Hertfordshire faces higher house prices and lower levels of social housing, while East Hertfordshire shows greater concentrations of affordable housing need. This is reflected in the housing register figures[9], with East Hertfordshire districts collectively accounting for over **11,000 households** on the register - more than double the **5,000** in West Hertfordshire.

East Hertfordshire also delivered significantly more affordable housing in both 2023/24 (**853 units**) and 2024/25 (**810 units**) compared to West Hertfordshire (**469** and **579 units**, respectively), highlighting both the scale of need and the capacity to respond. However, **West Hertfordshire has a higher number of households in temporary accommodation (783) than East Hertfordshire (594)**, suggesting that acute housing pressures - driven by affordability challenges and limited social housing stock - are resulting in more households requiring emergency support.

These differences underscore the need for **tailored housing strategies** within each geography. The proposed 2UA model enables each authority to respond more effectively to its distinct housing challenges, whether that is managing social housing stock and tackling overcrowding in the West, or coordinating affordable housing delivery and addressing homelessness in the East, within a coherent strategic framework.

Projected Housing Demand and Strategic Growth

Hertfordshire is undergoing one of the most ambitious growth programmes in the UK, with over **274,000 new residents** expected by 2045 and tens of thousands of new homes planned across two nationally significant strategic sites: **Hemel Garden Communities** in the West and **Gilston Area** within the Harlow

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[8] *Source: SQW, based on a detailed analysis of data from BRES, using the sectoral definitions provided by UK government (with the exception of clean energy, which uses a definition provided by DataCity) (Hertfordshire Futures Economic Strategy 2025)*

[9] *Source: Local Authority housing data (compiled by Stevenage Borough Council)*

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& Gilston Garden Town in the East. These developments are not only large in scale - each delivering over **10,000 homes**, major infrastructure investment, and thousands of jobs - but also complex in governance, requiring coordination across multiple partners, planning authorities and service systems.

The **2UA model** provides the scale, coherence and strategic capacity needed to manage this level of growth effectively. It ensures each new authority will lead decisively on delivery within its geography, while aligning with countywide priorities through the Mayoral Strategic Authority. Compared to more fragmented models, the 2UA configuration offers:

- **Unified leadership** across strategic sites

- **Simplified engagement** for developers and investors

- **Integrated planning** across housing, transport, education and health

- **Reduced risk** of delay, duplication or misalignment

- **Stronger partnerships** with national agencies such as Homes England and The Crown Estate

Socio-economic variation

Geo-demographic analysis confirms that West Hertfordshire is more affluent than East Hertfordshire, with a higher proportion of households in the most affluent Acorn[10] categories. As shown in the Acorn breakdown:

- **Luxury Lifestyles & Established Affluence:**

    o West: 38%
    o East: 27%
    o Herts average: 32%

- **Stretched Society & Low Income Living:**

    o West: 19%
    o East: 23%
    o Herts average: 21%

This pattern is reinforced by the Hertfordshire Personas segmentation in *Table 2*, which shows West Hertfordshire has a higher proportion of Highly Affluent Maturity and Affluent Families, while East Hertfordshire has more Stretched Families and Young Financially Stretched households.

Table 2[11]: Hertfordshire Personas

Persona Percentage of households	West	East	Herts
Highly Affluent Maturity	18%	13%	**16%**
Financially Secure Maturity	3%	4%	**3%**

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[10] *Source: LGR Acorn Analysis, September 2025 (HCC)*
[11] *Source: LGR Acorn Analysis: Breakdown of Hertfordshire Personas, September 2025 (HCC)*

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Affluent Families	19%	14%	**16%**
Comfortable Neighbourhoods	34%	35%	**34%**
Stretched Families	13%	19%	**16%**
Young financially stretched	11%	13%	**12%**
Struggling Elders	1%	2%	**1%**

These differences correlate with housing pressures: West Hertfordshire's affluence is reflected in **higher house prices and lower social housing availability**, while East Hertfordshire's more stretched profile aligns with **greater affordable housing need and demand for supported accommodation**.

The 2UA model ensures each authority can shape housing strategies that reflect the distinct needs and characteristics of their communities - supporting more responsive, equitable and place-based planning within a shared strategic framework.

DeprivatioMAP 3[12]: Index of Multiple Deprivation
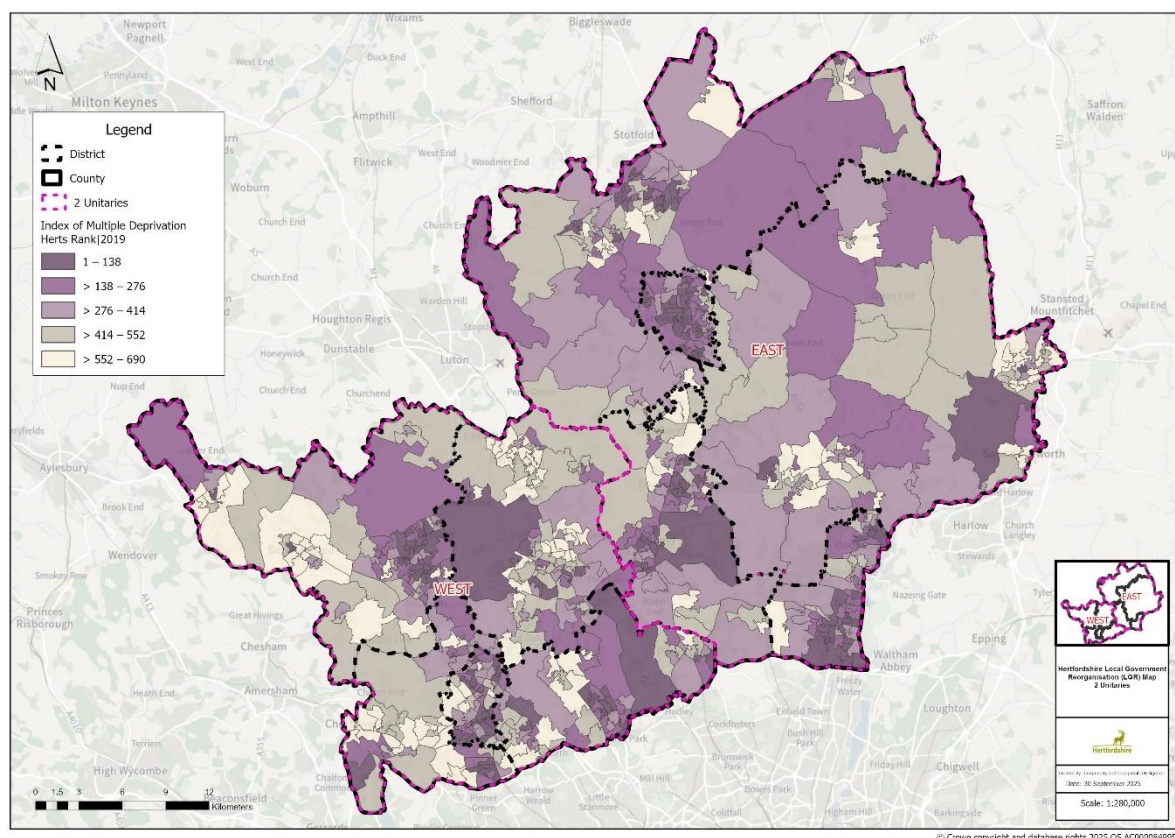
Map 3 evidences a clear spatial pattern across the proposed East and West Hertfordshire boundaries. **East Hertfordshire contains a greater share of neighbourhoods ranked among the most deprived nationally**, particularly in Stevenage, Broxbourne and parts of North Hertfordshire. In contrast, **West Hertfordshire has a higher concentration of areas ranked among the least deprived**, notably in St Albans, Three Rivers and parts of Dacorum.

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[12] Source: HCC

This pattern is reinforced by detailed deprivation metrics across 10 domains from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)[13]. **East Hertfordshire consistently shows higher levels of deprivation** than West Hertfordshire in areas such as:

- **Education, Skills and Training** (East: 12% vs West: 8%)

- **Health Deprivation and Disability** (East: 11% vs West: 9%)

- **Income Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI)** (East: 12% vs West: 8%)

- **Crime** (East: 11% vs West: 9%)

These figures highlight the need for **targeted, place-based interventions** in East Hertfordshire, particularly in education, health and child poverty. The 2UA model ensures each authority can respond to these distinct deprivation profiles with tailored strategies, ensuring resources are allocated where they are most needed. It also supports strategic coherence by aligning deprivation patterns with existing service footprints and partner geographies. This allows for more **equitable resource allocation**, targeted early intervention, and place-based commissioning - particularly in areas such as housing, education, public health and employment support.

Infrastructure and Service Demand

The 2UA model ensures that both East and West Hertfordshire have the scale, infrastructure and strategic coherence to deliver high quality services from vesting day and beyond. Each geography contains a balanced footprint of public assets - including hospitals, libraries, fire stations, civic offices and leisure centres - supporting equitable access and delivering continuity in service delivery. This is evidenced in **Table 4** and visualised in **Map 3**, which demonstrates parity across key infrastructure categories, confirming operational readiness and balanced leadership capacity.

Service demand data across Adult Social Care, Children's Services, education and public protection shows by a significant degree, **the greatest parity across all the proposed models**. This is detailed in **Table 5** which highlights comparable volumes of activity across long-term care, safeguarding, and education services. This balance supports equitable outcomes and confirms that both authorities have the capacity to manage demand effectively from day one.

The model reflects existing service footprints and partner geographies, reducing transition risk and avoiding disruption to high-risk services such as safeguarding, SEND, waste and emergency response. It ensures smarter commissioning and integrated planning, with locality-based delivery models that remain rooted in place. Community hubs and neighbourhood teams will ensure services are tailored to local needs, strengthening relationships between residents and their councils and improving responsiveness.

The 2UA model builds climate resilience into infrastructure planning, enabling strategic, place-based approaches to climate adaptation, ensuring that highways and transport services are designed to withstand extreme weather events and long-term environmental pressures. Coordinated investment in sustainable drainage, green infrastructure, and low-carbon transport networks helps mitigate climate risks while supporting national net zero goals. Larger authorities are better positioned to embed resilience into asset management, emergency response planning, and community engagement, ensuring infrastructure remains safe, reliable, and future-proof.

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[13] Source: Local Government Statistical Selection Model (HCC)

Cultural services - including libraries, museums, heritage sites and community arts programmes - are recognised as vital components of Hertfordshire's civic infrastructure. The 2UA model ensures consistent and equitable access to these services while allowing for locally responsive provision that reflects the distinct identities of East and West Hertfordshire. With strategic oversight and scale, the new authorities will be better placed to attract external funding, support cultural innovation and align cultural investment with broader place-based goals.

The model also supports integration across housing, health, education and employment services, delivering early intervention and preventative approaches. It provides the scale and coherence needed to embed digital transformation, predictive analytics and smarter commissioning across both authorities - driving innovation and improving outcomes for residents. These capabilities underpin long-term financial resilience and service sustainability.

Map 3[14]: Distribution of Key Infrastructure and Service Assets across Hertfordshire (2023)
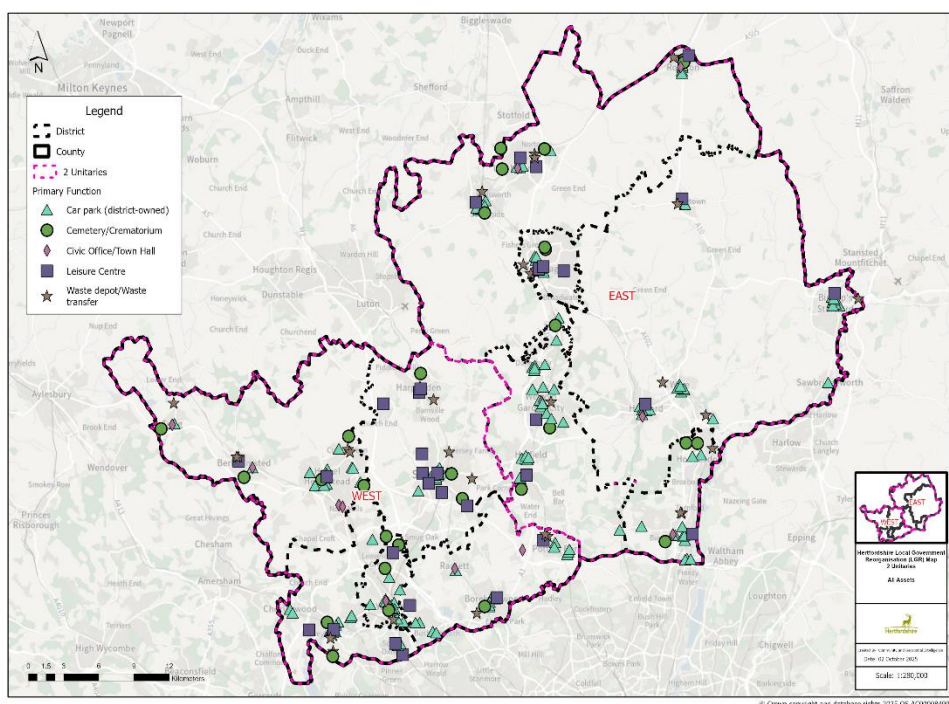
Table 4[15]

Assets	West	East
Number of Hospitals	18	16
Number of Libraries	24	22
Number of Fire Stations	14	15
Number of Recycling stations	8	8

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[14] Source: HCC

[15] Source: Local Government Reorganisation Statistical Selection Model (HCC)

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Number of Waste Transfer stations	17	15
Total Highways Length - km	2,228	2,853
Number of Leisure centres	18	13
Number of Civic offices	12	10
Number of Cemeteries & Crematoria	15	14

Table 5[16]

Services Demands	West	East
Adults in Long Term Nursing	433	483
Adults in Long Term Residential	928	940
Adults in Long Term Homecare	1,729	1,834
Number of Adult Care Services (ACS) Assessments (Adults)	8,296	7,205
Number of Residential/Nursing settings	132	117
Number of Homecare/Supported Living settings	149	171
Number of Children Looked After (CLA) (plus distributed SMC)	464	522
Children with a Child Protection (CP) Plan	266	370
Children's Services assessments in FY (plus distributed SMC)	2,698	2,750
Number of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)	6,757	7,929
Number of Children's Residential Settings	18	45
Registered Children's Beds	282	454

Mapping data, which sets out the service points for adult and children's social care evidences how the 2UA proposal delivers the most effective, balanced & resilient model for residents. The proposed 2UA model avoids the risk of residents presenting critical needs but facing unitaries which have limited capacity to respond.

Map [4]: Alignment of Adult Social Care service points with deprivation

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[16] Source: Local Government Reorganisation Statistical Selection Model (HCC)
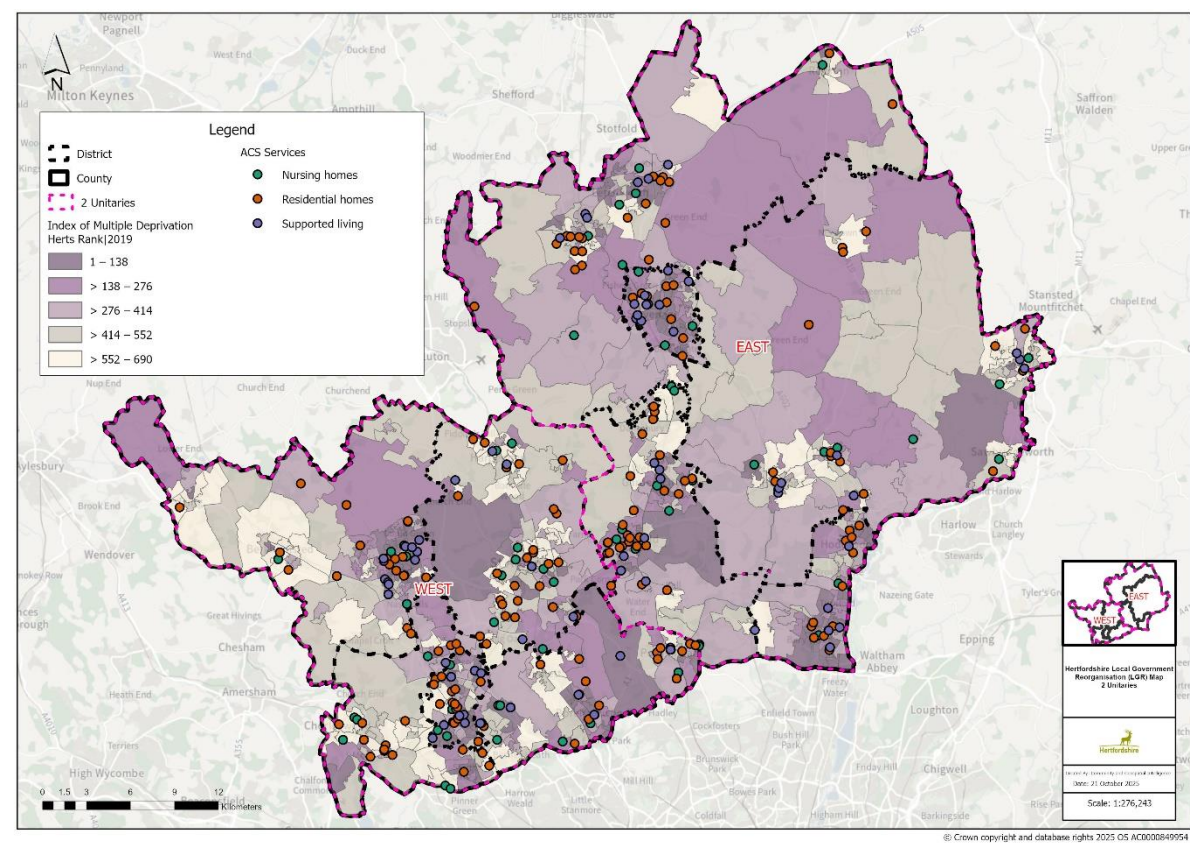
Map [5]: Alignment of Childrens Social Care service points with deprivation
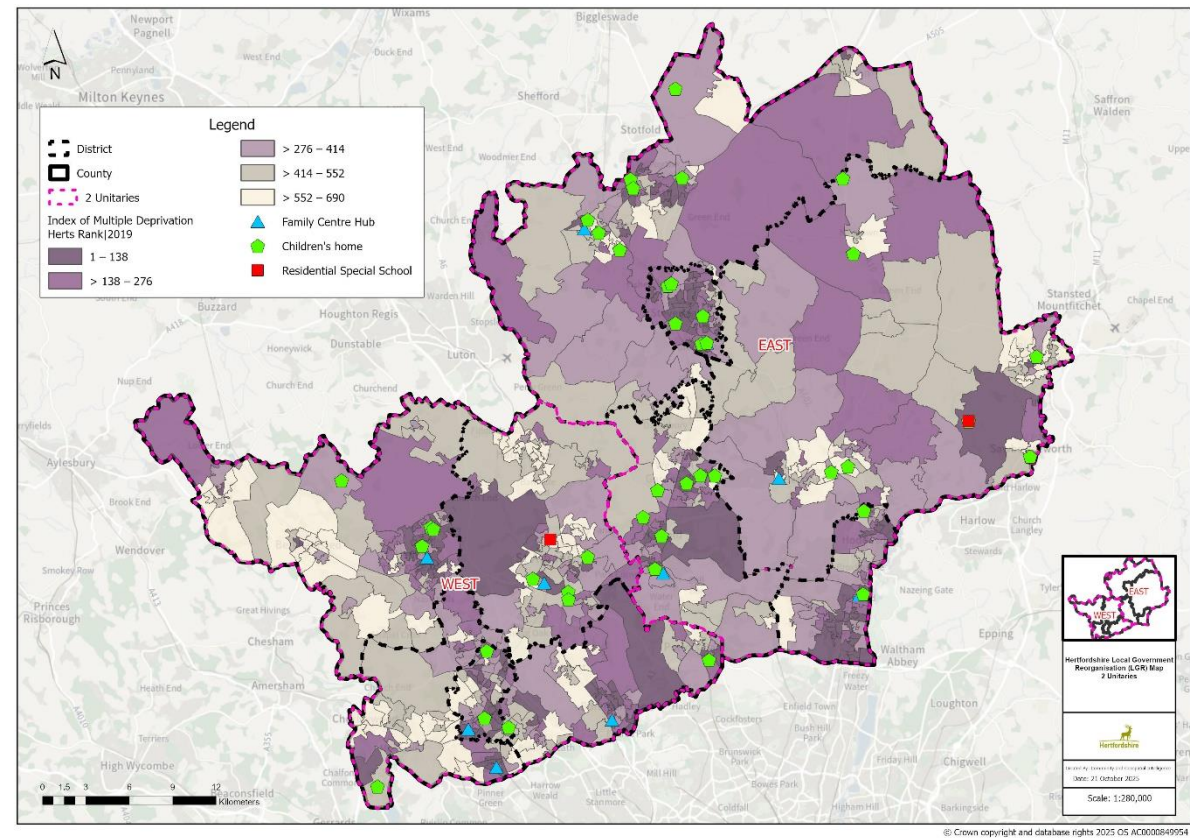
West Hertfordshire: confident, connected and creatively charged

West Hertfordshire blends urban vibrancy with rural character, underpinned by a rich civic and cultural heritage. From the Roman legacy of St Albans to its role as the spiritual heart of the county, the area reflects centuries of civic leadership and innovation. Today, it is home to thriving sectors including film and TV production, professional services and clean technologies, supported by exceptional connectivity to London and beyond. This unique mix of history, place and ambition positions West Hertfordshire as a *confident and forward-looking region, ready to lead and grow.*

West Hertfordshire is a sizeable economic area. It generates economic output (measured as GVA) of over **£27.3 billion** through **34,000 enterprises** and **411,000 jobs**. Its resident population of around 625,222 is projected to grow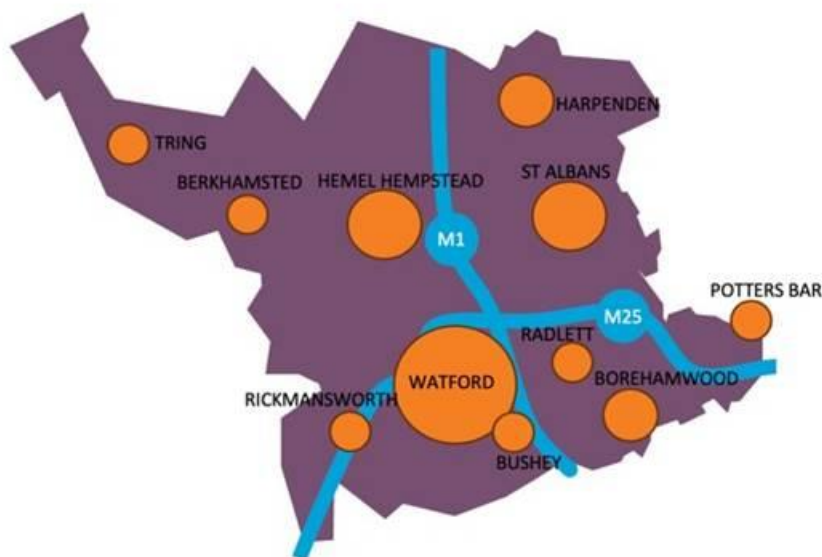 by 15% **(or 96,000people)** by 2045 (internal projection). This reinforces the need for strategic planning and resilient service delivery. [17]

It is distinctively polycentric, with three major towns (the modern business centre of **Watford**, the post war New Town of **Hemel Hempstead**, and ancient **St Albans)**, several smaller towns and a significant rural area, much of it within Metropolitan Green Belt and some within the Chilterns National Landscape.

Connectivity and Infrastructure

West Hertfordshire benefits from **exceptional connectivity** with the **M1, M25, and West Coast Mainline,** with about a third of its land within the **M25** and the **London Underground** network extending into this area. Historic transport routes such as **Watling Street**, the **Grand Union Canal** and the **Metropolitan Railway** reinforce its role as a strategic gateway between London and the South East. The 2UA model provides an opportunity to rebalance this relationship, ensuring West Hertfordshire can define its own strategic identity and reduce reliance on London through more **self-contained growth.**

Civic and Cultural Identity

St Albans, with its Roman heritage and Cathedral, serves as the spiritual heart of the county. Its civic significance is long standing, from its role in the Magna Carta to its place in the Wars of the Roses. **Watford's urban area exceeds 130,000** (compared to the current borough which has a population of about 100,000). The town is well positioned to pursue **city status**, with significant cultural and sporting amenities, strong connectivity and a confident civic identity. West Hertfordshire's rural landscape has

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[17] *Source: Local Government Reorganisation Statistical Selection Model – HCC*

historically shaped its identity and economy, with industries such as paper, silk, and brewing reflecting its relationship with water and land.

Strategic Links and Sub-Regional Opportunities

West Hertfordshire is strategically positioned as a **gateway to London and the South East**, with strong commuting flows and economic ties to the capital. Its proximity to major transport corridors such as the **M1, M25**, and **West Coast Mainline**, as well as **Luton Airport**, supports high levels of labour mobility and business connectivity.

It also unlocks stronger economic synergies between **Watford and Hemel Hempstead**. The two towns are **less than ten minutes apart by rail**, and yet they orient in opposite directions - Watford towards London, and Hemel Hempstead towards Luton. This presents a unique opportunity to strengthen shared growth and labour market integration.

Similarly, developing **the Abbey Line** could enhance links between **Watford and St Albans**, improving connectivity, supporting modal shift, and delivering more integrated planning across the sub-region. These connections reinforce West Hertfordshire's role in the **London–Luton–Milton Keynes growth arc**, and the 2UA model enables the area to define its own strategic identity, reduce reliance on London, and pursue **self-contained, place-based growth** aligned with national priorities.

Economic Strengths and Sectoral Clusters

West Hertfordshire hosts several nationally significant sectors aligned with the Government's Modern Industrial Strategy:

- **Professional and business services:** Major hubs in Watford and St Albans tap into the London-facing labour market. Growth is constrained by housing affordability, but developments such as **Hemel Garden Communities** offer solutions.
- **Film and TV:** The greater Watford area hosts major studios and has secured considerable recent investment, opening the potential for regional collaboration across Buckinghamshire, Surrey and Berkshire. This would reflect the sector's functional economic geography and allow for a more effective response to growth constraints such as skills and workforce development.
- **Agri-tech:** Anchored by Rothamsted Research, there is scope to strengthen links between Harpenden and Hemel Hempstead to unlock growth.

Anchor Institutions and Assets

As the **Place Profile Summary** below shows, West Hertfordshire is home to key anchor institutions including West Herts College, the Building Research Establishment (BRE), and Rothamsted Research, which support innovation, skills development and sectoral growth. This strategic coherence ensures West Hertfordshire will contribute fully to national priorities while responding to local needs.

BRE and Rothamsted Research are two nationally significant anchor institutions in West Hertfordshire. The Building Research Establishment (BRE), based in Watford, is a leading centre for innovation in the built environment, sustainability and construction standards. It plays a key role in the Herts IQ Enterprise Zone and works closely with public sector partners to support research, skills development and policy innovation - particularly in areas such as housing, energy efficiency and climate resilience. Rothamsted Research, located in Harpenden, is one of the oldest agricultural research institutions in the world and continues to lead in agri-tech and environmental science. Its strategic collaborations with local authorities and universities support innovation in food systems, land use and rural economy. Together, these institutions offer significant opportunities for joint working under the 2UA model.

Planning and growth

Two major programmes anchor West Hertfordshire's growth agenda:

Hemel Garden Communities (HGC): A transformational programme delivering up to 11,000 new homes and 10,000 new jobs to the north and east of Hemel Hempstead by 2050. It includes new schools, healthcare facilities, green infrastructure and sustainable transport. Led by a partnership of Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City & District Council, Hertfordshire County Council, and supported by Hertfordshire Futures, HGC is a nationally recognised exemplar of garden town development.

Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter (Herts IQ): Is a designated Enterprise Zone focused on clean growth, construction innovation and environmental technologies. It is backed by private and public sector partners including, The Crown Estate, Building Research Establishment (BRE), Rothamsted Research and University of Hertfordshire. The site will deliver 3 million sq. ft of commercial space, just 30 minutes outside London.

West Herts College plays a pivotal role in supporting the construction and clean growth sectors through its specialist programmes in modern methods of construction (MMC), engineering, and building services. The college offers apprenticeships and technical training aligned to the needs of Herts IQ and Hemel Garden Communities, including off-site construction and sustainable building techniques.

South West Hertfordshire Joint Spatial Plan

The South West Hertfordshire Joint Spatial Plan provides a locally determined strategy for housing and infrastructure across Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers and Watford. The 2UA model formalises this geography, ensuring accelerated delivery, strategic coherence, and joined-up planning across housing, transport and employment.

West Hertfordshire has the **scale, connectivity** and **sectoral strength** to chart its own course. The 2UA model ensures it can do so with clarity and coherence - supporting strategic planning, reducing out-commuting, and strengthening civic and economic identity.

West Hertfordshire: Place Profile Summary
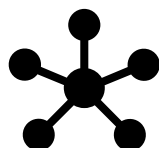
Sectors: Agri-tech/ Clean Industries; Construction; Film and TV; Professional and Business Services

Key developments: Hemel Garden Communities; Hertfordshire IQ Enterprise Zone**;** Watford Junction; Watford Riverwell

Education/anchor institutions: Building Research Establishment (BRE); Rothamsted Research; West Herts College

Major companies: Bourne Leisure; Costco; Elstree Studios; Imagination Technologies; JD Wetherspoons; Majestic Wines; Sky Studios Elstree; TJX Europe; Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden;

Culture/Heritage: Berkhamsted Castle; Frogmore Paper Trail; St Albans Cathedral; Tring Natural History Museum; Watford Museum; Palace Theatre; Verulamium Roman ruins
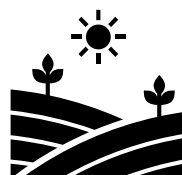
Green Spaces/Places of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): Chilterns National Landscape (AONB) including Ashridge Estate and Tring Park; Cassiobury Park; Verulamium Park; Whippendell Wood (Site of Special Scientific Interest);

Connectivity: Luton Airport; M1; M25, West Coast Mainline

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East Hertfordshire: Pioneering, purposeful and poised for growth

East Hertfordshire blends rural character with cutting-edge capability. From the Garden Cities of Letchworth and Welwyn to the post-war innovation of Stevenage, it has long been a place of planned growth and civic ambition. The area also played a pivotal role in British aviation history, with Hatfield serving as the home of the de Havilland Aircraft Company - a legacy that continues to shape its strengths in aerospace and advanced manufacturing. Today, East Hertfordshire is a nationally significant hub for life sciences, defence and digital technologies, with strong strategic links to Cambridge and the Oxford–Cambridge Growth Corridor. With a spirit of enterprise and a legacy of purposeful development, it is well-positioned to lead sustainable innovation and inclusive growth.
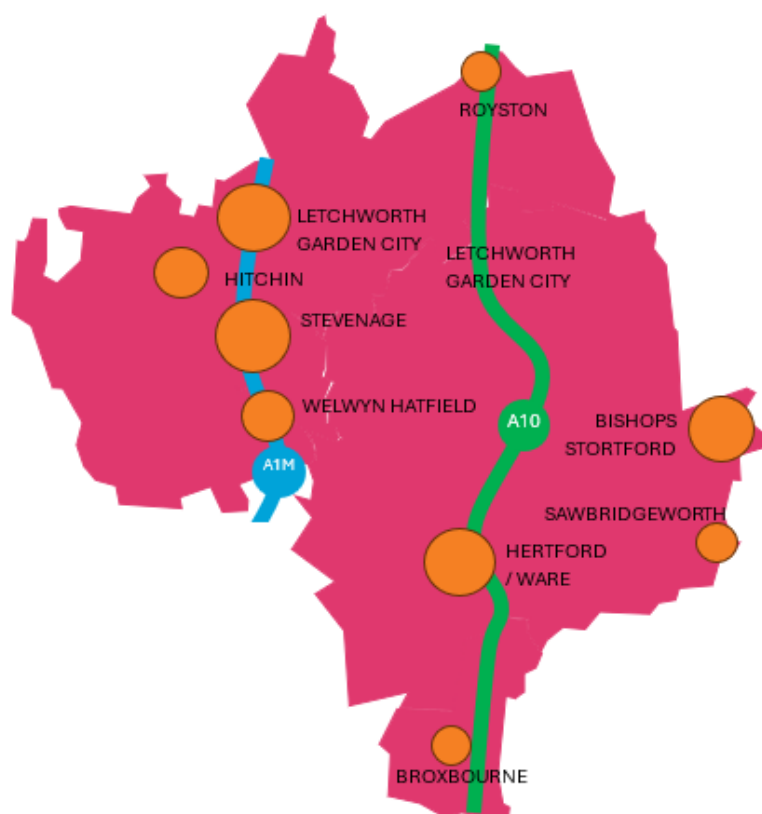
East Hertfordshire is home to **610,569 people**, and its population is projected to grow rapidly – by **24% (or 147,000 residents)** – in the period to 2045 (internal projection). It generates economic output of about **£22bn in GVA**. It is home to **27,000 enterprises** and **314,000 jobs**[18] with a sizeable and dynamic economy with significant assets and strategic potential.

The area is defined by two key transport corridors: the **A1(M**) and **East Coast Mainline** linking **Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City** and **Hatfield** to **Hitchin, Letchworth** and **Baldock** to the north. The **A10 corridor** connects **Broxbourne**, **Ware**, and **Hertford** to the wider region. This could be harnessed further in the future, particularly given the need to accelerate housing growth.

These towns support a mix of historic and future growth with a mix of market towns, Garden Cities of (Letchworth Garden City and Welwyn Garden City), and post-war New Towns (Stevenage, Hatfield)) forming a diverse and strategically important blueprint for the built environment.

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[18] Source: Local Government Reorganisation Statistical Selection Model (HCC)

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Connectivity and Infrastructure

East Hertfordshire benefits from strong connectivity via the **A1(M)**, **A10**, **M25**, and **East Coast Mainline**, with proximity to both **London Stansted Airport** (east) and **London Luton Airport** (west). These transport links support employment, trade, and mobility, and position East Hertfordshire as a key contributor to regional and national growth.

Civic and Cultural Identity

East Hertfordshire's geography includes a mix of market towns, post-war developments, and agricultural areas shaped by rivers flowing into the **River Lea**. Historic industries such as brewing and malting have evolved into modern sectors including **aviation**, **space**, and **life sciences**, particularly around **Stevenage**. It supports a mix of historic and future growth with a mix of market towns, Garden Cities of (Letchworth Garden City and Welwyn Garden City), and post-war New Towns (Stevenage, Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead) forming a diverse and strategically important blueprint for the built environment.

Strategic links and sub-regional opportunities

East Hertfordshire has strong strategic links to the **Cambridge sub-region** and is well-positioned within the **Oxford–Cambridge Growth Corridor**. These connections support labour market integration, sectoral collaboration, and housing delivery.

Its proximity to **London Stansted** and **London Luton Airports** enhances its role in international trade and mobility. The area also benefits from connections to other parts of **Cambridgeshire** and **Essex**, particularly through the **West Anglia Mainline** and **M11**, supporting growth in locations such as **Gilston** and **Harlow**.

Economic Strengths and Sectoral Clusters

East Hertfordshire hosts several nationally significant sectors aligned with the Government's **Modern Industrial Strategy**:

- **Life Sciences**: Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City, Ware, Bishop's Stortford, and Royston form a nationally significant cluster with strong links to Cambridge.

- **Advanced Manufacturing, Aerospace & Defence**: Stevenage, Letchworth, and Royston anchor this sector, with strategic connections to Bedfordshire and the wider growth corridor.

- **AI & Data Centres**: Waltham Cross is home to major infrastructure such as Google's data centre, with potential for clustering and innovation.

- **Housing & Growth**: Gilston is a major focus for planned housing growth, with opportunities to align with life sciences and employment hubs.

Planning and growth

East Hertfordshire is at the heart of one of the UK's most ambitious housing and infrastructure programmes: the **Harlow & Gilston Garden Town (HGGT)**. With a projected population increase of over 163,000 by 2045, the area requires a governance model capable of delivering strategic planning, infrastructure coordination and sustainable growth at scale.

The **Gilston Area**, located to the north of Harlow, is a key component of the HGGT designation. It will deliver **10,000 new homes**, including:

- **8,500 homes** across six villages by **Places for People**

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- **1,500 homes** in a seventh village by **Taylor Wimpey**

The development includes:

- **£1.3 billion** in infrastructure investment

- New **primary and secondary schools**

- Healthcare, leisure, retail and employment space

- Extensive **green infrastructure**, including parks, community gardens and country parks

- Strategic transport upgrades, including the **Central and Eastern Stort Crossings**

Planning permission was granted by **East Herts District Council** in January 2025, following one of the largest Section 106 agreements in the country.

The HGGT programme is a collaboration between:

- East Herts District Council
- Harlow Council
- Epping Forest District Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Essex County Council
- Homes England
- Places for People

The Gilston development addresses significant challenges to existing housing markets, transport corridors and service footprints. The 2UA model formalises this geography, delivering:

- **Accelerated delivery** of housing and infrastructure

- **Strategic coherence** across planning, transport and community services

- **Alignment with the Oxford–Cambridge Growth Corridor**, reinforcing East Hertfordshire's role in regional economic development

The Gilston site is already embedded within a coherent strategic geography - one that aligns with housing markets, NHS footprints, and transport corridors. The 2UA model strengthens this alignment, ensuring East Hertfordshire will lead decisively on delivery.

Anchor institutions and assets

East Hertfordshire is home to key anchor institutions including the University of Hertfordshire, North Herts College, Hertford Regional College, Oaklands College, and the Royal Veterinary College. These institutions are key pillars which drive workforce development, innovation, and sectoral growth.

The University of Hertfordshire (UH) is a particularly significant anchor institution in East Hertfordshire. The **Hertfordshire Civic University Partnership** between UH and Hertfordshire County Council is a formal agreement designed to build and maintain a strategic and purposeful relationship between the two organisations. It identifies and oversees joint projects that positively impact students, staff, communities and businesses across the county. The Partnership is underpinned by a Board chaired by the Director of Public Health and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), which sets out strategic priorities and workstreams, and expands collaboration in fields of shared interest and expertise.

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

The 2UA model ensures East Hertfordshire will build on its strategic assets and respond to distinct economic opportunities:

- **Strong links to the Cambridge sub-region:** Cambridge has been identified for accelerated housing growth and is pivotal within the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor. There is a clear opportunity for East Hertfordshire to position itself in this sub-region supporting labour market delivery and sectoral collaboration. These links are very much less strong in West Hertfordshire.
- **Proximity to London Stansted Airport (on its eastern boundary) and London Luton Airport (to the west):** This creates an opportunity for employment, trade and supply chain development; it will also bring amenity value to businesses looking to trade internationally and people seeking to travel. This would require co-ordinated planning to manage growth and mitigate risks.

By formalising this geography, the 2UA model supports strategic planning, unlocks sectoral growth, and ensures East Hertfordshire will contribute fully to national priorities while responding to local needs.

East Hertfordshire: Place Profile Summary
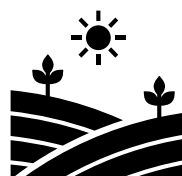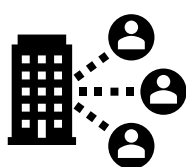
Sectors: Advanced Manufacturing; AI and Data Centres, Defence; Life Sciences	Education/anchor institutions: University of Hertfordshire; North Herts College; Hertford Regional College; Oaklands College; Royal Veterinary College	Culture/Heritage: Hatfield House; Gordon Craig Theatre; Hertford Castle; Hertford Theatre; Knebworth House; Royston Cave; Shaw's Corner; Welwyn Roman Baths; historic market towns (Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Ware): Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities	Green spaces/Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): Lee Valley Nature Reserve; Panshanger Park; Therfield Heath (Site of Special Scientific Interest SSSI); Broxbourne Woods (Hertfordshire's only National Nature Reserve	Connectivity: London Stansted (East); London Luton (West); A10, A1M, M25, East Coast Mainline
Key developments: Growing Baldock; Gilston area (part of Harlow Gilston Garden Town); Stevenage Town Centre (SG1); Elevate Quarter (life sciences); Brookfield Riverside and Garden Village;	**Major companies:** Airbus Defence and Space; Computacenter; Eisai; Google; GSK; Johnson Matthey; MBDA; Roche; Willmott Dixon			

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The 2UA model delivers the most **cost effective** and **financially resilient** solution for Hertfordshire's future. It delivers the highest level of projected savings and the fastest payback on transition costs, creating the conditions for long-term stability, investment in core services and inclusive growth.

Annual savings are almost double the level of 3UA, and almost four times the level of the 4UA proposal (under high-cost scenario). Under this scenario it is the only option that can pay back transition costs within 5 years and generate a surplus.

Under these assumptions, the two unitary model delivers £79 million in cumulative savings over five years (by 2032/33) – but then with transition costs paid off – the surplus rises substantially to £366m over ten years – significantly higher than other options.

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Operating at a larger scale ensures that each authority stronger financial planning capability, better risk management and greater purchasing power. This scale also creates the conditions to tackle complex, cross-cutting challenges, with greater strategic capacity, stronger partnerships and more coherent planning across wider geographies. It also provides the flexibility to absorb future demand pressures, particularly in high-cost areas such as Adult Social Care, housing and Children's Services – supporting our most vulnerable residents , while maintaining service quality and workforce stability.

The financial scale of the 2UA authorities also means that those councils:

- are most able to withstand risks inherent in the business case assumption

- Are most able to deliver the necessary transformation and change

- Are most able to deliver critical services to residents from day 1

As well as delivering the highest level of savings, the 2UA proposition is best able to manage and mitigate these wider financial risks as follows.

Transformation:

- As outlined elsewhere in this proposal, both children's services and adult social care have an excellent track record in developing and delivering groundbreaking transformation programmes – including Family safeguarding (children's) and Connect and Prevent (adult care)

- One of the key lessons in developing these programmes (and then supporting roll out across Hertfordshire for Family Safeguarding) is the necessary scale to be able to develop and deliver such programmes. It is also crucial that you have a structure that enables the right partnership working (for example with Health in adult care)

Service delivery at scale

- The county council currently delivers high quality services – with many rated good or outstanding. Being able to maintain scale in within 2UA will mean a greater chance of this being maintained. There is a clear link between service performance and financial performance – with those councils with poorly performing services (especially in Children's Services and Adult Care) also more likely to be facing financial difficulties

- This submission also outlines how the 2UA proposition will enable greater equity and access to services – given their geographical locations (including key services such and children's homes, nursing care provision and SEND places). Greater numbers of unitary councils risk not only access to services – but the cost pressure that comes from not having that capacity locally.

Delivery of LGR savings

- As outlined above, scale gives greater ability to deliver:

  - Safe and legal services from day one

  - The transformation needed as part of LGR

  - The wider service transformation needed to maintain excellent services

- Each council will need to identify the resourcing needed to deliver LGR and wider change. The 2UA proposition means there is a greater likelihood of having access to the people needed, and also having the greater pooling of reserves and asset sales to fund the substantial transition costs

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

District and community services

- One of the major concerns in local government is that increasing costs in social care could eventually mean that there is very little funding available for all other services which is crucial to communities and residents.

- Ensuring that the most efficient structures are in place for local government in Hertfordshire will maximise the funding available for the broad range of services residents rely on.

Ultimately, the two unitary model provides the scale to invest in preventative services, the flexibility to respond to future challenges, and the stability to deliver consistent, high-quality services for all residents.

CONTEXT

All eleven authorities in Hertfordshire have worked together with an external consultancy to develop a shared financial model and set of assumptions. The process that has been followed and the detail behind these assumptions is set out in detail within the accompanying "spine" document and technical appendix.

Important contextual points to note are:

- Chief Financial Officers of all eleven authorities have used best endeavours to follow a robust methodology and to develop a comprehensive and reasonable set of assumptions for the purposes of assessing the likely impacts, costs and savings arising from local government reorganisation. Significant uncertainties remain in several key areas and further due diligence is required on elements of our proposal, and so the results should be seen as an indication of future impacts rather than a firm prediction.

- Modelling assumptions have been accepted by all eleven organisations, including the use of ranges in key areas as detailed separately.

- The impact of the Fair Funding Review (FFR) is not reflected in our financial modelling because clear information is not available from government to enable this. We engaged with a third-party organisation to try to assess likely impacts but could not rely on the results as there are apparent conflicts with information from other sources and indications from government that modelling assumptions may change before FFR is finalised. Our understanding is that once implemented FFR may change both the quantum and distribution of revenue funding in Hertfordshire over the medium-term, which may have a material impact on the financial resilience of future unitary authorities.

- The scope of our modelling includes financial benefits and savings that arise directly and causally from the process of reorganisation; for example, removal of duplicate management posts and savings from having fewer elections. As a partnership we have not modelled any additional benefits or savings from additional transformation by new authorities once they have been created, which would have a further impact on the performance of new unitary authorities in practice.

- The financial model assumes is that new authorities will harmonise the District and Borough element of Council Tax at the taxbase-weighted average and then apply annual uplifts in line with

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government assumptions on funding. In reality the levels of annual council tax increases will be a decision for future authorities.

Headline results – TWO unitary authorities

	Higher cost scenario	Lower cost scenario
MTFS – outperforms the two-tier baseline in	2031/32	2030/31
One-off investment costs required to deliver LGR	£102m	£85m
Annual recurring NET savings from LGR by year 5	£50m	£55m
Cumulative net (deficit) / surplus from LGR after 5 years	£79m	£113m
Cumulative net (deficit) / surplus from LGR after 10 years	£366m	£418m
Payback on LGR savings in	2031/32	2030/31

This summary scorecard shows the overall aggregate performance of the two unitary option. A further breakdown of the performance of individual authorities within this option is included later in this section. On an overall basis the headline results are:

- The two unitary authority option "outperforms" the two-tier baseline in 2030/31 in the lower-cost scenario and 2031/32 in the higher cost scenario; the fastest of all options. This means that the cumulative net savings from LGR alongside the ability to raise additional council tax, if future authorities choose to do so, mean that this provides greater financial resilience than would have been the case without LGR.

- Estimated up-front investment costs to deliver the two unitary option range from £85m under the lower cost scenario to £102m under the higher-cost scenario. A further breakdown of these cost estimates is provided below.

- By year 5 after LGR, assumed here to be 2032/33, all costs and savings from LGR are fully "phased-in". At this point the two unitary authority option will deliver recurring net annual savings of £50m - £55m over the baseline for predecessor authorities.

- Adding up all costs and savings from LGR on a cumulative basis, after five years the two unitary option will have saved a net total of £79m to £113m.

- After ten years, the cumulative savings indicate a range of £366m to £418m.

- Excluding council tax and focusing just on the "payback" from the costs of investing in LGR, this option "pays back" on investment costs in 2031/32 (four years after LGR) in the higher-cost scenario, or 2030/31 (three years after LGR) in the lower-cost scenario.

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

New unitary authorities – modelled budgets and funding position for year one (2028/29)

The graphs below show the anticipated year one budget for each proposed new unitary authority, excluding the initial costs and savings from LGR. On current assumptions and to different extents, new authorities will begin with opening surpluses or deficits based on modelled demand and service expenditure in each area, the likely funding of each area and the capacity of each area to generate Council Tax.

Year 1 budget and funding – 2 West
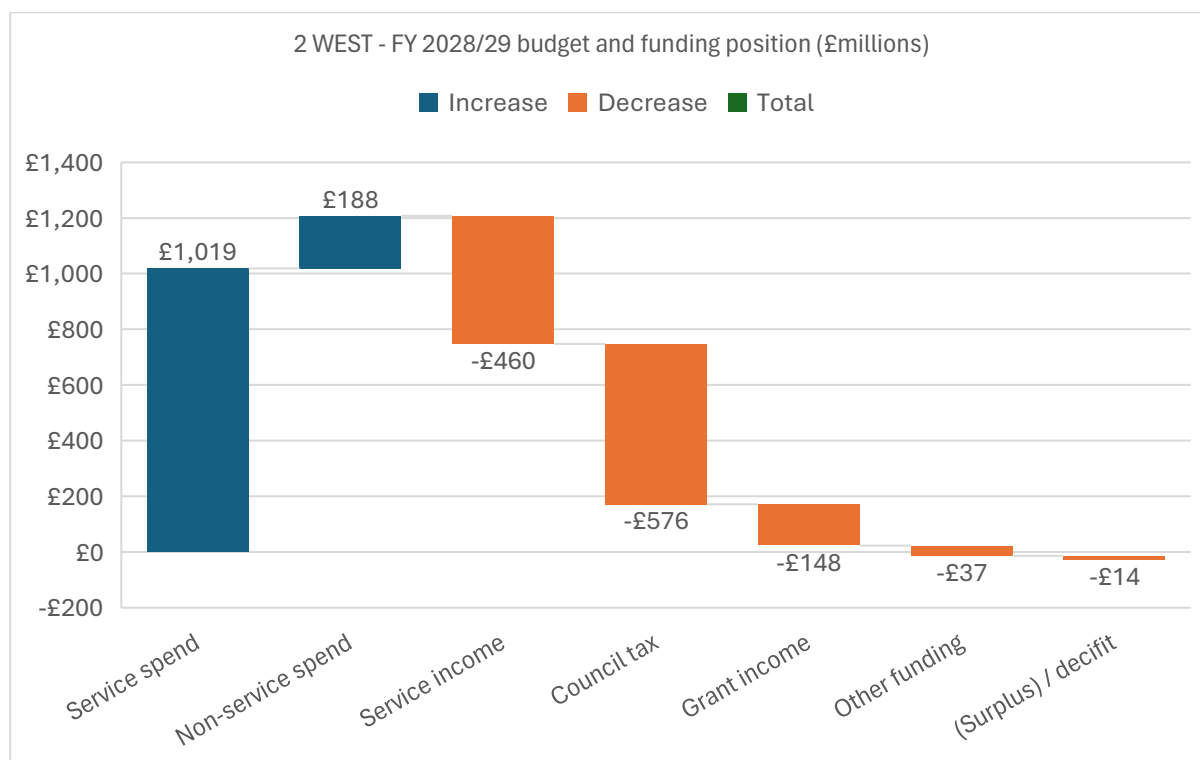
Year 1 budget and funding – 2 East

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

2 EAST - FY 2028/29 budget and funding position (£millions)

Legend: ■ Increase ■ Decrease ■ Total

Waterfall chart values:
- Service spend: £1,019
- Non-service spend: £169
- Service income: -£437
- Council tax: -£531
- Grant income: -£184
- Other funding: -£34
- (Surplus) / deficit: £2

Performance against the two-tier baseline over time

2 unitary authorities - higher cost scenario
Annual budget gap (£ millions) - change from two-tier system

Years: 2028/29 2029/30 2030/31 2031/32 2032/33 2033/34 2034/35 2035/36 2036/37 2037/38

Legend: ■ LGR costs ■ LGR savings ■ Additional CTAX capacity — Annual total

2 unitary authorities - lower cost scenario
Annual budget gap (£ millions) - change from two-tier system

These two graphs are shown in-year rather than on a cumulative basis and show the in-year difference from the two-tier baseline that is delivered by LGR under this option. The modelled two-tier baseline is shown as zero, and the estimated impacts of LGR are shown as increases or (decreases) from that baseline. The key finding is that despite significant up-front costs, implementing this option would rapidly make Hertfordshire better off overall than the two-tier baseline in both the lower and higher-cost scenarios. The different elements of the chart are summarised as follows:

- **LGR costs** – this line adds together one-off costs (e.g. programme management) and recurring costs (e.g. duplicating management teams for social care). The majority of one-off investment costs will be incurred in the first year of LGR in 2028/29, and after five years only recurring elements of cost remain.

- **LGR savings** – this line shows the total recurring savings that are delivered by LGR (e.g. by removing duplication). These savings are higher than recurring costs, through elimination of duplicate roles or functions; these are higher than ongoing costs and are anticipated to deliver annual savings.

- **Additional CTAX capacity** – this line shows the extent to which future unitary authorities would be able to raise additional Council Tax over and above the two-tier baseline should they wish to do so. This is the maximum potential for additional Council Tax in line with current referendum limits. This will be a decision for future authorities themselves.

- **Annual total** – this line shows the aggregate movement from the two-tier baseline forecast under this option, adding up all of the above.

Medium-term POSITION OF INDIVIDUAL UNITARY AUTHORITIES OVER TIME
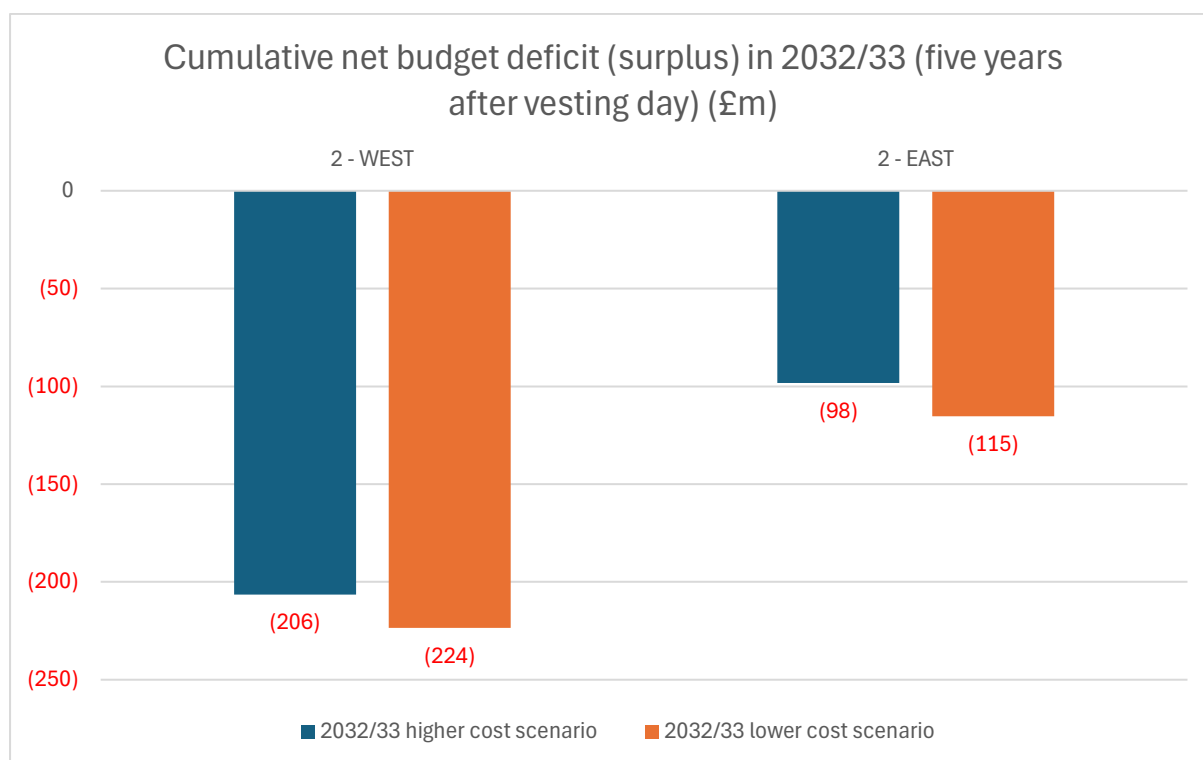
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Cumulative net budget deficit (surplus) in 2032/33 (five years after vesting day) (£m)

This graph combines all baseline modelling assumptions including inflation, assumed council tax increases and the impacts of LGR to show the cumulative net budget position for each unitary authority after the first five years of LGR. The set of baseline assumptions that we have used indicate that all models will be in a surplus position after this period, with increases in Council Tax outstripping underlying inflation for the cost of delivering services, and the investment costs of delivering LGR beginning to pay back. Further sensitivities have been modelled to test this position, and the surpluses will be quickly eroded if, for example:

- The significant savings planned in the 2025-26 to 2027-28 period (pre-vesting day) are not delivered in full, contributing to a more challenging opening position for new authorities.

- Inflation occurs at a higher rate than is assumed in our modelling.

- New authorities decide to increase Council Tax at a lower rate than the default assumed here, which is in line with government assumptions on future funding.

- There is any slippage in delivering the anticipated benefits from LGR.

- Further unexpected shocks occur.

The surplus shown above indicates that the 2 unitary model is likely to have the highest level of resilience in the event of any (or a combination) of the above occurring.

Costs and savings from LGR

2 unitary authorities - high scenario
Cumlative net costs (savings) from LGR (£millions)

2 unitary authorities - low scenario
Cumlative net costs (savings) from LGR (£millions)
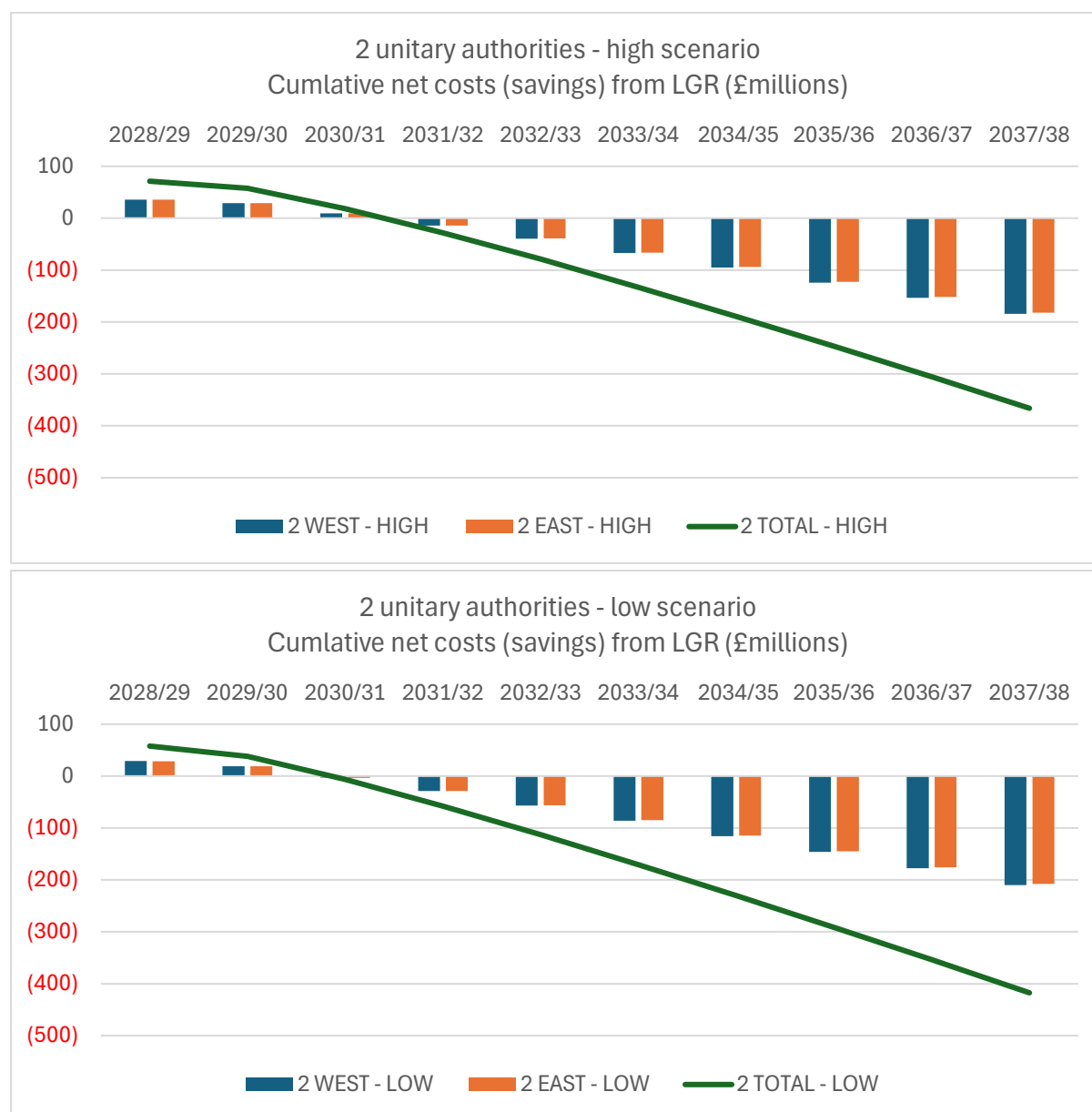
These graphs show cumulative net costs and savings from LGR over time for individual unitary authorities, with detailed assumptions included below.

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Cumulative net costs / (savings) from LGR – higher cost scenario

£m	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38
2 WEST - HIGH	36	29	9	(14)	(40)	(67)	(95)	(124)	(154)	(184)
2 EAST - HIGH	35	29	9	(14)	(39)	(66)	(94)	(123)	(152)	(182)
2 TOTAL - HIGH	**71**	**58**	**18**	**(28)**	**(79)**	**(133)**	**(189)**	**(247)**	**(306)**	**(366)**

Cumulative net costs / (savings) from LGR – LOWER cost scenario

£m	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38
2 WEST - LOW	29	19	(3)	(29)	(57)	(86)	(116)	(146)	(178)	(210)
2 EAST - LOW	29	19	(3)	(29)	(56)	(85)	(115)	(145)	(176)	(208)
2 TOTAL - LOW	**58**	**38**	**(6)**	**(58)**	**(113)**	**(171)**	**(230)**	**(291)**	**(354)**	**(418)**

LGR COST AND SAVINGS DETAILED ASSUMPTIONS

The table below shows cost and savings assumptions in detail, identifying the areas in which a range has been accepted by partners. For further detail see appendix A in the accompanying "spine" document.

Assumption	LGR costs and savings (£ m)									
	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38
One off-costs										
IT disaggregation (HIGH)	21.2	6.2	3.5	2.7	2.7					
IT disaggregation (LOW)	11.3	3.3	1.9	1.4	1.4					
IT consolidation	18.7									
Programme management	16.5									

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Contract novation and renegotiation	4.4								
Estates and facilities - reconfiguration	1.4	1.4							
Communication and rebranding	1.3								
Staff relocation	1.9								
Specialist support and advice	5.5								
Transition cost - redundancies	8.6	2.9	2.9						
Total one-off costs (HIGH)	**79.5**	**10.4**	**6.4**	**2.7**	**2.7**				
Total one-off costs (LOW)	**69.6**	**7.5**	**4.7**	**1.4**	**1.4**				
Recurring costs									
Additional costs of scale	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Diseconomies of scale (HIGH)	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4
Diseconomies of scale (LOW)	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Total recurring costs (HIGH)	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**
Total recurring costs (LOW)	**4.0**	**4.0**	**4.0**	**4.0**	**4.0**	**4.0**	**4.0**	**4.0**	**4.0**	**4.0**
Recurring savings										
Staff savings	(10.0)	(19.5)	(30.1)	(30.7)	(31.3)	(31.9)	(32.5)	(33.2)	(33.9)	(34.5)
Democratic and governance reorganisation	(1.4)	(2.8)	(4.7)	(4.7)	(4.7)	(4.7)	(4.7)	(4.7)	(4.7)	(4.7)
Direct cost savings	(4.3)	(8.9)	(18.4)	(21.4)	(24.5)	(25.3)	(26.1)	(26.9)	(27.8)	(28.7)
Total recurring savings	**(15.7)**	**(31.2)**	**(53.2)**	**(56.8)**	**(60.5)**	**(61.9)**	**(63.4)**	**(64.8)**	**(66.4)**	**(67.9)**

Balance sheet - benchmarking

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Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Benchmarking of the consolidated balance sheets of new organisations against existing unitary authorities was undertaken by an independent organisation in March 2025.

	Net Assets	URR	URR+DSG	CFR	Debt gearing
2b.1 East	TOP	2ND	2ND	3RD	TOP
2b.2 West	TOP	TOP	TOP	3RD	TOP

Existing and future Hertfordshire authorities have relatively stable balance sheet financial health when compared with all existing unitaries. In this exercise they were compared to unitary authorities (excluding Metropolitan and London Boroughs). The table above shows the results by quartile.

- **Net assets** - all options would see the proposed unitaries in the top quartile.

- **Usable Revenue Reserves (URR)** – all options will hold usable reserves at a level above the median.

- **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit** – currently low when compared with other areas, but forecasting much greater deficits in future which will impact the resilience of all options.

- **Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)** – the one area with consistently low performance. There are a handful of exceptions, driven by East Herts and Broxbourne.

- **Debt gearing** - all options show above top quartile levels in respect of debt gearing.

Other key financial risks and assumptions

Please refer to appendix A of the spine document for a further list of specific risks and assumptions that are relevant to this option. In particular:

Strategic Authority – some existing costs and budgets will transfer to the Strategic Authority such as the Fire service. These have not been included in the financial model at this stage due to the complexities of splitting out budgets and resource. No additional running costs have been assumed for the Strategic Authority within the financial model.

Existing MTFS savings – If the savings assumed to be achieved by vesting day are not delivered, this would reduce the projected baseline position and may require the new authorities to identify additional savings beyond those expected from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

It should also be noted that, while annual savings are included in the MTFS up to 2027/28, non-LGR savings (to address underlying funding gaps) have already been incorporated into the financial model.

Savings – while a prudent approach to savings has been adopted, it is not yet possible to fully determine which savings are cashable and which may be non-cashable—for example, where expenditure is funded by ring-fenced grants. Therefore, although expenditure may be reduced in some cases, there could be limitations on how those savings can be used.

MTFS forecasts – as outlined earlier the financial models assume that cost increases – especially in Social Care and SEND, are lower in the years after LGR than in the years preceding it. Council tax

increases are also assumed at the 4.99% (2.99% council tax + 2% adult social care precept) every year in line with government assumptions on funding.

Shared service arrangements – Hertfordshire has a track record of successful shared services. It has been assumed for the purposes of the financial case that shared service arrangements will continue where long-term countywide contracts exist, such as for Highways and Waste Disposal. Without these arrangements, the additional costs linked to disaggregation could rise significantly.

DSG Deficit /HNB – the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant funds education for children with SEND, including special schools, independent placements, and additional support in mainstream settings.

Rising demand for SEND provision has led many councils to overspend, as grant funding has not kept pace with costs. The government's 'statutory override' allows councils to exclude these deficits from their accounts, but the financial shortfall remains. The override has been extended to March 2028 while longer-term reforms are developed.

The County Council forecasts a cumulative DSG deficit of £255 million by March 2028, with annual overspends expected to continue. The outcome of national reforms will be critical to the financial sustainability of all three structural options. Any remaining HNB deficit would need to be divided between the new authority or authorities, creating a risk that an unfunded deficit could be transferred.

Pay Harmonisation – no assumptions have been made in relation to pay harmonisation within the financial model although it is recognised that pay harmonisation will occur over several years. Whilst staff will initially move into the newly formed authorities taking their existing terms and conditions (including salary) under TUPE transfer, over time staff are likely to move on to the new organisations' terms and salary levels.

Borrowing – If alternative funding sources are insufficient to cover transition costs, borrowing may be required. Borrowing costs have not been included in the financial model at this stage and could reduce projected savings and the baseline funding available.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – the HRA sits outside of General Fund revenue expenditure. Although the four HRA's in Hertfordshire receive support services/Cost of democracy from the General Fund the impact on HRA's for one off, on-going costs and savings has not been included within the financial business case.

Assets disaggregation – has not been accounted for within the financial model but this potentially poses risks at a later stage in terms of ensuring the transfer of assets and their corresponding revenue streams and or liabilities does not inadvertently worsen the financial position and sustainability of the new authorities. Disposal of surplus assets may help to defray the costs of reorganisation.

Shared services – whilst some shared services are already in existence across for example Audit, Fraud, Procurement and Building Control, across Hertfordshire, these may no longer align geographically with the new authority boundaries. This may pose additional costs in relation to:

- Disaggregating shared systems or contracts that are no longer aligned geographically.

- Potential duplication of effort or investment if new, separate services are required.

- Loss of economies of scale once shared arrangements end.

However, in other cases existing shared services will not require disaggregation and there may be opportunities to expand these and create greater economies of scale.

Companies and other entities – where they exist this may cause additional complexity in aggregating and disaggregating balance sheets and asset valuation or else amending governance and ownership arrangements. As a result, additional specialist support may be required. This is assumed to be covered by the existing allocation of specialist support within the one-off costs.

Shadow authority costs – it has been assumed that the costs of the shadow authority can be covered by existing budgets and one-off costs and the contingency where required. These are unlikely to have a material impact on the financial assessment of alternative unitary options being considered, nor on their ongoing financial sustainability.

HIGH-QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE SERVICES (MHCLG CRITERION 3)

GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS

Strong local democracy is the foundation of public trust and effective decision-making. Hertfordshire's proposed governance model under the 2UA structure has been designed to ensure robust accountability, visible leadership and meaningful representation for residents.

Each new council will be supported by **117 councillors**, a figure grounded in detailed modelling, national guidance and practical governance needs. It is also supported by detailed analysis of committee workload and community representation. While the 117 councillor representation number for the 2UA model exceeds the LGBCE guidance, we believe we have set out a strong and compelling case, for this as an interim measure pending a full LGBCE review that will be commissioned shortly after vesting of the two authorities. We are open to other options if the Secretary of State deems this necessary.

The case for this level of representation is built on four key factors:

1. Community Leadership

Councillors will represent larger areas and populations, covering both county and district functions. The expanded role requires an appropriate number of councillors to maintain strong local representation and manage increased casework.   Three councillors per ward is proposed which allows for shared workload and stronger representation.

2. Governance Capacity

Each authority will operate a Leader and Cabinet model with an estimated 170-200 committee seats. The proposed councillor count ensures sufficient capacity to manage committee workloads, provide representation on outside bodies, maintain democratic oversight, and avoid overburdening members - especially during the critical early years of transition.

3. Electoral Equality

Modelling shows that 117 councillors per authority results in an average elector-to-councillor ratio of 3,828, which is well within the range seen in other unitary authorities. This supports fair and accessible representation.

4. Boundary Simplicity

Using existing county divisions provides and stable structure for the interim period until a full electoral review is undertaken, aligning with Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and Secretary of State guidance to minimise complexity and cost.

A detailed map of parliamentary constituencies and district boundaries (see **Map 1, Proposition**) illustrates how the proposed East/West configuration reflects natural geographies and existing administrative footprints. While not designed to align directly with constituency boundaries, the 2UA model offers a clearer and more coherent framework for MP engagement than more fragmented alternatives. This supports stronger advocacy, simplifies strategic dialogue, and reinforces community identity.

While the proposal exceeds the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's guideline of 100 councillors per authority, this reflects a considered and pragmatic choice to **safeguard democratic integrity and ensure resilience** during transition. It prioritises continuity, avoids disruption, and ensures that residents remain well-represented through structural change. This governance model complements the wider 2UA vision: **simplified structures**, **clear lines of accountability**, and **strong local leadership** that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of Hertfordshire's communities.

SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS AND PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

The two-unitary authority (2UA) model provides a **strategic, scalable and future-proof solution** for delivering high-quality services from day one, while enabling long-term transformation and public service reform.

By consolidating services into two coherent authorities, it avoids the fragmentation and volatility associated with smaller authorities. It ensures each new unitary has the capacity to manage demand and workforce pressures. This scale supports smarter use of assets, investment in digital transformation and more equitable funding across diverse communities, particularly for services such as Adult Social Care and Public Health.

The viability of the two-unitary model is further evidenced by the distribution of service demands, as evidenced earlier in **Table 5,** across East and West Hertfordshire. Both areas demonstrate comparable levels of activity across Adult Social Care, Children's Services, and education, supporting equitable service planning and financial resilience.

This balance mirrors the infrastructure footprint outlined in the Place section, confirming that the proposed geographies are not only strategically coherent but also operationally ready. The 2UA model enables each authority to manage demand effectively, maintain consistent standards, and invest in preventative approaches without volatility or fragmentation associated with smaller unitaries. The 2UA model also enables consolidated commissioning across two larger authorities, reducing duplication and simplifying contract management. It supports stronger funding bids and fosters strengthened relationships with Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) partners, enabling integrated service delivery and joint initiatives at scale. Unified commissioning also allows for standardised eligibility criteria and outcomes measurement, improving service consistency and impact evaluation. Larger authorities can support voluntary organisations to coordinate efforts, share data and align goals.

1. Single Disaggregation and Service Continuity

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Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

This model enables a **single, coordinated disaggregation** of countywide services, reducing complexity and risk. This ensures:

- Safe and legal operation of critical services from day one

- Continuity of statutory functions such as Adult and Children's Social Care, Public Health, Highways and Waste Disposal

- Efficient transition planning with manageable programme oversight

This approach avoids the duplication and disruption that would arise from multiple disaggregation pathways, particularly in high-risk areas such as safeguarding, emergency response and judicial services.

2. Alignment with Key Partnership Geographies

This model aligns with the existing footprints of other public sector partners, including health, policing, safeguarding boards, local resilience forums and Coroner and judicial services. This alignment enables more coherent planning and delivery and supports:

- Streamlined strategic engagement and enabling stronger partnership working

- Reduced duplication and friction

- Faster, joined-up responses to complex challenges such as domestic abuse, youth violence, exploitation and asylum/migration

3. Flexibility to Respond to Local Differences

This model balances **scale** and **local responsiveness** through:

- Local Democratic Forums at a local community level

- Neighbourhood-level planning aligned with NHS and safeguarding models

- Place-based commissioning that reflects demographic and geographic diversity

This ensures services are designed around real communities, not administrative boundaries, and can respond to local health inequalities and community safety priorities.

4. Future Shape of Critical Services

This model supports long-term transformation by enabling:

- Integrated delivery of housing, health, education and employment, supporting early intervention and preventative approaches. The 2UA model also enables the application of strategic frameworks, see **Case Study: Hertfordshire Healthy Placemaking Framework.**

- Innovation through shared digital platforms, predictive analytics and smarter commissioning

- Strengthens service design in key areas such as mental health, family hubs and emergency planning.

5. Workforce and Financial Resilience

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

The model delivers:

- Leaner management structures and more efficient use of resources
- Workforce stability through co-ordinated recruitment, training and career pathways across the two unitaries
- Equitable service delivery by aligning funding with need

6. Strategic Reform and Devolution Readiness

The model positions Hertfordshire for future strategic reform by:

- Retaining a strong countywide identity, enabling up joined-up planning across two key growth areas.

- Creating the scale and clarity of leadership needed to unlock devolved powers and investment.

- Avoiding disruptive boundary changes

Two unitaries provides a clear and manageable framework for service delivery from day one. Each new authority will inherit a coherent operating footprint, enabling immediate continuity in statutory services. A single disaggregation process will ensure that countywide services are safely transitioned, with shared arrangements in place for specialist functions such as emergency duty teams, coroner services and contact centres.

This model places residents and communities at the heart of structural reform by delivering:

- Faster and more consistent responses to safeguarding, domestic abuse, youth violence and exploitation
- Integrated care pathways that reduce hospital admissions and support independent living
- Coordinated housing and health interventions to tackle homelessness and poor housing conditions
- Shared intelligence and data systems that enable early intervention and targeted support
- Streamlined commissioning and joint investment in preventative services and community infrastructure

Case study: Hertfordshire Healthy Placemaking Framework
Arising from the Hertfordshire Growth Board's 'Healthy and Safe Places for All' mission, the **Hertfordshire Healthy and Safer Placemaking Framework** provides a countywide blueprint for embedding health, wellbeing and safety into spatial planning and regeneration. Developed collaboratively by Hertfordshire County Council, district and borough councils, the Integrated Care Board (ICB), NHS partners and the voluntary sector, the Framework ensures that both new and existing communities are designed to support physical, mental and social health.

The Framework is a key enabler of **place-based public service reform**, offering practical guidance for Local Planning Authorities, and, in time, any Mayoral Strategic Authority on how to embed health outcomes into local plans and spatial development strategies. It supports a **joined-up approach to housing, transport, green infrastructure and community services**, ensuring that planning decisions actively contribute to reducing health inequalities and improving population wellbeing.

Crucially, the Framework will support delivery of Hertfordshire's two **Joint Strategic Plans (JSPs)** - North East Central JSP and South West JSP - which already reflect coherent housing markets, infrastructure

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priorities and economic linkages. The 2UA model formalises these geographies, enabling the Healthy Placemaking Framework to be applied consistently across both authorities, while ensuring **local responsiveness** to distinct community needs.

SAFEGUARDING ESSENTIAL SERVICES WHILST DRIVING INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION

The two unitary model provides a future ready framework for delivering high risk, demand-led services more effectively and sustainably, ensuring continuity, resilience and improved outcomes for residents. The model is designed to preserve Hertfordshire's most critical services while unlocking opportunities for innovation, integration and inclusive growth.

A new report[19] commissioned by the County Councils Network (CCN) warns that smaller unitary councils -particularly those below 500,000 population - face a "triple whammy" of risks to care services: rising costs, workforce shortages, and reduced service quality. These risks include higher care fees due to reduced purchasing power, duplication of senior roles amid existing recruitment challenges, and greater volatility in demand. Smaller councils are also more likely to experience extreme concentrations of care users, especially in areas like Stevenage and Watford, leading to unaffordable costs and reliance on expensive out-of-area placements. In contrast, larger councils are more likely to receive 'Good' or 'Outstanding' Ofsted ratings and attract skilled staff. **The 2UA model avoids these risks by maintaining scale, enabling financial resilience, and supporting consistent service quality across both authorities.**

These risks are particularly relevant in Hertfordshire, where the proposed East/West configuration aligns with existing health system footprints and operational geographies. NHS partners are strongly advocating support for greater joint working across local government and health. The South & West Hertfordshire Health & Care Partnership[20] states that this joint working provides several critical benefits, including:

- **Improved strategic planning**: Coherent geographies allow for more effective joint planning across health and local government, particularly in areas such as prevention, public health and social care.
- **Integrated service delivery**: When council and NHS footprints align, it becomes easier to design and deliver joined-up services that meet the needs of local populations, especially those with complex needs.
- **Population health management**: Shared geographies support the development of place-based approaches to improving health outcomes, reducing inequalities, and targeting resources where they are most needed using shared data and insights. This is increasingly important as the population ages and demand for complex care increases.
- **Workforce and estates planning**: Shared boundaries facilitate better coordination of workforce strategies and use of public sector estates.

The 2UA model enables consistent safeguarding practices across both authorities, reducing gaps and variation. It supports better data sharing for early risk identification, more uniform training for staff, and faster escalation of concerns, improving protection for children and families at risk of harm.

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[19] *Source: County Councils Network (CCN)/Newton report : Analysing the impact on people-based services: October 2025*

[20] *Letter from Chair of West Herts NHS Trust and CEO, West Herts NHS Trust and Chair, Chair, South & West Herts Health & Care Partnership*

These priorities reflect the feedback received during public and stakeholder engagement, where continuity of care, joined-up services and confidence in safeguarding were consistently raised. The 2UA model responds directly to these concerns - **preserving what works, protecting critical services and ensuring that no resident is disadvantaged by geography or transition**.

ADULT CARE SERVICES

The Adult Care Service is optimistic about the opportunities presented by the 2UA model, including integration with housing services, working collaboratively to embed prevention, and building on its existing 'Connected Lives' approach to delivery of Care Act statutory duties. This sees formal care and support services as complementing the existing strengths people have in their own families, networks and communities that help them live the lives they want to.

The Adult Care Service in Hertfordshire is recognised by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as being one of the foremost in the country. The Service is recognised nationally as a leading organisation, strongly advocating for the sector and influencing policy and practice development. This strength is based on effective leadership and management backed by financial resilience to sustain good quality services and approaches in a challenging context.

Operationally the Service is 'always on' with round the clock coverage every day of the year; hospital discharge teams work on a seven day basis, 8am to 8pm, and prevention of admission teams have a similar work pattern. Overnight, the Safeguarding Out of Hours Service provides emergency response and Mental Health Act assessment coverage. In-house direct care provision teams work night and day to ensure full continuity of care to people with critical care and support needs. This level of coverage and continuity is essential to keeping people safe and well.

It is therefore vitally important that the new configuration of local government in Hertfordshire ensures the continuity of the quality and effectiveness of services and smoothly sustains the direct provision of care and support day-in day-out. Only the two unitary model can both achieve this and diminish the disruption and harm from disaggregating this leading Service by:

- **Using the existing management, workforce and local delivery arrangements for Adult Social Care which are already configured to match the proposed two new unitary councils**

Adult Social Care teams already operate on district footprints, with senior operational leadership divided into two strategic areas which align precisely with the proposed two unitary footprints and mirror local health systems. Team management and workforce structures are organised into these two geographies and so continuity is ensured. As **Table 6** demonstrates, the two areas have very similar volumes of case activity and there is a clear operational coherence in the proposed split by area:

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Table 6[21]

Key Activity for ASC - Split by 2 UAs
(Rate per 18+ Population)
*data covers 12 months from 1st Oct 24 to 30 Sept 25

	East	West
Requests for Support	3459	3360
Adult Needs Assessments	1522	1542
Carers Assessments	453	419
Safeguarding Concerns Reported	922	896
Reviews	2630	2286

Key Long Term Service use for ASC - Split by 2 UAs
(Rate per 18+ Population)
*data covers 12 months from 1st Oct 24 to 30 Sept 25

	East	West
Direct Payments	361	396
Homecare	374	342
Supported Living	162	210
Residential	200	194
Nursing	95	91
Carers Direct Payments	110	179
Other Carers Services	171	118

Sufficiency of workforce is a challenge in Adult Social Care; there is high competition for registered professionals such as social workers and occupational therapists with and a thriving agency market. The 2UA model will work more easily together, better enabling control of the market for these roles, minimising the risk of spiralling workforce costs arising from competition for staff in a more fragmented geography.

Case management systems, budget and performance analyses are each already configured to enable reporting and monitoring on the two new unitary areas, ensuring the ongoing capability to steer the business and identify and mitigate emerging operational and financial pressures that are inevitable in a complex, highly volatile operational environment.

- **Leveraging the knowledge, expertise in and understanding of the populations in the two proposed unitary councils, ensuring vital continuity**

Both geographies have similar population sizes and contain areas of both relative deprivation and affluence; **Table 7** below shows the variation by district of current case load and illustrates the variety and intensity of activity and provision that operational staff and commissioners are well versed in managing across the two areas:

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[21] *Source: HCC*

Table 7[22]

Activity and Services Adults aged 18+ - Rate per population comparison across districts	Population 18+ (nearest 100)	Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) - Average IMD Score	Key Activity					Key Long Term Services						
			Requests for Support	Adult Needs Assessments	Carers Assessments	Safeguarding Concerns Reported	Reviews	Direct Payments	Homecare	Supported Living	Residential	Nursing	Carers Direct Payments	Other Carers Services
Broxbourne District	78,000	16.2	3482	1560	446	864	2759	408	480	166	125	33	114	166
East Hertfordshire District	120,300	9.7	2953	1246	465	741	1964	354	288	100	126	59	125	132
North Hertfordshire District	109,200	10.5	3651	1650	475	914	2877	323	404	133	261	125	81	167
Stevenage District	73,800	18.4	3911	1797	511	1230	3587	392	409	241	213	221	109	279
Welwyn Hatfield District	95,400	10.2	3536	1497	375	970	2390	352	336	209	279	65	123	147
East	476,700	13.6	3459	1522	453	922	2630	361	374	162	200	95	110	171
Dacorum District	124,000	12.3	3533	1756	506	896	2521	448	339	224	179	89	228	102
Hertsmere District	89,700	13.5	3426	1520	436	936	2389	430	398	221	217	132	203	160
St Albans District	123,500	8.5	3264	1432	391	837	2079	376	291	251	173	64	162	111
Three Rivers District	78,900	10.2	3232	1446	356	772	1868	344	341	111	146	27	137	90
Watford District	84,600	15.1	3280	1480	365	1053	2487	358	358	210	264	150	143	133
West	500,700	11.9	3360	1542	419	896	2286	396	342	210	194	91	179	118

IMD Score: Higher = more deprived. High Low

The different population characteristics of the two areas are well understood, as are the services, networks and offers in each locality. Teams use this knowledge to design care and support plans around each individual. This 'community connections' approach ensures people are anchored into their local networks based on a detailed understanding of what is available. Instability from disaggregation into smaller units risks loss of this in-depth knowledge and understanding. Conversely, there is a fantastic opportunity to build on this in the two unitary structures by blending in the skills and knowledge of all new colleagues with minimal distraction.

- **Combining the economy of scale that will allow for inequalities in supply and demand to be stabilised and for strong influence to shape, oversee and support the Hertfordshire care economy effectively**

Managing the multi-billion pound Hertfordshire care economy to shape sufficiency of provision for residents, whether they pay for their own care or receive financial support from the council, is a core task. The care market is fragile, there are areas of significant deficits in supply and quality such as nursing care for people with dementia; care providers exit the market regularly requiring 'last resort' support by the council to re-provide care.

It is vital that each authority has sufficient strategic capacity to understand the market, shape and manage it effectively, drive quality and respond when there are failures. The ability to own, direct and control this work is important given the impact on individuals of service failure and the high risk of overspend if supply side pressures are not effectively managed. A two unitary solution gives councils sufficient scale to invest in their own strategic commissioning capacity building on existing expertise and to more easily collaborate to ensure provider sustainability, fair fee structures and consistent quality standards across their footprint.

- **Building on strong partnership delivery which already reflects the two new unitary geographies**

In its 2024 inspection of Adult Social Care the Care Quality Commission assessed Hertfordshire's partnership arrangements as 'outstanding'. The CQC detailed the 'long term, strong effective relationships with NHS Trusts and it was clear that this had led to really positive outcomes for people'.

Like Adult Social Care itself, Hertfordshire's health geography is aligned along the East / West area model that is proposed for the two new councils. Health and Care Partnerships are established in these two

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[22] *Source: HCC*

areas, which group around acute hospitals at Watford and Stevenage in the West and East respectively. Adult Care Services is at the heart of work in these two areas, shaping strategy, supporting operational resilience, for example, in planning for Winter, and facilitating day to day 'system flow'. It is recognised as a reliable partner, supporting joined up delivery and ambitious to lead where appropriate. This work must not be interrupted as changes take place.

The two area geographic coherence already underpins integrated services across social care and health and ensures colleagues work together to deliver the best outcomes for residents; a number of jointly delivered services are long established, for example social care-led Integrated Hospital Discharge Teams based in two acute hospitals, jointly commissioned 'Discharge to Assess' pathways out of hospital overseen by two Post Hospital Area Teams, and two area based Prevention of Admission Teams which work closely with Community Health Providers, one for each unitary area.

System-wide alignment across health and care provides a strong foundation for transition, minimising disruption and enabling continuity in service delivery. Structural change needs to build on operational realities. Put bluntly, the two unitary geographies simply makes sense and allows easy continuity of effective partnership relations and vital working across health and social care. This stability is essential for maintaining trust with residents, communities and frontline teams during transition.

Looking forward, having councils which match existing health and care partnerships at place level will support the objectives of the NHS Long Term Plan. Simplifying structures around two new councils rather than the current eleven enables even closer alignment and commonality of purpose with local Health and Care Partnerships. Within a simpler, stronger and unified area partnership we can make further progress in joining up commissioning and delivery across health and social care and bring in council expertise in wider determinants of healthy outcomes. The opportunity is to enhance delivery models at neighbourhood levels with professionals from a wide range of disciplines to support residents and communities impactfully.

- **Generating strength in statutory roles and governance to deliver transformation**

Strong governance is a foundation of success in Adult Social Care. CQC expects clear responsibilities, roles and systems of accountability to deliver good quality, sustainable care and support and ensure robustness in safeguarding.

Case Studies

These case studies show how the two unitary model can build on Hertfordshire's existing strengths by delivering smarter, more joined up adult care. They highlight how using data and technology can help prevent problems before they escalate, and how working closely with communities leads to better support for people in need. The approaches are flexible, cost effective and inclusive - helping carers and vulnerable residents access the right help at the right time. Together, they demonstrate how the new model can improve outcomes, make better use of resources and strengthen public confidence in local services. The 2UA model provides the strategic scale, streamlined leadership and system-wide coherence to embed and expand these innovations consistently.

This is particularly important in managing complexity of need and ensuring continuity of provision in both urban and rural settings. The two new councils will also have the financial and operational scale to be better placed to absorb future demand pressures and reinvest in service innovation. This includes the ability to respond flexibly to demographic change, rising complexity of need, and workforce challenges - while maintaining service quality and resilience.

Case Study 1: Connect & Prevent: Strategic Community Empowerment in Hertfordshire

The *Connect & Prevent* programme by Hertfordshire County Council is a leading example of how strategic community empowerment across a mixed urban-rural context is delivering measurable improvements to help residents lead independent lives. It combines AI driven insight, joined up data, and community-led delivery.

The biggest opportunity identified to reduce long-term care starts was to provide better support to community carers. The programme has identified over **58,000 carers**, including **48,000 formal** and **10,000 informal**, and using predictive analytics with **67% precision**, is forecasting breakdown events and enabling proactive intervention to prevent them.

Through its **Carers Hub model**, it delivers personalised support via holistic conversations, local outreach and follow-ups to empower carers. This approach has led to a **25% measurable improvement in wellbeing and resilience**, with **75% receiving community-based support** and only **one in eight requiring formal assessment**. It is anticipated to generate **£1.2 million per annum in financial benefit**.

This initial project demonstrates a scalable model with strategic alignment, technological innovation, and community-first principles that are transforming public service delivery. The 2UA model provides the scale and coherence needed to position Hertfordshire as a national leader in proactive, preventative support. It offers a replicable blueprint for embedding empowerment into governance and service design - enabling programmes such as Connect & Prevent to be delivered consistently, strategically and equitably across both authorities.

Case Study 2: Community Wellbeing and VCFSE Partnership Model

Hertfordshire County Council's Community and People Wellbeing Team (CPWT), part of Adult Care Services, provides a strategic model for how a unitary authority can work in close partnership with the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector to deliver inclusive, preventative support. Operating across district footprints, CPWT commissions over 50 services and manages multiple grant programmes, including the Household Support Fund, supporting hundreds of organisations to promote wellbeing, connect residents to services and fill gaps in specialist provision.

Beyond commissioning, CPWT leads on sector development and engagement. It funds infrastructure bodies such as Community Help Hertfordshire (CHH), supports volunteering through GoVolHerts, and delivers regular communications to over 800 stakeholders via its monthly briefing. The team convenes the VCFSE Forum and the Annual Hertfordshire VCFSE Conference, enabling organisations to shape strategies on issues such as mental health, learning disability and adult care budgets. It also supports diverse communities through partnerships with the Faith and Health Networking Board and Hertfordshire Community Leaders Forum. CPWT runs eight Co-Production Boards, public engagement events and contracts such as Viewpoint and Healthwatch Hertfordshire. It ensures residents' voices inform service design, procurement and monitoring, using surveys, workshops and direct visits to commissioned services.

The team plays a central role in emergency and humanitarian responses, coordinating efforts across districts and boroughs during the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis, and successive humanitarian events. It has developed widely used resources such as the Referral and Information Book and commissioned countywide specialist services. CPWT has hosted six conferences and over 35 webinars to build sector capacity and represents Hertfordshire nationally through the Local Government East Strategic Migration Partnership.

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This model demonstrates how strategic coordination, local delivery and community empowerment can be embedded within a unitary structure. It offers a blueprint for how each authority under this model can maintain strong relationships with local partners, respond flexibly to emerging needs and deliver inclusive, place-based services that reflect the diversity and complexity of their communities.

Case Study 3: Health Integration

Hertfordshire's Integrated Care Programme Team provides a strategic blueprint for how two unitary authorities can lead and embed health and social care integration across complex systems. Established in response to the Government's Better Care Fund, the team has driven transformation across organisational boundaries, developing pioneering models for care transition services such as Integrated Discharge Teams, Hospital and Community Navigators and HomeFirst.

Operating across both South and West Hertfordshire and East and North Hertfordshire, the team has delivered system-wide and place-based change, mobilising health, social care, VCFSE partners, and people with lived experience. It has successfully navigated major structural reforms, including the transition from Primary Care Trusts to Clinical Commissioning Groups, and now plays a central role in the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System (ICS), the Integrated Care Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board and the three Health and Care Partnerships.

The team oversees the Better Care Fund and leads programmes focused on intermediate care, hospital discharge, complex care, frailty, prevention and the development of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams. These programmes are co-designed at county level and tailored to local needs across both proposed unitary footprints, demonstrating how strategic scale and local responsiveness can be delivered in tandem.

Its system leadership is embedded in strategic governance, ensuring transformation is informed by residents, service users and community partners. The team's work has been nationally recognised, including in the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) East of England What We Are Proud Of report, highlighting projects such as the Enhanced Nursing Dementia Pilot, Assistive Technology, Prevention of Admission services, and a Learning Disability Frailty Risk Assessment Tool.

The team led Hertfordshire's Adult Social Care emergency response during COVID-19 - launching a Care Provider Hub, pioneering the county's first Virtual Hospital, establishing Designated Clinical Settings and coordinating PPE, staffing and discharge protocols with health and care partners across South and West Hertfordshire and East and North Hertfordshire.

The Integrated Care Programme Team's approach shows how strategic coordination, system design and local delivery can be effectively embedded into a model that is flexible, agile and scalable - able to respond to emerging strategic needs while maintaining a strong focus on local delivery. Its track record demonstrates the ability to improve outcomes for residents, build strong partnerships, and deliver sustainable change at both system (Hertfordshire) and place levels (South and West Hertfordshire, East and North Hertfordshire), while responding to both strategic priorities and operational challenges.

Strategic advantages of a 2 Unitary solution for Adult Care Services

Balanced demand across East and West
New requests for support per 100,000 adults are closely aligned - East: 3,459; West: 3,360 (**Table 7**) - with similar volumes of adult needs assessments and safeguarding concerns. This parity ensures equitable service planning and supports consistent safeguarding standards across both authorities.

Operational coherence and continuity

ASC teams already operate on district footprints that map directly onto the proposed East/West boundaries. Hospital discharge pathways and health system geographies are also aligned, supporting integrated care and joint commissioning.

Scale without fragmentation

Unlike smaller unitary models, the 2UA configuration avoids the volatility and variation in activity rates and enables more stable management of long-term care placements, carers' assessments and safeguarding workloads. This stability enables better workforce planning, market shaping and financial resilience.

Digital and data infrastructure

The scale of the 2UA model supports investment in shared digital platforms, predictive analytics and business intelligence (BI) tools. A unified BI framework across two authorities enables consistent performance monitoring, strategic planning and risk identification (such as postcode lottery and workforce gaps).

Workforce and market resilience

Larger units allow for coordinated recruitment, retention and Continuing Professional Development strategies, while supporting commissioning across two footprints. This avoids fragmentation and competition in the care market, helping to maintain sufficiency and quality of provision.

Together these factors make the 2UA model the most balanced, scalable and future-ready configuration for Hertfordshire. It enables strategic coherence while preserving local responsiveness, ensuring that **Adult Social Care services remain safe, sustainable and equitable for all residents.**

CHILDREN'S SERVICES (SOCIAL CARE, EDUCATION AND SEND)

Hertfordshire has an excellent track record of cost-effective delivery and sustained improvements to critical services such as children social care. This is down to a relentless focus on putting outcomes for children first, using transformative and innovative approaches to creating local provision including residential care and specialist school places and so driving down use of costly independent providers. It has strong partner relationships with the Integrated Care Board, Hertfordshire Constabulary, schools and the voluntary sector; the 2UA model is an opportunity to unlock further innovation and preventative service delivery, whilst avoiding the risks of disaggregating countywide services and partnerships.

Bringing together Housing, Planning and Children's Services will harness more housing solutions that meet the needs of young people leaving care or those transitioning to Adult Social Care. For young people at risk of homelessness, changing how these services work for greater integration and collaboration will make a significant positive difference to their lives. The data evidence shows that the East/West Hertfordshire model will create equitable unitary authorities including referrals into Children's Service and numbers of children in care, school age pupil split, specialist provision and SEND **(see Tables 5 and 8).**

There is a strong correlation between the level of deprivation and the number of children coming into care (more deprived districts such as Stevenage, Watford and Dacorum have greater rate of children in care); at the same time the critical resources to meet need such as children's homes and foster carers varies by district. The 2UA model has greater capacity to enable equitable management of the most significant and volatile areas of children's service expenditure including care placements, as well as Home to School Transport and High Needs Funding (SEND).

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Table 8: Children' Services and Schools[23]

	East	West
0-17 population	129,571	141,230
Total schools	273	259
Special schools	13	13
Number of pupils eligible for free school meals	16,667	14,115
Children looked after	522	464
Children's Services Referrals in Financial Year	678	674
SEND: number of children with Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)	7,929	6,757

Two large unitaries are more financially sustainable in the context of volatile demand-led pressures and placement inflation in Children's Services and secures the leadership and quality assurance resource required to ensure safe and effective service delivery whilst minimising duplication across multiple Children's Services. It integrates our prevention-first strategy with effective strategic leadership and accountability, and by minimising highly disruptive disaggregation of high-risk services, including safeguarding, SEND and youth justice, the model protects established strategic plans, improvement journeys and Ofsted ratings. Hertfordshire's children's social care was judged to be overall outstanding in its most recent Ofsted inspection and has consistently achieved some of the lowest numbers of children in care and on child protection plans.

The 2UA model is specifically designed to protect and enhance Hertfordshire's most critical services including our nationally acclaimed **Family Safeguarding approach** (see **Case Study 4**) that delivers integrated social care, mental health, domestic abuse and probation services across local neighbourhood teams, and successfully prevents children coming into care. Key statutory safeguarding functions – including the multi-agency front door and the youth justice service - are currently delivered on a countywide footprint to support partnership resilience and consistency. Transfer of these existing arrangements to a 2UA model would represent the least amount of disruption to child protection, multi-agency resource and the workforce than models requiring greater disaggregation. This model is **advocated by key partners including Hertfordshire Constabulary and the Integrated Care Boards and the Independent Scrutineers for both Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Board**, as it is designed to preserve critical partnerships whilst building on our strengths. It provides a coherent structure that supports continuity and resilience in service delivery.

Crucially it will give confidence that the new authorities will have workforce stability and capacity to deliver high risk and specialist services, including recruitment to key statutory roles that are hard to recruit, such as the Director of Children's Services (DCS), social workers and education psychologists; and avoid the pitfalls of disaggregating specialist teams at scale, duplicating management structures and costs across smaller unitary models. It will minimise transition costs from new directorates and loss of economies of scale from commissioning of high-cost services such as children's placements. The 2UA model offers the clearest structure to facilitate a cooperative Alliance-approach across key assets such as children's homes and foster carers, preserving current capacity and avoiding the pitfalls of disaggregating these resources across new boundaries.

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[23] *Source: Local Government Reorganisation Statistical Model (HCC)*

SCHOOLS

The new unitary councils will take on the support of state-maintained schools across their geography. This model best preserves Hertfordshire's strong foundations in education, ensuring consistency, equity and strategic oversight across the county. Over 90% of schools in Hertfordshire are good or outstanding and grounded in strong foundations of strong school improvement, coordinated school place planning, and consistent admissions. Hertfordshire has cultivated a strong 'family of schools' approach, creating collaboration between academies and maintained schools across all phases. The preventative improvement model, utilising a locally created school-owned company (HFL Education), has ensured that standards are above national averages from KS2 to KS4 - uniquely for the East of England. The 2UA model would enable this collaborative system, which is popular with school stakeholders because of the demonstrable impact, to be maintained.

Both East and West geographies would be supporting similar pupil numbers taking current student population and geographical location of schools into account. This model will provide a more consistent approach to school planning and admissions, in particular, for disadvantaged children - including those excluded or missing from school, children in care and those with SEND who may attend special schools outside their home authority.

By avoiding the highly disruptive disaggregation of school admissions responsibilities, especially for special schools, whose distribution differs by Primary need, the model protects against the risk of a postcode lottery in specialist provision. The 2UA model avoids the complexity for parents and schools of working with multiple teams for SEND - preserving consistency and reducing administrative burden. This also applies for Home to School Transport, where the 2UA model allows for significantly greater financial and operational efficiencies, particularly for transport to specialist provision.

Hertfordshire has consistently been one of the lowest funded authorities per head for High Needs funding, the mechanism for supporting children with SEND, and with levels of need continuing to significantly outstrip the grant provided, the result is +£258m forecast cumulative deficit by April 2028. Whilst the 2UA model will not address the structural financial deficit in the SEND system, it does provide a level of scale and coherence which offers opportunities to harness economies of scale across statutory SEND services, strategic specialist provision planning and admissions and commissioning.

Case Study 4: Family Safeguarding Model

Hertfordshire's Family Safeguarding Model is a ground-breaking and nationally acclaimed model of delivering multi-disciplinary support for children and families in need of help and protection. Delivered on an East and West footprint, the approach brings specialist practitioners and social workers together to help families, secure and keep more children living safely at home.

The scale, operational footprint and the benefits for agencies such as Public Health, Integrated Care Board, probation and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) is such that the budget is comprised of significant partner contributions and can support a range of specialist adult practitioners - psychologists, domestic abuse practitioners, mental health workers, drug and alcohol workers, sexual harm prevention practitioners and probation officers – to meet the differing needs of children and their families. A 2UA model will support the scale and budget required to maintain the specialist training and workforce necessary to sustain the Family Safeguarding Model's effectiveness and mitigates the risks of complicated partnership funding arrangements and reduced or unsustainable access to specialist interventions.

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The model has been nationally evaluated and underpins much of the national children's social care reforms and is commended by the Department for Education in its guidance. In Hertfordshire, it has been pivotal in sustaining very low rates of children on child protection plans, children in our care and care leavers.

Case Study 5: Children's Social Care Reform

The neighbourhood model, currently being introduced under new Children's Social Care legislation and national reforms, forms the foundation of the 2UA operating model and aligns with the operational boundaries of key statutory partners, including Hertfordshire Constabulary and the Integrated Care Board (ICB). Hertfordshire Constabulary has restructured its safeguarding leadership across the proposed 2UA footprint to harness economies of scale, while the ICB is amalgamating into the largest in England, overseeing seven local authorities. The 2UA model alone protects and strengthens existing relationships aligned to continuing local health partnerships at a time of significant public sector reform.

Under this national reform, integrated multi-agency teams, comprising professionals from health, social care, police, housing, education and community safety will operate across two neighbourhoods in each unitary, providing families with a single, accessible gateway to support. These teams will prioritise preventative and timely interventions, maintain multi-agency input from statutory partners, and avoid the inefficiencies of requiring partners to resource multiple gateways and multi-agency child protection teams (MACTs), which are becoming statutory under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

Case Study 6: Hertfordshire Fostering and Residential Service

The new unitary councils will take on the support children in care and sufficiency of care placements. Hertfordshire County Council currently cares for 1,042 children, with 316 (30%) placed with in-house foster carers. The national shortage of foster carers presents a significant challenge, with the service operating at 97% capacity. When in-house carers are unavailable, children are placed via independent residential and fostering agencies - often out of area and at great cost - disrupting vital connections to family, school and community networks. Children's care placements represent the biggest financial and operational risk to Children's Services.

To address these pressures, Hertfordshire launched a countywide Fostering and Residential Sufficiency Strategy in 2022. Delivered in three phases, the residential strategy creates 70 additional care places, enabling 85% of placement needs to be met locally by 2027 and significantly reducing cost. A joint funded NHS/Local Authority specialist mental health children's home has been established, improving outcomes for children with complex needs and reducing reliance on costly independent provision and delayed hospital discharges. Its success is reliant on scale and partnership funding best facilitated by the 2UA model and an alliance of provision.

These strategies have been developed on a countywide footprint. Foster carers and children's homes are not evenly distributed across the districts, and disaggregation risks gaps in provision, misalignment between need and delivery, and increased financial strain. On the 2UA model, both East and West geographies would be supporting similar numbers of children in care, taking account of current population and geographical location of children's homes and foster carers.

Under more fragmented models, an increased number of children in care could be placed out of area in independent provision at a significant cost to the local authority. Disconnected recruitment activity would create unhelpful competition for foster carers and require additional resources. Hertfordshire currently has two successful countywide innovative projects, an emergency foster care project where children need a home in an emergency allowing time to calm a crisis and potentially return the child home to their birth family and a step out of residential care project. These small but impactful schemes

would be compromised if disaggregated as they could not be replicated across multiple areas due to the minimal, but specialist resource required to deliver them.

How the 2UA model supports a safe and sustainable transition

- **Keeps services manageable and joined-up** – with only two councils, it is easier to coordinate mission critical Children's Services, education and SEND without creating unnecessary complexity.
- **Preserves existing East/West service footprints** – many specialist services already operate on an East/West basis, which fits naturally into the proposed 2UA structure and avoids disruption.
- **Aligns with health and police boundaries** – two councils match existing partner geographies, making it easier to maintain strong multi-agency working and referral pathways & protecting vulnerable children & young people.
- **Reduces duplication and costs** – with two councils, there is less need to replicate leadership teams, systems and contracts. It also makes joint planning and purchasing easier, helping avoid competition and manage costs for services like foster care or specialist school places.
- **Makes it easier to maintain consistent standards** – with two councils, it is easier to coordinate practice models, performance frameworks and improvement plans, while still allowing for local flexibility.

PUBLIC PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SAFETY

Hertfordshire's Public Protection and Community Safety services are a critical part of the county's public safety infrastructure, encompassing regulatory enforcement, emergency planning/response, environmental health, trading standards, licensing and community safety. The 2UA model provides the scale, coherence and strategic capacity needed to deliver these services effectively, while preserving resilience and minimising disruption to existing partnerships.

The model supports a more robust and coordinated response to major incidents and public protection challenges, including those highlighted in the Grenfell Phase Two report. By aligning with existing policing structures, which already operate on an East/West divisional basis, the 2UA model strengthens operational coordination and supports effective multi-agency working across community safety, safeguarding, and localised issues such as anti-social behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is a key concern for communities and requires close collaboration between local authorities, police, housing providers and voluntary sector partners. The 2UA model enables targeted, place-based responses to ASB, while maintaining strategic oversight and consistency in enforcement approaches. It supports the integration of community safety teams with wider public protection services, ensuring that interventions are timely, proportionate and responsive to local needs.

Regulatory services such as planning enforcement, trading standards and environmental health face national workforce pressures and skills shortages. The 2UA model provides greater resilience by enabling strategic workforce planning, supporting specialist teams and reducing duplication across smaller units. It also allows for standardisation of approach, improving consistency and efficiency in enforcement and public protection.

For businesses, the model offers a clearer and more consistent regulatory environment. Many businesses operate across local authority boundaries, and the 2UA model reduces handoffs and

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complexity by supporting a single front door for queries and compliance. This improves the business experience and will set the conditions for economic growth through streamlined regulation.

The model is also supported by the Chief Fire Officer, who is exploring a two-division structure aligned with policing. This further reinforces the case for coherent public protection delivery, ensuring that fire and rescue services can work seamlessly with other agencies to protect communities. By maintaining partnerships and enabling integrated service delivery, the 2UA model ensures Hertfordshire's Community Protection services remain resilient, responsive and fit for the future. It provides the leadership, scale and operational clarity needed to safeguard residents, support businesses and uphold public confidence in local enforcement and safety services.

Case Study 7: Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Youth Engagement and Volunteer Programmes

Programmes such as Fire Cadets, LiFE courses and targeted arson prevention exemplify how locality-based, preventative services are already delivering impact across the county. These initiatives engage thousands of residents annually, support vulnerable young people, and strengthen community resilience. The 2UA model provides the strategic capacity to sustain and expand these programmes, ensuring consistent standards, smarter commissioning, and stronger outcomes across both authorities.

How the 2UA model supports a safe and sustainable transition for Community Protection

- **Keeps services coordinated and resilient** – with two councils, it is easier to maintain joined-up enforcement, regulatory and emergency response services without unnecessary fragmentation.

- **Aligns with Police and Fire boundaries** – two councils match existing partner geographies, supporting strong multi-agency working and effective coordination on community safety and emergency response.

- **Reduces duplication and supports specialist teams** – with two councils, there is less need to replicate leadership, systems and contracts, helping retain specialist expertise and manage workforce pressures.

- **Improves consistency for residents and businesses** – a two unitary model makes it easier to standardise enforcement approaches and provide a single front door for regulatory services, reducing complexity and improving responsiveness.

Public Health

Public Health is a statutory local government function based on 3 critical objectives: improving the health of the local population and reducing health inequalities, planning for and responding to emergencies that present a risk to Public Health, and advising the NHS and other partners on population need and evidence-based interventions. The Director of Public Health leads a range of preventative programmes that provide support for the leading causes of ill health including smoking, obesity, alcohol, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity. The 2UA model provides the scale, specialism and efficiency needed to achieve Public Health outcomes for the local population. It:

- ensures that the new unitaries will have the Public Health trained specialist workforce needed to commission evidence-based programmes and advise on Public Health interventions including pandemics and other health-related emergencies. The specialist Public Health workforce is small and there are likely to be gaps in workforce if teams are split into ever smaller units. The shortage of Directors of Public Health is a risk noted nationally.

- maintains existing joint work between Public Health and the NHS on an East and West footprint, maximising the potential benefits of the Government's neighbourhood health model, minimising disruption to existing pathways and reducing the risk of a postcode lottery for residents living in different geographical areas.

- provides best value for money. Commissioning services on more than two footprints will incur additional costs of management time for running procurements and commissioning services. This will also adversely impact on staff in the NHS and voluntary sector partners bidding to provide Public Health services.

- minimises disruption to existing countywide statutory partnerships convened or supported by the Director of Public Health such as the Drugs and Alcohol Strategic Board, the Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership Board, the Hertfordshire Mental Health Learning Disabilities and Neurodiversity Health and Care Partnership, and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Case Study 8: Mental health and substance use: transformation programme

Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health department is leading a service transformation programme to improve support for individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use needs (COMHSU). This multi-agency initiative, in collaboration with the Hertfordshire Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Neurodiversity Health and Care Partnership, aims to improve access to integrated, coordinated care, ensuring that people receive timely and appropriate support.

COMHSU is more common than many might think with up to 50% of people with severe mental ill health also using substances, and the majority of drug (70%) and alcohol (86%) users in community substance use treatment in England experiencing mental ill health. In Hertfordshire, people with both mental health and substance use needs have historically faced fragmented services, with people often 'falling through the gaps' in services.

The HCC Director of Public Health launched this programme in Summer 2024 and has funded a dedicated Strategic Lead to drive this work forward. It forms a key part of the HCC Public Health Business Plan, contributing to Priority 5: 'Help people to live healthy lives' and aligning with the strategic aim of 'Partnerships and influencing policy'.

The programme brings together a wide range of stakeholders – including commissioners, statutory providers and voluntary and community sector organisations across mental health, substance use, criminal justice, districts and borough councils, acute hospital trusts, Healthwatch and others - working collaboratively to improve pathways and outcomes for people with COMHSU.

Case Study 9: Age Friendly Hertfordshire

By 2043, residents aged 65 and over are expected to make up 23.2% of Hertfordshire's population (Herts Insight, 2023). This presents both challenges and opportunities, underscoring the urgent need to create communities that support healthy ageing and improve quality of life. The Age Friendly Hertfordshire programme represents a strategic response to this need. An Age-friendly Community is a supportive environment where individuals can enjoy a healthy and fulfilling later life. It is a place where residents can engage in meaningful activities and actively contribute to their communities for as long as possible.

Funded by Hertfordshire County Council Public Health and jointly led by Age UK Hertfordshire and North Herts & Stevenage CVS, the programme is being delivered in partnership with local organisations across all sectors. The initial baseline report gathered the views of approximately 3,000 residents on their local

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neighbourhoods and where improvements could be made. A recent stakeholder event then focussed on identifying the actions to prioritise to create a more age friendly Hertfordshire. These actions will involve adapting local environments, transport, businesses and services to be accessible and inclusive. This will include work across county council departments, as well as district/borough colleagues – all working with residents and businesses. Outcomes will include more social participation, less isolation, better health and wellbeing. One example to date has been Age UK, HCC public health and Intalink reviewing bus shelters with input from local residents to make them more welcoming and inclusive.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Housing is a critical determinant of economic performance as well as health, wellbeing and life outcomes. The 2UA model delivers a more coordinated approach to housing and homelessness, recognising housing as a key determinant of personal outcomes and community wellbeing. A larger authority footprint and asset base allows for planning across wider geographies while retaining the flexibility to respond to local challenges, ensuring services remain rooted in place.

Current pressures and need

Housing need in Hertfordshire varies across districts but remains a critical pressure point. Around **16,000 households** - 3.2% of all households - are on housing registers, below the national average of 5 –6%. However, some areas, e.g. Welwyn Hatfield, exceed this benchmark. There are with **1,377 households in temporary accommodation**, including **920 families with children**. Despite only **4,307 homes available to let each year**, more than **6,000 households are owed a legal duty to assist**, and nearly **7,000 households**[24] are approaching services at the point of crisis. These pressures are compounded by a fragmented policy and delivery landscape, with multiple allocations, homelessness prevention, and tenancy sustainment policies across the 10 districts.

The proposed East and West Hertfordshire unitary authorities face distinct challenges:

Table 9[25]

Indicator	East Hertfordshire	West Hertfordshire
Total Housing Stock	25,8422	25,9241
Housing Register Size	11,031	5,016
Households in Temporary Accommodation	594	783
Affordable Housing Delivery 2023/24	853	469
Affordable Housing Delivery 2024/25	810	579
Homelessness Approaches	4,160	2,799
Homelessness Duties Owed	3,452	2,596

East Hertfordshire shows greater affordable housing delivery and register demand, while West Hertfordshire faces more acute affordability challenges and higher use of temporary accommodation. These differences underscore the need for tailored strategies within a coherent framework.

How the 2UA model responds

Strategic delivery and transition

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[24] *Source: Local Authority Housing Data (supplied by Stevenage Borough Council)*
[25] *Source: Local Authority Housing Data (supplied by Stevenage Borough Council)*

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

The 2UA model supports a 'lift and shift' approach to transition, ensuring continuity of statutory functions such as homelessness prevention, allocations and temporary accommodation management. This is critical given the significant dependency on internal support services, the complexity of IT systems (10 primary and 50+ support systems[26]), and the need to maintain regulatory compliance from day one.

This model enables:

- **Consistent early intervention and prevention strategies**, reducing crisis presentations

- **Unified advice and housing options services**, improving access and outcomes for residents

- **Integrated commissioning** of temporary accommodation and housing-related support, reducing duplication and cost

- **Stronger alignment with Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Public Health**, enabling holistic support for vulnerable households

- **Improved data sharing and digital platforms**, supporting predictive analytics and targeted interventions.

The scale of the 2UA model is particularly advantageous for housing delivery. Larger unitary councils are better positioned to identify suitable sites for development, overcome delivery barriers (e.g. flood zones, protected landscapes, fragmented land ownership) and align housing growth with infrastructure investment. This includes transport, schools, healthcare, and utilities, all of which are critical to unlocking sustainable development.

The new authorities will be able to make better decisions about the use of land and premises. Their portfolios will comprise district and county land. There will be more scope to develop and redevelop sites for the highest priority needs, such as affordable and specialist housing and package land together, using existing assets for different housing purposes. It will also be easier to form and maintain strategic partnerships with housing associations and private providers.

It also enables strategic oversight of major growth corridors, such as Hemel Garden Communities and the A10 tech corridor in the West and East, facilitating joined-up planning across district boundaries and aligning housing delivery with economic development and infrastructure priorities.

The 2UA model provides an opportunity to develop more robust, standardised processes for meeting statutory obligations across services. In areas such as housing standards and homelessness duties, this consistency will reduce variability, improve service quality, and mitigate the risk of non-compliance. Shared governance and unified oversight will support clearer accountability and better performance monitoring.

Integration with Critical Services

Housing stability directly affects demand for adult and children's social care. Improved housing can reduce safeguarding risks and support independent living. The 2UA model supports integrated case management frameworks and governance, enabling housing teams to work more closely with social care professionals to deliver joined-up support.

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[26] *Source: Housing Service Design Workshop – Hertfordshire, September, 2025*

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Poor housing conditions and homelessness are also closely linked to Public Health outcomes, including respiratory illness, mental health challenges and substance misuse. Embedding models such as **Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM**) into housing transformation will be essential to improving health outcomes and reducing demand for emergency and long-term healthcare services.

The model supports the integration of housing, Adult Social Care and Children's Services into a **Team Around the Family** approach, enabling joined up support for vulnerable households and reducing fragmentation in service delivery. Families experiencing or at risk of homelessness will benefit from fewer handoffs, clearer pathways to support, and stronger relationships with health and social care services.

Homelessness often intersects with issues such as offending, substance misuse and mental health. The 2UA model provides an opportunity to strengthen pathways between housing and criminal justice services, including probation, police, courts and third sector mental health and substance misuse providers. By maintaining strategic scale and embedding housing within multi-agency neighbourhood teams, the model supports joint strategies that enable smoother transitions from the criminal justice system and reduce the risk of repeat homelessness.

Partnerships and Market Shaping

The 2UA model provides the scale and strategic oversight needed to:

- Align housing growth with infrastructure investment, including transport, schools, healthcare and utilities

- Develop coherent, area-wide strategies for housing and homelessness, replacing 10 separate plans

- Standardise processes for housing standards, homelessness duties and tenancy sustainment

- Strengthen partnerships with housing associations, private landlords and commissioned providers

- Support integration of housing with employment, education and community safety strategies.

The evolving partnership landscape must also include **private sector landlords and commissioned providers**, such as those contracted by the Home Office. The **Private Rented Sector (PRS)** is a significant component of the housing market and a vital prevention tool for statutory homelessness services. The 2UA model provides the **scale, visibility and strategic oversight** needed to engage proactively with PRS stakeholders across a broader geography. This enables:

- More consistent enforcement of housing standards

- Better coordination of access to accommodation

- Earlier identification of risks that could escalate into homelessness or community safety issues

By aligning PRS engagement with unified housing strategies, registers and prevention frameworks, the 2UA model reduces fragmentation and ensures a more coherent, preventative approach to housing challenges.

This mirrors the trend toward larger, more resilient housing providers - such as the merger of Watford Community Housing and Settle/Paradigm - and positions the new authorities to engage strategically with the sector, manage risk and deliver better outcomes.

District-run Environmental Health, PRS regulation, and licensing services play a vital role in maintaining housing standards. Teams responsible for addressing overcrowding, pest infestations, sanitation, and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing will be directly impacted by changes in housing strategy and service delivery. The 2UA model ensures these regulatory functions are integrated and resourced to respond to shifts in demand and maintain compliance.

Wider System Impact

Stable housing supports economic participation, educational attainment and community safety. Homelessness can disrupt employment and reduce access to job opportunities. The 2UA model offers scope to integrate housing with employment support and economic development programmes, strengthening social value delivery through contracts and contributing to more effective homelessness prevention strategies.

The quality and location of housing, particularly temporary accommodation, can significantly affect educational outcomes. Children in unstable housing situations may experience disrupted school attendance, lower attainment and reduced wellbeing. More effective prevention and early intervention will support educational stability and reduce pressure on school-based support services.

Homelessness and unstable housing can also correlate with increased anti-social behaviour and community safety concerns. During transition, frustrations or gaps in service access may increase demand on ASB teams and impact community cohesion. The 2UA model enables collaborative approaches between housing, community safety, and enforcement teams to manage these risks.

Access to transport is another critical factor. The location of temporary accommodation and the design of outreach or Housing First models must consider how vulnerable residents will reach services, employment, and education. Inaccessible support can lead to increased demand for statutory provision. The 2UA model allows for strategic planning that aligns housing with transport infrastructure to ensure services remain accessible.

The 2UA model facilitates better:

- **Economic participation** by enabling strategic housing delivery in proximity to employment centres and aligning housing services with local economic development plans across coherent East/West geographies.
- **Educational outcomes** by enabling strategic oversight of temporary accommodation and locality-based housing services that reduce school disruption and support earlier intervention for families at risk.
- **Community safety** by aligning housing enforcement with police and safeguarding structures already operating on East/West footprints, ensuring consistent, joined-up action across neighbourhoods.
- **Transport access** by aligning housing strategy with infrastructure planning, ensuring temporary accommodation and outreach models are located near public transport and essential services.

The model provides strategic oversight of **Temporary Accommodation (TA)** and **homelessness prevention**, supporting consistent standards, shared procurement frameworks, and improved outcomes. By aligning housing with wider growth, planning, and regeneration, the 2UA model ensures housing services actively support place-based transformation.

Specialist housing provision

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Appropriate provision of specialist housing for adults with care and support needs will be a key opportunity area. The two unitary councils will have the capacity and financial strength to deliver development in this area that addresses significant supply deficits. This will both provide better housing with care options for people and help achieve financial sustainability in care purchasing budgets.

The scale of the new authorities supports more efficient commissioning, better use of data and improved coordination with voluntary and community sector partners. This enables earlier intervention, more sustainable housing solutions, and will have a greater positive impact on residents' everyday lives.

How the 2UA model supports a safe and sustainable transition

- **Preserves operational coherence**: Aligns housing services with existing district footprints, supporting a safe and legal transition from vesting day.

- **Supports integrated working**: Embeds housing within multi-disciplinary teams alongside Adult Social Care, Children's Services, and Public Health.

- **Improves service resilience**: Reduces fragmentation and duplication, enabling consistent standards across homelessness, allocations, tenancy sustainment and housing-related support.

- **Strengthens strategic commissioning**: Enables shared procurement and investment in specialist housing and community-based provision.

- **Protects statutory compliance**: Ensures readiness through robust governance, statutory leadership and continuity of core functions.

- **Enables data-driven planning**: Supports improved data sharing, unified systems and stronger insight into housing need and service performance.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

The 2UA model supports integrated transport planning aligned with Hertfordshire's recognised economic corridors along the M1 and A1(M) - critical arteries for business, logistics and labour mobility. This strategic alignment enables more efficient infrastructure investment, better coordination of public transport and targeted improvements in road safety and active travel.

Hertfordshire is a **polycentric county**, with multiple economic centres and significant **net commuting flows both into and out of the county**. Many residents travel across district boundaries for work, education and services, and the county also attracts commuters from neighbouring areas.

By operating at a scale that reflects how people live and move, the 2UA model supports long term planning across wider catchments, improving connectivity between homes, jobs and services. This enhances productivity, helps manage congestion and strengthens Hertfordshire's role as a key contributor to the UK economy. Local responsiveness ensures that community specific transport needs are met, while strategic oversight enables smarter investment decisions and better value for money.

Fragmenting governance further would risk weakening the ability to plan and invest coherently across these geographies.

How the 2UA model supports a safe and sustainable transition for Highways and Transportation Services

- **Preserves operational coherence** – The 2UA model enables clear geographic allocation of depots, assets and staff, preserving local knowledge and ensuring continuity in day-to-day operations such as reactive repairs, inspections and winter maintenance. Depot-based teams and inherited service models will remain in place initially, with transformation phased post-vesting day.

- **Supports integrated working** – Highways and transport will be embedded within wider place-based teams, enabling alignment with planning, regeneration, and environmental services. This supports joined-up delivery of infrastructure projects, active travel schemes, and community transport initiatives.

- **Improves service resilience** – With only two authorities, the model avoids fragmentation of specialist teams and supports shared delivery of functions such as traffic management, engineering design and school transport. This protects critical expertise and enables flexible deployment across boundaries.

- **Strengthens strategic commissioning** – The scale of the 2UA model allows for more effective management of contracts, including the continuation of county-wide arrangements (e.g. Jacobs professional services contract). It also supports joint procurement and shared service models where appropriate, reducing duplication and improving value for money.

- **Protects statutory compliance** – Each UA will become the legal highway authority for its area, with clear governance and leadership structures in place. Statutory duties, including network management, inspection regimes, and development control advice, will be maintained from Day One, supported by inter-authority agreements for shared services.

- **Enables data-driven planning** – Shared or hosted digital systems will be protected, ensuring access to historical data and continuity in asset management, scheme planning, and traffic coordination. Over time, councils may choose to consolidate or separate systems based on strategic need.

- **Supports equitable access and community engagement** – The model enables harmonisation of policies such as parking charges and school transport, reducing post-code lottery resident and ensuring fairness across the county. Neighbourhood highway officers and local improvement schemes will remain visible and responsive to community needs.

PROTECTING OUR CULTURAL SERVICES

The 2UA model provides the most effective structure for preserving and strengthening civic identity across Hertfordshire's polycentric landscape. With two coherent authorities, the model enables a consistent and coordinated approach to safeguarding historic rights, ceremonial functions and civic traditions, where residents wish them to be retained.

The proposed East/West boundary reflects a long-standing and natural division within the county. While Hertfordshire's external boundaries have changed on occasion, most notably in 1965 when Barnet was exchanged for Potters Bar, its internal boundaries are deeply rooted. They are based on groupings of parishes, which have served as the principal units of local administration since medieval times. The current district areas are not dissimilar to the boundaries of the Poor Law Unions and Registration Districts established in the 1830s, when new forms of governance were introduced. The East/West divide is therefore not only administratively coherent but also historically grounded.

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There is also a clear geographical logic to the proposed configuration. The **East**, traditionally more arable and lower lying, is shaped by rivers flowing into the **River Lea**, with **Hertford** acting as a strategic and historic centre. The **West** converges around the **River Colne**, with towns such as **St Albans** and **Watford** forming civic and spiritual anchors. These natural features have long influenced settlement patterns, trade routes and local identity, reinforcing the logical and coherent geographies of the East/West split.

This model simplifies the process of establishing Charter Trustees or town councils where locally desired, ensuring that mayoralties, market rights and other privileges conferred by Royal Charters and Letters Patent are retained. While these legal instruments are valid, it is worth noting that all 10 districts have had a Mayor for the past 51 years, and where such privileges existed before 1974, they can continue under the new arrangements.

Critically, model also avoids the need for disruptive boundary reviews. Because the proposed East and West Hertfordshire authorities align with existing borough and district boundaries, there is no requirement to redraw electoral or administrative geographies to preserve civic identity. This provides immediate clarity and continuity for residents, elected members and civic institutions, while reducing the complexity, cost and uncertainty often associated with structural change.

The 2UA model offers the flexibility for each authority to work with communities to determine the most appropriate arrangements for civic life, whether through formal structures or integrated civic leadership. This enables local choice while maintaining clarity and legal continuity from vesting day onwards.

By enabling both the preservation of historic identity and the opportunity for civic renewal, the 2UA model ensures that Hertfordshire's civic traditions remain visible, valued and connected to the communities they serve.

Culture, in its broadest sense, is a vital expression of this civic identity. From libraries and museums to festivals, public art and heritage sites, cultural assets reflect the stories, values and aspirations of local communities. The 2UA model enables more locally responsive cultural planning, aligned with the distinct identities of East and West Hertfordshire. This supports civic pride, community cohesion and place-making, ensuring that cultural heritage and innovation continue to enrich civic life across the county.

MAXIMISING ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE

The two unitary model maximises accountability, simplifies performance management and strengthens alignment with national frameworks such as the Local Government Outcomes Framework and the NHS Long Term Plan. It reduces fragmentation, improves data coherence and enables clearer decision making across services. This supports better outcomes, more transparent governance and a stronger platform for future innovation.

By consolidating systems and streamlining oversight, the model enables smarter use of data and digital infrastructure to monitor performance, target interventions and drive continuous improvement. Residents will benefit from more consistent service standards, clearer lines of responsibility, and a more responsive public sector. These improvements also support economic resilience by ensuring that services are efficient, scalable and capable of adapting to future challenges.

MEETS LOCAL NEEDS AND INFORMED BY LOCAL VIEWS (MHCLG CRITERION 4)

SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK AND IMPACT ON PROPOSAL

Engagement[27] with residents, local authorities, voluntary organisations and strategic partners across Hertfordshire revealed **broad and consistent support** for the 2UA model. The 2UA model was frequently cited as the most coherent and least disruptive configuration, particularly in relation to strategic planning, service integration and value for money. Support was rooted in practical considerations, with respondents highlighting how the model could **simplify governance**, **reduce duplication and improve outcomes across housing, health, and social care.**

Of those who expressed a preference in the public engagement survey, 33.8% favoured a two-unitary model, 22.5% preferred three, and 43.7% supported four. This evidences a relatively narrow gap between the two-unitary and four-unitary options, with the two-unitary model emerging as a strong contender.

Financial Efficiency and Simplification

Across both public and stakeholder engagement, the potential for cost savings and reduced duplication was the most consistently cited benefit of the 2UA model. Respondents highlighted:

- Shared back-office functions
- Streamlined governance
- Economies of scale

"Efficiency through shared back-office functions" - North Herts resident

"Fewer stakeholders = clearer governance" – Stevenage resident

"The best financial and effective option with economies of scale" – Three Rivers resident

Strategic stakeholders echoed this view, with Hertfordshire Futures business board members and Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) Investment Management, describing the model as *"simple and efficient"* and *"big enough to capture the benefits of consolidation but small enough to be locally accountable"*.

Strategic Coordination and Service Integration

Integration across housing, health, and social care was a recurring theme. Fragmentation between tiers was frequently cited as a barrier to effective delivery. The 2UA model was seen as the best way to overcome this, delivering:

- Joined-up referral pathways
- Consistent service standards
- Strategic planning across broader geographies

"I would prefer as little amount of new councils as possible. I am concerned that there will be a postcode lottery of services and a disconnect in things like adult care." North Herts resident

This view was strongly echoed in the public engagement survey. On benefits of reorganisation:

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[27] *Source: Local Government Engagement Feedback Report on Unitary Options and Appendix*

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

- **55%** selected "more joined-up services that work better together"

- **43%** cited "coordinated strategic planning"

- **41%** highlighted "better quality services"

These priorities align directly with the strengths of the 2UA model, which delivers integrated and consistent service delivery across housing, health, and social care - areas where fragmentation was frequently cited as a concern, combined with significant savings that will be reinvested to further improve key services.

Alignment with Existing Geographies and Service Footprints

A recurring theme in both public and stakeholder feedback was the strategic coherence of the East/West configuration. Respondents highlighted how the proposed boundaries align with existing operational footprints across health, policing and transport, helping to preserve partnerships and reduce transition risk. Stakeholders and residents cited the following benefits:

- Alignment with NHS Health and Care Partnership footprints
- Coherence with Hertfordshire Constabulary's divisional structure
- Simplified engagement for strategic planning and commissioning
- Reduced disruption to existing service delivery partnerships

The Herts and West Essex ICB and Citizens Advice St Albans noted that the East/West split reflects current operational footprints and would minimise disruption. Watford Community Housing cited that two unitaries would be a natural extension of *"existing strategic planning and health joint working initiatives"*.

"We welcome as much alignment of local authority boundaries with the NHS as possible. As you are aware, the NHS is now organised over two footprints within the county, south and west Hertfordshire and east and north Hertfordshire. This configuration aligns extremely closely with the option of two unitary authorities and is our strong preference from the options set out." – East and North Herts Teaching NHS Trust

"Many of our strategic partners including health and Hertfordshire Constabulary are organised on an East/West basis. This makes operational planning and partnership working considerably more practical" - HCC staff member

"West groupings mirror the South & West Herts Health and Care Partnership footprint (Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, Watford), while the East side aligns with East & North Herts hospital catchments (Lister/ New QEII)" – East Herts voluntary sector respondent

Geographic Coherence and Travel-to-Work Patterns

The East/West configuration was consistently described as geographically logical and reflective of how people live, work and access services across Hertfordshire. Respondents highlighted that the proposed groupings align with:

- Travel-to-work areas
- Hospital catchments
- Leisure and retail patterns
- Community and civic ties

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"The proposed West and East reflect real travel-to-work, retail and transport corridors (M1/M25 vs A1(M)/A10" - East Herts voluntary sector respondent

Local Accountability and Representation

Some respondents noted concerns about the scale of two councils covering 1.2 million residents, but many felt that the model supported strong local representation, particularly if paired with strengthened roles for town and parish councils.

Key themes included:

- The need to retain local voice and civic identity
- Support for devolving responsibilities to hyper-local bodies
- Recognition that scale can be balanced with responsiveness

Supporters also felt that two councils would strike a good balance between being large enough to be strategic, yet not too remote for residents. A parish councillor from Three Rivers described two unitaries as *"not too big, not too small... 1.2 million residents so 2 is a good number"*.

Minimising Disruption and Supporting a Smooth Transition

The 2UA model was consistently viewed as the least disruptive option for reform. Stakeholders highlighted its ability to:

- Build on existing service footprints and operational geographies
- Avoid unnecessary disaggregation of high-risk services
- Reduce complexity for residents, staff and partners during transition
- Enable continuity in safeguarding, care pathways and commissioning relationships

"Matches the current geographic footprint and would mean less disruption than other models" – Citizens Advice Bureau St Albans

This reinforces the case for the 2UA model as a stable and practical platform for reorganisation - one that protects what works while enabling transformation.

SUPPORTS DEVOLUTION ARRANGEMENTS (MHCLG 5) (MHCLG CRITERION 5)

This section describes the Hertfordshire Councils' ambition for devolution in the county. We recognise that devolution is achieved through a separate legislative process, and we have written to the Secretary of State in this regard. The references throughout this document are intended to signal our ambition and demonstrate how our strategic direction supports the government's potential opportunities for Hertfordshire.

The 2UA model enables swift and effective devolution to a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA). A leadership of three (the Mayor and two local authority Leaders) will provide decisive, visible and accountable leadership for Hertfordshire, streamlining governance and decision-making. The two unitary authority model best supports strategic development and delivery at county scale, effectively delivered through the two authorities working together with business and partners – reducing fragmented and duplicated relationships that slow down strategic direction and delivery.

Each unitary will be sufficiently local to understand and champion the needs of its communities, yet large enough to support the Mayor in developing effective strategies and to make decisions in the interests of

their whole area. The efficiency and financial sustainability of the two unitaries will enable them to respond to the strategic direction set by the MSA, moving at pace to deliver the necessary services and infrastructure. This will deliver rapid progress to unlock growth, further boosting our thriving economy and supporting our world-leading businesses as well as the local companies that form the bedrock of our local high streets and communities, creating more jobs for local residents.

Two unitary leaders and a Mayor will also lead to faster action on the environment, from meeting net zero commitments to protecting and enhancing our green spaces as set out in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, to decarbonising the economy and taking advantage of the many opportunities of 'green growth'. Two financially sustainable unitaries supporting a Mayor can provide the bold, consistent and ambitious leadership and action that is needed to ensure Hertfordshire's residents, businesses and our environment thrive in the future.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (MHCLG CRITERION 6)

Community empowerment will be central to the identity and operating model of the two new unitary authorities. Hertfordshire is made up of many diverse and interconnected communities, each with its own identity, strengths and priorities. The 2UA model provides a scale of organisation that can support neighbourhood-level governance and community-led decision-making, while avoiding the imposition of artificial boundaries that risk dividing communities which naturally collaborate to deliver economic, social and cultural benefits.

The model is designed to ensure decisions are made closer to communities, with clear lines of accountability and visible local leadership. This includes formal mechanisms such as Local Democratic Forums, strengthened partnerships with parish and town councils, and shared physical infrastructure such as libraries and family hubs. These familiar touchpoints will act as accessible spaces for engagement, support and community action.

The Local Government Engagement Feedback Report highlighted strong support for localism - a principle that is fully embedded in the 2UA model. By maintaining coherence across community networks and civic infrastructure, the 2UA model enables stronger local leadership and inclusive engagement. It builds on Hertfordshire's existing strengths in community partnerships, ensuring that Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations continue to play a central role in shaping and delivering support.

This approach recognises that communities are best placed to understand their own needs and priorities. It supports grassroots initiatives, from local arts programmes and heritage projects to community-led festivals, which foster identity, wellbeing and economic vibrancy. By embedding this model across both organisations, from service design to decision making, this model will create simplicity and accessibility for communities, residents and businesses.

Delivering the vision
With each authority serving around 600,000 residents the 2UA model enables a coherent and scalable framework for locality working. Localised management structures with dedicated service teams and locality leads will strengthen civic leadership. This approach provides the flexibility to tailor delivery to the distinct character of different places, whether urban, rural, or mixed, while maintaining consistency in standards and strategic oversight.

The scale of the new authorities also provides the internal capacity for robust engagement, supported by stable workforce structures and improved data and insight capabilities. This will enable more proactive, preventative and place-based approaches to service design and commissioning.

Community Engagement: Principles and Practice

This model will establish a clear and consistent approach for community engagement, enabling residents, community groups and local businesses to influence decisions that are best taken locally. This will include:

- **Supporting community action and involvement**, recognising the value of local knowledge, lived experience and grassroots leadership.

- **Transparent processes** demonstrating how local input informs outcomes

- **Accessible engagement channels** tailored to different communities including digital platforms, in-person forums and targeted outreach.

- **Co-designed services and policies** developed in partnership with residents, businesses and local leaders via a range of locally accountable structures such as Local Democratic Forums, youth councils and people's assemblies.

Infrastructure for Delivery

To ensure this vision is delivered in practice, the following infrastructure will underpin our approach:

- **Local Democratic Forums** will act as a formal mechanism for engaging with local communities and responding to local needs

- **Locality Teams** will be embedded across services to support place-based delivery and facilitate community action

- **Digital platforms** will provide faster response times and better visibility of local issues

- **Shared facilities and community hubs** such as libraries, family hubs will be familiar, physical touchpoints for residents. Acting as a direct link between local communities and the new unitaries, they will help tackle social isolation and will be key focal points for building community networks and engagement on local issues

This joined-up system reflects how people live their lives - not through institutional boundaries, but through trusted relationships, shared spaces and local priorities. This builds on Hertfordshire's existing strengths and responds to stakeholder feedback calling for visible local presence, simpler access to services and stronger community voice.

Operationalising the Four Pillars of Community Empowerment

The 2UA model brings to life the four pillars of community empowerment outlined in the full submission ensuring that communities retain influence over decisions that affect their everyday lives.

1. Local Democratic Forums

Local Democratic Forums (LDFs) will play a key role in ensuring that the two unitary councils and their services listen and are responsive to local needs and aspirations.

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Convened by councillors representing that particular area, these forums will bring together local NHS partners, police, voluntary and community organisations, town and parish councils and local businesses to:

- Engage with residents and local communities

- Shape services and direct the distribution of grant funding

- Maintain community assets and consider their transfer to community stewardship where appropriate

- Use integrated data to identify and address emerging issues early.

Developed in line with proposed neighbourhood governance provisions in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, LDFs will be constituted as formal area committees empowered with budgets and access to officer support and other resources that can be used to address issues that matter most to local people.

The forums will provide transparent processes and accessible engagement channels, ensuring local priorities inform decision-making. This will enable residents to participate directly – whether through raising issues; asking questions of service providers; or contributing to participatory budgeting or local residents' panels.

Every area of each unitary will have its own forum. A flexible approach will be taken to ensure the geography of these forums reflect 'real places', covering both larger urban areas and smaller rural settlements. Where possible, forum boundaries will align the areas with NHS health integrated neighbourhood areas to maximise local accountability and responsiveness.

2. Town, Parish and Community Councils

Town, parish and community councils – collectively known as 'local councils' - are vital partners in the 2UA model. They provide essential hyper-local services, foster civic pride and act as a direct voice for their communities.

The Local Government Engagement Feedback Report highlighted strong support for empowering parish and town councils to take on greater responsibility for very local matters. The 2UA model reflects this by enabling tailored charters and co-designed arrangements that **delegate appropriate functions to local councils**, including grounds maintenance, community facilities and neighbourhood planning, and, where appropriate, the transfer of community assets.

Both new unitary councils will work with the Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils and develop and continue existing engagement frameworks such as Parish Voice Forums and a countywide conference. In unparished areas, alternative mechanisms, such as area forums, will ensure residents have a voice on local decision making. We will also consider the possibility of creating of new local councils where there is local appetite to do so.

3. Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Sector

The third pillar of community empowerment focuses on Hertfordshire's vibrant VCFSE sector. Given this sector's central role in empowering residents and enabling meaningful engagement, this section gives a detailed overview of how the 2UA model will embed and strengthen VCFSE partnerships across both authorities.

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The county's existing infrastructure supports active participation from individuals, grassroots groups, faith communities and charities of all sizes, many of which are commissioned to deliver community-based support and represent local voices.

This inclusive ecosystem is already embedded in strategic planning and delivery across Hertfordshire. VCFSE partners are equal members of key statutory boards, including Health and Wellbeing; Domestic Abuse; Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG); the Drugs and Alcohol Strategic Board, and both Hertfordshire Adults Safeguarding Board and the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership. Long-standing partnerships such as the VCFSE Alliance, Community Leaders Forums, Multi-Faith Forums, and Community Help Hertfordshire (CVS network) are supported by Hertfordshire County Council, the Integrated Care Board (ICB), and other statutory bodies, ensuring continuity and collaboration.

Adult Care Services, Children's Services, and Public Health commission a wide range of services that support hundreds of thousands of residents. These are funded through HCC budgets, Public Health allocations, pooled funding with the ICB, the Better Care Fund, and central government grants. The collective impact is delivered through thousands of local VCFSE organisations, ensuring that services are responsive, locally rooted, and co-produced with communities.

VCFSE representatives have raised concerns that any move away from a countywide approach, such as requiring them to respond to multiple Local Authorities, would risk fragmenting their capacity, limiting their ability to pool expertise, and weakening their collective voice. Splitting contracts into smaller areas could increase management costs and exacerbate existing challenges in recruiting staff and volunteers, making critical community-based services harder to deliver.

The 2UA model addresses these concerns by preserving countywide commissioning, collaboration and funding arrangements whilst also enabling them to engage on specific local issues through the LDF. It enables consistent leadership of initiatives such as the Cost of Living response and Household Support Fund distribution, ensuring that the most vulnerable residents are supported effectively.

The 2UA model also empowers communities to play an active role in building climate resilience. By embedding decision-making at the neighbourhood level, residents and local organisations can shape responses to climate risks that reflect their unique environmental contexts and priorities. This includes community-led initiatives such as flood preparedness, energy efficiency schemes, local food networks, and nature recovery projects. Through strengthened partnerships with VCFSE organisations and local forums, the model supports inclusive engagement on climate action, ensuring that all voices are heard—especially those most vulnerable to climate impacts. By aligning local knowledge with strategic support, the 2UA model enables communities to become active participants in creating a more sustainable and resilient Hertfordshire.

The case studies below demonstrate how coordinated countywide strategies built on community engagement, consultation and coproduction deliver real impact.

Case Study 9: Hertfordshire Dementia Strategy

The Hertfordshire Dementia Strategy 2023–2028 is delivered through the Mental Health, Learning Disability and Neurodiversity Health and Care Partnership (MHLDN). Workstreams are chaired by experts-by-experience and bring together local community groups, faith representatives, charities of all sizes, and all three tiers of Local Authority alongside countywide statutory services.

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Significant progress has been made, particularly in response to community calls for better coordination across services. Hertfordshire County Council funds the majority of community-based dementia support, including a countywide helpline, one-to-one support, and local hubs, all delivered through **Memory Support Hertfordshire**, a network of charity partners guided by community need and innovating to support Strategy delivery.

A key strand of this work is the development of **Dementia Friendly Communities**, which brings together VCFSE organisations, statutory services, and local businesses. This initiative provides access to expertise, resources, communication tools, and shared learning, enabling communities, from high streets to districts, to collaborate on initiatives such as the Dementia Friendly Community accreditation scheme.

Case Study 10: Hertfordshire Carers Strategy

The Hertfordshire Carers Strategy is a long-standing multi-agency partnership focused on improving support for unpaid carers of all ages. Community empowerment and co-production are central to both delivery and the current refresh of the Strategy.

Led jointly by Hertfordshire County Council and the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board, the Strategy is driven by strategic lead officers working closely with the Hertfordshire Carers Co-production Board and its subgroups. The independent charity **Carers in Hertfordshire** is the key commissioned partner, funded through pooled health and social care budgets.

All aspects, from recommissioning planning to individual projects, involve statutory and voluntary sector partners alongside unpaid carer representatives, ensuring that carers remain central to decision-making. Recent work includes a review of carers breaks, where carers highlighted the need for continuity of care and better access in evenings, weekends, and rural areas. A task and finish group also co-produced improvements to information resources and developed an updated card and information about the **Carers In Case of Emergency** action plan.

4. Councillors as Community Empowerment Leaders

Councillors will act as visible local advocates, champions and enablers of community engagement and participation. Through Local Democratic Forums, they will:

- Facilitate community development and problem solving

- Build local capacity and civic leadership

- Champion community ambitions and connect residents to council and partners services.

Councillors will be supported by strengthened locality support teams and dedicated locality budgets, digital platforms and physical touchpoints such as libraries and community hubs.

Inclusive and Thematic Engagement
To ensure diverse voices are heard we will embed **inclusive and thematic engagement structures** alongside place-based approaches. These will include:

- **Youth Councils and Forums** to shape priorities for young people

- **Faith and Inter-Faith networks** to engage communities around shared values and social action

- **Citizens' Panels and People's Assemblies** to deliberate on complex issues

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

- **Communities of interest** (e.g. carers, disabled residents, ethnic minority groups) to ensure inclusive representation.

A Model That Goes Further

The 2UA model delivers greater consistency and coordination in how locality working is delivered across the county. It supports stronger partnerships with parish and town councils and provides the flexibility for each authority to adapt its approach to reflect the character, priorities and service needs of its communities.

By combining physical access points with digital innovation and embedding councillor advocacy into service design, the model creates a responsive, inclusive, and easy-to-navigate system. This approach builds on Hertfordshire's existing ambitions and goes further to establish a system that is more local than the existing two-tier system, unlocking the power of local communities, supporting grassroots action, and ensuring every resident has the opportunity to shape local decisions and outcomes.

Importantly, the model reflects the priorities raised in the Local Government Engagement Feedback Report, where respondents consistently emphasised the importance of localism and the delegation of very local matters to parish and town councils. By embedding these principles into the governance and delivery architecture, the 2UA model ensures that hyper-local leadership is not only preserved but strengthened - enabling communities to take greater ownership of the issues that matter most to them. Example below evidences the approach of Local Area Boards, to engage and empower communities.

Local Area Boards
Purpose and Principles : Local Area Boards (LABs) serve as a mechanism to:
- Strengthen local democracy, empower communities, Improve service delivery responsiveness
- Facilitate place-based decision-making with transparency and accountability
- Community-led priority setting via collaborative working with partners

Structure and Governance
- **Chair : Elected unitary councillor** representing the area
- **Membership : Local Unitary councillors, Community representatives** (e.g. parish/town councils, voluntary sector), **Public service partners** (e.g. police, health, education)
- **Geographic Coverage**: Each board covers a **defined locality** within the unitary council (Based on **natural communities, parish boundaries,** or **former district areas**)
- **Meetings and Engagement**: Quarterly public meetings, **Working groups** for specific themes (e.g. youth, transport, health) , **Online platforms** for consultation and feedback

Functions and Powers: **Influence over local service delivery** and consultation on major changes
- **Delegated budgets** for local grants, minor highways improvements e.g grass cutting and open space maintenance, oversight of community centres and play areas
- **Access to Area Board funding** and ability to leverage external funding through partnerships
- **Local Priority Setting** Annual community-led priority setting process and Development of local action plans aligned with the council's strategic goals

Support and Accountability
Council Support: Dedicated **Democratic Services Officer** & **Community Engagement Officer** to support outreach and coordination
Monitoring and Evaluation: Annual **impact reports** including integration with the council's **performance and assurance framework**

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The East/West Hertfordshire model offers a clear, deliverable pathway to local government reform. Its strength stems from the fact that the County Council currently delivers the majority of public services across Hertfordshire. This enables a **single-phase transition** that minimises disruption, reduces risk and accelerates the delivery of benefits residents and staff. These are:

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- **Lower implementation costs**
  With fewer organisations to restructure, the 2UA model **avoids the complexity and cost** of repeated disaggregation. It builds on existing service footprints and partnerships, reducing the need for wholesale system change.

- **Reduced transition risk**
  The approach to safely and securely disaggregating IT platforms and underlying sensitive data is being carefully considered. A 2UA model **reduces associated risk due to the complexity** of large-scale data migration activity across multiple organisations.

- **Faster transition and early benefits**
  A two-unitary structure allows for quicker alignment of governance, systems and staff. This means earlier delivery of savings, **faster stabilisation of services, and a shorter period of uncertainty** for residents and employees.

- **Higher net savings and cumulative cash flow**
  The model delivers greater long-term financial resilience through streamlined management, reduced duplication and smarter use of assets. It generates **higher cumulative savings** and a **faster return on investment** than more fragmented alternatives.

- **Greater integration across statutory services**
  The model supports a more integrated approach across statutory services, enabling **more coherent commissioning, better outcomes** and more efficient use of public resources.

- **Stronger focus on prevention**
  The scale and capacity of the 2UA model allow for investment in **preventative approaches** across resident-facing services, particularly in Adult Social Care, Children's Services, SEND and early help – supporting earlier interventions and reducing long-term demand.

- **Improved performance management and accountability**
  A simplified structure enables unified performance frameworks, **clearer lines of accountability** and better use of data and insight to drive improvement.

- **Capacity to invest in locality working**
  The financial headroom created by the model supports investment in **strong locality models**, ensuring services remain close to communities and responsive to local needs.

- **Reduced risk to residents**
  With fewer moving parts, the 2UA model reduces the risk of disruption to high-risk services during transition. It enables **continuity in safeguarding, care pathways** and commissioning relationships, reducing risks for the most vulnerable.

With the two unitary model standing up favourably against government criteria Hertfordshire can move forward from day one with confidence - protecting what works, reforming what doesn't, and delivering a simpler, stronger and more sustainable future for all its communities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE

PROPOSAL FOR THREE UNITARY AUTHORITIES

V3 draft – last saved 6th November 2025

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FOREWORD

THREE-UNITARY AUTHORITY MODEL FOR HERTFORDSHIRE: ROOTED IN PLACE, DESIGNED FOR PREVENTION AND BUILT TO DELIVER PROSPERITY

Hertfordshire has for generations been a place of economic dynamism, rural beauty and strong connections to the capital. These treasured qualities – and the people who embody them – demand councils that truly understand their needs.

The three-unitary authority model for Hertfordshire is a bold response to the government's call for change that puts our residents first. Developed through strong collaboration, informed by robust evidence and shaped by extensive engagement with the people who call Hertfordshire home, it offers clarity, purpose and a framework fit for the future. This proposal creates three distinct councils: West, Central and Eastern Hertfordshire.

At its heart are our people and the places they know. This model follows how people already live, work and connect; with significantly more alignment than the base proposal. It is the natural conclusion for our county's future. The people of Hertfordshire have been clear, and this proposal delivers authorities small enough to preserve local identity and sense of belonging, yet large enough to deliver the strategic leadership, financial sustainability and capacity for essential growth. Services become more accessible, transparent and empowering. One council to contact, one place to go, clearer accountability for the services you use every day.

By design, the model is prevention-led. It tackles root causes, reduces demand pressures and reinvests savings into frontline services. With housing, public health and social care under one roof, councils see the full picture, spot problems early and intervene when it matters most.

This model unlocks devolution and drives economic growth. It speeds up housing delivery and infrastructure investment. Streamlined decision-making attracts businesses whilst ensuring community spirit grows and our residents, businesses and places thrive.

At this historic moment, we can create councils fit for generations to come, preserving the dynamism, pride of place and sense of community that makes Hertfordshire special. In the pages that follow, you will see how this vision becomes reality. A proposal rooted in our people and built to deliver the prosperity our communities deserve.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

For the avoidance of doubt, this document reflects the modified proposal for the establishment of three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire. Notwithstanding this, the base proposal, as presented in the accompanying 'spine' document, for three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire also satisfies the criteria set out by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). As such, the base proposal is capable of standing on its own merits should the Secretary of State determine not to exercise discretion to modify the existing boundary between Hertsmere Borough Council and Watford Borough Council. However, it is the considered view of the councils supporting three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire that the modified proposal set out herein more effectively meets MHCLG's criteria.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THREE-UNITARY AUTHORITY MODEL FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Hertfordshire is at a defining crossroads. The proposal to establish three new Unitary Authorities presents a transformative opportunity to replace the county's current structure of 11 councils with three streamlined, future-ready Unitary Authorities – reimagining local government to unlock the county's full potential. The model strikes an ideal balance between local and strategic governance, with the voice of community at its core. It sets out a vision for three new councils that are large enough to deliver efficiencies and shared benefits, yet small enough to preserve local identity and community connection.

The three-unitary model reflects the reality of Hertfordshire's economy and the strength of its community identities, creating authorities that can lead and grow, whilst remaining responsive and deeply connected to the people they serve. By prioritising the empowering of communities and leveraging scale where it matters, Hertfordshire will set the stage for a future where every community can thrive.

ROOTED IN PLACE

The proposed West, Central and Eastern Hertfordshire authorities reflect how residents live, work and connect with their communities. Each aligns with established travel patterns, business hubs and housing markets, offering governance that is both familiar and responsive. These areas are shaped by distinct economic ecosystems and specialist sectors, supported by unique mixes of infrastructure and housing development. Collectively, they are well-positioned to deliver the government's Modern Industrial Strategy and 10-Year Infrastructure Strategy. At the same time, they face shared challenges, housing affordability, pockets of deprivation and skills gaps, that demand targeted, coordinated solutions.

DESIGNED FOR PREVENTION

Each authority is optimally sized to integrate health, social care, housing, education and policing. Multidisciplinary teams working from community hubs will identify risks early and coordinate support before issues escalate, reducing pressure on statutory services and strengthening community resilience. This model aligns with the NHS 10-Year Health Plan, enabling joint commissioning, shared data systems and coordinated workforce planning. By embedding prevention from the outset, rather than retrofitting it, Hertfordshire will lead the shift from reactive services to proactive community support.

BUILT TO DELIVER PROSPERITY

The scale of each authority enables it to attract investment, develop specialist skills programmes and deliver major housing and infrastructure projects. The model supports accelerated housing delivery, skills development aligned with 'Get Britain Working', and the transition to net zero through integrated planning. Combined with a Mayoral Strategic Authority, this structure lays the foundation for transformational devolution, empowering local leadership with control over transport, housing, skills and economic development.

A SUSTAINABLE MODEL FOR TRANSFORMATION

The financial case for restructuring into three Unitary Authorities is both robust and compelling. By year five, the model will deliver recurring annual net savings of £30-£38 million, with cumulative savings reaching £181-£258 million over ten years. Transition costs of £91-£111 million are fully recovered within four to six years. This configuration strikes a balance between efficiency and local connection, enabling each authority to maintain specialist services, invest in digital transformation, build strong reserves for future resilience, and protect discretionary services. Crucially, the model achieves financial independence without reliance on external equalisation or emergency government support. The three-unitary structure will support investment in transformation aligned with our ambition for place, prevention, prosperity.

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THE CASE FOR CHANGE: BUSHEY'S INTEGRATION INTO WEST HERTFORDSHIRE

This document justifies and represents a modification request for the proposed transfer of Bushey (population 28,411) from Hertsmere to West Hertfordshire as part of Local Government Reorganisation. The boundary change aligns administrative structures with community identity, service delivery patterns and economic geography. **Appendix 2** provides further detailed information, supporting evidence and data, and establishes how the proposed boundary change underpins the case for strong public services and financial sustainability.

The proposal is to amend the boundary, as per **Appendix 2A**, to realign the existing Hertsmere wards of Bushey North, Bushey St James, Bushey Park and Bushey Heath so that they fall within the West Hertfordshire Unitary Authority.

Geographic reality
Bushey sits as an isolated enclave in south-west Hertsmere, physically separated from the rest of the district by the M1/A41 corridor and over two miles of greenbelt to Borehamwood. In contrast, less than 0.5 miles of greenbelt separates Bushey from Watford, where urban areas flow together naturally. The proposed boundary along the M1/A41 creates a clear, logical and identifiable dividing line that reflects actual settlement patterns.

Community identity
Bushey's community connections overwhelmingly orient towards Watford:

- 97.6% of Bushey residents visit Watford town centre, with 55% naming it as their most visited destination
- 1,829 pupils (29% of Bushey's school population) have home addresses in Watford
- Over 900 Bushey residents commute to Watford for work
- Historical development since the Victorian era has embedded Bushey within Watford's economic and social fabric
- Public consultation revealed strong resident support for integration with West Hertfordshire.

Service delivery and economic integration
- Eight bus routes and the London Overground Lioness Line connect Bushey directly to Watford
- Walking and cycling between Bushey and Watford occurs along residential streets with complete pedestrian infrastructure, whilst routes to Borehamwood involve longer journeys on rural roads with limited facilities
- Over 1,400 Bushey residents commute to work within the proposed West Hertfordshire area
- Integration enables coordinated transport planning, waste collection, emergency services and infrastructure investment aligned with actual usage patterns.

Democratic alignment
The proposal transfers the existing Hertsmere wards of Bushey North, Bushey St James, Bushey Park and Bushey Heath to West Hertfordshire, whilst keeping the existing Aldenham West ward (and intact Aldenham Parish) within Central Hertfordshire. This approach:

- Avoids fragmenting established parish structures
- Creates more equitable councillor distribution across the three authorities
- Ensures boundaries reflect genuine community identity and functional relationships
- Enhances democratic legitimacy and resident engagement.

Alignment with government assessment criteria
The boundary modification directly supports the government's stated assessment criteria for local government reorganisation:

- **Sensible economic areas**: the change recognises Bushey as part of West Hertfordshire's functional economic area, with over 1,400 residents commuting to work within the proposed unitary authority and integrated retail, transport and business patterns. This creates a coherent economic geography with an appropriate tax base.
- **Right size for efficiency and resilience**: the modification creates more balanced unitary authorities with populations in line with government guidance, ensuring each authority has the capacity to deliver efficiencies and withstand financial shocks without creating undue advantage or disadvantage across the three-unitary structure.
- **High quality and sustainable public services**: integration eliminates service fragmentation by aligning administrative responsibility with functional geography. Services can be delivered more efficiently when boundaries reflect actual settlement patterns, travel routes and community connections, avoiding the inefficiencies of cross-boundary arrangements.
- **Collaborative approach and local engagement**: the modification has political support from all Leaders in Hertfordshire. Public consultation revealed strong resident support, with Bushey residents consistently describing their area as physically and socially closer to Watford than to the rest of Hertsmere.
- **Local identity and cultural importance**: the proposal responds directly to community identity shaped by over 150 years of shared history, infrastructure and daily interaction with Watford. It rights a historical inconsistency by reconnecting communities divided by arbitrary administrative boundaries.
- **Support for devolution**: the boundary change strengthens the platform for devolution by creating unitary authorities based on genuine functional economic areas with coherent governance aligned to how residents live, work and connect.
- **Community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment**: boundaries that reflect lived experience enhance democratic legitimacy and enable residents to engage more effectively in local governance, strengthening opportunities for genuine neighbourhood empowerment.

The boundary modification directly delivers the Minister of State's expectations for local government reorganisation by enabling stronger, more strategic local leadership across a coherent functional economic area, creating simpler governance structures by eliminating Bushey's isolation as an administrative island, and delivering greater alignment of public services across the functional area that residents actually use. Most fundamentally, by creating unitary authorities based on genuine community relationships and functional geography rather than arbitrary administrative lines, the modification builds long-term resilience into local government structures, ensuring services can adapt and respond to future challenges more effectively.

In summary
This boundary change rights a historical inconsistency by aligning administrative boundaries with the lived reality of residents. It strengthens alignment to local government reorganisation criteria whilst utilising a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reconnect a community divided by arbitrary administrative boundaries. The modification enhances prosperity, improves services and strengthens democracy across the sub-region for decades to come.

The Secretary of State is respectfully requested to approve this modification request as part of the statutory change process.

1. THE PROPOSITION (MHCLG CRITERION 1)

A FUTURE-FOCUSED, LOCALLY EMPOWERED HERTFORDSHIRE

This proposal marks the beginning of a new chapter for Hertfordshire, one that builds confidently on the strong foundations of the current system of local government and responds positively to the challenges set down by government and the complex demands of public service delivery today.

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Proposal for three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Our vision for the future is bold: to create three strong, agile unitary authorities – West, Central and Eastern Hertfordshire – each with the scale to deliver where it matters, but with the flexibility and local focus to empower every individual and every community. This is not a 'lift and shift' of old models. It is a future-facing transformation that will be safe and legal from day one, providing a stable foundation on which to build a more ambitious, responsive and forward-thinking system of local government. It will be big enough to be efficient and small enough to be local.

The three-unitary model for Hertfordshire is rooted in place, designed for prevention and built to deliver prosperity for every community. Each new authority, more so with the boundary modification, is aligned with established patterns of commuting, business clusters and housing markets, ensuring decision making is responsive and logical at a local community and economic level. This approach guarantees clear accountability and more efficient services aligned to the needs of communities, supported and energised by political leaders who understand the unique challenges and opportunities of each area.

The model better aligns natural geographies and groups services more effectively. It will protect and strengthen local identity and community relationships and services will be delivered at a more local level. Distances to administrative centres will be minimised and will be based around existing communities.

There are a number of well-established shared services based on these geographical areas, many of which can easily be adapted and expanded to incorporate the new authorities.

This model is designed to deliver directly on key national policy priorities. Progressive and agile, it will anticipate and adapt to rapid technological, environmental and demographic change. It aligns with Treasury Spending Review principles[1] for public service reform: integrating services so that they are organised around people's lives; improving long-term outcomes through a focus on prevention; and devolving power to local areas with services designed with, and for, people. It supports the 10-Year Health Plan for England[2], with its shift of emphasis to community-based care and prevention as central to health service sustainability. It complements Cabinet Office initiatives, such as Community Help Partnerships, to support adults with complex needs at a neighbourhood level. It supports the Department for Work and Pensions economic inactivity agenda[3] by enabling local flexibility to adapt support to different community circumstances. Finally, it aligns with the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper[4] by enabling local focus on sector strengths and the skills needed to support employment.

Hertfordshire's three-unitary model represents far more than administrative reorganisation, it is a platform for fundamental transformation in how public services connect with and serve local communities. By aligning governance with the places people identify with, the functional economic areas where they work and do business, and the transport corridors that shape opportunity, this proposal creates the conditions for inclusive, sustainable prosperity.

We recognise there is no one-size-fits-all solution for empowering our communities. Each locality is unique, with its own identity, challenges and ambitions. That is why each new Unitary Authority will develop its own target operating model, shaped by local voices and needs, but informed by our strategic ambition. Our approach is to trial, refine and implement, piloting new forms of democracy by active participation, supporting town and parish councils and codesigning solutions with the voluntary and community sector.

We will use scale where it delivers real value, to support reducing demand on complex statutory services, while ensuring that decision making and service design happen locally, remaining closer to residents. Integrated, multidisciplinary teams will work from local service hubs based around neighbourhood footprints, focusing on early intervention and prevention, reducing crisis interventions and delivering better outcomes for all.

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[1] Spending Review 2025, HMT, June 2025
[2] Fit for the future: 10 Year Health Plan for England, DHSC, July 2025
[3] Get Britain Working White Paper, DWP, September 2025
[4] Post-16 Education and Skills, HM Government, October 2025

Prevention is not an add-on; it is the foundation of our model. Rather than retrofit neighbourhood working on to existing structures, we will build it into our governance, culture, systems and ways of working from day one. By identifying risks early and codesigning solutions with communities, we will support vulnerable residents before problems escalate, reinvesting savings into frontline provision and building long-term resilience.

Our ambition is to make community empowerment a lived reality, not just an aspiration. Every resident will have the opportunity to shape their place and future, through mechanisms like participatory budgeting and digital democracy platforms. We are committed to reaching those voices seldom heard, to removing the common barriers to participation and building community capacity and confidence.

To deliver this vision, we are seeking a new partnership with government; one that recognises our ambition and provides the funding and devolved powers needed to make it a reality. The three-unitary model provides a firm foundation for devolution, combining strategic leadership with deep local roots, to unlock the full potential of Hertfordshire's people and places.

The three-unitary model is ambitious, inclusive and resilient, demonstrating what is possible when structural change and service transformation are planned together with purpose. It places people at the heart of decision-making, empowers communities through locally responsive leadership, and unlocks prosperity by aligning services with the places people live, work and do business. With prevention at its core and scale applied where it matters, the model creates the conditions for sustainable growth and a future-ready Hertfordshire, where every community can thrive, and no one is left behind.

ONE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT: HERTFORDSHIRE'S THREE UNITARY AUTHORITIES

Hertfordshire's strength lies in its diversity of landscape, history and civic identity. The proposal to establish three new Unitary Authorities, West Hertfordshire, Central Hertfordshire and Eastern Hertfordshire, directly reflects the county's authentic sense of place and the lived experiences of its people.

This model marks a transformative step for Hertfordshire, replacing the complexity of the current two-tier system of 11 councils, with a streamlined single tier. Each council is rooted in a coherent and functional economic area, ensuring that the realignment, demonstrated by the modification request, is not merely administrative, but a strategic transformation that brings local government closer to how people live, work and do business.

HERTFORDSHIRE'S CONTEXT SUPPORTS THE THREE-UNITARY APPROACH

Surrey's reorganisation into two unitary authorities demonstrates the viability of larger-scale local government reform. Hertfordshire's proposal builds on similar principles of financial resilience and simplified governance but is designed specifically for our county's strengths and circumstances. Operating from a position of financial stability, Hertfordshire can prioritise optimal scale that balances strategic capability with community connection. The three-unitary model provides the critical mass needed for excellence in complex statutory services, particularly adult social care and children's services, while ensuring each authority remains closely aligned with distinct economic areas and community identities. This configuration delivers the financial sustainability and governance simplification essential to any unitary model, while maximising local responsiveness and democratic accountability for Hertfordshire's 1.2 million residents.

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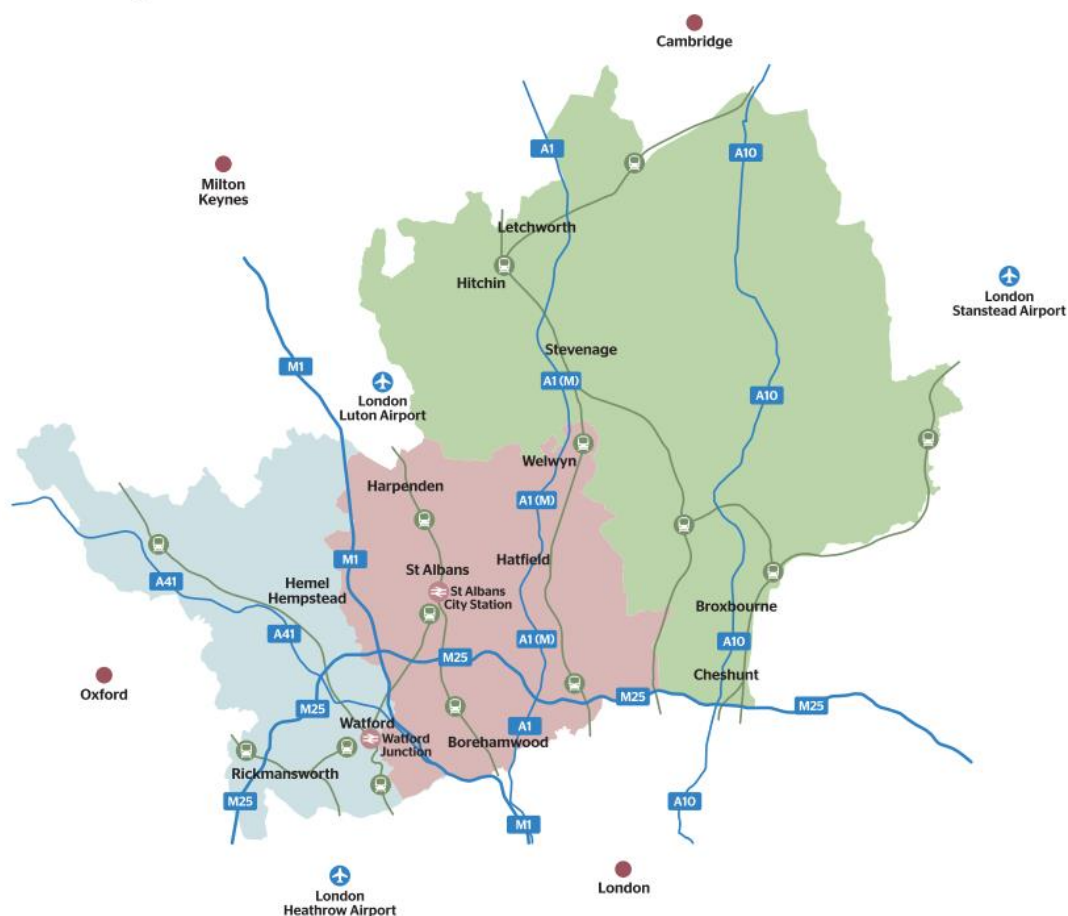
ROOTED IN PLACE

The populations of the three proposed unitary areas enjoy a diverse mix of lifestyle benefits, each offering distinctive blends of countryside landscapes, vibrant towns and rural villages. This variety supports economic success by helping businesses attract and retain skilled workers who value both career opportunities and quality of life. Each area provides attractive places to live and work, with access to green spaces, leisure and cultural amenities, historic environments and modern urban facilities that meet the needs of diverse communities and contributes to quality of life.

The proposed councils are shaped by the historical development of settlements, industry, transport and constitutional boundaries that give Hertfordshire its character and identity. The county has served for centuries as a key interface between London and the counties beyond, a role that continues to define its economic geography and civic culture. The reorganisation proposal is informed by this legacy, ensuring that identity with place and sense of belonging are respected and preserved, whilst at the same time enabling future prosperity. Appendix 2 sets out the statistical evidence that demonstrates how the Bushey modification aligns to the place-based approach taken by the three unitary model.

ALIGNED WITH FUNCTIONAL ECONOMIC AREAS

Travel-to-work patterns, business clusters and transport infrastructure all demonstrate the economic coherence of the proposed authorities. Each area is defined by distinct economic ecosystems and specialist sectors, all poised to make a significant contribution to future growth and the delivery of the government's Modern Industrial Strategy.[5] Additionally, the

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[5] The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025, DBT, June 2025

unique mix of infrastructure and housing development in each area directly supports the government's 10-year Infrastructure Strategy.[6]

The three proposed Unitary Authority areas, strengthened by the proposed modification, each benefit from a distinctive combination of strategic transport connections, underpinning their economic strengths and enabling the development of key growth sectors. These corridors not only support access to skilled labour, customers and supply chains, but also enable communities to reach essential services and employment opportunities within their localities, reflecting established economic geographies.

BUILT TO DELIVER PROSPERITY

Hertfordshire's heritage fuels rather than constrains ambition: the same innovative spirit that created Letchworth Garden City and established world-class studios, now drives enterprise in life sciences, creative industries and digital technology. The three-unitary model harnesses this confidence, providing governance rooted in place and identity, whilst also equipped to deliver transformational growth.

Each Unitary Authority is built around coherent economic geographies that reflect real patterns of sectoral specialisation, business clustering and labour markets. This structure directly supports the government's Modern Industrial Strategy by enabling focused investment in high-value sectors where Hertfordshire demonstrates global competitiveness. It also reflects the government's ambitions for post-16 education and skills, with each area home to high performing Further Education (FE) colleges or universities which deliver against this agenda to meet the needs of residents, employers and contribute to economic growth.

The three-unitary model brings together recognisable geographies to achieve scale and critical mass in key sectors. West Hertfordshire will concentrate support for creative industries, professional and business services and emerging data centres. Central Hertfordshire will coordinate interventions for research and development, digital technology and logistics. Eastern Hertfordshire can leverage its position within the UK Innovation Corridor to connect world-leading life sciences clusters, advanced manufacturing and defence. By creating governance structures that match functional economic areas, each authority can implement targeted interventions that respond to sectoral needs whilst operating at sufficient scale to attract national and international investment.

ACCELERATING HOUSING SUPPLY

The delivery of 120,000 new homes over the next 10–15 years requires governance operating at strategic scale with clear accountability. The three-unitary model provides this capacity through major projects already planned or underway across each area, supported by alignment between housing growth, transport infrastructure and employment opportunities. Each area demonstrates commitment to housing delivery at scale through transport-led regeneration, new garden communities and urban renewal projects that integrate homes with employment, education and green infrastructure.

Each Unitary Authority will produce a detailed Local Plan allocating specific sites, working within the framework set by the Strategic Authority's Local Growth Plan and Spatial Development Strategy. The three-unitary model creates the necessary coherence to attract investment whilst ensuring development respects local character and responds to community needs; an approach that directly supports the government's housing targets and the National Planning Policy Framework's emphasis on sustainable, well-connected communities.

PARTNERSHIPS TO DELIVER REGENERATION

The three-unitary model provides a strong foundation for advanced joint ventures and investment vehicles, enabling the attraction of institutional capital alongside public sector resources. Building on the successful experience of

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[6] UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy, HMT, June 2025

Hertfordshire authorities, where several effective joint ventures are already in place, this model draws on proven approaches and existing expertise in partnership working. Each unitary authority has the scale to form equal partnerships with developers, housing associations and institutional investors, typically through corporate joint ventures or limited liability partnerships. Land assets are transferred into the joint vehicle and matched by equivalent private sector capital, ensuring a balanced and mutually beneficial relationship.

Recent government programmes, such as the £2 billion social housing investment initiative, increasingly prioritise partnerships between investors and local authorities, particularly for projects ready for immediate development. The three-unitary structure is well placed to meet these priorities, offering pooled land assets across former district boundaries, development insight and capability, and the Strategic Authority's ability to negotiate on equal terms with major projects. This model enables local authorities to access specialist regeneration skills while retaining equal control over developments, sharing both risks and rewards. Strategic capacity is enhanced, supporting the effective negotiation and delivery of complex projects.

A key strength of these partnership models is their ability to support place identity and community engagement through strategic allocation of responsibilities. Local authorities typically lead resident engagement and consultation, developers contribute planning and construction expertise, and community partners ensure local voices shape decisions such as site plans and architectural design. This helps developments reflect local character and principles like healthy place-making and the prevention of adverse health outcomes. Leading regeneration projects show how combining private capital, public land, and community insight can create vibrant, sustainable communities with a strong sense of place. The scale enabled by the three-unitary geography supports a cohesive strategy, preserving neighbourhood connectivity and ensuring inclusive, community-led development and long-term stewardship.

CASE STUDY: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS ACCELERATING HOUSING AND REGENERATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE

Hertfordshire councils are already delivering what many authorities aspire to, strategic partnerships that accelerate housing delivery and unlock millions in private investment.

Three Rivers District Council is partnering with Countryside Properties and Home Group to deliver the £150 million South Oxhey Initiative, a mixed-use regeneration providing 514 new homes (private and affordable), retail space including a supermarket, high-quality public spaces, improved station access and a market square for community events. The scheme is creating employment and training opportunities alongside new housing, demonstrating how partnership approaches transform established communities at scale.

Watford Borough Council has built an exceptional track record through flexible joint ventures. The award-winning Riverwell project with Kier plc has transformed a contaminated brownfield site, delivering over 1,600 mixed-use homes (including affordable housing), 156,000 square feet of light industrial space, extensive public realm and infrastructure supporting the redevelopment of Watford General Hospital. A partnership with Mace Group is regenerating the town centre to deliver 100s of homes, a health hub and vibrant civic spaces.

Dacorum Borough Council has established the Dacorum Investment Partnership with The Hill Group as an equal partnership to accelerate affordable housing delivery and drive major regeneration across the borough. The Hemel Place project is revitalising Hemel Hempstead town centre into a thriving culture and leisure hub with new homes, commercial spaces and leisure opportunities.

Stevenage Borough Council is partnering with Mace for long-term town centre renewal. Within 18 months of formalising the partnership, planning approval was secured for SG1, a 14.5 acre redevelopment delivering homes, retail, leisure facilities and a public sector hub.

Dacorum, Hertsmere and Watford have all established joint ventures with Watford Community Housing to deliver new housing, including significant social housing, on underutilised council land and brownfield sites. These initiatives are delivering hundreds of new homes, proving the model's effectiveness for affordable housing delivery.

The lesson is clear: councils that establish equal partnerships early, maintain strategic control whilst leveraging private sector capability, and focus on long-term transformation rather than quick transactions consistently outperform traditional approaches.

For Hertfordshire's three-unitary authorities, these partnerships demonstrate what becomes possible with enhanced strategic capacity and streamlined decision-making. The three-unitary model enables authorities to pool land assets across wider geographies, negotiate with major developers from positions of strength and attract the scale of investment that transforms communities. The track record exists, the three-unitary model scales this success county-wide.

CREATING OPPORTUNITY AND TACKLING INEQUALITY

Despite Hertfordshire's economic strengths, a significant number of foundational roles that are lower paid exist, exacerbating affordability pressures and creating barriers to opportunity. Significant pockets of deprivation persist across all three areas and require targeted interventions.

The new authorities will implement targeted skills interventions aligned with the Get Britain Working and the Post 16 Education and Skills white papers, investing in digital skills and literacy to ensure workers can adapt to technological change, particularly the rise of AI. They will work with universities, colleges and employers to address labour shortages, tackle economic inactivity and create pathways into high-value employment in growth sectors. Each authority will align skills provision, employment support, transport access and housing delivery in ways that address the specific barriers

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facing disadvantaged communities. The new authorities will each be served by a FE college, allowing for local focus on skills development and securing post-16 opportunities for young people. Strong partnerships with and across local colleges will support young people at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) into education and employment as part of the focus on prevention. This place-based approach, operating at sufficient scale to attract government funding and employer investment, can deliver the transformative change essential for inclusive growth.

ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY AND NET ZERO

Each Unitary Authority is positioned to drive the transition to net zero whilst ensuring levels of sustainable growth that protect and enhance environmental quality. The governance structure aligns with transport corridors, enabling integrated planning for sustainable transport, housing, employment and energy infrastructure.

All areas bring distinctive contributions: clean growth and green technology development in innovation quarters, sustainable transport promotion along major rail corridors, and environmental stewardship balancing development with protection of biodiversity and agricultural land. The three-unitary model combines the governance capacity essential for implementing sustainability strategies at scale with the ability and agility to remain responsive to local environmental characteristics and community priorities. The three authorities can coordinate planning across housing, transport, employment and energy infrastructure in ways that a unified structure enables, whilst the Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) ensures county-wide coherence on issues including climate adaptation, biodiversity and resource management.

DESIGNED FOR PREVENTION

Each Unitary Authority will embed neighbourhood-level public service reform from the outset, working to establishing integrated teams that bring together council services including, social care, housing, community safety, early help and community development with partners from the NHS, police, housing associations and the voluntary sector. These teams will be organised around neighbourhood footprints aligned with NHS Primary Care Network (PCN) boundaries, ensuring seamless coordination between health and social care. Crucially, this approach is universal across all neighbourhoods, creating a robust infrastructure that flexes to meet local circumstances and strengthen operational health relationships.

Operating at the scale of functional economic areas enables each authority to deploy specialist expertise, develop sophisticated insights into neighbourhood needs, and maintain the financial resilience required for sustained investment in prevention. At the same time, neighbourhood teams remain close enough to communities to build trust, understand local contexts, and support a shift from council-led to community-led approaches, empowering residents to shape their own futures. This balance between strategic scale and local responsiveness makes the three-unitary model the optimal foundation for transforming public services across Hertfordshire.

STRATEGIC CAPACITY, LOCAL CONNECTION

The three-unitary model creates the right proportional relationship between local and strategic governance, avoiding both the imbalance of unitaries that are too large when compared to the strategic area, and the fragmentation of smaller, more numerous authorities. Each Unitary Authority will have the scale to be resilient and effective from the outset, with populations ranging from approximately 350,000 to 475,000 that will grow towards and beyond 500,000 as housing delivery progresses across major projects. This ensures sufficient capacity to deliver complex local services, attract and retain skilled staff, achieve operational efficiencies and withstand financial shocks, but also close enough to communities to understand and respond to local needs.

This is local government reorganisation pursued with vision and ambition, a model designed not just for today, but for the decades ahead.

DEFINING PLACE

WEST HERTFORDSHIRE: POWERING BRITAIN'S CREATIVE, DIGITAL AND GREEN FUTURE

West Hertfordshire is a dynamic economic powerhouse, home to over 20,000 businesses and with a population projected to reach nearly 463,000 by 2045. Anchored by the M25, A41 / West Coast Main Line and M1 corridors, the area combines the thriving urban hubs of Watford and Hemel Hempstead with the rural beauty of the Chilterns, offering exceptional connectivity to London, the Midlands and the North West. The Metropolitan Line underground and London Overground services provide rail connectivity to the capital, and the area also has strong connections via the M25 towards London Heathrow airport.

The clearly defined transport corridors within West Hertfordshire ensure the area enjoys strong commuting patterns both within the area and towards London, particularly from Watford and Three Rivers, where an average of 42% of commutes are into the capital. Outside London commuting, Watford, including Bushey, and Three Rivers share a reciprocal relationship of being each other's top commuting destination and both areas have strong commuting outflows towards Hemel Hempstead and the wider Dacorum area.

The area's economic strengths align directly with the government's Modern Industrial Strategy. Creative industries flourish here, led by Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, a global centre for film and media production that has generated over £2bn in investment to date, with the Harry Potter franchise, including the hugely successful studio tour, also proving a major driver for UK tourism. Forming the heart of a wider creative cluster that extends to the east and west, this represents one of the UK's most significant concentrations of film and TV production capability outside London. Planning permission has been granted for the Langleybury Film Hub which, along with the expansion of Warner Bros. Studios, will continue the history of significant private investment into the sector in West Hertfordshire. Professional and business services locate around Watford, with major employers including KPMG, TJX Europe and Epson driving productivity growth. Croxley Business Park is a leading M25 business location with fast-growing strategic and regional importance. Northwood Headquarters is the UK's principal military HQ site and home to five operational HQs for 2,000 personnel.

The established digital and technologies ecosystem around Hemel Hempstead is now attracting additional investment from major data centres, positioning West Hertfordshire at the forefront of AI and digital infrastructure development. Whilst facilitating growth in AI and digital innovation, this sector requires careful strategic planning to manage resource and land implications. Hemel Hempstead's Maylands Business Park advances clean growth and sustainable infrastructure, aligning with net zero ambitions and a green jobs strategy. Prologis Park supports advanced manufacturing and logistics, with firms like Biomel and Vitabiotics serving national supply chains.

West Hertfordshire's regeneration potential is vast. Projects like Watford Junction and Hemel Garden Communities, which also straddles Central Hertfordshire, will deliver thousands of new homes and jobs, supporting both urban densification and family-friendly neighbourhoods. Watford Junction will deliver 3,000 homes and 7,000 jobs, and Hemel Garden Communities will provide family-friendly homes integrated with employment space and green infrastructure, creating some 10,000 new jobs. Together, these projects will deliver in the region of 10,000 new homes, directly supporting the government's national target of 300,000 homes annually.

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West Hertfordshire

Herts Innovation Quarter

Tring

M1

Berkhamsted

A41

Hemel Garden Communities

Maylands

Prologis Park

Hemel Hempstead

A41

Warner Bros Studios

Wenta DomeWorks

Watford

Watford Innovation Hub

Watford Junction

Bushey

M25

Rickmansworth

M25

Dwelling growth: **23,000+** new dwellings

Current population: **386,000**

Housing affordability ratio: **12:1**

Geographical area **338 km²**

160 schools

20.31% Young people as % of population

Number of parishes or town councils: **22**

GVA per capita: **£46,198**

Number of businesses: **20,000+** active businesses enterprises

Number of councillors: **72** (incl Bushey boundary change)

Projected population (2045): **463,000**

Health access: **8** hospitals **53** GP practices

GVA **£17.68** billion

However, affordability remains acute, with average prices at £475,000 and an affordability ratio of 12:1 (based on existing borough boundaries). Eight neighbourhoods[7] rank within the top 20% most income-deprived in England. In addition, the rise of AI could significantly impact professional and business jobs in Watford and Hemel Hempstead, requiring proactive investment in digital skills and literacy.

The new Unitary Authority will provide the scale and focus to accelerate affordable housing delivery, implement targeted interventions aligned with the government's 'Get Britain Working' plan, and harness sectoral clustering benefits. West Herts College, with its campuses in Watford and Hemel Hempstead, will support young people to develop the skills needed by local businesses, preventing them becoming NEET, and work with Job Centre Plus and the Jobs and Careers Service to help adults develop the skills needed to secure employment. Local initiatives such as the Watford Innovation Hub and Wenta's Enterprise Centre, being expanded to become the DomeWorks, actively help build entrepreneurial capacity and upskill the workforce. By creating an innovation district connecting Watford's historic economic core with Hemel Hempstead's growth areas, and by leveraging clustering around the clean growth agenda, film and TV production, professional services and data centres, the new authority can act as a facilitator for the exchange of knowledge. It can also achieve the scale essential to compete internationally, whilst addressing inequalities and ensuring workers in lower-paid foundational roles can access opportunity and affordable housing.

West Hertfordshire's connectivity supports growth and provides access to jobs and skills. A three-unitary model would enable a greater focus on urban mobility and modal shift within major towns like Watford and Hemel Hempstead, where high population density and good rail connectivity create opportunities for cycling networks connecting residential areas to stations and town centre regeneration, prioritising pedestrians. It would also enable a focus on supporting existing commuting patterns from more rural locations towards major employment areas through on-demand and improved bus

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[7] Primary Care Network (PCN) neighbourhoods

services. West Hertfordshire is uniquely placed to advance government goals for accelerated housing delivery, decarbonisation of the transport network and innovation-led economic growth.

CENTRAL HERTFORDSHIRE: DRIVING INNOVATION, ENTERPRISE AND OPPORTUNITY

Central Hertfordshire is polycentric in nature, with strong connections to London, but also linked to Luton airport by the M1 / Midland Mainline corridor and to Yorkshire and the North-East by the East Coast Main Line. Its position along the M1 corridor positions the area at the heart of the London-Luton-Milton Keynes arc and make it a centre of innovation and enterprise with distinctive strengths in research and development, digital technology and logistics, with a population projected to exceed 414,000 by 2045.

Hertsmere has the strongest commuting relationship with London of all of the Hertfordshire districts with nearly 59% of commutes being into the capital. Outside London commuting, all three areas have strong commuters flows with every area being within the top three commuting destinations of the others, excluding London. This is reflective of the polycentric nature of the area and the economic cluster this creates.
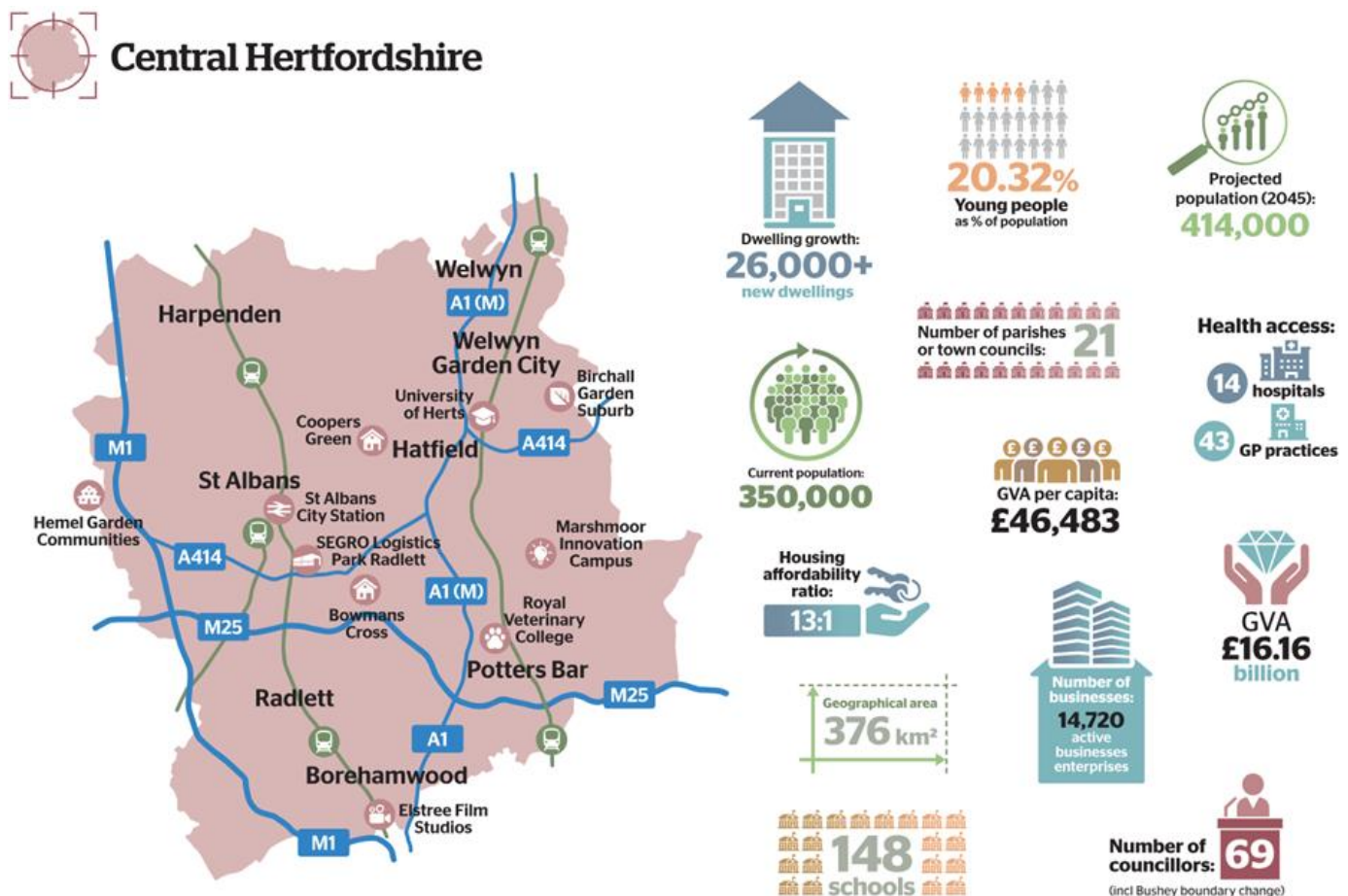
Its towns, St Albans, Borehamwood, Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield, blend historic economic cores with planned communities, combining quality of life with economic opportunity.

The area exemplifies the government's vision for a knowledge-driven, high-wage economy. The University of Hertfordshire, designated a University Enterprise Zone, drives research commercialisation, supports start-ups and builds innovation clusters, providing the skills pipeline essential for high-value sectors. Their enterprise focus encourages business engagement and investment to help their staff develop higher level skills in priority sectors, utilising the Growth and Skills Levy, to help maximise business productivity and contribute to Central Hertfordshire's economic growth. Major employers, including Tesco and Ocado, along with the Royal Veterinary College, act as anchors for local strength in logistics, distribution and life sciences. Digital and technology sectors concentrate in St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield, with

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59.2% of the population of the area educated to Level 4 or above and weekly earnings at £817.97, both significantly above national averages. The area is attracting investment in new technology as illustrated by the recent planning approval of a state-of-the-art data centre in South Mimms, an 85-acre campus near the M25 and the Elstree grid connection.

The Marshmoor Innovation Campus will provide modern commercial space and innovation facilities, attracting high-growth businesses and supporting essential knowledge exchange between academia and industry. SEGRO Logistics Park Radlett, a nationally significant freight hub along the A414 corridor, reinforces established strengths in the logistics sector, presenting an opportunity to focus on decarbonisation of the wider logistics network including zero-emission freight vehicles and infrastructure, consolidation centres reducing urban delivery traffic and rail freight connections. Film and TV production clusters around Elstree and Borehamwood, benefit from proximity to London, whilst life sciences and manufacturing capabilities are developing in Welwyn Hatfield. This diversity of sectors provides economic resilience and opportunities for cross-sector innovation, including AI and digital technology applications across traditional sectors.

The Sky Studios Elstree North project will deliver 10 extra stages and expand the current Borehamwood complex to 22 stages across 65 acres and 470,000 sq ft. Construction is scheduled to start in 2026 and will create around 600 jobs. The expansion will also grow the Sky Up Academy Studios, offering training and career pathways for 11–18-year-olds.

New settlements at Hemel Garden Communities, Bowmans Cross and Coopers Green will provide garden communities integrating housing with employment, education and green infrastructure, and Birchall Garden Suburb delivers urban regeneration whilst respecting heritage. These projects, aligned with transport corridors, support government housing targets and create sustainable, well-connected communities. However, affordability pressures remain acute, with average house prices at £559,000 and an affordability ratio of 13:1 – amongst the highest nationally – creating challenges for residents and businesses recruiting staff, particularly in lower-paid foundation sectors.

Despite economic strengths, pockets of deprivation persist. New and garden towns like Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield exhibit greater separation between work and home life, compared to historic centres like St Albans, creating additional challenges for residents accessing employment.
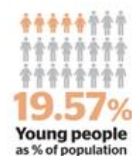
The new Unitary Authority will enable responsive, locally focused leadership that can deliver interventions tailored to community needs. By working with the University of Hertfordshire, Oaklands College, businesses and communities, the authority can implement targeted skills programmes aligned with the Get Britain Working and the Post-16 Education and Skills white papers, address labour shortages, tackle economic inactivity and invest in digital skills. By enabling sectoral clustering and knowledge exchange across its network of towns – connecting St Albans' visitor economy, founded on its rich Roman heritage and historically significant Cathedral, with Welwyn Hatfield's dynamic manufacturing and life sciences and Borehamwood's globally renowned creative industries – Central Hertfordshire can unlock the scale and critical mass essential for international competitiveness and ensure the benefits are felt across all communities.

EASTERN HERTFORDSHIRE: LEADING LIFE SCIENCES, ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Eastern Hertfordshire, with a population set to surpass 600,000 by 2045, is positioned to become a global leader in life sciences, advanced manufacturing and digital innovation. Strategically aligned with both the A1(M) / East Coast Main Line corridor and the A10 / M11 routes to Cambridge, Stansted Airport and the East of England, the area sits at the heart of the UK Innovation Corridor, combining internationally significant economic assets with urban centres and rural landscapes.

Eastern Hertfordshire is generally less reliant on London commuting than the other Hertfordshire areas (less than 25%), with the exception of Broxbourne. The area enjoys strong internal commuting relationships, particularly between Stevenage and North Hertfordshire, with each area being the top commuting destination for one another within the Eastern Hertfordshire area. Broxbourne and East Herts also hold strong commuting relationships with one another, but also outside of the area to locations such as Harlow, Uttlesford and Epping Forest.

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Proposal for three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Eastern Hertfordshire

Dwelling growth: **39,000+** new dwellings

19.57% Young people as % of population

Projected population (2045): **602,728**

Current population: **479,000**

Number of parishes or town councils: **81**

Health access: **12** hospitals, **69** GP practices

Housing affordability ratio: **10:1**

GVA per capita: **£33,499**

Geographical area **928 km²**

Number of businesses: **23,500+** active businesses enterprises

GVA **£15.90** billion

224 schools

Number of councillors: **93** (incl Bushey boundary change)

The area's economic strengths directly support the government's life sciences ambition and defence priorities. Stevenage hosts the UK's largest cell and gene therapy cluster, with the Stevenage Bioscience Cluster providing world-class facilities for early-stage companies and the Elevate Quarter offering a mixed-use innovation district that integrates commercial space, housing and community facilities. Expertise in life sciences and the defence sectors are represented by major employers, including GSK and Airbus, providing high-value employment and supporting extensive supply chains. Advanced manufacturing and life sciences companies concentrate in the towns to the north of the region, creating networks that facilitate knowledge exchange and growth in productivity, whilst defence sector specialisms in Stevenage support critical national capabilities.

Southern areas around Broxbourne demonstrate significant strength in the digital and technology sectors. Google's £5 billion data centre investment in Broxbourne represents one of the largest private investments in UK digital infrastructure, positioning Eastern Hertfordshire at the forefront of AI and cloud computing capabilities. Broxbourne's strategic location on London's edge, combined with excellent transport connectivity, supports logistics and distribution serving regional and national markets. The area's SME base and rural economy add diversity and resilience, with strengths in agri-tech, rural enterprise and market towns providing employment across dispersed geographies.

Eastern Hertfordshire's two FE colleges play a major role in supporting economic growth, with North Herts College hosting the £2.5m Airbus Defence and Space Centre for STEM, which will help deliver skills needed for future growth of a UK priority sector. Along with Hertford Regional College, they are also helping prevent young people becoming NEET and helping economically inactive adults gain the skills needed for employment.

Major projects demonstrate commitment to delivering growth at scale. Harlow & Gilston Garden Town will provide over 10,000 new homes integrated with employment space, education, transport infrastructure and green networks. Brookfield Riverside will deliver a riverside community combining housing with leisure and commercial space, plus urban renewal in Stevenage and Hitchin will regenerate town centres and provide new housing that respects local heritage.

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With average house prices at £394,000 and an affordability ratio of 10:1, Eastern Hertfordshire offers relative affordability, though pressures remain significant, given lower-paid foundational roles. Educational attainment varies significantly: some communities achieve greater than 50% educated to Level 4 or above, whilst attainment falls to 30.1% in Stevenage and 40.9% in Broxbourne. This variation creates inequality of opportunity and limits residents' ability to access high-value employment and constrains business recruitment.

The new Unitary Authority will deliver targeted interventions that enhance skills, employment and digital access through collaboration with industry, education and communities. This includes programmes aligned with 'Get Britain Working', investing in digital skills for AI and technological change, addressing economic inactivity and creating pathways into employment in growth sectors. A three-unitary model enables Eastern Hertfordshire to focus on rural transport resilience and last-mile connectivity critical for dispersed communities, addressing challenges through demand-responsive transport in rural areas, community transport solutions for isolated villages, EV charging in rural locations and integration of rural services with main transport hubs. By connecting Stevenage's life sciences and defence strengths with Broxbourne's digital capabilities and advanced manufacturing clusters to the north, Eastern Hertfordshire can unlock the scale, strength and combined expertise to compete on the global stage, whilst ensuring all communities benefit from growth and maintain the distinctive character that makes the area exceptional for living, working and investing.

2.   SCALE, EFFICIENCY AND CAPACITY (MHCLG CRITERION 2)

STRATEGIC SCALE AND PROPORTIONATE STRUCTURE

As a guiding principle, the government has set out that unitary areas should cover a population of around 500,000, with the Strategic Authority covering a population of approximately 1.5 million. Three Unitary Authorities working alongside a MSA for Hertfordshire provides the optimum model.

Hertfordshire currently has a population of 1.2 million, and with future growth by 2045, will deliver the population principles outlined by government. As evidenced in the following table, it is forecast that by 2045 West, Central and Eastern Hertfordshire unitary areas will grow broadly proportionately to closely align with the government's principles for devolution and a single-tier of local government:

	Current population	Forecast population (2045)
West Hertfordshire	392,247	462,887
Central Hertfordshire	356,193	413,737
Eastern Hertfordshire	487,750	602,728
Total	**1,236,191**	**1,479,352**

Under a three unitary model, each Unitary Authority will have the scale to be resilient and effective from the outset. The scale of the model provides sufficient capacity to deliver complex local services, attract and retain skilled staff, achieve operational efficiencies and withstand financial shocks, protect discretionary services, whilst remaining close enough to communities to understand and respond to local needs. The model eliminates fragmentation, builds critical mass for sectoral clustering, enables strategic infrastructure investment, and provides the capacity for substantial prevention programmes that address needs early on, before they become crises.

This is governance that is both deeply rooted and boldly ambitious, respecting what makes Hertfordshire's diverse communities distinctive and equipping them to seize the opportunities of a rapidly changing economy. Working in partnership with a MSA, the three Unitary Authorities will deliver responsive, place-based leadership to help every resident and business in Hertfordshire recognise their potential and thrive.

BALANCE OF NEED AND PROVISION ACROSS THE THREE UNITARY AUTHORITY AREAS

The data demonstrates carefully balanced distribution of provision and need across the three new unitary authorities, ensuring each has the resources to address pockets of greater need within their footprint without creating unsustainable financial or service delivery pressures.

DEPRIVATION: SHARED CHALLENGE

The three authorities show very balanced overall deprivation levels within a narrow three-percentage-point range. No single area carries disproportionate burden. Critically, across nine individual deprivation domains, no authority consistently appears as most or least deprived. West shows particular challenges in living environment quality and income deprivation but lower barriers to housing and services. Central demonstrates higher crime-related deprivation and income deprivation affecting older people but lower educational and employment challenges. Whilst Eastern experiences the highest employment and education deprivation but lower income deprivation affecting children.

This distributed pattern means each authority faces distinct challenges requiring tailored local responses, whilst none carries overwhelming concentration of disadvantage that would compromise financial sustainability.

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Area	Need	West	Central	Eastern
Deprivation - percentage of lower layer super output areas in most deprived hertfordshire decile.	Index of multiple deprivation	9%	9%	12%
	Income	12%	8%	11%
	Employment	9%	6%	14%
	Health deprivation and disability	12%	9%	9%
	Education, skills and training	10%	6%	13%
	Barriers to housing and services	6%	10%	13%
	Crime	8%	11%	11%
	Living environment	13%	8%	10%
	Income deprivation affecting children	9%	10%	11%
	Income deprivation affecting older people	11%	12%	8%
Adult care services. Rate per 100,000 population aged 18-64	New requests for support	1,253	1,153	1,151
	Assessments (adults)	390	354	395
	Assessments (carers)	213	172	189
	Statutory adult care plan reviews	783	678	745
	Adults in long term nursing	8	15	16
	Adults in long term residential	41	83	36
	Adults in long term homecare	87	92	91
	Adults in long term supported living	242	215	175
	Adults with a long term direct payment	324	283	308
Adult care services. Rate per 100,000 population aged 65+	New requests for support	12,008	10,578	11,529
	Assessments (adults)	7,082	5,492	5,458
	Assessments (carers)	1,059	984	1,223
	Statutory adult care plan reviews	8,310	7,014	8,667
	Adults in long term nursing	376	333	435
	Adults in long term residential	745	662	688
	Adults in long term homecare	1,421	1,192	1,440
	Adults in long term supported living	167	125	83
	Adults with a long term direct payment	690	571	495
Children's services. Rate per 1,000 population aged 0-17	Referrals to children's services social care	5.2	4.6	5.2
	Assessments	4.4	4	5
	Children in need	4.7	4.4	4.1
	Child protection plans	2.1	2	2.8
	Children looked after	3.6	3.6	3.7
	Education & health care plans	51.4	48.1	61.3
Free school meals. Rate per 1,000 pupils	Number of pupils eligible	158	147	169
Children looked after. Rate per 10,000 children	Children looked after	35.6	36.1	37.3
SEND. Rate per 10,000 children	Children with an education & health care plan	514.1	481.2	612.5
Early help	Total children in fostering for adoption	938	811	1178
	Number of young carers	101	127	130
Homelessness	Households in temporary accommodation	508	424	410

Proposal for three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

ADULT SOCIAL CARE: COMPARABLE PRESSURES

Demand for adult social care amongst working-age adults demonstrates marked consistency, with new requests clustering within a narrow range. Assessment activity is similarly consistent, indicating comparable gateway pressures across all authorities.

Substantial variation appears in how care is delivered rather than in underlying need levels. Rates across nursing care, residential care, home care, and supported living indicate different historical service models and provider markets rather than fundamental differences in need.

For older adults, demand variation remains within manageable parameters approximately thirteen per cent difference. All three authorities will face substantial but broadly comparable demand. Variations in delivery models represent genuine opportunity for shared learning whilst retaining autonomy to respond to genuine local differences.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES: CONSISTENCY IN CORE DEMAND

Core children's social care activity demonstrates striking consistency. Referral rates show minimal variation, with the proportion of Children in Need varying by less than one child per thousand. Most significantly, rates of children looked after are virtually identical across all three authorities, demonstrating comparable levels of acute need.

SEND provision shows more variation, with Eastern demonstrating notably higher rates. The three-unitary model creates opportunity to understand these variations and ensure equitable access.

Free school meal eligibility shows modest variation, reinforcing the pattern: each authority faces meaningful challenge, but none carries unsustainable burden. All three authorities will require robust, well-resourced children's social care departments with specialist expertise.

HOUSING: COMPARABLE CAPACITY

There is balanced provision of council and registered provider housing stock. Critically, each authority includes significant Council retained stock, ensuring all three possess Housing Revenue Account capability and direct delivery experience. Temporary accommodation placements remain similar across all three authorities. Pressures present consistently but challenges manifest differently, reflecting national pressures on affordable housing. The three-unitary structure provides the best platform to respond across the entire county enabling both locally tailored approaches and strategic coordination on major housing delivery programmes.

A BALANCED MODEL ENABLING SUSTAINABLE DELIVERY

The three-unitary model achieves carefully balanced distribution of provision, need and service demand. Deprivation is distributed across all three areas, with different authorities experiencing higher levels in different domains rather than one carrying overwhelming disadvantage. Adult social care demand, children's social care activity, and looked-after children rates show manageable variation rather than stark differences.

The balanced distribution means each authority can independently raise the Council Tax revenue necessary to support pockets of greater deprivation within their footprints, without requiring cross-subsidisation between authorities or dependency on redistribution mechanisms. This creates genuine financial resilience and local autonomy.

The three unitary model achieves an ideal configuration: sufficient balance that each authority is financially sustainable and capable of meeting need, whilst preserving sufficient distinction that locally tailored approaches remain appropriate and valuable. This balance provides the foundation for the prevention focused community empowered service transformation at the heart of the three unitary model.

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	Provision / Metric	West	Central	Eastern
Health	NHS Health and Care Partnership Neighbourhoods	2	3	5
	Hospitals	8	14	12
	Primary Care Networks	11	8	10
	GP Practices	53	43	69
	GP practices per 10,000 people	1	1	1
Education	Further Education Colleges	1	1	2
	Further education college campuses	2	1	6
	Schools with key stage 5	23	24	31
	Total schools	160	148	224
	Schools per 1,000 children	1.8	1.9	2.2
	Number of special schools	8	8	10
	Total special schools per 10,000 pupils	0.9	1.0	1.0
Waste & Recycling	Number of Recycling stations	4	5	7
	Number of Waste Transfer stations	11	7	14
Adult Social Care	Residential/Nursing settings	73	94	82
	Residential/Nursing settings per 10,000 adults	2.4	3.4	2.1
	Homecare / supported living settings	93	106	121
	Homecare / supported living settings per 10,000 adults	3.0	3.7	3.3
Children's Social Care	Children's homes and residential special schools	8	12	31
	Children's homes and residential special schools per 10,000 children	0.9	1.5	3.0
	Children's homes and residential special school places	32	47	185
	Children's homes and residential special school places per 10,000 children	3.7	5.9	17.8
DWP	Job centres	2	3	4
Voluntary Sector	Council for Voluntary Service locations	2	3	2
Police	Police neighbourhood teams	2	2	2
	Police stations	7	6	8
Fire	Fire stations	8	9	12
	Fire stations per 10,000 people	2	3	3
Housing	Total Registered Provider and Local Authority Housing Stock	26,686	36,134	27,908
Community	Leisure centres	8	12	11
	Leisure centres per 10,000 people	2.1	3.5	2.3
	Libraries	15	15	16
	Libraries per 100,000 people	4	4	3
	Number of civic offices	8	5	9
	Number of cemeteries & crematoria	11	6	12
	Registry offices	2	2	4
	Registry offices per 100,000 people	5	6	8

FINANCIAL CASE

Restructuring Hertfordshire's local government into three new Unitary Authorities delivers a financially sustainable model that achieves early payback, generates substantial recurring savings, creates capacity for transformational investment in prevention and service improvement, and protects discretionary services.

By year five (2032/33), the model will deliver recurring annual net savings of between £30 million and £38 million. Over ten years, cumulative net savings reach £181 million to £258 million. The transition costs of £91 million to £111 million will be fully recovered within four to six years. Critically, this model achieves financial independence without reliance on external equalisation or emergency government support.

Three Unitary Authorities represent the optimal configuration, delivering sizeable efficiency gains while mitigating disaggregation costs and maintaining the scale necessary for specialist services and strategic investment. This model will enable investment in transformation aligned with our ambition for place, prevention and prosperity for every community.

Proposal for three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

THE FINANCIAL MODEL AT A GLANCE

- **Transition costs:** £91 million to £111 million (phased to 2032/33)
- **Payback period:** 4 to 6 years
- **Annual recurring savings by Year 5:** £30 million to £38 million
- **10-year cumulative benefit:** £181 million to £258 million
- **Funding approach:** Self-financed through existing reserves, asset realisation, and flexible use of capital receipts.

TRANSITION COSTS

The total investment required to establish three new unitary authorities ranges from £91 million to £111 million, with most one-off investment costs being incurred in 2028 / 29. These one-off costs cover:

- IT disaggregation and consolidation: £46 million to £66 million (phased through to 2032 / 33)
- Programme management: £16.5 million (through to 2028 / 2029)
- Redundancy and severance: £12 million (phased through to 2030 / 31)
- Legal work, estates reconfiguration, communication, and specialist support: £13 million (through to 2028 / 2029)
- Contract novation and renegotiation: £4.4 million (through to 2028 / 2029).

The implementation strategy deliberately phases these costs over three years or more, running through to 2032/33. This approach maximises savings while using controlled consolidation to avoid excessive disaggregation that would create multi-system duplication and long-term technical debt. The phased approach to redundancy protects institutional knowledge during the critical transition period.

RECURRING SAVINGS

Annual recurring savings build progressively over the implementation period, reaching between £30 million and £38 million by year five (2032 / 33):

- Staff rationalisation: £25 million to £28 million annually through phased implementation from 2030 / 31
- Democratic and governance reorganisation: £3.6 million annually
- Improved procurement, contract management, and facilities: £18 million to £21 million annually.

These savings are partially offset by recurring costs including some diseconomies of scale, totalling £7 million to £13 million annually. The net result is £30 million to £38 million in annual recurring savings, as efficiencies occur.

STRATEGIC RATIONALE: WHY THREE AUTHORITIES

The three-unitary configuration is not arbitrary. It represents the optimal balance across multiple dimensions: scale, complexity, efficiency, and local connection. This configuration delivers superior financial outcomes compared to both the current two-tier system and alternative unitary models.

OPTIMAL SCALE FOR DISAGGREGATION

Three authorities strike the optimal balance for managing disaggregation complexity. County-wide systems covering IT, HR, and Finance can be efficiently split three ways without creating excessive technical debt. More than three authorities would multiply implementation costs and create unsustainable duplication; fewer could introduce operational risks that might compromise service delivery.

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Critical tasks including asset splits, pension allocations, grant distribution, and contract management all become tractable at this scale. The implementation can proceed at a controlled pace, allowing three organisations to be safely established without overwhelming programme management capacity.

MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY GAINS

Each authority achieves sufficient scale to sustain specialist capabilities without duplication yet remains small enough to avoid unwieldy bureaucracy. This critical mass enables investment in digital transformation, cyber resilience, and service modernisation that smaller authorities would struggle to afford.

Streamlined governance delivers further savings through reduced democratic overhead, clearer accountability, and faster decision-making. Service integration eliminates the handoffs and coordination costs inherent in the two-tier system, creating synergies across housing, planning, social care, public health, and economic development.

LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Financial sustainability extends beyond annual budgets. Each of the three authorities will maintain reserves sufficient to absorb unexpected shocks from demographic changes, policy shifts, or economic downturns. This financial headroom enables investment in transformation without forcing cuts to frontline services.

After transition costs are recovered, the authorities will generate growing annual surpluses that fund ongoing transformation in digital innovation, prevention programmes, and workforce development rather than being absorbed by operational pressures. This creates a sustainable dynamic where efficiency gains enable reinvestment in better outcomes.

The model is self-sustaining without dependency on external equalisation or emergency government funding. Each authority has sufficient tax base and economic diversity to weather local variations, creating genuine resilience.

EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY

As detailed elsewhere in this proposal, the three-unitary model achieves a balanced distribution of deprivation and affluence across all three authorities. This balance is strategically significant from a financial perspective, as it enables each council to independently raise the funds necessary to support pockets of greater need within their respective footprints without creating dependency on redistribution mechanisms or cross-subsidisation between authorities.

The graphs in the technical papers illustrate the cumulative net budget position for each unitary authority after the first five years of reorganisation, combining all baseline modelling assumptions including inflation, assumed Council Tax increases, and the impacts of local government reorganisation. When compared across alternative configurations, the three-unitary model demonstrates the most equitable budget position avoiding the financial imbalances that would characterise either more fragmented or more consolidated alternatives.

This equity of financial capacity provides each authority with genuine autonomy to respond to local priorities whilst ensuring that no single authority faces disproportionate fiscal pressures that would undermine service delivery or require external intervention.

STRATEGIC BENEFITS: INVESTING FOR TRANSFORMATION

The recurring savings generated by reorganisation will be strategically deployed to strengthen services and improve outcomes. This is not about implementing cuts or managing decline but about achieving transformation through building financially sustainable services that invest in prevention, respond to emerging needs, and continually improve outcomes.

Proposal for three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The three-unitary model provides sufficient scale to maintain specialist capacity in children's safeguarding, SEND provision. Each authority will be large enough to sustain senior posts and specialised teams while avoiding the fragmentation that would increase costs and reduce quality. The phased transition protects expertise and institutional knowledge, ensuring continuity through reorganisation.

PREVENTION AND DEMAND REDUCTION

Larger authorities can pool resources to fund targeted prevention programmes, invest in upstream health interventions, and maintain sophisticated data systems and specialist preventive staff. The return on prevention investment accrues across multiple systems as residents maintain independence longer, require less acute intervention, and avoid crisis points that trigger expensive support.

In children's social care, early help reduces statutory intervention and expensive placements. In adult social care, reablement maintains independence and delays residential care. Better housing quality, employment support, and addressing social isolation prevent hospital admissions and reduce health service demand. Youth services and community safety programmes reduce policing and criminal justice costs.

While savings from prevention and demand reduction have not been included in financial modelling, the recurring benefits compound over years and decades, creating a level of financial sustainability that efficiency savings alone cannot deliver.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Each authority will have sufficient resources to implement modern, cloud-based platforms that replace aging legacy infrastructure, ensure cyber resilience, and meet data protection standards. Automation capabilities will free staff from repetitive tasks to focus on high-value work requiring human judgment. Predictive analytics will enable early identification of emerging needs, while resident-facing digital services will improve accessibility and satisfaction.

The costs of this modernisation programme have not been included in financial modelling, but each authority is expected to be large enough to sustain robust IT platforms and ongoing investment, avoiding the continued reliance on any outdated systems or expensive shared service arrangements that might limit flexibility.

TARGETED INVESTMENT IN HIGH-NEED AREAS

Smaller, strategically focused authorities enable locally agile decision-making that improves spend efficiency by ensuring investment aligns with actual need rather than uniform service models. Scale provides the resources to make meaningful investments in SEND, adult care, and prevention, while local knowledge ensures those investments are effectively targeted to achieve maximum impact per pound spent.

MANAGING DISAGGREGATION RISK

The successful disaggregation of county-wide systems represents the single largest risk in reorganisation. The three-unitary model manages this risk through appropriate scale that makes technical and organisational challenges tractable, controlled consolidation that avoids excessive disaggregation and multi-system duplication and phased implementation that provides time to manage complex changes properly.

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FINANCIAL HEADROOM AND RESERVE STRATEGY

Strong reserve balances across the three authorities provide essential capacity to absorb unexpected shocks from demographic changes, policy reforms or economic downturns without immediately cutting services or raising Council income beyond planned levels. This financial headroom enables investment in transformation initiatives that take time to generate returns and creates ability to respond to new demand pressures as they emerge.

This approach avoids the vulnerability of smaller or less balanced unitary models that lack reserves to weather significant challenges, forcing reactive rather than planned responses.

REINVESTMENT STRATEGY

The recurring savings generated by reorganisation will be strategically deployed across three priority areas:

PREVENTION INFRASTRUCTURE

Early help and family support services, mental health and wellbeing programmes, falls prevention and reablement for older adults, housing support and homelessness prevention, youth services and positive activities, and community development to build local capacity.

DIGITAL AND INNOVATION INVESTMENT

Modernised IT platforms replacing aging infrastructure, data analytics and AI capabilities for decision-making and predictive intervention, automation to free staff for complex work requiring human judgment, and cyber security to protect sensitive resident data.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Professional development and training, clear career pathways and progression opportunities, leadership development programmes, targeted recruitment and retention in hard-to-fill specialisms, and wellbeing and support for staff. A skilled, stable, and motivated workforce is essential for delivering transformation, and the recurring financial surpluses provide capacity to invest in people without squeezing frontline budgets.

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE SAVINGS

While the financial model demonstrates strong recurring savings and early payback, successful delivery depends on managing implementation risks and capturing additional transformation opportunities beyond those currently modelled. The three-unitary configuration provides inherent advantages in managing these risks whilst creating capacity to pursue further efficiencies.

MANAGING KEY FINANCIAL RISKS

The modelled savings assume successful delivery of pre-vesting MTFS savings through 2027/28, controlled inflation aligned with baseline assumptions, and full realisation of benefits from reorganisation being delivered on schedule. The surplus position shown in year five provides essential headroom to absorb potential variations in any of these areas. The three-unitary authority model will enable councils to maintain sufficient reserves to manage unexpected shocks whilst continuing planned investments in prevention and transformation. The implementation approach outlined elsewhere reduces execution risk by avoiding simultaneous system disaggregation and allowing controlled consolidation of technology platforms.

ADDITIONAL TRANSFORMATION OPPORTUNITIES

The modelling captures only those savings arising directly from reorganisation itself. Significant additional opportunities exist through ongoing transformation once authorities are established. The three-unitary authority model provides the agility to redesign services swiftly, embed prevention at scale but also remain responsive to local need. Strategic asset rationalisation across the enlarged estate and accelerated digital adoption will generate further recurring benefits. Adult social care presents opportunity, with benchmarking indicating that authorities of this scale achieve better productivity across working age and older adult services through integrated commissioning and partnership delivery models.

MAXIMISING FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Several additional levers can improve the financial position beyond baseline modelling. Business rates retention gains, currently not assumed in projections, could support transition costs or accelerate payback if retained through a transition period. Council tax base growth above the conservative 0.8% baseline assumption would generate material additional revenue as new authorities drive housing delivery. Asset disposals from estate rationalisation will provide capital receipts to offset implementation costs. Housing Revenue Accounts that join the unitaries can contribute proportionally to setup costs whilst creating opportunities for innovative accommodation solutions that reduce social care expenditure.

GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP

The model demonstrates financial independence without requiring external equalisation or emergency support. However, specific government support could accelerate benefits realisation: capitalisation directions to spread one-off costs over multiple years, digital transformation funding to support ICT modernisation, funding for ambitious prevention pilots, extended business rates retention to bridge the transition period, and clarity on Fair Funding Review impacts to enable long-term planning. These measures would enhance an already sound financial case rather than rescuing an unviable proposition.

The three-unitary model creates the optimal platform to capture these additional opportunities whilst managing implementation risks effectively. The combination of sufficient scale for strategic investment, local agility for rapid transformation, and strong reserves for resilience ensures that financial sustainability extends well beyond the modelled projections.

ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

The three-unitary financial model directly supports government objectives across multiple policy areas:

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Early payback within four to six years, recurring surpluses without additional government funding, self-sufficient operation independent of external support, and £181 million to £258 million in taxpayer value over ten years.

PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM

Resources to invest meaningfully in prevention and early intervention, digital transformation for modern and efficient service delivery, integration of services around residents' needs, and evidence-based investment in interventions proven to improve outcomes while reducing costs.

CONCLUSION

Three Unitary Authorities represent the optimal financial configuration for Hertfordshire, balancing scale and local connection to deliver maximum value. The model provides:

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- Strong recurring surpluses of £30 million to £38 million annually by year five
- Cumulative ten-year benefit of £181 million to £258 million
- Early payback within four to six years
- Financial resilience through strong reserves and headroom
- Capacity for prevention investment that reduces long-term demand
- Strategic capacity for innovation and partnership working
- Local accountability through authorities that understand their communities
- Self-sufficiency without dependency on external support.

This is not about implementing cuts or managing decline. It is about achieving transformation through building financially sustainable services that can invest in prevention, respond to emerging needs, and continually improve outcomes for residents through the 2030s and beyond.
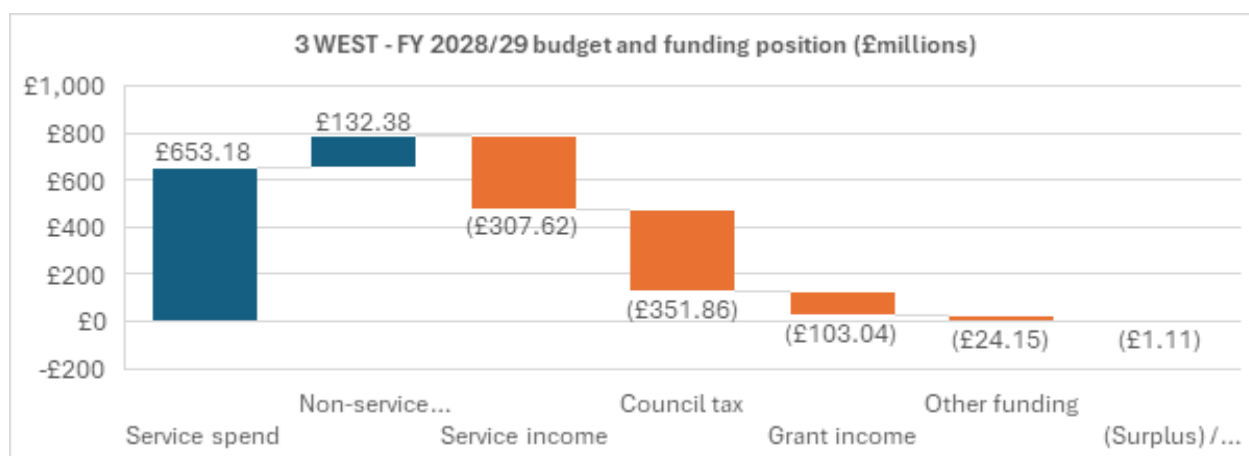
The detailed technical modelling that accompanies this strategic summary provides the complete evidence base, including scenario analysis and year-by-year projections that demonstrate how this vision will be delivered in practice. Together, these documents provide a complete financial case that combines strategic vision with technical rigor, demonstrating why three unitary authorities represent the sustainable, strategic, and financially sound choice for Hertfordshire's future.

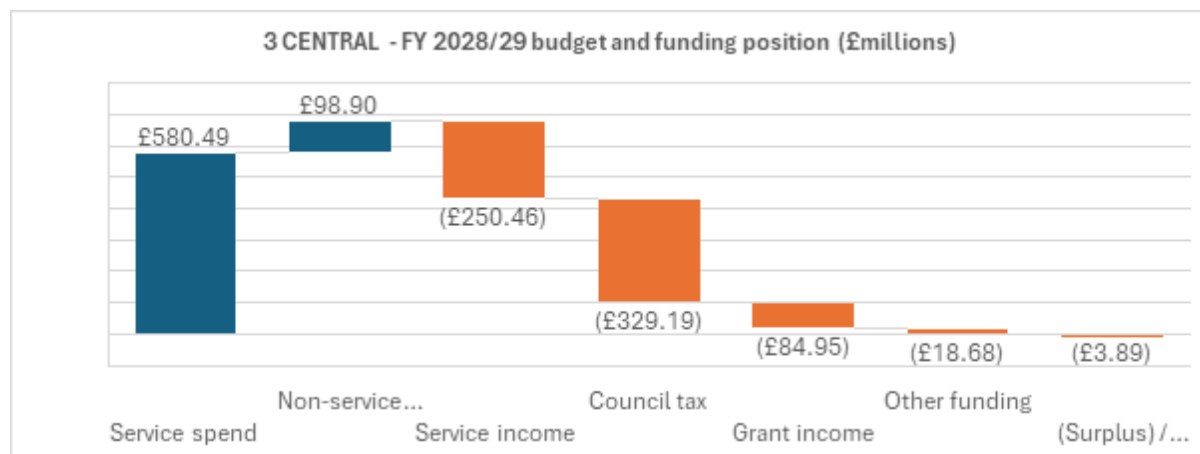## NEW UNITARY AUTHORITIES – MODELLED BUDGETS AND FUNDING POSITION FOR YEAR ONE (2028 / 29)

The graphs below show the anticipated year one budget for each proposed new unitary authority, excluding the initial costs and savings from LGR. On current assumptions and to different extents, new authorities will begin with opening surpluses or deficits based on modelled demand and service expenditure, the likely funding of each area and the capacity of each area to generate council tax.

As noted above, this modelling does not reflect the future impact of the Fair Funding Review, beyond that assumed within current authorities' Medium Term Financial Strategies, which is likely to change both the quantum and distribution of resource within Hertfordshire and may have an impact on the financial resilience of future unitary organisations.

YEAR 1 BUDGET AND FUNDING – 3 WEST

3 WEST - FY 2028/29 budget and funding position (£millions)

Service spend £653.18; Non-service... £132.38; Service income (£307.62); Council tax (£351.86); Grant income (£103.04); Other funding (£24.15); (Surplus)/... (£1.11)

YEAR 1 BUDGET AND FUNDING – 3 CENTRAL

3 CENTRAL - FY 2028/29 budget and funding position (£millions)

YEAR 1 BUDGET AND FUNDING – 3 EASTERN
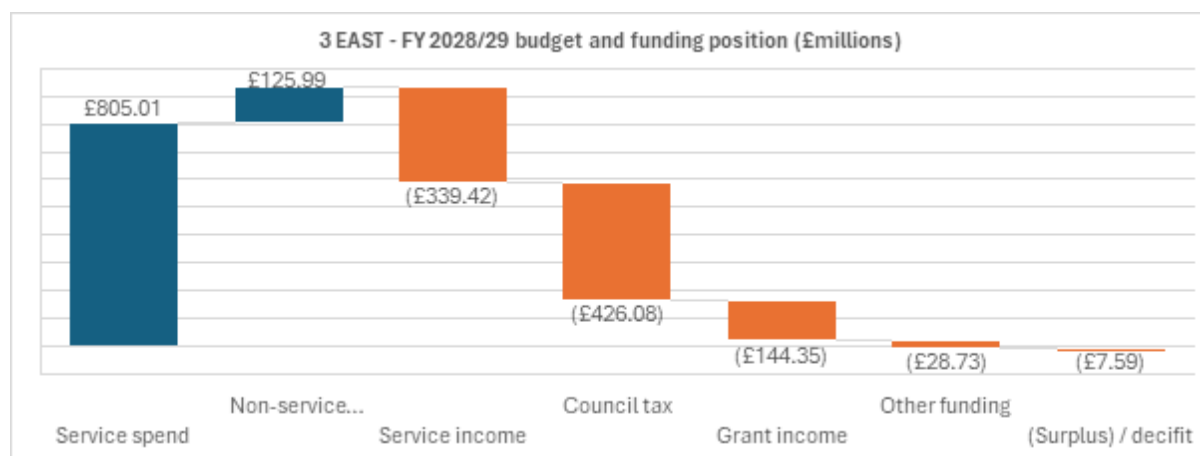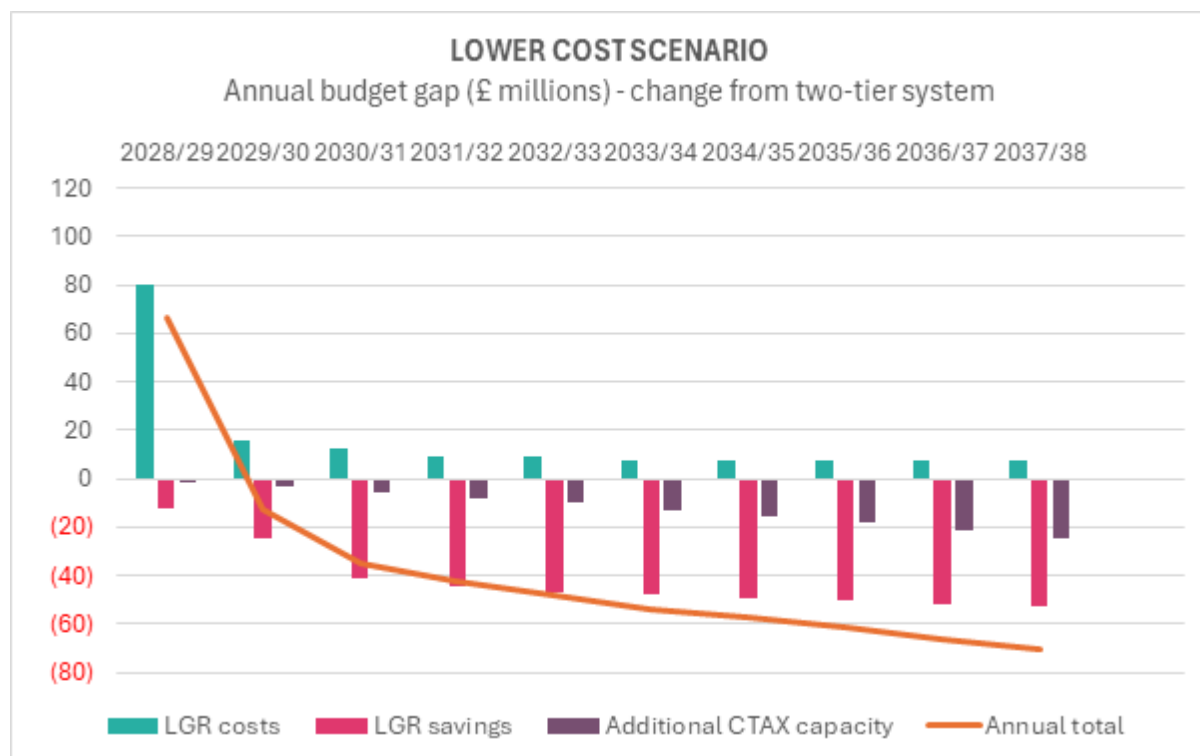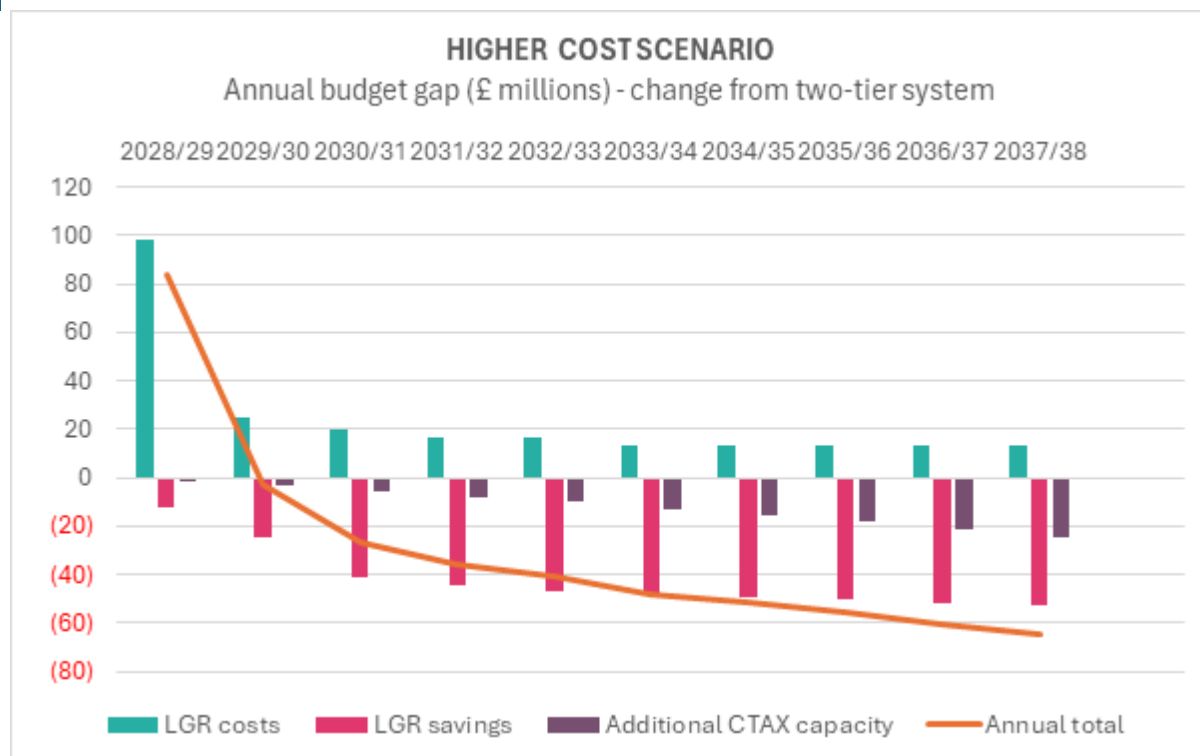
3 EAST - FY 2028/29 budget and funding position (£millions)

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PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE TWO-TIER BASELINE OVER TIME

HIGHER COST SCENARIO
Annual budget gap (£ millions) - change from two-tier system

LOWER COST SCENARIO
Annual budget gap (£ millions) - change from two-tier system

These two graphs show the in-year difference from the two-tier baseline that is delivered by LGR under this option. The modelled two-tier baseline is shown as zero, and the estimated impacts of LGR are shown as increases or (decreases) from that baseline. The key finding is that despite significant up-front costs, implementing this option would make Hertfordshire better off overall than the two-tier baseline in both the lower and higher-cost scenarios. Breaking down each line individually:

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- **LGR costs** – this line adds together one-off costs (e.g. programme management) and recurring costs (e.g. duplicating management teams for social care). The majority of one-off investment costs will be incurred in the first year of LGR in 2028 / 29, and after five years only recurring elements of cost remain.
- **LGR savings** – this line shows the total recurring savings that are delivered by LGR (e.g. by removing duplication). These savings are higher than recurring costs so that a net annual saving is generated.
- **Additional CTAX capacity** – this line shows the maximum extent to which future unitary authorities would be able to raise additional Council Tax over and above the two-tier baseline should they wish to do so, without breaching referendum limits. In practice, this will be a decision for future authorities themselves.
- **Annual total** – this line shows the aggregate movement from the two-tier baseline forecast under this option, adding up all of the above.

As set out in the summary table above, adding up positive and negative movement from the baseline over time means that, overall, Hertfordshire would be better off as a result of this option in 2031 / 32 in the lower-cost scenario and 2032 / 33 in the higher-cost scenario.

MEDIUM-TERM POSITION OF INDIVIDUAL UNITARY AUTHORITIES OVER TIME

Cumulative net budget deficit (surplus) in 2032/33 (five years after vesting day) (£m)

This graph combines all baseline modelling assumptions including inflation, assumed council tax increases and the impacts of LGR to show the cumulative net budget position for each unitary authority after the first five years of LGR. The set of baseline assumptions that we have used indicate that all models will be in a surplus position after this period, with increases in Council Tax assumed to be at 4.99 % (2.90% Council tax + 2% adult social care precept) in line with government funding assumptions. In our baseline assumptions this increase drives higher funding than the cost of services as driven by inflation, combined with the investment costs of delivering LGR and resulting savings. Further sensitivities have been modelled to test this position, and the surpluses will be quickly eroded if, for example:
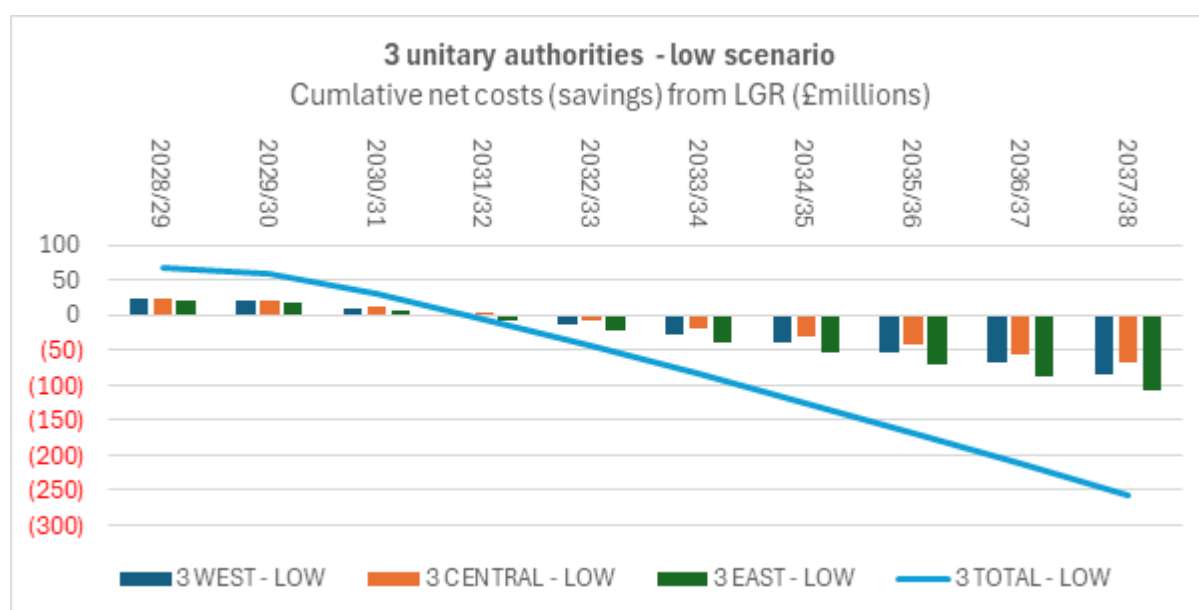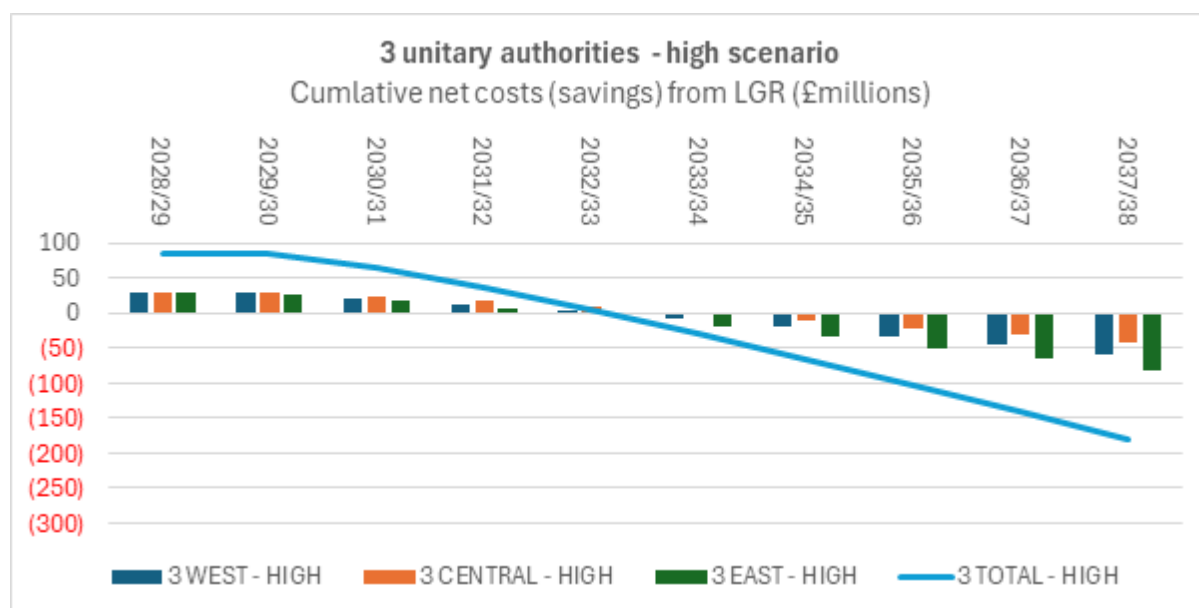
Further sensitivities have been modelled to test this position, and the surpluses will be quickly eroded if, for example:

The significant savings planned in the 2025-26 to 2027-28 period (pre-vesting day) are not delivered in full, contributing to a more challenging opening position for new authorities.

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- Inflation occurs at a higher rate than is assumed in our modelling.
- New authorities decide to increase council tax at a lower rate than the default assumed here, which is in line with government assumptions on future funding.
- There is any slippage in delivering the anticipated benefits from LGR.
- Further unexpected shocks occur.

The surplus shown above indicates that the 3-unitary model is likely to have some level of resilience in the event of any (or a combination) of the above occurring.

COSTS AND SAVINGS FROM LGR

3 unitary authorities - high scenario
Cumulative net costs (savings) from LGR (£millions)

3 unitary authorities - low scenario
Cumulative net costs (savings) from LGR (£millions)

These graphs show cumulative net costs and savings from LGR over time for individual unitary authorities, with detailed assumptions included below.

CUMULATIVE NET COSTS / (SAVINGS) FROM LGR – HIGHER COST SCENARIO

£m	2028 /29	2029 /30	2030 /31	2031 /32	2032 /33	2033 /34	2034 /35	2035 /36	2036 /37	2037 /38
3 West - HIGH	29	29	22	13	3	(8)	(20)	(32)	(45)	(58)
3 Central - HIGH	29	30	24	17	9	(1)	(11)	(21)	(32)	(42)
3 Eastern - HIGH	28	27	18	7	(6)	(20)	(35)	(50)	(65)	(81)
3 Total - HIGH	**85**	**86**	**64**	**37**	**6**	**(29)**	**(65)**	**(103)**	**(141)**	**(181)**

CUMULATIVE NET COSTS / (SAVINGS) FROM LGR – LOWER COST SCENARIO

£m	2028 /29	2029 /30	2030 /31	2031 /32	2032 /33	2033 /34	2034 /35	2035 /36	2036 /37	2037 /38
3 West - LOW	23	20	11	(1)	(13)	(26)	(40)	(54)	(69)	(83)
3 Central - LOW	23	21	13	3	(7)	(19)	(31)	(43)	(55)	(68)
3 Eastern - LOW	22	18	7	(7)	(22)	(38)	(55)	(71)	(89)	(107)
3 Total - LOW	**68**	**59**	**30**	**(5)**	**(43)**	**(83)**	**(125)**	**(168)**	**(213)**	**(258)**

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LGR COST AND SAVINGS DETAILED ASSUMPTIONS

The table below shows cost and savings assumptions in detail, identifying the areas in which a range has been accepted by partners. For further detail see Appendix A in the accompanying "spine" document.

Assumption	LGR costs and savings (£ m)									
	2028 /29	2029 /30	2030 /31	2031 /32	2032 /33	2033 /34	2034 /35	2035 /36	2036 /37	2037 /38
One off-costs										
IT disaggregation (HIGH)	28.0	8.2	4.6	3.5	3.5					
IT disaggregation (LOW)	16.3	4.7	2.7	2.1	2.1					
IT consolidation	18.7									
Programme management	16.5									
Contract novation and renegotiation	4.4									
Estates and facilities - reconfiguration	1.4	1.4								
Communication and rebranding	1.3									
Staff relocation	1.9									
Specialist support and advice	5.5									
Transition cost - redundancies	7.1	2.4	2.4							
Total one-off costs (HIGH)	**84.8**	**11.9**	**7.0**	**3.5**	**3.5**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**
Total one-off costs (LOW)	**73.0**	**8.5**	**5.1**	**2.1**	**2.1**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**
Recurring costs										
Additional costs of scale	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Diseconomies of scale (HIGH)	12.7	12.7	12.7	12.7	12.7	12.7	12.7	12.7	12.7	12.7
Diseconomies of scale (LOW)	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0
Total recurring costs (HIGH)	**13.1**	**13.1**	**13.1**	**13.1**	**13.1**	**13.1**	**13.1**	**13.1**	**13.1**	**13.1**
Total recurring costs (LOW)	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**	**7.4**
Recurring savings										
Staff savings	(8.1)	(15.8)	(24.2)	(24.7)	(25.2)	(25.7)	(26.2)	(26.7)	(27.2)	(27.8)
Democratic and governance reorganisation	(1.1)	(2.1)	(3.6)	(3.6)	(3.6)	(3.6)	(3.6)	(3.6)	(3.6)	(3.6)
Direct cost savings	(3.2)	(6.7)	(13.8)	(16.0)	(18.4)	(19.0)	(19.6)	(20.2)	(20.8)	(21.5)

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BALANCE SHEET - BENCHMARKING

Benchmarking of the consolidated balance sheets of new organisations against existing unitary authorities was undertaken by an independent organisation in March 2025. This comparison is based on our unmodified proposal (i.e. without changes to boundaries), but the results give a clear indication of the likely position of modified authorities.

	Net Assets	URR	URR+DSG	CFR	Debt gearing
3 West	TOP	TOP	TOP	3RD	TOP
3 Eastern	TOP	2ND	2ND	2ND	2ND
3 Central	TOP	2ND	2ND	3RD	TOP

Existing and future Hertfordshire authorities have relatively stable balance sheet financial health when compared with all existing unitaries. In this exercise they were compared to unitary authorities (excluding Mets and London Boroughs). The table above shows the results by quartile.

Net assets – all three proposed unitaries would be in the top quartile.

Usable Revenue Reserves – all three unitaries will hold usable reserves at a level above the median, with 3 West in the top quartile.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit – currently low when compared with other areas, but forecasting much greater deficits in future which will impact the resilience of all three unitaries.

Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) – the one area with consistently low performance for all three unitaries. There are a handful of exceptions, driven by East Herts and Broxbourne.

Debt gearing - all three unitaries show above median levels in respect of debt gearing.

OTHER KEY FINANCIAL RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Please refer to Appendix A of the spine document for a further list of specific risks and assumptions that are relevant to this option. In particular:

- Some existing costs and budgets will transfer to the Strategic Authority such as the Fire service. These have not been included in the financial model at this stage due to the complexities of splitting out budgets and resource. No additional running costs have been assumed for the Strategic Authority within the financial model.
- Existing MTFS savings – If the savings assumed to be achieved by vesting day are not delivered, this would reduce the projected baseline position and may require the new authorities to identify additional savings beyond those expected from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- It should also be noted that, while annual savings are included in the MTFS up to 2027 / 28, non-LGR savings (to address underlying funding gaps) have already been incorporated into the financial model.
- Savings – while a prudent approach to savings has been adopted, it is not yet possible to fully determine which savings are cashable and which may be non-cashable—for example, where expenditure is funded by ring-fenced grants. Therefore, although expenditure may be reduced in some cases, there could be limitations on how those savings can be used.
- MTFS forecasts – as outlined earlier the financial models assume that cost increases – especially in Social Care and SEND, are lower in the years after LGR than in the years preceding it. Council Tax increases are also assumed at the 4.99% (2.99% council tax + 2% adult social care precept) every year in line with government assumptions on funding.

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- Shared service arrangements – Hertfordshire has a track record of successful shared services. It has been assumed for the purposes of the financial case that shared service arrangements will continue where long-term countywide contracts exist, such as for Highways and Waste Disposal. Without these arrangements, the additional costs linked to disaggregation could rise.
- DSG Deficit / HNB – the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant funds education for children with SEND, including special schools, independent placements, and additional support in mainstream settings.
- Rising demand for SEND provision has led many councils to overspend, as grant funding has not kept pace with costs. The government's 'statutory override' allows councils to exclude these deficits from their accounts, but the financial shortfall remains. The override has been extended to March 2028 while longer-term reforms are developed.
- The County Council forecasts a cumulative DSG deficit of £255 million by March 2028, with annual overspends expected to continue. The outcome of national reforms will be critical to the financial sustainability of all three structural options. Any remaining HNB deficit would need to be divided between the new authority or authorities, creating a risk that an unfunded deficit could be transferred.
- Pay harmonisation – no assumptions have been made in relation to pay harmonisation within the financial model although it is recognised that pay harmonisation will occur over several years. Whilst staff will initially move into the newly formed authorities taking their existing terms and conditions (including salary) under TUPE transfer, over time staff are likely to move on to the new organisations' terms and salary levels
- Borrowing – If alternative funding sources are insufficient to cover transition costs, borrowing may be required. Borrowing costs have not been included in the financial model at this stage and could reduce projected savings and the baseline funding available
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – the HRA sits outside of General Fund revenue expenditure. Although the four HRA's in Hertfordshire receive support services/Cost of democracy from the General Fund the impact on HRA's for one off, on-going costs and savings has not been included within the financial business case
- Assets disaggregation – has not been accounted for within the financial model but this potentially poses risks at a later stage in terms of ensuring the transfer of assets and their corresponding revenue streams and or liabilities does not inadvertently worsen the financial position and sustainability of the new authorities. Disposal of surplus assets may help to defray the costs of reorganisation.
- Shared services – whilst some shared services are already in existence across for example Audit, Fraud, Procurement and Building Control, across Hertfordshire, these may no longer align geographically with the new authority boundaries. This may pose additional costs in relation to:
  - Disaggregating shared systems or contracts that are no longer aligned geographically.
  - Potential duplication of effort or investment if new, separate services are required.
  - Loss of economies of scale once shared arrangements end.
- However, in other cases existing shared services will not require disaggregation and there may be opportunities to expand these and create greater economies of scale.
- Companies and other entities – where they exist this may cause additional complexity in aggregating and disaggregating balance sheets and asset valuation or else amending governance and ownership arrangements. As a result, additional specialist support may be required. This is assumed to be covered by the existing allocation of specialist support within the one-off costs.
- Shadow authority costs – it has been assumed that the costs of the shadow authority can be covered by existing budgets and one-off costs and the contingency where required. These are unlikely to have a material impact on the financial assessment of alternative unitary options being considered, nor on their ongoing financial sustainability.

3. SUPPORTS DEVOLUTION ARRANGEMENTS (MHCLG CRITERION 5)

FROM PARTNERSHIP TO POWER: BUILDING HERTFORDSHIRE'S DEVOLUTION FRAMEWORK

The reorganisation of Hertfordshire into three new Unitary Authorities, creates the foundation for a transformational shift in local leadership and delivery. This model brings together the strategic scale of a county-wide vision with the local responsiveness of unitary governance, creating a framework designed to deliver.

As noted previously, Hertfordshire's strengths align directly with the government's Modern Industrial Strategy priorities. Well connected to both London and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, the county stands as a major economic powerhouse, with a GDP per capita amongst the highest of any comparable authorities. The three-unitary model provides the clarity, coherence and capacity needed to unlock the full potential of devolution, positioning Hertfordshire at the forefront of the government's devolution ambition.

This is not about redrawing boundaries. It is about turning shared ambition into measurable outcomes for every community across the county; reimagining what a modern, confident Hertfordshire can achieve: planning growth and transport as one integrated system, connecting people to skills and opportunity, driving innovation across a diverse economy and leading the transition to a sustainable, net-zero future.

DISTINCT ECONOMIC IDENTITIES, UNITED STRATEGIC PURPOSE

Hertfordshire's economic strengths are matched by persistent structural challenges. West Hertfordshire's creative and professional and business services growth is tempered by affordability pressures and social exclusion. Central Hertfordshire reflects a high-performing knowledge economy, yet faces severe housing stress and pockets of deprivation. Eastern Hertfordshire leads in life sciences and digital infrastructure, but its relative affordability conceals deep educational inequalities and a vulnerable foundational workforce. These regional contrasts, outlined previously, highlight the need for targeted, place-based strategies that bridge opportunity and inclusion.

WHY THREE UNITARIES: THE OPTIMAL MODEL FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

The three-unitary configuration delivers at a level that fewer or multiple authorities would struggle to achieve. The model balances scale with proximity, creating authorities large enough to think and act strategically, yet close enough to communities to understand and respond to local needs.

The three-unitary model is an optimal approach as it:

- **Aligns with Hertfordshire's functional economic geography.** The three areas correspond to real transport corridors and economic clusters. The road and rail networks that define and traverse each area are not arbitrary lines and reflect how people live, work and travel.
- **Creates the right scale for strategic delivery without losing local connection.** Each Unitary Authority will serve between approximately 350,000 and 479,000 residents rising significantly by 2045, large enough to employ specialist staff, manage complex projects and deliver at pace, but not so large that they become remote or disconnected from communities. A smaller unitary configuration would create areas too large to maintain distinct place identities, with the risk of tensions between different communities, whilst more Unitary Authorities would fragment capacity, duplicate strategic functions and retain many of the coordination problems we are seeking to resolve.
- **Provides balanced representation at the MSA**. Three constituent authorities offer even representation around the MSA table, ensuring no single area dominates decision making. This structure allows diverse perspectives, rural in some areas, urban and suburban in others, different political traditions and varied economic strengths to inform strategic choices. Each authority becomes a strong anchor institution that can represent its communities effectively while collaborating on county-wide priorities.

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- **Provides effective partnerships**. Three strong Unitary Authorities offer clear contacts and scalable, locally informed solutions for organisations like the NHS, emergency services, education providers and major businesses.
- **Reflects how Hertfordshire works.** The three Unitary Authority areas have coherent identities. People identify with these areas. They make sense to residents, businesses and partners.

The three-unitary model is not a compromise; it is the optimal solution. It creates authorities of sufficient scale to deliver transformational change, balanced with sufficient proximity to understand and respond to community needs. When combined with a MSA, this structure unlocks the full potential of devolution.

POWERING OUR WORLD-CLASS ECONOMY AND INVESTING IN SKILLS

Hertfordshire's economic diversity creates a powerful platform for strategic, place-based investment. The three-unitary model allows each council to lead regeneration aligned with local economic strengths, while the MSA provides coordination, funding streams and strategic alignment through a comprehensive Hertfordshire Local Growth Plan and Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

With powers to create Investment Zones and Mayoral Development Corporations, the MSA would hold the levers to deliver growth at scale. The three unitaries ensure sufficient local focus to support delivery and successful operation of major growth opportunities in each area.

This partnership approach ensures investment is focused where it matters most, leveraging Hertfordshire's economic diversity to attract national and international capital while retaining strong local leadership. By connecting sectoral clusters, linking Watford's creative corridor with Stevenage's life sciences strengths and Broxbourne's digital and AI capabilities, Hertfordshire can unlock the critical mass and scale essential to compete at an international level.

BUILDING A WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE

A thriving economy relies on a workforce equipped for the industries of tomorrow. The three-unitary model enables skills provision to be tailored to local economic strengths and challenges, while the MSA ensures strategic alignment and access to devolved funding through the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and Adult Skills Fund.

With support from the MSA, each Unitary Authority will develop local skills hubs providing routes into training and employment aligned with key sectors:

- **West Hertfordshire Skills Hub**: professional and business services, creative industries (film / TV production, post-production, digital content), digital skills and AI literacy to address automation impacts, clean growth technologies.
- **Central Hertfordshire Skills Hub**: life and veterinary sciences, logistics and supply chain management (including decarbonisation), innovation and entrepreneurship (leveraging University of Hertfordshire Enterprise Zone), creative industries at Elstree and Sky Studios, addressing education deprivation in Borehamwood and Hatfield.
- **Eastern Hertfordshire Skills Hub**: cell and gene therapy, advanced manufacturing and defence sector capabilities, digital infrastructure and AI / cloud computing, agri-tech and rural enterprise, pathways from lower educational attainment areas into high-value sectors.

Hertfordshire's sectoral specialisms, including advanced manufacturing and digital technologies, are ideally positioned to create one of the government's proposed new Technical Excellence Colleges, further strengthening local growth and opportunities. Through the MSA, these local initiatives are unified by the LSIP, ensuring a consistent, inclusive approach to workforce growth that meets employer needs and creates opportunities for residents. Targeted programmes aligned with the government's 'Get Britain Working' will reduce economic inactivity through integrated employment and skills support,

create pathways from foundational sectors into higher-value employment and address barriers faced by residents in deprived areas.

BUILDING THE RIGHT HOMES IN THE RIGHT PLACES

Hertfordshire faces acute housing affordability challenges, as enumerated above, that require both strategic and local responses. With plans for considerable housing growth, the three-unitary model enables a joined-up approach to growth built around natural transport and economic corridors. Each Unitary Authority area is large enough to shape ambitious local growth, whilst delivering on strategic housing and infrastructure objectives set by the MSA through an ambitious Spatial Development Strategy (SDS).

Through the SDS, and utilising powers to call in strategic sites or create Mayoral Development Corporations, Hertfordshire can optimise the opportunities in housing delivery and urban regeneration.

The three-unitary model ensures delivery builds on Hertfordshire's excellent track record of collaborative working on strategic housing growth opportunities, like Hemel Garden Communities and Harlow-Gilston Garden Town, to maintain community engagement and sustain momentum. Critically, the model also provides the right balance of capacity and local knowledge to directly deliver affordable housing within communities. Each of the three areas can develop clear programmes for affordable housing delivery on non-strategic sites, identifying opportunities that would otherwise be missed without the local expert knowledge this model provides.

Taking inspiration from the government's Small Sites Aggregator pilots, the three unitary areas within Hertfordshire can take a proactive role in the delivery of housing. Being of a similar scale to the current pilot areas of Lewisham, Bristol and Sheffield, this model provides a unique opportunity to work with SME builders and local tradespeople across Hertfordshire to support local housing delivery. The three unitaries provide organisations of the right scale to deliver new homes through a portfolio approach that benefits the local economy, while having the resources to work alongside a MSA to leverage the powers and funding required to deliver at scale. Together these initiatives form a county-wide ecosystem for sustainable growth, where housing, infrastructure and jobs are planned and delivered in balance.

CREATING A MODERN, CONNECTED TRANSPORT NETWORK

Hertfordshire's transport network is the economic backbone of the county. Positioned strategically, the county's connectivity is vital but suffers from congestion, fragmentation and underinvestment. The three-unitary model reflects key transport corridors and creates local delivery capacity to invest in and maintain the network, while the MSA provides strategic oversight to create a truly integrated transport system.

As the single Local Transport Authority, the MSA would take on responsibilities for bus franchising, rail integration and planning for strategic active travel networks, developing a unified Hertfordshire Transport Strategy that connects major roads and rail lines into a coherent system. Delivering east-west connectivity across the county will be a strategic priority for the MSA. Funding from Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), similar to that charged in London, can help deliver the strategic transport infrastructure needed to address this long-standing barrier to growth.

DECARBONISATION: STRATEGIC AND LOCAL INTERVENTIONS

Delivering net-zero requires both local innovation and regional development. Decarbonising the transport system, improving air quality and meeting climate goals requires strategic and local interventions. The three-unitary model embeds sustainability at the core of delivery, bringing the ability to focus on place-specific issues, whilst the MSA provides the strategic reach and investment levers to accelerate decarbonisation and climate resilience across the county.

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This joined-up vision, with the MSA and three new authorities, will deliver an approach that strengthens north-south and east-west connectivity, reduces carbon emissions, unlocks growth, improves accessibility and removes barriers that have limited inclusive economic opportunities in Hertfordshire for decades.

PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM BUILT FROM NEIGHBOURHOODS OUTWARD

As outlined elsewhere in detail, the three-unitary model embeds integrated neighbourhood teams that link housing, social care, health, policing, wellbeing and community safety at a local level. The MSA can support the three Unitary Authorities to deliver their ambition for system-wide reform, uniting place, prevention and prosperity for Hertfordshire.

MOVING FROM POSSIBILITY TO POWER

This approach gives Hertfordshire the scale to think bigger and the structure to deliver smarter. It is a model designed not only to meet today's challenges, but to unlock the full potential of devolution tomorrow, providing the essential connection between local vision and regional power.

It sets out a clear route to a MSA built on strong foundations: three authorities leading delivery at place level, working together under a single strategic umbrella that amplifies their collective impact. This is how Hertfordshire moves from possibility to power, to a shared platform for growth, innovation and leadership.

The three-unitary model will unleash ambition for growth across Hertfordshire, empowering people and places. It is about aligning ambition with delivery, combining local energy with strategic intent, ensuring that every community benefits from the opportunities devolution brings. A structure that can invest in the right things, in the right places, at the right time and do so with clarity, confidence and purpose.

Each of the three unitary areas brings its own character to the table. Together these areas represent Hertfordshire's full economic and cultural spectrum. Each brings unique strengths. Each faces distinct challenges. And each deserves local leadership that understands its communities and local needs while being empowered to deliver transformational change at scale. The three-unitary model provides exactly that.

When combined with a MSA, this structure unlocks powers that can reshape Hertfordshire's future: powers over housing, transport, skills, economic development and climate action that will enable us to move at pace and respond to our communities' ambitions.

4. HIGH-QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE SERVICES (MHCLG CRITERION 3)

DESIGNING TOMORROW, TODAY

The accompanying spine document establishes how Hertfordshire's new councils will be safe, legal and operational from day one, providing the secure foundation on which transformation can begin. Set out below is what the three-unitary model will achieve from that point: a shift from stabilising the present to shaping the future.

The creation of three confident, connected and capable authorities provides the platform to deliver services that are not only efficient but transformative, structures that enable prevention, technology that empowers people, and cultures that turn ambition into action. We recognise that services such as social care, housing and public health operate within statutory frameworks that set clear expectations and parameters, frameworks that rightly prioritise safeguarding, quality and equity. While these duties limit the scope for radical transformation of core functions, they do not constrain our ambition to deliver them better: with greater prevention, stronger integration and deeper community connection. It is where vision becomes delivery; where reorganisation translates into better lives, stronger communities and a more confident Hertfordshire, built by people who believe that public services can and should create lasting change.

By uniting ambition with community connection across West, Central and Eastern Hertfordshire, the authorities will transform local government into a dynamic catalyst that, through leadership, innovation, prevention and growth, empowers all three areas to thrive and shape their own prosperous futures.

Whilst organisational structures provide the framework, it is people who bring that framework to life. Their engagement, innovation and commitment are what make transformation real and lasting. Yet structure matters, not for its own sake, but for what it enables. A people-first culture, essential to prevention, sustainable growth and innovation, does not happen by accident, it must be intentionally designed and enabled. The three-unitary model provides that configuration: large enough to invest in the sophisticated capabilities that define modern public service but also connected enough to remain grounded in community understanding.

This transformation rests on a fundamental principle that will shape everything that follows; prevention works, but only when structure enables it. The three-unitary model creates that structure.

WORKING TOGETHER: THE ONE HERTFORDSHIRE ALLIANCE

The three-unitary model delivers prevention through autonomous authorities, each large enough to lead, yet connected enough to collaborate. Autonomy does not mean isolation. The One Hertfordshire Alliance, comprised of leaders of critical services, adult and children social care, public health, education and SEND, will provide a framework to coordinate seamlessly around shared priorities, markets and resources to deliver equity and opportunity for every resident. It will evolve from ensuring day one safe and legal critical service delivery to a strategic partnership that supports continuous improvement and a platform for key countywide partnerships.

This framework provides the gateway to transformation at scale and as a coherent voice for Hertfordshire to work with Central East Integrated Care Board, the MSA, the wider east of England region and central government on key issues such as SEND demand. This will take forward current foundations and successful practice in social care in Hertfordshire to support new models of service delivery including exploration of shared service delivery, where appropriate to do so.

Joint frameworks will enable market shaping and specialist provision that ensures equity in critical areas such as foster care, SEND provision, children's homes and public health commissioning. Shared digital platforms will create interoperability without uniformity, allowing each authority to develop its own intelligent digital core whilst connecting to countywide infrastructure. Integrated workforce planning will build resilience, share expertise, and create career pathways that span all three councils.

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Cross-boundary service models will ensure residents experience seamless support regardless of administrative boundaries. Shared investment and funding for innovation, transformation and resilience will pool resources for change that benefits everyone.

The One Hertfordshire Alliance exemplifies the approach of the three-unitary model: autonomy with alignment, partnership by design, built on trust, mutual benefit and a shared commitment to prevention and prosperity across every part of Hertfordshire.

PREVENTION AS THE FOUNDATION – WHY IT MATTERS

The three-unitary model creates the optimal structure for prevention to succeed: large enough for strategic public sector integration, systems relationships and data capability, small enough to connect with neighbourhoods and community assets. It is the catalyst for transforming public services to proactive, community-centred support that builds resilience and improves lives.

There is a strong economic case for prevention. Research by the Local Government Association, Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, and IMPOWER demonstrates that for every £1 invested in prevention, councils save more than £3 in future social care costs[8]. Nearly half of high-cost interventions, including statutory child protection, hospital admissions and residential care placements could have been avoided through earlier, integrated support.

National analysis indicates a £4bn - £5bn potential productivity gain from improving the Local Government–NHS interface,[9] with even greater benefits when focusing on prevention. Local studies show that 40% to 60% of demand in complex health and care systems can be influenced. Case studies highlight opportunities to prevent, reduce, or delay long-term care in 78% of adult cases and to provide earlier support in 81% of children's cases.[10] Early Integrated Neighbourhood Team pilots, such as those in East Birmingham, have already demonstrated positive results, including fewer GP visits, reduced hospital stays, and less need for long-term care packages.[11] The three-unitary authority model aims to match or surpass these outcomes.

Prevention works when investment targets evidence-backed interventions that address root causes: early years support, falls prevention and reablement, tackling loneliness and social isolation, housing retrofit and healthy homes and employment and skills pathways. These interventions reduce demand, maintain independence, enhance wellbeing and generate prosperity. The three-unitary model structure enables operational delivery.

WHY PREVENTION REQUIRES THIS SCALE

The three-unitary model creates the foundation for effective neighbourhood-based service delivery. In the NHS 10-Year Plan, neighbourhoods are the cornerstone of integrated care, based on natural geographies, population distribution and need.

The Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) will merge into the new Central East ICB in April 2026 (covering Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, and Hertfordshire), fundamentally reshaping strategic commissioning across a broader geography.

Existing Primary Care Networks (PCN's) provide the springboard for new "single neighbourhood provider" contracts delivering enhanced multidisciplinary services that coordinate GPs, community health, social care and voluntary sector teams serving populations of 30,000 to 50,000.

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[8] Earlier action and support: The case for prevention in adult social care and beyond, LGA, November 2024
[9] IMPOWER analysis using 2025 INDEX tool
[10] Based on recent IMPOWER case reviews with a London Borough
[11] Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS FT, July 2025

These neighbourhoods then cluster at a Place Board level which then coalesce at Unitary Authority level. At this level, clusters of PCN's link to care providers such as, health and care partnerships, acute hospitals, care homes, mental health, local government and voluntary organisations to make shared assessments of local need, plan how to use collective resources and join up what they offer beyond traditional health and social care services.

Directors of adult social care, public health and children's services hold significant legal duties to protect people and are the gateway to a range of local government functions and resources that can be deployed to neighbourhoods to build a prevention first approach, and scale and embed preventative work already underway.

Policing Vision 2030[12] emphasises prevention-focused policing integrated with multi-agency partnerships, aiming to address factors such as mental health, homelessness, domestic abuse, adult and youth vulnerability. The three-unitary model enables Police neighbourhood teams to align with PCN footprints, building genuine relationships with partner agencies and communities whilst reducing inefficient demand through coordinated, multiagency support rather than emergency response. The model already aligns with updated Police neighbourhood structures. Regardless of the end destination of the LGR work, the Chief Constable has confirmed that he will ensure that policing can work effectively in the community partnership.

The Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise organisations (VCFSE) sector champions prevention because it aligns with their core mission to strengthen communities. Yet crisis-driven commissioning marginalises them through short-term grants rather than strategic partnership. By embedding prevention as the operating principle, the three-unitary model offers long-term investment in community capacity and positions VCFSE as equal partners in design and delivery.

This configuration responds to demographic pressures, particularly the growing elderly population in Hertfordshire, forecasting a 40% increase in over 65s, a 47% increase in over 85s and a 78% increase in dementia prevalence by 2040. SEND demand is growing at 12-15% per annum in line with national averages meaning a new model of delivery is required to enable financial sustainability and better outcomes.

Prevention requires coordinated multi-agency support, integrated governance structures that enable seamless collaboration across all levels of the system from neighbourhood delivery to working with government.

Neighbourhoods and Integrated Care Systems are critical constants for long-term reform to enable prevention and the long-term financial sustainability of public services.

Through neighbourhood working, prevention becomes tangible, where risk is identified early, support is wrapped around families from all disciplines; health, care and local government genuinely connecting at the frontline. This model of neighbourhood working delivers reduced costs, fewer hospital admissions and improved health outcomes, as demonstrated by case studies across England.[13] This approach also aligns to DCN Guidance; Building the Best Places for Families and Children[14] and the government's Family First Partnership approach.[15]

The three-unitary structure provides alignment to the NHS 10-Year plan, creating the stable platform for joint commissioning, shared data systems and coordinated workforce planning. This will deliver care within community settings, transitioning from analogue to digital systems while fostering innovation, and emphasise prevention.

As the following table demonstrates, this is the scale where strategic public sector integration meets neighbourhood delivery, creating authorities which are large enough for data capability, specialist commissioning and system partnerships, but also small enough for community connection, local knowledge and democratic accountability. By aligning with neighbourhood infrastructure and positioning strategically for the emerging Central East ICB footprint, the three-unitary model supports delivery of the NHS 10-Year Plan.

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[12] Policing vision 2030, Strategic Policing Partnership Board, March 2023
[13] Neighbourhood health – case studies of good practice, NHS England, March 2025
[14] Building the Best Places for Children and Families, DCN, July 2025
[15] Families First Partnership programme, DfE, March 2025

Guidance	Population			
	Systems	Place	Local governance arrangements	Neighbourhoods
MHCLG (Devolution Guidance)	1.5M (Strategic Authority)	500K (Unitary Authority)	Criterion 6 – Provide detail on Neighbourhood based governance	N/A
NHS (Designing Integrated Care System guidance)	1-3M (Integrated Care System)	250-500k	N/A	30-50k
3UA Proposal	3.3M (Central East ICB) 1.5M (Strategic Authority)	413-600k (Unitary Authority)	30-120k (Place Boards)	30-50k served by community hubs

Future Resident Journey: Margaret and George

Margaret (82) and George (85) live in a semi-detached home in East Hertfordshire. Margaret has early-stage dementia and George has mobility issues and a history of falls. They are proud, independent, and have lived in their community for over 50 years.

1. Early identification and outreach

Shared data systems from health, social care, housing and benefits using predictive AI technology identify Margaret and George as high-risk for hospital admission and care home placement. This trusted, transparent use of data reflects the system's prevention-first design: learning from people, not just about them.

A member of their local neighbourhood team, aligned to the Primary Care Network footprint, receives this alert and visits them to conduct a home safety assessment and cognitive screening. The officer is part of a multidisciplinary team that includes NHS staff, social workers, housing officers, and voluntary sector partners, a One Workforce, operating seamlessly across organisational boundaries.

2. Coordinated support plan

A single key worker is assigned to Margaret and George, eliminating the need for multiple referrals, embodying Hertfordshire's integrated front door approach, one assessment, one plan, one relationship.

The key worker develops a joined-up care plan that includes falls prevention interventions (grab rails, stair lift, non-slip flooring), memory café sessions and dementia-friendly activities at the local community hub, weekly check-ins from a volunteer befriender, and remote monitoring via wearable devices linked to NHS systems. Data flows securely between agencies, allowing early intervention rather than crisis response.

3. Neighbourhood team integration

Margaret and George's care is coordinated by a co-located team operating within their neighbourhood footprint. This team includes a dementia nurse specialist, a housing adaptations officer, a community safety officer, and a voluntary sector coordinator.

Together, they ensure Margaret's cognitive needs and George's physical risks are addressed holistically. This is Hertfordshire's neighbourhood delivery model in action, bringing together previously separate functions through the aggregation and disaggregation of services to deliver joined-up, human-centred support. The team meets monthly to review progress and adapt the care plan, using shared data and professional insight to continually learn and improve.

4. Community hub engagement

Margaret and George begin attending their local community hub, which offers in-person support and peer groups, drop-in sessions for benefits advice, and digital access to health and wellbeing advisors.

The hub becomes a lifeline, reducing isolation and providing trusted, local support. As a flagship of the place-based delivery model, it brings together public, voluntary and digital services under one roof, turning service points into social spaces. Margaret joins a reminiscence group, while George participates in a falls prevention exercise class. Both feel more connected, supported, and part of their community again.

5. Voluntary sector as equal partner

Local charities and faith groups are embedded in the neighbourhood model, not just as providers but as co-designers. Margaret and George benefit from a dementia-friendly walking group run by a local charity, a volunteer driver service for hospital appointments, and a community-led "safe homes" initiative that checks on vulnerable residents during winter.

6. Ongoing prevention and evaluation

Margaret and George's outcomes are tracked not by service usage, but by avoided crises. Their admissions to hospital reduce, their wellbeing improves, and their independence is maintained.

Through the Place Board, representing health, housing, and community partners, anonymised data and resident feedback are used to shape future services. This closes the loop between insight, learning and action, demonstrating how Hertfordshire's new model is designed not only to deliver services but to evolve and lead.

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HOW THE MODEL WORKS: CONNECTED PLACES, STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Prevention at this scale requires structural configuration that operates with strategic sophistication whilst maintaining intimate community knowledge. Transformation only succeeds when staff know their communities deeply enough to see the person behind the data, the family behind the statistic and the opportunity behind the challenge.

The three-unitary model achieves this balance. Each authority is large enough to invest in AI-driven digital capability, employ specialist expertise and operate at sufficient scale to command credible partnerships, but is also small enough for staff to retain the local knowledge that makes those capabilities meaningful. Skills pathways can reflect local employment landscapes. Prevention strategies can be tailored to how specific communities experience need.

This is not a compromise between competing priorities. It is the optimal design: sophisticated enough to compete at scale, connected enough to understand lived experience and financially resilient enough to invest in prevention.

THE OPTIMAL CONFIGURATION

Each Unitary Authority coordinates 8 to 11 PCN neighbourhoods, benchmarked to similar comparable authorities in Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire.[16]

- **West Hertfordshire**: 463,000 population; 11 neighbourhoods.
- **Central Hertfordshire**: 414,000 population; 8 neighbourhoods.
- **Eastern Hertfordshire**: 603,000 population; 10 neighbourhoods.

  (2045 populations estimates)

At 8 to 11 neighbourhoods per authority, Hertfordshire achieves the critical balance and scale to work across and with the wider integrated care system.

This optimal range enables each authority to maintain direct relationships with strategic public sector partners, lead Health and Wellbeing Boards, coordinate multidisciplinary teams across a manageable footprint, operate population health management systems that stratify risk and target interventions, align community assets and voluntary sector infrastructure with neighbourhood geographies, command a credible voice within the new Central East ICB and Strategic Authority. Critically, Section 75 partnership agreements as created by the NHS Act 2006 will enable budgets to be pooled between local health and social care organisations and authorities to deliver greater impact.

PREVENTION IN PRACTICE: WHAT CHANGES

The three-unitary structure enables a fundamental shift to proactive prevention:

- **Shared data** integrates across health, social care, education, housing and policing to identify residents at risk 6 to 12 months before crisis occurs, enabling intervention when support costs less and works better.
- **Key workers** coordinate one plan across multiple services, eliminating fragmented referrals. One professional holds accountability for ensuring the right support wraps around the family.
- **Multidisciplinary neighbourhood teams** co-located across PCN footprints bring together health, social care, policing, housing, education and VCFSE, working collaboratively with shared accountability for community outcomes and maximising a family first approach. Services are co-designed at local level, shaped by the unique culture and specific needs of each neighbourhood, with team members possessing deep understanding of their communities to tailor support effectively.

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[16] North Northamptonshire (407,000 population; 9 neighbourhoods), West Northamptonshire (406,000; 8 neighbourhoods), and Buckinghamshire (553,000; 14 neighbourhoods)

- **Community hubs** provide physical and virtual spaces for accessible support, such as drop-in sessions and virtual peer support tailored to each community, overcoming geographical barriers to ensure everyone can access help.
- **VCFSE organisations** are embedded as equal partners, leading community-led solutions with community assets, befriending schemes, peer support networks, faith groups, sports clubs and residents' associations mobilised as the first line of support, with statutory services as enablers.
- **Needs-led, strengths-based support** replaces risk-based thresholds, building on community assets. Support continues for as long as needed, not just until immediate crisis is resolved.
- **Shared accountability** measures success by how many avoid needing services, not how many access them and a need to move from traditional hospital performance indicators.[17] Joint commissioning across health, social care, housing, education, VCFSE and policing creates accountability for population outcomes, with evaluation built into every programme and Place Boards connecting neighbourhood delivery to strategic governance.

By intervening earlier and providing coordinated support across a range of services e.g. via Healthy Hubs, demand for statutory services decreases because people receive the right help at the right moment. Communities experience greater resilience. Individuals and families are less likely to reach crisis point.

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[17] Making care closer to home a reality, The Kings Fund, Feb 2024

Future Resident Journey: Aisha

This journey demonstrates the system's commitment to co-design, empowerment and value through prevention, putting trust, voice and lived experience at the heart of transformation.

Aisha, who has cerebral palsy and learning disabilities, faced major challenges when she turned 18 and transitioned from children's to adult services. The loss of school support left her uncertain, and finding housing added further stress. These changes increased her anxiety, made her behaviour harder to manage, and led to feelings of isolation. The journey below reflects how this would be different in the future.

1. Early identification and transition planning

As Aisha approaches 18, her children's social worker flags her upcoming transition using Hertfordshire's integrated life-course pathway. This begins at age 14, ensuring no cliff edge. The Neighbourhood case worker proactively reviews her case through a multi-agency transition panel including adult social care, housing, health, and SEND services to map future care options. Her Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) automatically triggers an adult social care assessment using shared data, no duplication, no retelling her story. A personalised transition plan is initiated 12 months before her 18th birthday, ensuring continuity across services.

2. Neighbourhood-based support coordination

Aisha is assigned a lead professional from her local neighbourhood team, aligned to the Primary Care Network footprint, who becomes her single point of contact. This team, part of Hertfordshire's One Workforce model, brings together professionals across traditional boundaries to undertake legally required assessments and design support around the person, not the process. This team includes a social worker, housing officer, a learning disability nurse, a community occupational therapist, a benefits officer and a voluntary sector advocate. Together, they co-produce a support plan with Aisha and her family, ensuring her voice is central. The team works collaboratively across children's and adult services, health, housing, benefits and education to deliver seamless support.

3. Housing and independence pathway

Recognising Aisha's need for accessible housing, the team identifies and adapts a supported living placement one year in advance. The housing officer ensures the property meets her physical needs, while the voluntary sector advocate helps Aisha understand her tenancy rights and responsibilities. This anticipatory approach, using shared intelligence and pooled budgets, avoids crisis-driven placements and demonstrates how the three-unitary model enables scale for planning, but flexibility for personalisation. Aisha's independence is supported from day one, with wrap-around assistance designed to grow as her confidence does. This proactive approach avoids crisis-driven placements and ensures Aisha's independence is supported from day one.

4. Skills, employment and community connection

Aisha is enrolled in a local skills programme tailored for young adults with disabilities. Her day opportunities are co-funded through pooled budgets from education, social care, and health, a practical example of integrated commissioning and shared accountability. She attends sessions at the community hub, which offers peer mentoring, social activities and digital literacy support. She also begins working one day a week in a local café enabled by the VCS and attends a specialist college two days a week. The hub is inclusive and empowering, helping Aisha build confidence and friendships. After completing her college course, she goes on to get a permanent role working in the local café continuing to build community connections.

5. Seamless service continuity

Thanks to the Neighbourhood Team, Aisha's children's service records are seamlessly transferred to adult services. There is no duplication, no re-assessment, and no need to retell her story. Her health and care plan is digitally accessible to all relevant professionals, ensuring joined-up working and consistent support.

6. Empowerment and co-design

Aisha joins a youth advisory panel that helps shape services for young adults with disabilities. Her lived experience informs future service design, and she participates in participatory budgeting sessions to allocate funding for inclusive community projects. Her family describes the transition as "a smooth bridge, not a terrifying jump." The integrated approach reduces family stress, improves Aisha's outcomes, and costs 35% less than traditional, fragmented transitions.

BUILDING INTELLIGENCE, SHAPING FUTURES

These changes in practice, multidisciplinary teams, key worker coordination, VCFSE partnership, shared accountability, all depend on three critical enablers: effective, ethical and innovative use of data, people and infrastructure. The three-unitary model provides the scale to invest in shared expertise, interoperable systems, and a unified approach to analytics

that provides a bridge between prevention, growth and innovation, delivering change that is intelligent, trusted and human.

Shared integrated enterprise architecture and infrastructure, not isolated systems are critical. Each unitary will operate a local digital core, anchored in community needs. This model promotes innovation, ensures alignment with Government Digital Service standards, and allows scalable use of new technologies across the county.

Data-driven decisions will connect prevention, growth and inclusion. Through secure, open data platforms, residents can understand performance, participate in shaping services, and see the real impact of public investment. Predictive insights will link housing, health, employment, and education and will turn information into action. This will enable early intervention and resource optimisation, through identifying homelessness risk, matching residents with jobs, or optimising housing locations, transforming how decisions are made and how outcomes are delivered.

BUILDING THE DIGITAL CORE

The three-unitary model is designed to establish a robust enterprise-level infrastructure core that seamlessly connects people, systems and insights, but is sufficiently flexible for each authority to tailor its use to the needs of its communities and neighbourhoods. Hertfordshire's technology framework will follow the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) Technology Code of Practice, though it is anticipated that some initiatives will evolve over time. Certified public cloud environments would be adopted to provide the flexibility, resilience and cost efficiency required, in line with the G-Cloud framework. This cloud-first, hybrid-ready approach is intended to ensure that systems remain adaptable and robust.

Security measures are being aligned with the NCSC Zero Trust Architecture principles and the Government Cyber Security Strategy 2022-30. This means that, once implemented, every connection will be verified and monitored, ensuring a zero-trust security model is in place. There is also an ambition to interconnect shared services through Application Programming Interfaces, enabling reuse and collaboration between the different unitaries and promoting open standards and interoperability.

A strong commitment to data governance and ethics will ensure compliance with UK GDPR and the National Data Strategy, guaranteeing data reliability, privacy and trust. These foundational elements will support hybrid working, intelligent automation and real-time analytics across all service areas. Ultimately the success of this transformation will be measured by the outcomes it delivers in terms of improved decisions, faster delivery and a more empowered workforce, rather than by the technology itself.

This local intelligence makes prevention deliverable, identifying risk earlier, coordinating support seamlessly and targeting interventions where they have greatest impact. It also fuels inclusive growth, providing the insight to align housing, skills, transport and investment around the real needs of people and places. This is technology in service of people, enabling smarter services, thriving neighbourhoods and prosperous, connected communities across Hertfordshire. The three-unitary model creates the scale to build that foundation once and use it well: unified where it adds value, local where it makes the difference.

OUR PEOPLE

Technology and data build capability, people turn it into progress when they are empowered, skilled and supported by cultures that champion innovation. The three-unitary model creates the conditions for this, with councils large enough to invest in digital capability and professional development, but local enough for people to feel connected to their communities and see the difference they make. Public service reform re-engineers local government around three enablers: digital intelligence, human connection and shared purpose. The three-unitary model will be digital first but human always, using technology and real-time data to streamline processes and create seamless resident experiences, while maintaining empathy, inclusion and trust.

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Public service reform will challenge the status quo, replacing outdated practice with joined-up design that reflects how people live their lives. Staff will be trusted to identify what no longer works, co-design new solutions and innovate around shared outcomes. Structures will be agile by design, with flexible governance that adapts quickly to changing demand, demographics and technology. Decisions will be evidence-led, guided by data and resident feedback, with AI-powered analytics enhancing, not replacing, professional judgement.

Partnerships will empower multidisciplinary neighbourhood teams to make decisions where knowledge is deepest and relationships strongest. Equity in access will ensure every community benefits, supported by culturally competent practice and a workforce that reflects Hertfordshire's diversity.

Prosperity shared by all defines growth that benefits everyone. The three-unitary model enables this by aligning economic development, housing, skills and transport around the specific opportunities of each place, recognising that prevention and growth are two sides of the same coin. Economic development becomes a prevention strategy, linking affordable housing, skills pathways and regeneration to long-term wellbeing, ensuring prosperity uplifts both towns and rural areas.

Services will be designed around residents' lived experience, with frontline staff empowered to advocate for them. Financial sustainability will come through transparency, honest dialogue and investment in prevention and transformation rather than short-term efficiencies. Above all, the three-unitary model will build one workforce, a culture of collaboration, empowerment and pride, where staff experience change happening with them, not to them, supported by leadership that enables rather than controls. This is people-first transformation: councils large enough to create opportunity and progression, but which remain local enough for every colleague to see their impact and every community to feel it.

THE ENGINE OF DELIVERY – INTEGRATED BACK OFFICE

The back office is not a support function. It is the operational engine of local government. In the future, services such as finance, HR, ICT, procurement and governance must operate collaboratively. Transformation will be enabled by building integrated enterprise architecture that consolidates systems, streamlines and automates processes, and embeds analytics into everyday management.

This model replaces duplication with standardisation and data silos with intelligence. Platforms will integrate process automation, case management, and insight tools that provide transparent performance dashboards and operational forecasting.

A people-first culture, prevention-focused practice and intelligent use of technology all depend on one further foundation: a modern, integrated back office which turns ambition into action. Whilst frontline services shape outcomes for residents, it is the systems, processes and people behind them that determine how quickly, efficiently and effectively those outcomes are achieved.

The creation of three new authorities provides the opportunity to design this foundation coherently, aligning people, process and technology from the outset. The three-unitary model gives the critical mass to invest in shared digital architecture, common data standards and intelligent automation, while retaining the local flexibility to adapt systems to the needs of communities and neighbourhoods. Fragmentation gives way to connection, duplication to collaboration. This joined-up foundation releases capacity. accelerates decision-making and enables staff to focus where they add most value, on prevention, growth and human connection.

Evidence reinforces this direction. Over half of councils (58%) report a digital skills gap, showing that capability, not technology, remains the biggest barrier to transformation.[18] Effective use of data and AI enhances productivity, reduces duplication and improves outcomes for both staff and residents, particularly when digital literacy is shared across the

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[18] Local Government Workforce Survey: Research Report, Local Government Association, 2023

workforce rather than confined to technical teams. Investment in digital capability becomes a retention strategy, giving staff the confidence, autonomy and purpose to shape how services evolve.

In the three-unitary model, the back office becomes the adaptive core of the organisation. Services operate as one connected system, powered by automation, analytics and shared intelligence. Routine processes are streamlined and self-managed; predictive tools surface insights that guide investment, workforce planning and early intervention. Real-time data flows between back office and frontline, ensuring decisions at every level are informed, transparent and responsive.

THREE LEARNING, ADAPTIVE ORGANISATIONS

The three-unitary model will operate as a connected, learning organisation, one that captures insight, anticipates risk and reshapes processes dynamically. Shared intelligence across the system will create feedback loops that improve service quality, financial control, and community experience.

By aligning technology with purpose and embedding good governance, Hertfordshire's councils can become models of digital maturity in line with A Blueprint for Modern Digital Government,[19] organisations that are intelligent, trusted, and above all, person-centred.

Three unitaries make this possible at scale. It provides the resilience and shared investment to modernise systems once while keeping accountability and service insight close to place. Transforming the back office first creates the stability, scale and capability needed for every other part of the system to thrive. It is the invisible infrastructure that connects prevention with growth, links digital ambition to human insight and turns strategic intent into everyday practice across Hertfordshire.

WHAT IT DELIVERS FOR RESIDENTS

Prevention works when structure and its supporting infrastructure enable it. Safe landing through implementation of detailed transition plans on day one is non-negotiable and forms the essential foundation upon which we will build transformation. Critical services will transfer seamlessly, preserving all statutory functions and frontline relationships to ensure uninterrupted statutory compliance and continuity of casework. This stability creates the solid platform from which we can innovate and improve. Building on this secure base, we will embed an integrated front door within each unitary as a single point of access to safeguard our most vulnerable residents; transforming how we deliver services from the ground up. What matters most is what this delivers to our residents:

Adult social care will transform from a service of support into a system of independence and opportunity, where prevention is embedded at every level and through collaboration residents' rights protected. Residents will receive person-centred care and support rooted in their neighbourhood where prevention, independence and choice are at the core, aligned to the government's vision to put 'People at the Heart of Care'.[20] Every resident will receive the right support at the right time, in the right place, enabling individuals to live independently, safely and well within their communities. The robustness and focus on day one transition plans will be maintained to ensure ongoing support and care for our residents as services evolve. This preventative approach is not about avoiding or reducing care and support when it is needed, it is about delaying when provision is needed and by reducing those who need high levels of support the quality of service can be maintained.

Neighbourhood teams will provide single points of contact, coordination and connection. Community hubs will expand face-to-face support such as falls prevention and blood pressure checks, alongside cutting-edge technological advances providing digital platforms for medical information to be shared with NHS staff.

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[19] A Blueprint for Modern Digital Government, Cabinet Office, January 2025
[20] People at the Heart of Care: adult social care reform white paper, Department of Health and Social Care, December 2021

Proposal for three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Building on Hertfordshire's 'Good' Care Quality Commission rating, its 'Connected Lives' approach, and the pioneering 'Connect and Prevent' transformation programme, the use of predictive analytics and AI will mature into a unified data platform. This will enable seamless data integration to proactively identify risks, intervene earlier, and personalise support. As a result, hospital admissions will decline, integrated and co-produced services will become standard practice, and community-led models will be the norm. Maintaining the robustness and focus on day one transition plans is critical, and it is crucial to ensure quality ongoing support and care for our residents as our services evolve. The three-council model will position the new authorities for readiness to transform, a preventative approach that is not about avoiding or reducing care and support when it is needed. Instead, it aims to delay the provision of such care. By reducing the number of individuals who require high levels of support, we can ultimately enhance the quality of service provided for those most in need.

Children's social care builds on the strength of high-performing services with a future model of prevention and early intervention to advance the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. Completion of the current programme to develop new care homes and increase bed capacity will help to meet demand and manage costs. Future provision will be supported through integration with housing initiatives. Foster care services will be coordinated across Hertfordshire to promote fairness and consistency in both delivery and incentives.

Multidisciplinary neighbourhood teams will improve outcomes and experiences, providing a holistic care model for families. Children's voices will be louder and greater by embedding them at the heart of continuous improvement to co-design services.

The authorities will act as ambitious corporate parents, ensuring children and families receive coordinated, accessible support through a single agency and place-based care integrated by neighbourhood teams, making it easier to navigate support and benefit from the principles of Family Safeguarding.

This is not about doing the same at a different scale, it is about maintaining and retaining a skilled and settled workforce by giving them the opportunity to reshape how children's services are delivered.

Through digital transformation, predictive analytics and real-time insight, practitioners will have the autonomy and tools to work smarter and closer to families, using technology to strengthen, not replace, professional judgement. The model provides stability, consistency and a sense of place and belonging in the foundational years of a child's life, supporting every child to thrive.

Education and SEND faces significant pressure locally and nationally to build an inclusive education system. Within this context, the three-unitary model will deliver an inclusive and equitable system that places children and families at the heart of service design, with early intervention, prevention and neighbourhood provision at its core. This will build on the work of the SEND Local Area Partnership and SEND Academy, which are delivering a programme of improvements and skills development.

Informed by the voices of children, carers and families, health, education, housing and social care will come together as a single agency to co-design and produce SEND and education provision. SEND officers placed in neighbourhood teams will be visible and approachable, working in close collaboration with therapists, health visitors, neighbourhood teams and parent forums.

Early identification and multi-agency coordination will drive timely, effective support. The three-unitary model will deliver equitable and balanced school provision, with an appropriate number of schools, pupil referral units and special schools distributed across each authority area as the platform for wider improvement.

Families will spend less time navigating bureaucracy and more time benefiting from tangible support and positive outcomes where they live.

Hertfordshire's education system is one of its greatest strengths, with over 90% of schools rated good or outstanding and pupil attainment consistently above national averages from Key Stage 2 through to GCSE. This success is built on

strategic coordination, strong school improvement support through HFL Education (a school-owned company), and a collaborative 'family of schools' culture that spans maintained schools and academies across all phases.

Under a three-unitary model, each new authority would become the local education authority for schools within its boundaries. The challenge is maintaining the strategic coherence and collaborative culture that has driven Hertfordshire's success, whilst avoiding fragmentation that could undermine school standards or create inequity for children and families.

Maintaining strategic coherence Several education functions operate most effectively at scale and require coordination across the three authorities. School improvement services would continue through HFL Education, with all three authorities commissioning from this proven model to maintain consistency and quality. Place planning requires a county-wide view of demographic trends and capacity to avoid inefficient provision and ensure children can access good local schools. Admissions need coordinated fair access protocols, particularly for vulnerable children and those requiring specialist placements. The 'family of schools' culture depends on networks and partnerships that often span multiple authority boundaries.

Housing and homelessness services will consolidate into three Strategic Housing Authorities capable of acting on prevention. By aligning operational services in neighbourhood teams and embedding wider services within and informed by communities, early intervention and Family Safeguarding becomes achievable. Integration enables prevention that addresses root causes rather than managing consequences.

Demands on temporary accommodation will reduce and critically families will not experience further trauma, parents are supported to create safe environments for their children; to maximise income and seek employment, children remain in their family home without school disruption; at least one authority with retained housing stock and an active development programme, providing Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capacity and strong partnerships with registered providers. Merging assets and expertise removes fragmentation and creates the scale to deliver more affordable homes, accelerate supply and reduce homelessness. Additionally, community-led housing models will benefit from this scale to move from pilot to practice, enabling locally driven solutions that have the potential to strengthen place and prevent crisis.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Public health will be embedded within each Unitary Authority to ensure consistent leadership while maintaining local responsiveness. In addition to delivering statutory functions, it will provide strategic intelligence and leadership to embed a preventative model that improves population health, reduces inequalities, and proactively manages public health risks.

Working at both neighbourhood and system levels, Public Health will play a central role in neighbourhood teams and Place Boards, using evidence to identify local needs, shape targeted interventions, and inform commissioning across Hertfordshire. It will lead coordination with health partners, convene statutory partnerships, and collaborate closely with the VCFSE sector to co-design and deliver services that reflect community and cultural intelligence.

Crucially, Public Health will act as the link to the wider Integrated Care System (ICS) and MSA and population health management, ensuring that local insights inform strategic decisions and that outcomes are improved through joined-up, place-based approaches.

Transport and infrastructure will create a connected system that links people, places and opportunity: safe, sustainable, inclusive and resilient. The move to three unitaries will transform how services are delivered, replacing fragmented, duplicated arrangements with a cohesive model built around real travel patterns, growth corridors and community priorities.

Residents will engage with a single, accountable authority for repairs, maintenance and enforcement, supported by transparent, data-driven systems that improve responsiveness and trust. Empowered neighbourhood teams and Place

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Boards will shape local design, from safe routes to schools and community hubs to active travel, air quality, biodiversity and climate resilience, ensuring infrastructure reflects the way people live.

Innovation and technology will underpin every stage of delivery, driving smarter asset management, reducing waste and creating a transport system that enables prevention, supports growth and builds confidence across Hertfordshire's communities.

All other county, district, and borough functions will be unified around the principles of prevention, place and prosperity. Where scale offers improved outcomes, shared services will be explored; where local decision-making is essential, sovereign authority will be respected.

This flexible approach, balancing aggregation and disaggregation, creates opportunities to shape services in line with these principles. Libraries, museums, theatres, community centres and educational facilities will evolve into community hubs, providing access to learning, health services, and digital inclusion. These hubs will also act as gateways to skills development and employment pathways, tailored to each authority's unique economic strengths and ensure resident / user quality of life is maintained.

Parks, open spaces, and leisure services will become focal points for community cohesion, public health, and civic pride. Economic development functions will align with locally relevant growth strategies, working in partnership with a MSA. Planning services will be responsive to distinct market conditions. Existing partnerships, such as Better Business for All, will offer a unified platform for accessing regulatory services. The Hertfordshire Waste Partnership has the potential to serve as a strong foundation for integrated delivery, achieving efficiencies and resilience while maintaining local focus.

Harmonised service standards, developed with current and future partnerships, will ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability across all three authorities. At the same time, each authority will retain the flexibility to shape local services, economic development, skills programmes, and growth strategies around their specific sectors and opportunities.

Residents will have clarity about who delivers which services and confidence in a system that is consistent, efficient, and people-centred – connecting prevention with prosperity and ensuring that both social wellbeing and economic opportunity are rooted in the needs and potential of local communities.

FROM VISION TO DELIVERY

This is Hertfordshire's moment to move from managing systems to shaping futures. The creation of three confident, connected and capable authorities provides the platform to deliver services that are not only efficient but transformative; structures that are rooted in place, designed for prevention and built to deliver prosperity. Technology will empower people and cultures that turn ambition into action. It is where vision becomes delivery; where reorganisation translates into better lives, stronger communities and a more confident Hertfordshire, built by people who believe that public service can and should create lasting change.

To bring this vision to life, we are seeking government support and funding to enable us to maximise the collective impact of local government, health services and our voluntary and community sector. Our goal is to unlock prevention and prosperity, prepare for devolution and play a key role in improving population health and prosperity. We have identified two or three pilot neighbourhoods focused on highest-need cohorts, including frail elderly, those with complex conditions and families. By implementing an integrated neighbourhood prevention approach, we aim to build and pilot this model of working for a fuller roll out as set out in the programme below, with a full plan in Appendix 4.

Proposal for three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire
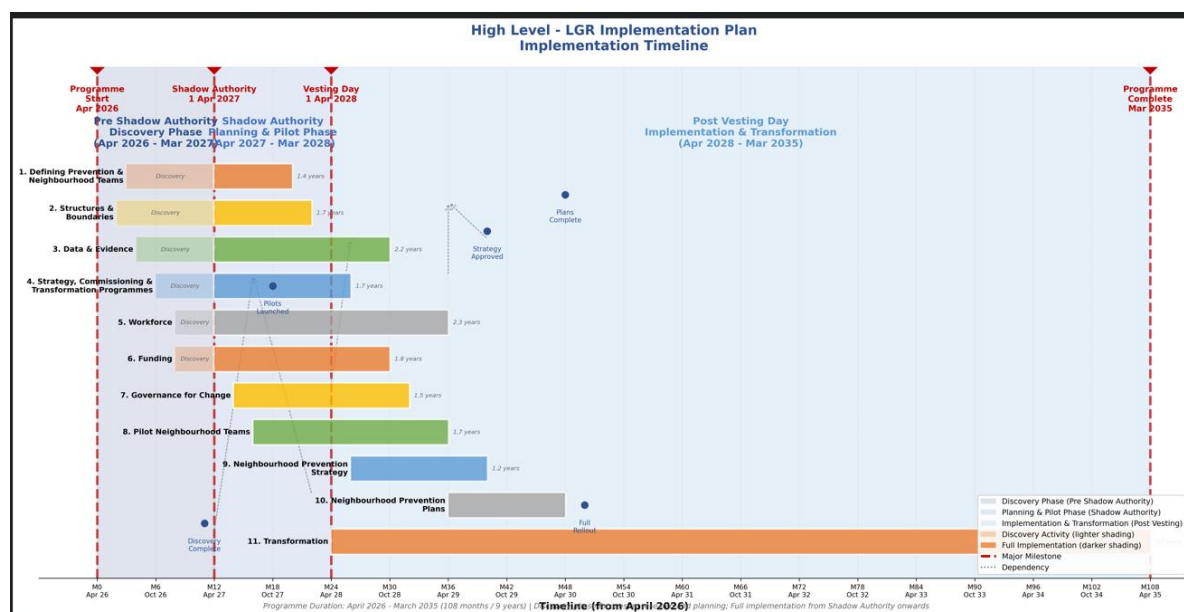
The delivery of this approach is dependent on securing appropriate funding, without this, the programme will require significant revision with implications for readiness and transformation capability particularly during the pre-shadow and shadow authority periods:

Pre-shadow and Shadow periods (April 2026 - March 2028): Programme is reliant on funding from either central government or LGR Joint Committee which will be established when the Structural Changes Order comes into effect. This funding is essential for discovery, planning, and pilot activities.

Post-vesting period (April 2028 onwards): Funding flows through the new unitary authority budgets, providing greater certainty for transformation activities.

CHAMPIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

The three-unitary model comprises 234 Councillors (three per division of the current Hertfordshire County Council, aligned with Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance) distributed across:

- **West Hertfordshire**: 72 Councillors (24 divisions x 3)
- **Central Hertfordshire**: 69 Councillors (23 divisions x 3)
- **Eastern Hertfordshire**: 93 Councillors (31 divisions x 3)

These numbers reflect careful consideration of LGBCE guidance on strategic leadership, accountability and community leadership, and are made more equitable by the Bushey boundary modification request (see also Appendix 1). The proposal balances executive scrutiny, electoral equality and Councillors' broader responsibilities to constituents and outside bodies.

EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION AND CIVIC IDENTITY

Three Councillors per division enables shared workload and improved constituent representation, whilst aligning with LGBCE guidance that councils exceeding 100 members risk becoming unwieldy, and with diluted accountability. This model avoids disruptive post-vesting-day boundary changes that would confuse residents navigating the reorganisation. Proposed numbers align with 90% of single-tier authorities that operate with 40-95 Councillors.

Three new authorities will strengthen democratic representation whilst amplifying resident and community voices. The average ratio of 3,800 residents per Councillor is comparable to recent Unitary Authorities (4,016) and substantially lower

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than the current County Council, creates stronger connections between residents and local government, enhancing community empowerment at every level.

Built predominantly on existing district boundaries, with the exception of the Bushey boundary change, the approach respects strong civic identities and reflects established community shapes, and the three unitaries create clear, recognisable electoral arrangements. This familiarity of approach optimises potential turnout for the 2027 Shadow Authority elections and brings clarity and more confidence to voters, to help retain and build sustained engagement and enfranchisement.

Balanced population representation ensures fairness and equity for everyone. By using not just administrative boundaries but place-based boundaries residents already know, the proposal delivers democratic institutions that are familiar, responsive and designed to safeguard local identity whilst enabling a smooth transition. This approach directly supports the government's commitment and the three-unitary authority commitment to neighbourhood empowerment, ensuring communities have genuine influence over decisions that affect them.

The reduction of 283 Councillors across Hertfordshire delivers efficiency and savings aligned with government priorities, without compromising democratic engagement or local representation. With approximately 167 committee seats, each Councillor will hold two to three committee roles (ratio of 1.8 – 2.4), allowing them to discharge their duties, including committee attendance, constituent casework and local representation, without the role becoming the preserve of full-time politicians. The smaller geographic coverage eliminates the need for multiple committees (such as Development Management) in each authority.

REPRESENTATIVE OF OUR COMMUNITY

Investment in Councillor training, technology and data access will equip elected members to lead effectively. A highly skilled, visible team of representatives will amplify resident voices on the issues that matter most to them, whilst strengthening community empowerment through better-informed decision making.

Better support and accessibility will encourage wider participation, including younger people and those who might not otherwise consider public office as an option available to them. This will attract diverse candidates who truly reflect Hertfordshire's communities, ensuring representation remains inclusive and rooted in lived experience.

ASSURANCE

The tiered operating model of the three-unitary authority proposal establishes sophisticated risk management, balancing distributed decision making with transparent oversight, fully embedded within governance arrangements. Each level takes responsibility for appropriate risks:

- **Neighbourhood teams:** operational and service delivery risks.
- **Unitary Authorities:** strategic risks across services and geographies.
- **Hertfordshire-wide structures:** shared risks spanning local boundaries, where necessary.
- **MSA**: enterprise-level risks from devolved powers, major investments and county-wide priorities.

This framework ensures no authority is overburdened, whilst creating coherent risk ownership across tiers. Multiple reinforcing accountability streams, designed to avoid duplication whilst strengthening oversight, will deliver resilience and agility for prevention-first, community-connected services that build long-term public confidence.

Assurance operates through three complementary channels:

- **Democratic assurance,** via Place Boards, and neighbourhood working linked with transparent performance dashboards, keeps communities at the heart of oversight and enables genuine community empowerment in service design and delivery.

- **Professional assurance** through peer review, shared learning networks, open risk conversations and joint quality frameworks that safeguard standards whilst encouraging innovation.
- **Regulatory assurance** by adapting statutory frameworks to collaborative delivery, ensuring coordinated inspection, proportionate regulation and independent external audit, overseen by a designated Governance and Audit Committee.

These interlocking safeguards form a tested and credible model that will secure high-quality services for Hertfordshire's residents and provide the stability, discipline and confidence necessary to manage complex transition successfully. The new authorities will start on a strong footing, capable of sustaining excellence whilst genuinely empowering communities to shape their own futures.

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5. MEETS LOCAL NEEDS AND INFORMED BY LOCAL VIEWS (MHCLG CRITERION 4)

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT: LISTENING, LEARNING AND SHAPING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

Residents, partners and businesses want simpler, more accountable local government that stays connected to communities whilst having the scale to lead on prevention, prosperity for all and innovation.

The proposed three-unitary model provides the platform for smarter, earlier intervention, stronger local leadership and long-term sustainability, a system built not just to manage today, but to shape Hertfordshire's future. Stakeholder and resident feedback on the modified proposals were clear:

KEEP SERVICES LOCAL, RESPONSIVE AND JOINED-UP

Residents and partners were united in valuing local knowledge and relationships. Health, care and voluntary sector representatives expressed the view that strong neighbourhood intelligence is essential to prevention and early intervention, with one partner emphasising that "strong place-based partnerships with good engagement from district and borough councils are essential to delivering integrated health and care outcomes." As another partner said, "It only works when the people designing services understand the people who use them."

Community groups also pointed to duplication and confusion created by the current system, "buck-passing between tiers," as one resident described it. Voluntary sector representatives stressed that "any reorganisation must protect and build upon these relationships." Across all voices, the message was the same: reorganisation must make life simpler for residents, not more distant.

PROTECT COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND LOCAL VOICE

Hertfordshire's diversity is one of its key assets. Residents want reorganisation that reflects the way people live, work and identify with their local areas – that is why the Bushey boundary modification is proposed. Cultural organisations argued that "civic identity and local pride are vital to public trust, people need to see themselves in their council." Similarly, voluntary sector representatives spoke of the need to retain "distinct community voices that reflect local heritage, diversity and networks."

Residents strongly agreed, with typical comments including: "It's important that every town keeps its sense of identity – people are proud of where they live." Many recognised the three-unitary approach as a natural fit with these daily patterns, with West, Central and Eastern Hertfordshire each reflecting functional geographies, transport links and shared communities. As residents put it: "Three unitaries recognise Hertfordshire's three natural regions and keep local decisions local," and "We need something resilient but still local – three councils feels about right."

Focus group participants reinforced this view, agreeing that: "Three unitaries are preferred for balancing accessibility and relational services e.g., social care, maintaining community identity." This perspective was reinforced by the feedback from one Youth Panel, which brought together young people aged 14 to 18 to discuss how future local services could better reflect their needs and aspirations. Nearly 40 students participated in an active and thoughtful dialogue, emphasising that while they recognise the importance of financial resilience in local government, it is equally vital for them to have a meaningful voice in shaping how their communities are run. When asked to vote on the preferred model for future governance, an overwhelming majority of students expressed clear support for the three-unitary authority approach.

Proposal for three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Stakeholders also supported this rationale, noting that boundaries should align with how people live their daily lives. As one explained, "The 3UA option most closely matches how people live their lives day to day." Another described the approach as "reflecting community reality rather than administrative convenience."

Respondents also highlighted the regional significance of getting this structure right. Stakeholders pointed out that a unified approach across three strong authorities will help Hertfordshire remain competitive within the London-Cambridge-Oxford corridor and wider southeast economy. A coordinated structure supports consistent planning for infrastructure, skills and growth, strengthening the county's ability to attract investment and deliver sustainable development.

DELIVER VALUE FOR MONEY AND LONG-TERM RESILIENCE

Businesses and partners emphasised that overlapping roles between tiers waste resources, particularly in planning, licensing, estates and back-office functions. They called for streamlined, accountable structures that free investment for frontline delivery. As one stakeholder noted: "Three unitaries offer the scale to achieve efficiencies through shared procurement, aligned strategies and better technology."

Residents linked reorganisation to fairness and efficiency: "We want our money spent on services," with another adding that, "three unitaries would make it clearer who is responsible for what."

Stakeholders also connected efficiency with environmental sustainability, arguing that larger, coordinated councils could deliver countywide climate strategies, unified waste management and integrated sustainable transport planning. They viewed reorganisation as an opportunity to make every pound and every decision work harder for local outcomes, whilst accelerating progress toward shared environmental goals.

The three-unitary model responds by combining sufficient scale for efficiency with mechanisms to reinvest savings into frontline services and strategic priorities like climate action. It delivers resilience through shared functions whilst ensuring accountability remains local and transparent.

MODERNISE, INNOVATE AND GROW

Reorganisation was widely seen as a chance to reset local government for the future. Respondents wanted digital access that is consistent across services, faster decision-making and councils that use data intelligently to anticipate need.

Young residents in particular called for visible results from reorganisation: "Larger authorities could deliver coordinated growth, such as new towns," and "Cleaner streets, better parks, and stronger youth provision." Focus groups added that reorganisation could lead to "simplified access via a one-stop shop model, reducing resident confusion (valued by young people especially)."

Business and community partners saw the same potential: joined-up governance that makes Hertfordshire easier to invest in and better positioned for sustainable growth. As one business representative stated, "Three unitaries will create consistency and clarity for investors and developers, helping Hertfordshire remain competitive."

Stakeholders agreed that the new authorities could unlock innovation through shared systems, digital transformation and integrated planning. The three-unitary framework enables this by aligning strategic policy across wider areas whilst maintaining flexibility for local adaptation.

BUSHEY WITHIN WEST HERTFORDSHIRE

Engagement also addressed specific boundary questions, notably the inclusion of Bushey within West Hertfordshire authority. Responses clearly demonstrated support for this alignment, with residents citing shared identity and practical connections with neighbouring communities.

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One said, *"I support three Unitary Authorities, it correctly recognises that Bushey belongs within the west authority alongside Watford, Three Rivers and Dacorum. Bushey's identity and daily life links are with Watford and the A41 provides a clear natural boundary from Borehamwood/Elstree."*

Another resident observed, *"From my postcode, it is only around 2.1 miles to Watford town centre compared to almost 3.8 miles to Borehamwood town centre. This reflects everyday reality: Bushey is physically and socially closer to Watford, with stronger daily links in shopping, transport, and community life."*

This evidence reflects the value residents place on boundaries that match lived experience and functional geography. The three-unitary authority proposal provides flexibility for such refinements, ensuring new authorities align with how people identify their communities.

HOW THE PROPOSAL RESPONDS

The feedback from residents and stakeholders shaped every part of the proposal. It confirmed that reorganisation must not only simplify structures, but also change the way services are delivered, making prevention, growth and innovation the foundations of how Hertfordshire works.

Place and prevention mean keeping the local relationships and intelligence that partners value most. The three new authorities will embed neighbourhood-based working through Place Boards and community partnerships, ensuring that services are designed and owned locally. This approach turns prevention into a shared mission, identifying needs early, tackling root causes and connecting people to support before crisis hits. Cross-agency collaboration with education, policing and health will be strengthened by operating across coherent local footprints, enabling partners to 'join up prevention and early intervention across systems.'

Prosperity answers the call for resilience and long-term value for money. By consolidating where scale matters, in planning, housing, transport and the economy, the three authorities will unlock investment, strengthen local economies and reinvest efficiencies back into communities. A unified strategic approach ensures that growth benefits every area, not just the fastest growing ones.

Innovation delivers on residents' demand for modern, accessible and transparent services. Reorganisation provides the opportunity to build shared digital infrastructure, data platforms and customer access systems that make it easier for residents and businesses to engage with their council. Innovation also extends to new ways of partnering, across health, education, policing and the voluntary sector, creating smarter collaboration around people and places.

MAINTAINING TRUST, ACCESS AND CONNECTION

Stakeholders were clear that reorganisation must strengthen, not weaken, existing partnerships. Hertfordshire's collaborative culture, across councils, the NHS, police, education and the voluntary sector, is a great strength. Health sector representatives emphasised: "Local relationships are going to become even more pertinent as neighbourhoods become more prominent within the health and care system." Cultural partners stated, "Watford Cultural Leaders Group has made a big difference, this needs to be preserved and enhanced to ensure valuable momentum is not lost."

The proposal safeguards these strengths by anchoring neighbourhood-level engagement into the new structures, ensuring partners remain visible and trusted in every community. Each authority will maintain community hubs, place boards, community engagement channels to preserve direct access and democratic accountability. As residents emphasised, "If councils listen locally and involve communities, people will support change." Councillors will remain rooted in their areas, empowered with the tools and data to represent residents effectively.

Stakeholders also raised valid concerns about potential remoteness and service continuity. Residents emphasised: "We need clear local contacts and visible Councillors," and "People need reassurance that bins will still be collected and care visits won't be disrupted." The three-unitary authority model addresses these concerns directly. Each authority will

ensure every community retains strong representation and accessible points of contact, avoiding the remoteness of larger unitaries whilst achieving better coordination than the current two-tier system. As one respondent summarised, "Three is a practical and deliverable solution, less disruptive than four or more and more responsive than one."

A SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The message from engagement is unequivocal: Hertfordshire is ready for change but not change that loses sight of people and place. Residents want local government that works smarter, acts earlier and plans ahead. Partners want coherence and shared purpose. Businesses want clarity and speed.

The three-unitary authority model meets all these expectations. It creates authorities that can lead and innovate, whilst also remaining close enough to people and places to listen and respond. It replaces duplication with collaboration, silos with shared intelligence and short-term fixes with prevention and growth. As participants summed it up: "Three unitaries strike the right balance, big enough to be efficient, but not so big that they lose local accountability," and "Three is the best compromise – it recognises Hertfordshire's natural regions and keeps local decisions local."

Through place, prevention and prosperity for all of Hertfordshire, this proposal delivers exactly what residents and stakeholders have asked for: a simpler, stronger, more locally connected Hertfordshire that is ready to shape the future together.

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6. COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (MHCLG CRITERION 6)

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT: A TRANSFORMATIVE VISION FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Community empowerment drives Hertfordshire's future. The three-unitary authority model embeds empowerment in democratic structures that share real power, build community capacity, and elevate resident leadership. Hertfordshire will create a radically different governance model. Communities won't just influence decisions, they'll make them. Resources will flow to their priorities.

The three-unitary approach builds community capacity and sparks democratic innovation at every level. Reorganisation becomes democratic renewal through genuine partnership with residents, delivering tangible outcomes. The evidence is clear: communities with strong social connections, active voluntary sectors, and genuine decision-making power achieve better wellbeing, stronger economies, lower crime, better health, and greater resilience.[21]

The three-unitary authority approach creates the conditions for transformative community empowerment. It works through democratic principle and practical outcomes, rebuilding trust while harnessing community knowledge, capacity, and leadership. This transformation delivers efficiencies: research shows a £3.50 return per £1 invested in community capacity.[22]

A MULTI-TIERED ARCHITECTURE FOR COMMUNITY POWER

The Hertfordshire Five-point Strategic Plan gives communities greater influence and control over local decisions. The three-unitary authority model delivers this strategy through design principles that shift power to communities, not just consult them. These principles guide every decision.

Four interconnected pillars deliver this vision: Local Democratic Forums, town and parish councils, the VCFSE, and Councillors. The three-unitary model design principles underpin these pillars, turning strategy into action and making community empowerment real across Hertfordshire.

HERTFORDSHIRE'S FIVE-POINT STRATEGIC PLAN

As set out in the core document, the strategic plan builds on existing networks, leveraging current successes to achieve greater impact. It encourages inclusive democratic participation, integrates prevention-focused services and promotes asset-based community development. By addressing the social determinants of health, it enhances equality and wellbeing, while driving local prosperity through economic empowerment.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Community empowerment will evolve in the three new Unitaries by creating ways of working that embed genuine power sharing and local decision making. Design principles will guide every decision about structures, processes and resource allocation to test commitment and avoid tokenism:

- **Subsidiarity –** Taking decisions as locally as possible, with communities controlling issues directly affecting them. Strategic frameworks at unitary level, with power over local priorities flowing downwards.
- **Genuine power-sharing** – Communities decide, rather than advise. Forums control meaningful resources through participatory processes with decision-making power over service design and delivery.
- **Multiple entry points** – Value all participation, formal structures, community organisations, informal neighbourhood activities, creating multiple pathways for voice and leadership.

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21 Rapid evidence review of community initiatives, DCMS, updated June 2022
22 The Impacts of Scaling Social Infrastructure Investment, Frontier Economics, May 2025

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- **Progressive community leadership** – Move from council-led to community-led approaches, so communities increasingly drive agendas and shape futures.

THE FOUR PILLARS

PILLAR ONE: LOCAL DEMOCRATIC FORUMS – PLACE BOARDS

Approximately 15 Place Boards will operate as Local Democratic Forums across the three Unitary Authorities, providing place leadership aligned with community identities. These Boards operate at the scale where people experience their daily lives – where they shop, where their children attend school, where they use services and know their neighbours.

Under the three-unitary model, this number and scale strikes the right balance: large enough to retain strategic oversight of the neighbourhoods they serve, yet maintaining the place identity and community connection essential for genuine empowerment. They are explicitly designed for place and people, not artificial boundaries, adapting flexibly to reflect what residents identify with as their neighbourhood.

Place Boards are designed to work in partnership with, not replace or duplicate, existing town and parish councils. In rural areas where parish councils already provide effective hyper-local governance, Place Boards will operate at a neighbourhood cluster level, providing strategic coordination and access to resources that complement parish-level activity. In urban areas with no parish structure, Place Boards fill convene and connect community anchor organisations and partners operating in those areas, building on the success of the One Watford Place Board (included as a case study elsewhere in this document) and the Stevenage Development Board.

Place Boards align with the government's English Devolution & Community Empowerment Bill, positioning Hertfordshire at the forefront of democratic innovation. They will build genuine connections and facilitate community confidence in the new Unitary Authorities from day one.

A FUNDAMENTAL EVOLUTION IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Place Boards represent a fundamental evolution from traditional area committees, embedding genuine power-sharing:

Dimension	Traditional Area Committee	Place Board
Decision-making	Advisory or limited delegation	Real delegated powers over budgets and services
Membership	Councillors with some co-optees	Multi-agency partnership with equal standing
Community engagement	Consultation-focused	Co-design, co-creation, ongoing participation
Empowerment	Variable, often limited	Opportunities in relation to community ownership of assets and commissioning
Agility	Moderate, fixed processes	Adaptive to the local area
Integration	Limited cross-agency work	Full integration with health, police, housing partners
Accountability	To parent council	To community and council, with direct representation
Scope	Defined area, fixed themes	Flexible, responsive to local context, prevention focus
Innovation	Traditional, sometimes slow to change	Designed for innovation and continuous improvement

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This structural shift demonstrates the three-unitary model's commitment to transforming not just structures, but the fundamental relationship between councils and communities.

GOVERNANCE AND MEMBERSHIP

Place Boards will operate with a strong link to the Cabinet of each authority, ensuring democratic accountability at leadership level. Membership includes Councillors alongside representatives from the NHS, police, housing associations, the VCFSE sector, town and parish councils, and anchor institutions. This will create multi-agency forums where diverse voices hold equal weight in decision-making.

Representation from key public sector organisations also presents opportunities for efficiency and alignment, with Place Boards potentially serving multiple functions such as the Community Safety Partnership Responsible Authority Group or the Local Health Partnership Board, reducing duplication whilst strengthening coordination.

Place Boards will be delegated real power, moving beyond traditional advisory functions to genuine decision-making authority. They will:

- Commission local services within agreed frameworks and thresholds, determining which services operate in their area and how they are delivered
- Determine community asset transfers below defined thresholds, giving direct control over which community organisations receive support and access to community facilities
- Allocate revenue and capital budgets to reflect local priorities, setting local standards within strategic frameworks established at unitary level
- Co-design service delivery working with council teams, partners and communities to shape how local services operate most effectively, rather than accepting one-size-fits-all approaches imposed centrally

This shift of power increases responsiveness, improves coordination between health, policing, housing and voluntary sectors, and makes accountability clearer for residents. Participatory budgeting will be a central but not exclusive focus. Each Place Board will provide capacity for local problem-solving, bringing together residents, Councillors, service providers and community organisations to collaborate on neighbourhood issues.

Place Boards will utilise shared data from health, housing, education, policing and social care partners to identify emerging needs and support early intervention. This prevention-focused approach targets support before issues escalate, reducing demand on acute services whilst improving outcomes for residents.

Underpinning each Place Board will be existing and evolving engagement arrangements – neighbourhood forums, resident networks, sector partnerships and community panels. Each area will select and adapt the most effective tools for their unique community contexts, ensuring engagement is both inclusive and responsive to local voices. This approach allows each Place Board to draw upon proven methods best suited to their communities whilst remaining open to innovation.

Community co-design has been central to developing the Place Board model. VCFSE partners have emphasised that "the LDF must be adaptable so structures can operate in ways that best suit local communities and needs", a principle embedded in the design approach. Rather than imposing a rigid template, each Place Board will have flexibility to customise governance arrangements, meeting frequencies, engagement methods, and priority-setting processes to match local context.

GEOGRAPHIC EQUITY AND TAILORED APPROACHES

The three-unitary geography enables Place Boards to be configured with geographic coherence, clustering areas with similar settlement patterns and needs. This allows powers and resources devolved to Boards to be tailored appropriately,

recognising that urban Place Boards will face different challenges and opportunities to more rural boards where town and parish councils already provide strong hyperlocal governance.

This differentiation ensures equity of impact rather than uniformity of approach, with each Place Board empowered to operate in ways that complement existing local democratic structures rather than competing with or duplicating them.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Local governance will enable neighbourhoods to manage services within agreed standards, influence strategic decisions through consultation and co-design, and operate transparently through:

- Clear financial frameworks and delegation thresholds
- Robust oversight mechanisms connecting to unitary governance
- Regular community review and feedback loops
- Public reporting on decisions, spending, and outcomes
- Accountability both upward to the unitary council and outward to the communities they serve.

IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH PILOTS

The model will be tested and refined through an initial pilot phase in three areas representing diverse community contexts. These pilots will:

- Test the delegation frameworks and decision-making processes in real-world conditions
- Identify and resolve operational challenges before wider rollout
- Generate evidence of what works in different community contexts
- Build confidence and demonstrate impact to support expansion across all three unitary authorities.

Pilot Place Boards will co-design critical elements of their operation:

- Local priorities linked to council corporate policies but grounded in hyperlocal data and community voice
- Governance footprint with opportunity to simplify local structures by bringing existing forums, networks and working groups under the Place Board umbrella to enhance rather than duplicate local voice
- Engagement mechanisms exploring deliberative sessions, community assemblies, targeted outreach to under-represented groups, and youth participation
- Modular functions tailored to local needs within the overall framework.

This co-design approach ensures Place Boards are shaped by communities, not imposed upon them.

A second phase during the shadow authority period will test Place Board models in different contexts, ensuring the approach works effectively across Hertfordshire's diverse geography. This phased approach enables comparison, ensures equity, and drives transformation across all communities – urban and rural – before full rollout at Vesting Day.

Learning from these pilots will inform the bespoke framework for full implementation, ensuring Place Boards are resilient, responsive, and genuinely transformative from Vesting Day.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Place Boards will be evaluated against clear outcomes that demonstrate genuine community empowerment:

- Neighbourhood decision-making: Number of residents engaged in priority-setting; percentage of local budget co-designed with communities; community satisfaction with influence over local decisions

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- Trust and legitimacy: Trust in local governance; attendance at Place Board meetings and engagement activities; geographic spread of participation
- Prevention and early intervention: Increase in preventative activity; reduction in demand on acute services; multi-agency collaboration on early-help approaches; time-to-resolution on local issues.

This evidence-based approach ensures accountability whilst supporting continuous improvement across all Place Boards.

PILLAR TWO: TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS AND COMMUNITY ANCHORS

Existing town and parish councils, alongside recognised community anchor organisations, such as community centres, family hubs and sports clubs, form the foundation of hyperlocal governance and service delivery. These organisations often command strong trust and local knowledge and can be highly responsive to changing circumstances.

Building capacity within councils and community anchors empowers localities to take on greater responsibility. Focusing on governance, financial management, and effective service delivery enhances both asset and service management. Strong governance ensures transparency and accountability, while robust financial management underpins long-term sustainability. Improved service delivery makes communities more agile and resilient. Under the three-unitary authority model, there is a clear commitment to supporting these community organisations to broaden their roles and contribute more effectively.

PILLAR THREE: VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY, FAITH AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

The VCFSE sector represents community empowerment's lifeblood. These organisations sit closest to needs, command the highest trust and deliver impressive impact per pound. The government recognises this contribution, seeking to reset the relationships through the Civil Society Covenant to harness the sector's "dynamism, innovation and trusted reach" for growth and better community outcomes.

Success requires reimagining the relationship between the VCFSE and the three authorities. To optimise these relationships, we will develop VCFSE Accords in recognition of their vital role as partners in leadership, delivery design and community-facing activity.

DRAFT THREE-UNITARY AUTHORITY HERTFORDSHIRE VCFSE ACCORD

Commitment	From UAs	From VCFSE sector	Timeline
Funding security	3-year agreements (not annual) - Annual grants - Payment advance / monthly not arrears 12-month notice if changes	- Collaborate, avoid duplication - Shared learning - Transparent impact reporting - Sustainability planning - Quality self-regulation	Post Vesting Day
Strategic voice	- VCFSE on all Place Boards (full members) - Representatives on strategic partnerships 12-week consultation minimum - Coproduction policies / services - Voice in budget priorities	- Report to wider sector - Constructive challenge - Frontline evidence shared - Active participation - Honest feedback	Vesting Day representation Quarterly forums Annual assembly

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Commitment	From UAs	From VCFSE sector	Timeline
Infrastructure	• Funding / Unitary for infrastructure orgs • Building access nil / nominal cost • Shared back-office systems • Professional development • Digital support	• Support small groups • Peer mentoring • Knowledge exchange • Volunteer support • Evaluation capacity	Funding post Vesting Day. Systems April 2029 Ongoing development
Commissioning	• Pipeline 18 months ahead • Lots tailored to value. • 20% social value weighting • Light processes under £100k • Payment 30 days (target 14)	• Proportionate responses • Honest capacity assessment • Collaboration not competition • Quality standards • Innovation willingness	Pipeline post Vesting Day Reforms 2028–29 Quarterly updates
Place-based	• Neighbourhood Officer partnership • Asset transfers with revenue support • Co-location opportunities • Joint external funding bids	• Support underserved areas • Anchor institutions • Community settings delivery • Reach excluded groups • Support resident leadership	Asset framework Oct 2028 Co-location ongoing

PILLAR FOUR: COUNCILLORS AS COMMUNITY LEADERS

With the three-unitary authority model, the scale of operations allows for a deeper understanding of local areas. This enables Councillors to embrace their roles as community leaders (in partnership with executive), championing the voices and actions of their communities, and strengthening relationships.

Through active participation in Place Boards and unitary decision-making processes, Councillors ensure that residents' voices and community priorities are incorporated into strategic decisions, connecting communities with resources and assisting grassroots organisations in navigating complex systems. To underpin this approach, it is essential to upskill both the workforce and Councillors so they can effectively function as enablers rather than directors.

IMPLEMENTATION

We recognise that transforming community empowerment from an aspiration into a tangible reality requires concrete structures, clear expectations and dedicated resources. During the transition period from 2026-28, we are committed to developing the operational frameworks that will enable our four pillars to deliver meaningful change from Vesting Day. Our approach is built on codesign with communities, learning from pilot initiatives, and ensuring operational readiness before launch.

Our transition programme focuses on five interconnected critical work areas that will lay the foundations for effective community empowerment:

Work Area	Activities	Deliverables	Timeline
Structures & boundaries	Collaborate with communities and VCSFE to map boundaries respecting identity; explore	• Community-informed boundary maps	Pre Vesting Day: Pilot approaches

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Work Area	Activities	Deliverables	Timeline
	constitutional models granting decision-making power; pilot approaches with volunteer communities; finalise transparent, inclusive, scalable framework	- Constitutional models with genuine powers - Pilot evaluations - Final governance framework	Pre Vesting Day: Mapping / models Post Vesting Day: Finalisation
Service portfolios	Service mapping councils / communities; create tiered framework (manage directly / scrutiny-influence / set priorities); pilot frameworks selected areas; refine for county-wide rollout	- Comprehensive service mapping - Tiered framework document - Pilot area evaluations - Refined rollout plan	- Pre Vesting Day: Mapping / framework - Pre Vesting day: Pilots - Post Vesting Day: Refinement
Funding mechanisms	Develop Community Investment Fund business cases; explore external vehicles (investment trusts); design participatory budgeting processes; create delegation frameworks balancing autonomy / accountability	- Investment Fund business cases - External funding options analysis - Participatory budgeting design - Delegation frameworks	- Pre Vesting Day: Business cases/design - Post Vesting day: Mechanisms established
Capacity & support	Councillor training / Officer support / dashboards / tools / communities of practice; VCFSE Accord / protocols / funding mechanisms; Neighbourhood Officer training / protocols / frameworks community development / codesign	- Comprehensive training programmes - VCFSE Accord signed - Officer development resources - Support infrastructure operational	- Pre Vesting day: Development - Vesting day: Delivery begins - Post Vesting Day: Full operation
Data & accountability	Develop integrated intelligence systems multi-agency data; establish privacy / ethics frameworks; build community data literacy; define success metrics / baseline; design accessible reporting formats	- Integrated data systems - Privacy / ethics frameworks - Data literacy programmes - Metrics / baseline established - Reporting templates	- Pre Vesting Day: Systems / frameworks - Post Vesting Day: Implementation / training

The approach incorporates codesign with communities, draws on lessons from pilot projects, and focuses on ensuring operational readiness prior to April 2028.

SEIZING THE MOMENT

Hertfordshire has a rare opportunity to place real community power at the heart of local government. The challenges are clear: public trust is low, and traditional structures no longer meet resident expectations for genuine influence and responsive partnership. Bold action is essential.

A multi-layered approach; Place Boards, town and parish councils, and the voluntary sector, gives communities real decision-making power, not just voice. From day one, investing in community capacity and embedding empowerment into council culture will unlock local leadership, innovation, and shared ownership of outcomes.

This vision requires letting go of outdated models, trusting communities to lead, and supporting participation when resources are stretched. The rewards are substantial: stronger relationships, more resilient communities, better outcomes, and renewed democratic purpose.

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7. TRANSITION AND IMPLEMENTATION, DESIGNING VISIONARY SERVICES FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

TRANSITION AND IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

At the heart of the government's ambition for Local Government Reorganisation is the need to deliver high quality and sustainable services and community empowerment, all underpinned by meaningful public service reform. The three-unitary model for Hertfordshire responds directly to this ambition, and the approach to transition is purposefully designed to ensure that the imperative to achieve "safe and legal" outcomes does not crowd out transformational thinking.

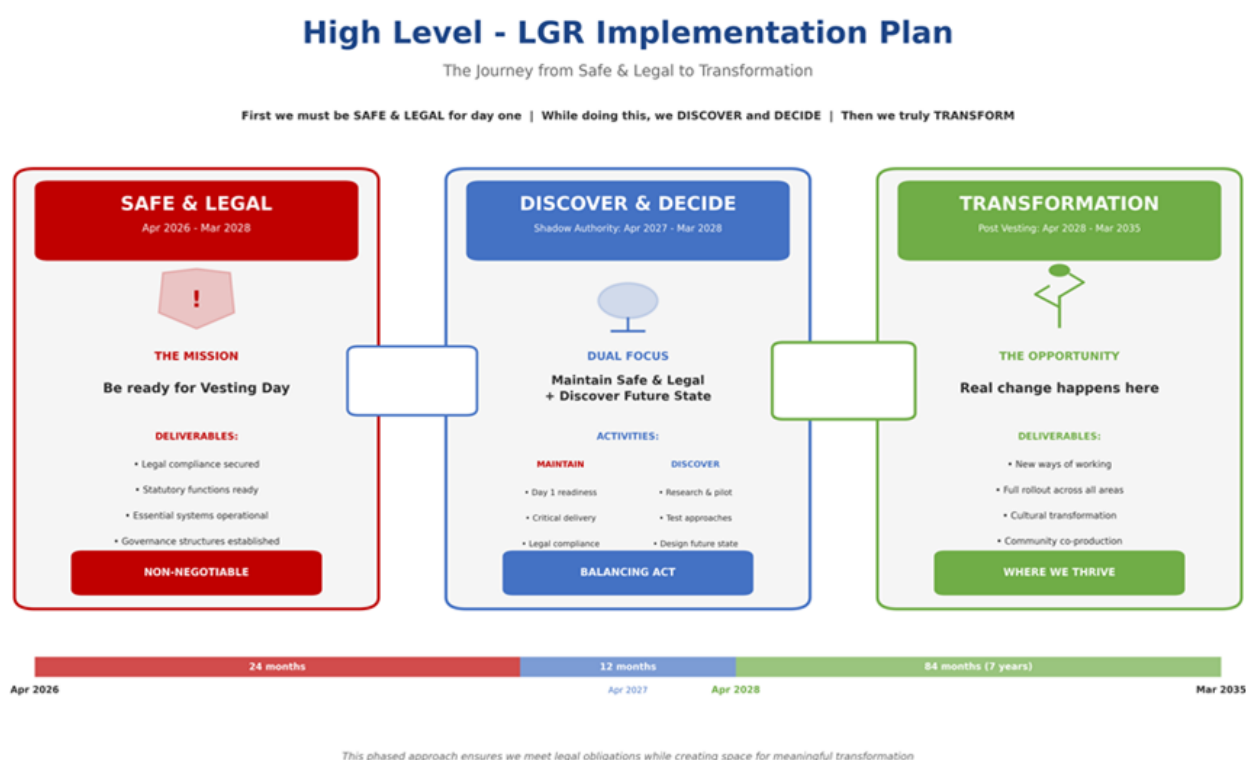### THE CHALLENGE: BALANCING COMPLIANCE AND TRANSFORMATION

Experience from previous reorganisations demonstrates a consistent pattern; without deliberate protective measures, operational pressures inevitably consume all available capacity, reducing ambition to mere structural consolidation. The urgent demands of legal compliance, system migration, and operational continuity create a gravitational pull that draws resources, attention, and leadership focus away from transformational work. The result is reorganisation that changes structures but not outcomes; a missed opportunity that communities experience as disruption without improvement.

OUR APPROACH: DESIGNED FOR TRANSFORMATION

The three-unitary model addresses this risk head-on through an implementation approach that treats transformation not as an aspiration for "later," but as a core requirement from day one. This is achieved through four interconnected mechanisms that protect and advance transformational thinking throughout the transition period.

THE IMPLEMENTATION JOURNEY

The visual below illustrates our phased approach, showing how we balance the essential requirements of compliance with the equally important work of transformation:

High Level - LGR Implementation Plan

The Journey from Safe & Legal to Transformation

First we must be SAFE & LEGAL for day one | While doing this, we DISCOVER and DECIDE | Then we truly TRANSFORM

SAFE & LEGAL	DISCOVER & DECIDE	TRANSFORMATION
Apr 2026 - Mar 2028	Shadow Authority: Apr 2027 - Mar 2028	Post Vesting: Apr 2028 - Mar 2035
THE MISSION	DUAL FOCUS	THE OPPORTUNITY
Be ready for Vesting Day	Maintain Safe & Legal + Discover Future State	Real change happens here
DELIVERABLES:	ACTIVITIES:	DELIVERABLES:
• Legal compliance secured	MAINTAIN / DISCOVER	• New ways of working
• Statutory functions ready	• Day 1 readiness / • Research & pilot	• Full rollout across all areas
• Essential systems operational	• Critical delivery / • Test approaches	• Cultural transformation
• Governance structures established	• Legal compliance / • Design future state	• Community co-production
NON-NEGOTIABLE	BALANCING ACT	WHERE WE THRIVE

24 months	12 months	84 months (7 years)
Apr 2026	Apr 2027 / Apr 2028	Mar 2035

This phased approach ensures we meet legal obligations while creating space for meaningful transformation

This phased journey ensures that compliance work and transformational thinking proceed in parallel, with each phase building the foundation for the next. Safe and legal delivery is achieved not at the expense of transformation, but as the platform upon which transformation can thrive.

FOUR MECHANISMS TO SAFEGUARD TRANSFORMATION

Four intentional mechanisms work together to ensure transformation remains central throughout the transition period:

1. DUAL GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE

The programme structure deliberately separates transactional delivery from transformational design, ensuring neither crowds out the other. This dual architecture operates as follows:

Transactional workstreams: Dedicated capacity focuses exclusively on operational continuity, legal compliance, and system migration. These workstreams ensure the critical foundations are secured, the "safe and legal" baseline that enables the new authorities to operate from day one.

Transformational workstreams: Operating in parallel with protected capacity and resources, these workstreams develop new service models, digital capabilities, partnership arrangements, and ways of working that will define how the new authorities deliver public services.

Structured integration: Regular touchpoints ensure the two streams inform each other: transformation designs must be implementable within the timeframes and constraints of transition, while transactional decisions must not inadvertently lock in old ways of working.

2. PROTECTED CAPACITY AND RESOURCES

Planning explicitly ringfences resources for transformation activity throughout the transition period. This recognition that building new capabilities requires sustained capacity that cannot be sacrificed to immediate operational pressures is fundamental to the programme's success.

Protected capacity includes:

- Dedicated programme capacity for service redesign and new model development across all service areas
- Resources for community and partner engagement to co-design new approaches
- Investment in staff development and cultural change programmes that equip teams for new ways of working
- Early adoption funding for digital platforms, data systems, and enabling infrastructure
- Protected time for pilot programmes and testing of new approaches while transition proceeds.

Without this explicit protection, transformation capacity would be gradually eroded as operational pressures mount. By building protection into the programme structure from the outset, we ensure that transformation is resourced as fully as compliance.

3. EXPANDED VESTING DAY READINESS STANDARDS

The definition of 'safe and legal' has been deliberately expanded beyond basic operational continuity to include transformational readiness. This crucial redefinition changes what it means to be ready for Vesting Day.

The three new authorities will not simply maintain existing services in new structures; they will be poised to operate differently from day one.

Vesting day readiness criteria therefore include:

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Baseline requirements:

- Operational continuity for all statutory services
- Legal compliance with all regulatory and statutory duties
- Financial systems and controls in place
- Staff employment transferred and payroll operational
- Essential ICT systems functioning

Transformational readiness:

- New service delivery models designed, piloted, and ready for implementation
- Partnership arrangements and integrated working protocols established with key partners
- Community engagement frameworks in place with clear mechanisms for resident voice and influence
- Digital platforms and data systems enabling modern, efficient service delivery
- Workforce equipped with skills, tools, and support for new operating models
- Performance frameworks aligned to outcomes, not just outputs.

By embedding transformation into the definition of readiness, we ensure it is not treated as optional or deferred. Being ready for Vesting Day means being ready to operate differently, not just ready to operate.

4. PHASED IMPLEMENTATION WITH LEARNING

Rather than attempting immediate wholesale transformation that would overwhelm transition capacity, the programme adopts phased implementation that protects space for experimentation, learning, and adaptation.

This approach works through three stages:

- **Discovery phase (pre-Shadow Authority):** Light-touch research, stakeholder engagement, and mapping establish the foundation for transformation without overwhelming pre-shadow period capacity. This phase is about understanding current state, identifying opportunities, and building the evidence base, not delivering wholesale change.
- **Pilot phase (Shadow Authority):** Selected pilot programmes test new service models and ways of working while transactional work proceeds. These pilots generate evidence, build capability, and create momentum. Critically, they allow for learning and course correction before wider rollout, reducing risk and improving quality.
- **Scaled implementation (post-vesting):** Armed with evidence from pilots and freed from the immediate pressures of vesting preparation, transformation scales systematically across services and geographies over a 7-year period, with continuous learning and adaptation built into the process.

This approach ensures transformation begins during transition rather than waiting for some distant "business as usual" state. It creates momentum, builds confidence, and generates tangible examples of what transformation looks like in practice, critical for maintaining commitment as transition pressures mount.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: TRANSFORMATION AS BASELINE, NOT ASPIRATION

These four mechanisms reflect a fundamental principle that distinguishes this implementation approach from traditional reorganisation: safe and legal delivery is the baseline, not the ceiling of ambition.

The three-unitary model is designed to achieve both operational security and transformational change, recognising that without deliberate structural protection, the former will inevitably consume the latter. This is not naive optimism; it is deliberate design informed by learning from previous reorganisations where transformation was consistently lost to operational pressures.

WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

In practical terms, this approach manifests in several concrete ways:

- Programme governance structures with equal standing for transformation and transactional workstreams, ensuring transformation has a voice at every decision point
- Budget allocations that protect transformation funding even when operational pressures create competing demands
- Performance frameworks that track both operational readiness and transformation progress, making both equally visible to programme leadership and stakeholders
- Communication strategies that tell the transformation story alongside the transition story, maintaining focus on the "why" as well as the "how"
- Decision-making criteria that explicitly consider transformational impact, not just operational efficiency
- Workforce engagement that emphasises new possibilities and opportunities, not just structural changes.

These are not aspirations; they are commitments built into the programme design from the outset.

REIMAGINING FROM DAY ONE

Implementation of the three-unitary model is not simply about moving from eleven councils to three. It is about using that structural change as the foundation for fundamentally reimagining how local government serves communities across Hertfordshire.

Crucially, that reimagining begins on day one of the transition period, not after it. Through dual governance architecture, protected capacity, expanded readiness standards, and phased implementation, the programme ensures that transformation is not sacrificed to the pressures of transition, but proceeds alongside it.

The result will be three new unitary authorities that are not only operationally sound and legally compliant, but fundamentally different in how they work, with communities, with partners, and internally. They will be modern, efficient, responsive, and outcome-focused from the moment they come into being.

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CONCLUSION

Hertfordshire is a place of economic dynamism, rural beauty and strong connections to the capital, where ambition, enterprise and community spirit run deep. It now stands at a defining point: a rare opportunity not just to reorganise services, but to redefine what local government can achieve. Yet without the right structure, that potential cannot be fully realised.

The three-unitary authority model is the answer. Whilst the base three-unitary proposal could stand alone, the modified model creates authorities large enough to invest, innovate and influence, yet close enough to understand every neighbourhood and ensure opportunity reaches every community. This is not an arbitrary choice. It reflects extensive engagement with residents and builds on how people already live, work and connect across Hertfordshire, following natural geographies. It keeps communities central whilst providing the dynamic system, clarity and capacity the county needs to shape tomorrow's opportunities.

This proposal is built on a powerful truth: prevention and prosperity are inseparable from place, but both need an enabling structure to succeed. The three-unitary model delivers exactly that - clarity of purpose, coherence of leadership and capacity for impact. It creates organisations capable of attracting investment, growing local economies and putting people before process.

Success depends on collaboration. The three authorities - West, Central and Eastern Hertfordshire - will operate with shared intent. Together they create the scale, maturity and credible voice needed to unlock devolution. This positions Hertfordshire to secure the transport, skills and economic powers that will drive transformative change and long-term prosperity.

At the heart of this model are Hertfordshire's communities. Each authority will remain locally connected, building the relationships that make services work and the understanding that drives continual improvement. Every resident will see the difference: one council to contact, one place to go, clearer accountability. Rather than distancing people from their councils, this model preserves cherished local identity whilst creating the scale needed for responsive, effective and efficient services.

This is what the three-unitary authority model achieves: a system designed for prevention and prosperity, powered by partnership, built on place and driven by ambition. It gives Hertfordshire the structure, scale and shared purpose to deliver growth, resilience and opportunity for every community. Not as an aspiration, but as a commitment to results. This means faster housing delivery, more effective prevention services, stronger negotiating power with developers, and the financial sustainability to protect frontline services for generations to come.

This opportunity will not come again. The choices made now will shape Hertfordshire for decades, either limiting what is possible or unlocking the county's full potential. At this historic moment, we have the chance to create something exceptional. The three-unitary authority model, rooted in our people, designed for prevention, and built to deliver prosperity, gives Hertfordshire the means to move forward with confidence. It builds on existing realities and is unequivocally the right choice for Hertfordshire's future.

APPENDIX 1 – TABULAR SUMMARY OF LGR PROPOSAL FOR 3 UNITARY AUTHORITIES MAPPED AGAINST MHCLG CRITERIA

Criterion	1. Foreword	2. The Proposition	3. Scale, efficiency & capacity incl Finance	4. Supports devolution arrangements	5. High-quality & sustainable services	6. Meets local needs & informed by local views	7. Community empowerment	8. Transition & Implementation	9. Conclusion	Appendices
Criterion 1 - A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government										
a) Sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area		✓	✓	✓					✓	
b) Sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs		✓	✓	✓						
c) Supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement		✓	✓						✓	
d) Describe clearly the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these are expected to achieve the outcomes described.			✓	✓			✓			
Criterion 2 - Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.										
a) As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more		✓	✓							
b) There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	

Criterion	1. Foreword	2. The Proposition	3. Scale, efficiency & capacity incl Finance	4. Supports devolution arrangements	5. High-quality & sustainable services	6. Meets local needs & informed by local views	7. Community empowerment	8. Transition & Implementation	9. Conclusion	Appendices
devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal										
c) Efficiencies should be identified to help improve Councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money		✓	✓			✓				
d) How an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from - existing budgets; flexible use of capital receipts to support transformation; invest-to-save projects			✓							
Criterion 3 - prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens										
a) New structures will improve local government and service delivery and avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services				✓	✓	✓			✓	
b) Deliver public service reform leading to better value for money				✓	✓	✓				
c) Impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety				✓	✓				✓	
Criterion 4 - work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views										
a) Evidence meaningful and constructive local engagement						✓				

Criterion	1. Foreword	2. The Proposition	3. Scale, efficiency & capacity incl Finance	4. Supports devolution arrangements	5. High-quality & sustainable services	6. Meets local needs & informed by local views	7. Community empowerment	8. Transition & Implementation	9. Conclusion	Appendices
b) consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance						✓			✓	
c) Evidence of local engagement, explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed						✓				
Criterion 5 - New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements										
a) consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established, or a decision has been taken by Government to work with the area to establish one	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
b) Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution				✓					✓	
c) Ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.				✓						
Criterion 6 - enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment										
a) make sure that communities are engaged							✓		✓	

APPENDIX 2 – BUSHEY

THE CASE FOR CHANGE – BUSHEY'S INTEGRATION INTO WEST HERTFORDSHIRE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The three Unitary Authority model for Hertfordshire (3UA) is based on the building blocks of district areas. However, the Secretary of State is asked to consider implementing the proposal with a modification request as part of the statutory change process to alter the existing boundary between Watford Borough Council and Hertsmere Borough Council, enabling the wards of Bushey North, Bushey St James, Bushey Park and Bushey Heath (herein referred to as 'Bushey') to be integrated into the future West Hertfordshire administrative boundary, noting that the existing ward boundaries are coterminous with the Aldenham parish boundary but not existing County division boundaries. The map appended at Appendix 2A illustrates the proposed boundary change, which allows the existing Aldenham parish to remain within the proposed Central Unitary Authority.

This document presents a detailed justification for the proposed boundary change that will better align administrative boundaries with community identity, service delivery and economic integration.

INTRODUCTION

The proposal to transfer Bushey from the Borough of Hertsmere to West Hertfordshire is rooted in the recognition that true community identity is shaped by the lived and shared experiences and daily interactions of residents, rather than by arbitrary administrative boundaries.

Local government reorganisation creates the opportunity to correct misalignment in the part of West Hertfordshire known as Bushey, by ensuring that governance structures mirror the social, economic and cultural relationships that characterise Bushey's community life.

The opportunity for the Secretary of State to facilitate this modification request as part of the Statutory Change Order presents a significant opportunity to bring local government arrangements into harmony with community reality. The realignment will help secure better outcomes for current and future generations by placing community identity at the heart of local governance.

With a population of 28,411 (Bushey North: 8,004; Bushey St James: 7,700; Bushey Park: 7,280; Bushey Heath: 5,427), Bushey currently sits as an isolated enclave in south-west Hertsmere (see Appendix 2A), physically separated from the rest of the district by the M1 / A41 corridor and substantial greenbelt (over two miles to Borehamwood). In contrast, Bushey shares deep-rooted historic, social, economic and infrastructure ties with Watford (less than 0.5 miles of greenbelt separation) that make its integration into West Hertfordshire both logical and beneficial (see Appendix 2B).

The proposed boundary change strengthens public services and financial sustainability, reflects genuine community identities and interests, enables effective and convenient local government and delivers value for money. Most importantly, it aligns administrative boundaries with the lived reality of residents and the functional geography of the area. For that reason, it has political support from existing Leaders in the areas that will make up the future Central and West Hertfordshire Unitary Authorities. In short, this modification request is made because it strengthens alignment to the LGR criteria whilst righting a historical inconsistency, utilising a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to enact the will of local residents and re-connect a community divided by administrative boundaries.

COMMUNITY IDENTITIES AND INTERESTS

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

Bushey's community identity has been shaped by its relationship with Watford since the 19th century. By the Victorian era, Bushey was firmly embedded within the Watford district through shared postal services and railway infrastructure. The London and North-Western Railway connected Bushey directly to Watford and London, establishing an economic interdependence and commuter flows that persist today.

Between 1860 and 1960, Bushey underwent significant transformation, with its population rising from 856 in 1801 to over 24,000 by the mid-20th century. This growth was directly shaped by Watford's industrial expansion, with many Bushey residents working in Watford's brewing, printing and manufacturing sectors. The development of council housing in Bushey during the interwar period was explicitly tied to Watford's population pressures and planning strategies.

Governance structures have long reflected this historical integration. Under the Local Government Act of 1894, parts of Bushey were included in the Watford Urban District, later forming Oxhey Ward. This administrative overlap enabled joint planning and service delivery, establishing patterns that continue to define community interaction.

CONTEMPORARY COMMUNITY INTERACTION

Today's community patterns overwhelmingly demonstrate Bushey's orientation towards Watford rather than Hertsmere. A 2018 Retail and Leisure study surveying Bushey residents revealed:

Centres visited by Bushey residents:

- Watford: 97.6%
- Bushey: 74.4%
- Bushey Heath: 71.8%
- Borehamwood: 65.3%
- Radlett: 31.9%

Most visited centres:

- Watford: 55%
- Bushey: 15.5%
- Bushey Heath: 12.7%
- Borehamwood: 11.3%
- North Watford / St Albans Road: 2.2%

These figures demonstrate that virtually every Bushey resident visits Watford town centre, and it is by far the most frequented destination, significantly exceeding even local centres within Bushey itself.

Socially and culturally, Bushey residents have long participated in Watford's civic and cultural life. From early 20th-century civic celebrations, such as the 1935 Silver Jubilee, to shared access to cultural amenities including cinema, arts and public events, the communities are closely intertwined. The influence of Watford's artistic heritage extended into Bushey through institutions like the Herkomer Art School, which attracted artists and students from across the region.

Today residents routinely cross boundaries for transport, schooling, healthcare, leisure and cultural activities. Bushey benefits directly from Watford's vibrant retail, hospitality and entertainment offer whilst also giving back: contributing to Watford's character as a diverse and inclusive urban area. In line with the LGR criteria, there is therefore a compelling community and economic argument for this modification request to be considered and approved.

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EDUCATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Educational patterns further reinforce these close community ties. As of Spring 2025:

- 1,829 pupils attending schools in Bushey have home addresses in Watford, nearly 29% of Bushey's 6,351 total pupils.
- Only 18% of Bushey's pupils come in from across the rest of Hertfordshire in comparison (excluding Bushey and Watford).
- 9.5% of pupils living in Bushey attend schools in Watford.
- 11% of pupils living in Watford attend schools in Bushey.

Furthermore, the schools across Watford, Three Rivers and Bushey already form part of the South West Herts Schools Consortium for secondary school transfer and this, along with the cross-boundary education patterns above, demonstrates deeply embedded, cohesive community relationships that transcend administrative boundaries.

RESIDENT PERSPECTIVES

Public consultation on local government reorganisation in September 2025 revealed strong support among Bushey residents for integration with West Hertfordshire. Residents consistently described Bushey as physically and socially closer to Watford than to Borehamwood or to the rest of Hertsmere, citing shorter distances, stronger daily links and a shared sense of community identity. Representative comments include:

"I support three unitary authorities, it correctly recognises that Bushey belongs within the West authority alongside Watford, Three Rivers and Dacorum. Bushey's identity and daily life links are with Watford, and the A41 provides a clear natural boundary from Borehamwood/Elstree. This adjustment reflects community reality while keeping disruption minimal."

"I have always felt a much closer connection to Watford than to Borehamwood or the rest of Hertsmere."

"From my postcode in Bushey it is only around 2.1 miles to Watford town centre, compared to almost 3.8 miles to Borehamwood town centre. This reflects everyday reality: Bushey is physically and socially closer to Watford, with stronger daily links in shopping, transport and community life."

These perspectives underscore that the proposed boundary change reflects lived experience, convenience and genuine community identity, rather than imposing artificial administrative divisions and presents the Secretary of State with a unique opportunity to right a historical inconsistency.

EFFECTIVE AND CONVENIENT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

CLEAR AND IDENTIFIABLE BOUNDARIES

The current boundary creates an anomaly: Bushey sits as an isolated island within south-west Hertsmere, physically separated from the rest of the district by significant barriers. The opening of the M1 motorway in the 1950s created a substantial physical severance between Bushey and Borehamwood, reinforced by over two miles of greenbelt to the east. This compares with less than 0.5 miles of greenbelt between Bushey and Watford, where urban areas flow together more naturally with minimal physical separation.

The proposed boundary change would create a clear, logical and easily identifiable boundary along the M1 / A41 corridor, a major transport infrastructure feature that already functions as a natural dividing line. This alignment would eliminate the current administrative anomaly and establish boundaries that reflect actual physical geography and settlement patterns.

SERVICE DELIVERY ALIGNMENT

The amended boundary would significantly improve service delivery patterns by aligning administrative responsibility with functional geography. Currently Bushey's physical orientation towards Watford creates practical challenges for service integration with Hertsmere, whilst its separation from the rest of the district complicates coordinated delivery.

Walking or cycling between Bushey and Borehamwood involves longer travel times along rural national speed limit roads with limited pedestrian infrastructure (footpaths often only on one side). In contrast, travel between Bushey and Watford occurs along residential streets with urban character and complete pedestrian infrastructure. Bushey flows seamlessly into Watford's residential areas of Watford Heath and Oxhey with little to no physical severance.

This connectivity is reinforced by:

- **Rail**: the London Overground Lioness Line, with Bushey Station serving as a key node, terminating at Watford Junction.
- **Bus**: eight routes operating between Bushey and Watford (routes 142, 258, 306/306A, 347, 885, 336, 346, 602).
- **Road**: strong connections enabling easy access for residents and service vehicles.

Integrating Bushey into West Hertfordshire would align service delivery with these existing travel patterns, enabling:

- More efficient waste collection and street maintenance aligned with natural access routes.
- Coordinated transport planning reflecting actual usage patterns.
- Integrated emergency service deployment from natural response locations.
- Joint infrastructure investment aligned with functional geography.
- Coherent planning for growth and regeneration across a unified area.

This alignment eliminates the need for complex inter-authority agreements and enables more responsive, convenient service delivery for residents.

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Economically Bushey functions as part of Watford's functional economic area. The 2021 Census revealed that over 900 Bushey residents commute to Watford for work, probably an underestimate due to the impacts of COVID-19 on working patterns. In total, over 1,400 Bushey residents commute to work within the proposed West Hertfordshire area. By comparison, just over 900 commute to the central area, with fewer than 600 working in Hertsmere specifically.

Many Bushey residents are employed in Watford's major sectors such as health, education, the creative industries and in professional services. This economic link is further reinforced by Bushey's local businesses, which depend on Watford's larger market and infrastructure to thrive. The close relationship between the two areas extends beyond employment and commerce; they share key strategic priorities, including growth, regeneration and sustainability.

Integrating Bushey into West Hertfordshire via approval of this modification request would enable a more coherent and impactful approach to joint planning and investment. By aligning administrative boundaries with the functional economic geography, planning, infrastructure investment and business support can be coordinated more effectively. This would ensure that resources are targeted where they are most needed and allow both areas to benefit from shared opportunities for growth and development.

DEMOCRATIC ALIGNMENT

The proposal is to amend the boundary, as per Appendix 2A, to realign the existing Hertsmere wards of Bushey North, Bushey St James, Bushey Park and Bushey Heath so that they fall within the West Hertfordshire Unitary Authority. It is proposed that the existing Aldenham West borough ward of Hertsmere remains in the future Central Hertfordshire Unitary

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Authority. This is because the current County division boundaries are not coterminous with existing borough ward boundaries and the existing Parish Council Ward of Aldenham is aligned with the borough ward boundaries rather than County division boundaries. Aligning the boundary change to borough ward boundaries subsequently means that the entirety of the existing Aldenham Parish Council ward area can remain intact under the Central Hertfordshire Unitary. This proposal avoids fragmenting a well-established parish structure, with consequences for governance, financial arrangements and community cohesion.

STRONG PUBLIC SERVICES AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

STRATEGIC COHERENCE

Bringing Bushey and Watford together within West Hertfordshire offers a strategic opportunity to enhance prosperity across the sub-region. Watford will play a pivotal role as a key economic and service centre in West Hertfordshire, with strong transport links, a thriving business community and a successful regeneration track record. Integrating Bushey will enable a more coherent and joined-up approach to public service delivery, allowing both areas to benefit from:

- **Shared infrastructure**: coordinated investment in transport, digital connectivity and community facilities aligned with actual usage patterns.
- **Integrated service delivery**: health, education, social care and environmental services planned and delivered across a unified functional area.
- **Strategic investment**: stronger case for regional and national funding through a unified vision for growth and resilience.
- **Coordinated planning**: coherent approach to housing, employment and regeneration, reflecting functional relationships.

ENHANCED SERVICE QUALITY

For Bushey residents, integration into West Hertfordshire would provide:

- Greater access to Watford's employment opportunities, cultural amenities and high-quality services.
- More responsive local governance aligned with actual community connections.
- Investment and planning decisions reflecting genuine travel-to-work, education and retail patterns.
- Preservation of Bushey's distinct identity within a broader administrative framework.

For West Hertfordshire as a whole, the integration would:

- Create a more balanced and sustainable Unitary Authority.
- Enable more efficient resource deployment across the functional economic area.
- Strengthen democratic representation and county-wide equity through better alignment of boundaries with community identity.
- Support inclusive growth and reduce inequalities through coordinated strategy.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The boundary change enhances financial sustainability through:

- **Operational efficiency**: aligning service delivery with natural geography reduces costs associated with complex cross-boundary arrangements, duplicate infrastructure and inefficient service patterns. Services such as waste collection, street maintenance and public transport can be planned and delivered more efficiently when boundaries reflect actual settlement patterns.

Proposal for three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

- **Strategic investment**: a unified approach to planning and regeneration across Bushey and Watford creates better opportunities to secure strategic funding from regional and national sources. The stronger economic case for investment in a coherent functional area enhances the return on public spending. Transport improvements, digital infrastructure and community facilities can be planned holistically, rather than requiring complex, cross-boundary coordination.
- **Resource optimisation**: integration enables more effective sharing of specialist resources, facilities and expertise across the functional economic area.
- **Economic development**: joint economic strategy across a unified functional economic area creates better conditions for business growth and job creation. This strengthens the tax base and reduces demand for public services through improved prosperity.
- **Administrative simplification**: eliminating artificial boundaries reduces the need for formal inter-authority agreements, joint committees and complex governance arrangements for service delivery. This reduces administrative overhead and enables faster, more responsive decision making.
- **Democratic engagement**: boundaries that reflect genuine community identity and functional relationships enhance democratic legitimacy and engagement. Residents participate more effectively in governance when boundaries align with their lived experience and community connections.
- **Long-term sustainability**: the boundary change creates more resilient and sustainable unitary authorities by ensuring administrative areas reflect actual settlement patterns, economic geography and community relationships. This enhances capacity to respond to future challenges and opportunities.
- **Section 151 Officers**: whilst the case for value exceeds financial assessment, the Section 151 Officers of Watford Borough Council and Hertsmere Borough Council have nevertheless confirmed that the proposed boundary change delivers value for money. In their analysis, they have established that the adjustment will not have a negative impact on the financial modelling underpinning the overall Hertfordshire Local Government Reorganisation proposal.

EQUITABLE AUTHORITY CONFIGURATION

The boundary change also improves the overall configuration of unitary authorities. The existing Bushey North and Bushey St James wards become the new Bushey North division, whilst the existing Bushey Park and Bushey Heath wards become the new Bushey South division, both within the West Hertfordshire Unitary area. The remaining area of the current Bushey divisions, which currently fall within the Aldenham West ward of Hertsmere will form part of the new Watling division, within the Central Hertfordshire Unitary area. See Appendix 2C. With Bushey subsequently integrated into West Hertfordshire, the councillor and division distribution becomes more equitable:

- **West Hertfordshire**: 72 councillors (24 divisions x 3)
- **Central Hertfordshire**: 69 councillors (23 divisions x 3)
- **Eastern Hertfordshire**: 93 councillors (31 divisions x 3)

This represents a balanced distribution, yet avoids creating an authority that approaches the LGBCE's threshold of concern regarding council size, whilst ensuring all three authorities have the capacity for effective strategic leadership.

LEGAL POSITION

In a letter to the Leaders of Hertfordshire Councils on 5 February 2025, Jim McMahon, the then Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, invited Leaders and Chief Executives to work together to develop a proposal for a single tier of local government for the county, and proceeded to set out the criteria, guidance for the development of proposals, and timeline for this process.

In particular, the following matters relating to boundary change were required to be taken into account in formulating a proposal:

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1. Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.
2. There will need to be a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for any proposals that involve boundary changes, or that affect wider public services, such as fire and rescue authorities, due to the likely additional costs and complexities of implementation.

It was made clear, therefore, that whilst maintaining existing boundaries may be the default starting position, provision is made for departing from those boundaries where justification can be made on the grounds of public service and financial sustainability.

It remains the view of the councils that approval of this modification request will significantly strengthen the opportunities relating to the three unitary model, and this has been clearly evidenced, as required, within the request. Noting advice from MHCLG that the local government reorganisation is operating within the framework of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, we understand that the Act does not allow for boundary changes to form part of any base proposal. As such, MHCLG has confirmed that any modification request to the Secretary of State to amend existing boundaries should accompany a 'base proposal' developed using existing boundaries. In doing so, it was advised by MHCLG that any modification request should cover the boundary alteration request as well as strong justification for it, covering the benefit to public services and financial sustainability against any costs or complexities of implementation. This modification request meets these requirements.

Furthermore, the 3UA proposal sets out our assessment against the LGR criteria and so this modification request, as required, notes how that assessment against the criteria differs from the proposal so that the benefit of the proposed boundary change can be sufficiently assessed by the Secretary of State.

CONCLUSION

The case for integrating Bushey into West Hertfordshire is compelling across key criteria:

- **Community identity**: historical development, contemporary interaction patterns, educational connections and resident perspectives consistently demonstrate that Bushey's community identity is oriented toward Watford, rather than Hertsmere. The proposed boundary change reflects the lived reality of communities, rather than administrative convenience.
- **Effective local government**: the boundary change creates clear, identifiable boundaries along natural features (the M1 / A41 corridor) and aligns service delivery with functional geography. This enables more efficient, responsive and convenient public services for residents.
- **Public services and financial sustainability**: integration enables strategic coherence, enhanced service quality, operational efficiency and better investment returns. It creates conditions for inclusive growth and long-term sustainability across the functional economic area.
- **Value for money**: the boundary change delivers value through service efficiency, infrastructure investment, economic development, administrative simplification and democratic engagement, while creating more resilient and sustainable unitary authorities. Indeed, we do not believe it practical to achieve the same change via a future Principal Area Boundary Review because this would significantly increase transition costs and limit the scope for public sector transformation in the initial years of a new unitary council.

Most fundamentally, this boundary change recognises that communities are defined not by administrative lines on maps, but by the daily interactions, relationships and connections that shape residents' lives. Bushey's integration into West Hertfordshire ensures that the new unitary structure reflects and serves these genuine community bonds, creating governance that is locally responsive and strategically capable.

This once-in-a-generation opportunity to align administrative boundaries with community reality will enhance prosperity, improve services and strengthen democracy across the sub-region for decades to come and it is respectfully requested that the Secretary of State, in full consideration of the compelling narrative, approves this modification request.

Proposal for three unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

KEY DATA SUMMARY

Population (2022 mid-year estimates, ONS)

- Total Bushey population: 29,330
- Bushey North: 14,629
- Bushey South: 14,701
- Projected growth to 2040 (detailed projections available)

Travel to work (2021 Census)

- Over 900 Bushey residents commute to Watford
- Over 1,400 Bushey residents commute to proposed West UA area
- Just over 900 commute to Central UA area
- Fewer than 600 commute to Hertsmere specifically

Education (Spring 2025)

- 1,829 pupils attending school in Bushey have home addresses in Watford (29% of 6,351 total pupils)
- 18% from rest of Hertfordshire (excluding Bushey and Watford)
- 9.5% of pupils living in Bushey attend school in Watford
- 11% of pupils living in Watford attend school in Bushey

Retail and leisure (2018 Survey – most recent survey)

Centres visited by Bushey residents:

1. Watford: 97.6%
2. Bushey: 74.4%
3. Bushey Heath: 71.8%
4. Borehamwood: 65.3%
5. Radlett: 31.9%

Most visited centres:

1. Watford: 55%
2. Bushey: 15.5%
3. Bushey Heath: 12.7%
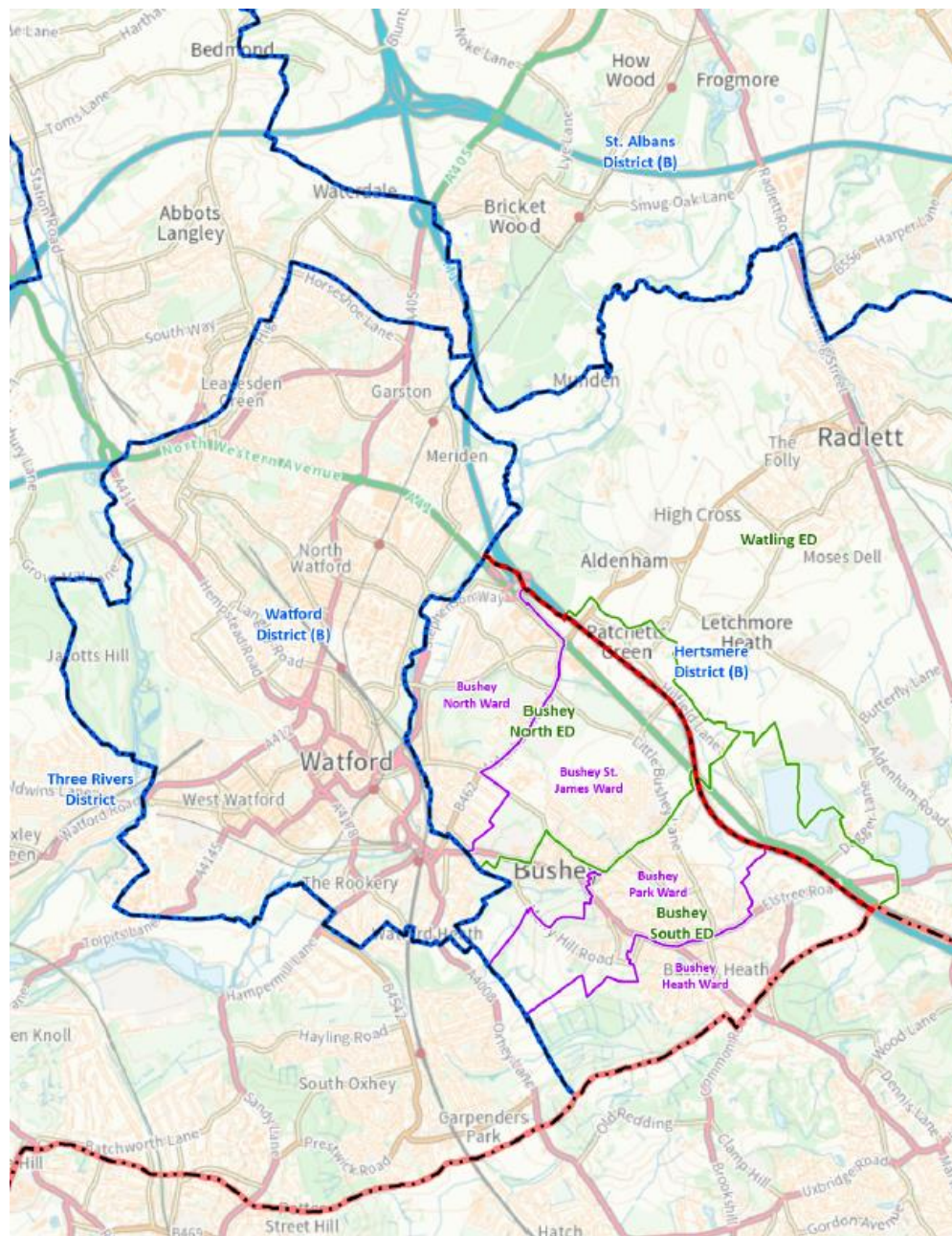4. Borehamwood: 11.3%
5. North Watford / St Albans Road: 2.2%

Transport infrastructure

- Rail: London Overground Lioness Line (Bushey Station to Watford Junction)
- Bus routes connecting Bushey and Watford: 142, 258, 306/306A, 347, 885, 336, 346, 602
- Green belt separation: Over 2 miles to Borehamwood vs less than 0.5 miles to Watford
- Distance: Approximately 2.1 miles from Bushey postcodes to Watford town centre vs 3.8 miles to Borehamwood town centre

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APPENDIX 2A MAP OF EXISTING WATFORD AND HERTSMERE BOUNDARIES

Please note: The red line represents the new unitary boundary, running along existing Bushey ward boundaries, coterminous with parish boundaries. The green line shows the existing county boundary which will be realigned through the approval of this modification request.
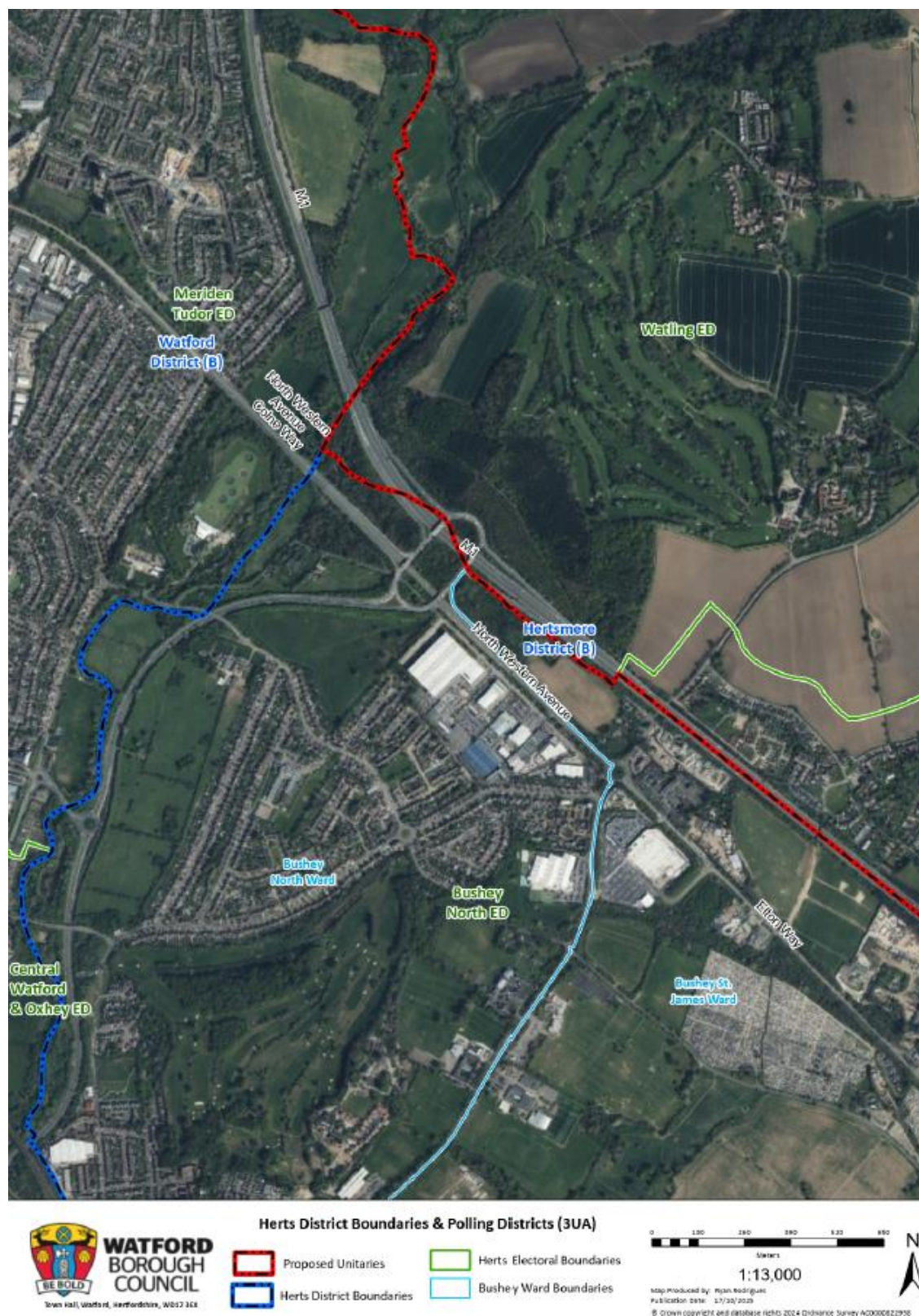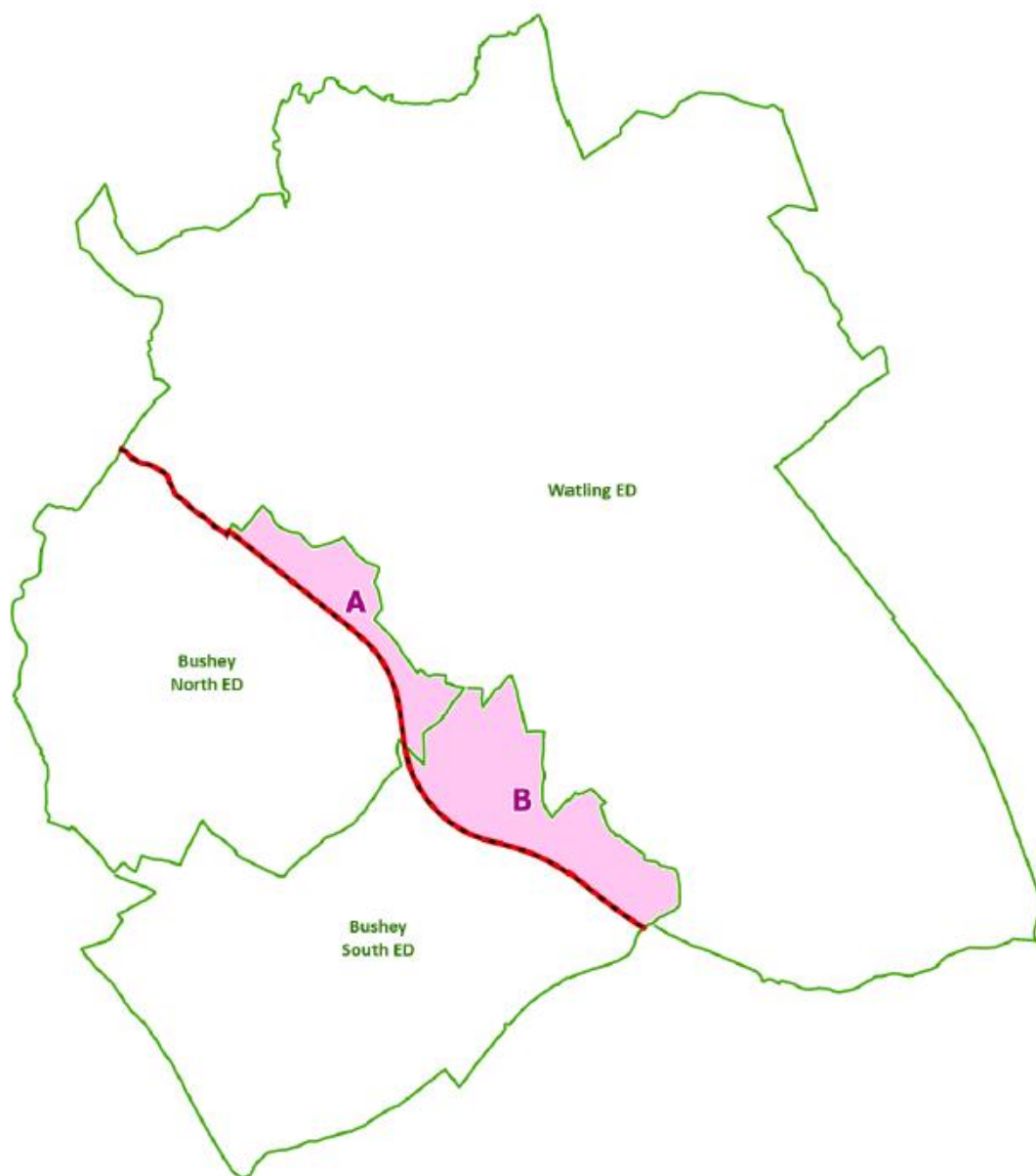
APPENDIX 2B AERIAL VIEW OF EXISTING WATFORD AND HERTSMERE BOUNDARIES

APPENDIX 2C - REMAINING AREA

A and B represent the remaining area of current Bushey divisions, which will be in the new Watling division, within the Central Hertfordshire Unitary Authority

APPENDIX 3 – HEMEL GARDEN COMMUNITIES

The Hemel Garden Communities programme plans for housing and employment growth, including urban regeneration within Hemel Hempstead and an expansion of 11,000 homes to the north and east of the current town. This development goes beyond the existing Dacorum Borough Council boundary into the St Albans City and District Council area. The development involves 455 hectares in Dacorum and 519 hectares in St Albans, together with 53 hectares of new employment space. The plan is connected with the regeneration of Hemel Hempstead, and upon completion, it will be necessary to ensure the integration of new and existing communities with Hemel Hempstead, in terms of identity and local government administration.

Although delivery is at an early stage, both Dacorum and St Albans have worked in close collaboration with Hertfordshire County Council and other stakeholders to develop a joint Delivery Board and Delivery Strategy – the programme is an exemplar of cross-boundary working between local government partners. The emerging local plans for each of these areas support this opportunity to deliver the co-ordinated expansion of the existing town of Hemel Hempstead, with housing delivered on a relatively even distribution across each area on completion of the programme in 2050. Under a three-unitary solution these established joint working arrangements will continue to flourish between West and Central Hertfordshire, with delivery turbo-charged through the support of the new Strategic Authority.

Towards the completion of the programme there will be a need to ensure the new expansion is unified with existing communities under the shared identity of Hemel Hempstead and fully aligned and integrated with the existing town. This alignment will optimise local service delivery and strengthen community cohesion.

Under the proposed three-unitary solution, collaborative efforts between West and Central Hertfordshire will ensure that this expansion is delivered seamlessly, establishing long-term place-based governance. To achieve this a thorough boundary review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is anticipated towards the end of the development programme, and this will be required to ensure that ward structures appropriately reflect evolving community needs and strengthen growth opportunities in West Hertfordshire.
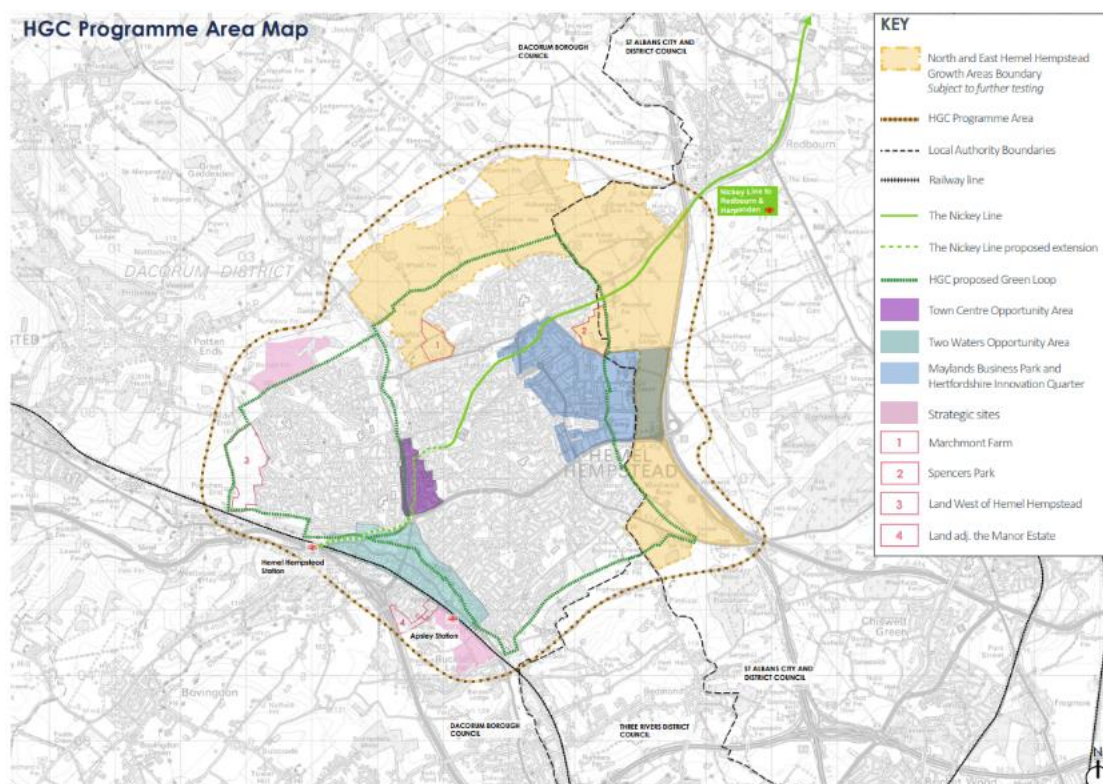

Figure 1 - Hemel Garden Community Delivery Statement March 2025

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APPENDIX 4 – NEIGHBOURHOOD PREVENTION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

	Activities	Deliverables	Timeline	Key Dependencies & Risks Status
1. Defining Prevention and Neighbourhood Teams	• **DISCOVERY PHASE:** Conduct initial stakeholder engagement to understand current landscape • **DISCOVERY PHASE:** Undertake benchmarking exercise with comparable local authorities • **SHADOW ONWARDS:** Facilitate multi-agency workshops to co-design Hertfordshire prevention approach • **SHADOW ONWARDS:** Develop clear definitions of prevention tiers and neighbourhood team operations • **SHADOW ONWARDS:** Establish guiding principles for team composition and integrated delivery	• Discovery Report on current state and best practice • Vision and Target Operating Model document • Strategic vision for prevention • Operating principles and values • Team composition and roles • Performance framework and success metrics	**Discovery:** Apr 2026 - Mar 2027 **Full Work:** Apr 2027 - Aug 2028	• Securing commitment from all partner organisations • Alignment with ICS neighbourhood strategy • Managing expectations around pace of change • Discovery phase must inform shadow authority planning
2. Structures and Boundaries	• Map existing administrative boundaries across all partner organisations • Analyse population data, deprivation indices, and community identity • Facilitate workshops to develop boundary options (30,000-50,000 population) • Undertake impact assessment of boundary options • Engage communities and members on proposed boundaries • Develop transition plan for moving to proposed structures	• Proposed Neighbourhood Model Boundaries Report • Comparative analysis of boundary options • Maps showing proposed neighbourhoods with demographics • Coterminosity analysis with partners • Whole System Approach Framework • Impact assessment and transition plan	**Discovery:** Apr 2026 - Mar 2027 **Full Work:** From Apr 2027	• Political sensitivity around boundary changes • Tension between ideal coterminosity and pragmatism • Impact on existing staff and services • Partner agreement on boundaries
3. Data and Evidence	• Collate existing needs assessments, JSNA, Public Health reports • Analyse demographics, health inequalities, social care demand at neighbourhood level • Map current service utilisation, costs, and outcomes • Identify data gaps and commission additional analysis • Develop neighbourhood profiling methodology • Create evidence summaries for each proposed neighbourhood	• Neighbourhood Evidence Packs for each area • Population demographics and projections • Health and wellbeing profiles • Social care demand and spend analysis • Community safety profiles • Community assets mapping • Service utilisation data and identified priorities	**Discovery:** Apr 2026 - Mar 2027 **Full Work:** From Apr 2027	• Data sharing agreements between partners • Quality and consistency of data • Capacity within analytical teams • Making evidence accessible and actionable • GDPR compliance
4. Strategy, Commissioning and Transformation Programmes	• Comprehensive stocktake of current strategies across all partners • Map all commissioned services, contracts, and delivery programmes • Identify transformation programmes impacting neighbourhood teams • Facilitate analysis workshops: stop, start, scale decisions • Develop high-level strategic plan for neighbourhood alignment • Undertake risk assessment of contractual and financial implications • Engage service providers and communities on proposed changes	• Gap and Opportunity Analysis • Matrix of current commissioned services • Duplication and gap analysis • Stop/start/scale recommendations • Strategic Alignment and Commitments Map • High-Level Risk Assessment • Mitigation strategies	**Discovery:** Apr 2026 - Mar 2027 **Full Work:** From Apr 2027	• Complexity of mapping multiple organisations • Contractual constraints limiting flexibility • Financial pressures driving short-term decisions • Provider market concerns • Legal review requirements
5. Workforce	• Map existing workforce across all partners for neighbourhood teams • Analyse current staff locations, roles, skills, terms and conditions • Model workforce requirements for proposed teams • Undertake gap analysis between current and required workforce • Engage with staff, trade unions and HR leads • Develop workforce transition principles (TUPE considerations) • Identify training and development needs for new ways of working	• Workforce Mapping Report • Current workforce analysis by neighbourhood • Skills, capacity, and gap analysis • Workforce modelling for target teams • Workforce Transition Plan • TUPE and employment implications • Training and development requirements • Recruitment and retention strategy	**Discovery:** Apr 2026 - Mar 2027 **Full Work:** From Apr 2027	• Staff anxiety and resistance to change • Employment law and TUPE complexity • Recruitment challenges in key roles • Different terms and conditions • Trade union consultation requirements • Retention of key staff during transition
6. Funding	• Map all current funding streams supporting prevention activity • Analyse funding allocation geographically and by service type • Model funding requirements for proposed neighbourhood teams • Identify opportunities for pooled budgets and aligned funding • Engage partners on funding principles and governance (S75) • Develop business case for pilot neighbourhood teams • Explore national pilot funding opportunities • Design funding governance model enabling local flexibility	• Funding Mapping and Analysis • Comprehensive map of funding by source and value • Funding requirements modelling • Partner Funding Engagement Report • Pooled budget proposals • Section 75 development roadmap • Pilot Funding Business Case • Expected outcomes and ROI	**Discovery:** Apr 2026 - Mar 2027 **Full Work:** From Apr 2027	• Partner willingness to pool/align budgets • Financial pressures limiting investment • Complex funding conditions • Accountability and governance concerns • Success of national funding bids • Time for Section 75 agreements

7. Governance for Change	• Review existing governance arrangements across partners • Design governance model for neighbourhood, locality, and strategic levels • Develop draft Section 75 agreements for integrated commissioning • Establish programme governance for development phase • Develop criteria and process for selecting pilot neighbourhoods • Create business case and approval papers for pilots • Secure approval from decision-making bodies for pilot funding	• Draft Governance Model • Governance structure and terms of reference • Decision-making framework • Draft Section 75 Agreements • Pilot Neighbourhood Proposal • Selection criteria for ~3 pilot areas • Implementation timeline and evaluation framework • Pilot Funding Approval secured	**Shadow Authority (Apr 2027 - Mar 2028)**	• Legal arrangements for new Unitary Authority • Partner commitment to formal governance • Complexity of Section 75 development • Political and organisational approvals • Resource for governance infrastructure • Timing of decisions
8. Pilot Neighbourhood Teams	• Establish project management for pilot neighbourhoods • Co-design detailed operating model with local stakeholders • Recruit and deploy staff with appropriate induction • Establish local neighbourhood partnerships • Implement integrated IT systems and data sharing • Deliver training: strengths-based practice, integrated working • Launch pilots with clear communication • Establish monitoring and evaluation framework • Capture learning, challenges and adaptations • Undertake formal evaluation at key milestones	• Pilot Neighbourhood Team Implementation • Fully operational teams in ~3 neighbourhoods • Monitoring and Evaluation Reports • Progress against objectives • Quantitative data on activity and outcomes • Staff, partner and resident feedback • Impact case studies • Recommendations for wider rollout • Cost-benefit analysis	**Shadow Authority (Apr 2027 - Mar 2028) 6-12 month pilot**	• Recruitment and retention of staff • IT systems and information governance readiness • Partner engagement in pilot areas • Managing expectations during pilot • Sufficient time for meaningful evaluation • Changes required based on learning
9. Neighbourhood Prevention Strategy	• Establish co-production process with diverse stakeholders • Review evidence base, best practice, and pilot learning • Facilitate co-production workshops for vision and priorities • Draft Neighbourhood Prevention Strategy • Undertake formal consultation with stakeholders • Revise strategy based on consultation feedback • Develop implementation plan including rollout phasing • Secure formal approval through governance • Confirm funding commitments from partners • Develop communication and engagement plan for launch	• Neighbourhood Prevention Strategy • Vision for prevention in Hertfordshire • Strategic priorities and outcomes framework • Neighbourhood team model • Partnership commitments and governance • Implementation roadmap • Performance and evaluation framework • Strategy Implementation Plan • Confirmed Funding and Resources	**Post Vesting Day (Apr 2028 - Mar 2035)**	• Meaningful co-production takes time • Balancing ambition with financial constraints • Securing funding commitments • Alignment with ICS and partner strategies • Political approval and support • Managing implementation expectations
10. Neighbourhood Prevention Plans	• Establish neighbourhood planning process with methodology • Form neighbourhood planning groups with diverse representation • Share evidence packs and facilitate local analysis • Undertake community engagement and asset mapping • Co-produce neighbourhood prevention plans • Ensure plans are specific, measurable, and achievable • Identify local priorities and actions • Incorporate learning from pilots • Link plans to strategic priorities and commissioning • Secure sign-off through neighbourhood partnerships	• Neighbourhood Prevention Plans for each area • Neighbourhood profile and evidence summary • Community-identified priorities • Agreed outcomes and success measures • Detailed action plan with responsibilities • Resource allocation • Governance and accountability arrangements • Community engagement approach • Annual review and refresh process	**Post Vesting Day (From Apr 2028) Annual refresh**	• Capacity of teams and partners to lead planning • Quality of community engagement • Ensuring plans are meaningful not bureaucratic • Aligning local and strategic priorities • Maintaining momentum across multiple areas • Plans as living documents not one-off
11. Transformation	• Operationalise governance across all neighbourhood partnerships • Roll out neighbourhood teams across all areas based on pilots • Complete TUPE transfers and organisational changes • Implement comprehensive workforce development programme • Develop neighbourhood team leaders for multi-agency management • Establish communities of practice for shared learning • Implement cultural change programme: collaboration, learning, innovation • Implement integrated IT systems and shared care records • Build data analytics capability for evidence-based decisions • Develop performance dashboards and digital inclusion initiatives	• Fully Operational Governance Structures • Complete Neighbourhood Team Rollout • Digital Infrastructure for integrated working • Embedded Culture Change • Performance Management Framework operational • Continuous Improvement Processes • Section 75 agreements implemented • Staff wellbeing and support mechanisms • Career pathways within neighbourhood teams	**Post Vesting Day (Apr 2028 - Mar 2035) 7 year transformation**	• Sustained leadership commitment • Investment in workforce and digital • Managing change fatigue • IT system integration challenges • Information governance complexity • Maintaining momentum over time • Financial pressures impacting investment • Demonstrating impact to sustain commitment

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE

PROPOSAL FOR FOUR UNITARY AUTHORITIES

V3 draft - last saved 6th November 2025

Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

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MHCLG criteria	MHCLG sub-criteria (summarised)	Section(s)
Criteria 1 Sensible geography	a) Sensible economic areas and tax base	- Implications for place - Scale, efficiency and capacity: - Unitary scale & population size
	b) Sensible geography that meets housing supply and local needs	- Implications for place
	c) Robust evidence and analysis	- Implications for place
	d) Clear description of structures and intended outcomes	- Implications for place - Scale, efficiency and capacity: - Unitary scale & population size
Criteria 2 Efficiency and resilience	a) & b) Guiding principles on population sizes	- Scale, efficiency and capacity: - Unitary scale & population size
	c) Efficiency and VFM	- Scale, efficiency and capacity: - Financial information
	d) Managing transition cost	- Scale, efficiency and capacity: - Financial information
	e) BV intervention / EFS – not relevant f) Debt – not relevant	N/a
Criteria 3 High Quality public services	a) Improving services	- High quality & sustainable services: - Service delivery models and public sector reform
	b) public service reform	- High quality & sustainable services: - Service delivery models and public sector reform
	c) Impacts on critical services	- High quality & sustainable services: - Services safeguarded for those who need them most.
Criteria 4 Local Identity	a) Local collaboration	- Covered in spine proposal
	b) Local identity, culture, history	- Implications for place
	c) Local engagement	- Meets local needs and informed by local views
	a) Existing case – not relevant	N/a

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Criteria 5 Supporting Devolution	b) 'unlock devolution'	- Implications for place: - Enabling devolution
	c) Population ratios and timelines	- Implications for place: - Enabling devolution
Criteria 6 Community Empowerment:	a) Community engagement	- Community empowerment
	b) Building on existing arrangements	- Community empowerment

THE PROPOSITION (MHCLG CRITERION 1)

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSAL

COMBINING THE SCALE TO DELIVER WITH THE AGILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS OF COUNCILS ROOTED IN PLACE

This proposal presents a vision for four new unitary authorities in Hertfordshire that will transform local government services, unlock the potential of our people and places, and enable our communities to flourish. Local government reorganisation is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rethink how councils can best serve our communities, responding to what matters most to local people, enabling inclusive growth that benefits residents, delivering improved local services, and working closely with communities to respond to the challenges of the future.

To do this, at the heart of this vision are three clear commitments to residents:

- Councils with the insight and capacity to shape services around the needs and priorities of their communities, based in geographies that local communities relate to and with local knowledge embedded in decision-making and design.
- Councillors who are visible and connected, championing local priorities and ensuring residents' voices influence decisions.
- Authorities designed at the right size to deliver high-quality, efficient services today and to scale as Hertfordshire grows. They are large enough to sustain specialist capacity and share functions where this adds value, yet close enough to stay responsive, accountable and efficient.

This proposal is written on the basis of the modified 4UA configuration as we judge the modified arrangement to be the strongest option for Hertfordshire. We believe the base 4UA configuration also meets the government criteria to a lesser degree, which is why this submission focuses on the modified boundaries. We have adopted the modified configuration because it achieves a better balance of starting populations across the four authorities, presents more coherent geographies that reflect how people live, travel and work, and aligns more closely with the criteria. Our rationale is set out throughout this proposal. For the comparison of the base and modified proposals, see the Spine: Modification of Existing Boundaries (pages 32 to 37), Evaluation of options against MHCLG criteria (pages 40 to 46) and Appendix B: Modelling numbers used for councillor assumptions (pages 137 to 144).

The four unitary (4U) model strikes a balance between scale and local identity. Each council is large enough to deliver essential services yet small enough to stay rooted in its communities. It can be delivered in a way that is safe and legal on day one while building capability to transform how services are designed around people's needs. Boundaries follow how people live, travel and work, which allows joined-up planning across housing, transport and employment and ensures services are coordinated.

Sector analysis from the District Councils' Network (*DCN Analysis of existing unitary authorities: bigger isn't better, October 2025*) shows that councils at this scale are closer to residents and deliver better value for money per resident on core outcomes. The broad pattern is clear, greater scale alone does not correlate with improved performance or financial resilience.

Our vision is designed to build on how the county contributes to the Government's plan for change, aligning national ambitions with the practical levers councils hold over planning, transport, skills, housing and the local environment so

deliver visible improvements in people's daily lives. Four balanced unitaries combine proximity and pace, strengthening community representation in place-shaping and economic growth, providing resilience so councils can adapt to future challenges without compromising service quality, and enabling strong partnership with a Strategic Authority to drive county-wide priorities.

The following sections demonstrate how this model supports shared ambitions, responds to the challenges facing Hertfordshire and delivers local and national priorities:

* Unlocking growth and opportunity through **place-based leadership**
* Empowering **communities** with more accessible and accountable local institutions
* Delivering integrated, **prevention-focused public services** that improve outcomes

PLACE - UNLOCKING GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACROSS HERTFORDSHIRE

This proposal strengthens the ability of local government to lead and deliver place-based regeneration, economic development and housing. By creating four councils with a clear focus on local identity, the model supports a deeper understanding of place.

Councils are designed around real places, not administrative boundaries on a map. They take into account connectivity, work and housing, so choices on housing, land use, transport and employment fit the grain of each area.

The approach is also the best choice for future partnership with a Strategic Authority. Local leadership across four distinct areas augments the broader remit of a Strategic Authority, allowing effective local tailoring of policy, practice and interventions based on the needs of different communities.

The four unitary model directly advances the Government's Plan for Change, especially the missions to boost economic growth and accelerate housebuilding. Councils built around real places align local plans with transport, utilities and employment land, identify deliverable development schemes, and plan infrastructure so new homes and jobs are delivered together. The approach strengthens accountability for housing delivery, builds capacity to deliver accelerated schemes, and keeps decisions close to communities.

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Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

1. SHAPED BY REAL PLACES

Hertfordshire's communities are shaped by how people move, work and live.

Starting from place and community means each new council has a credible organisation size, each serving populations between 290,000 and 321,000, and with and growth of between 351,000 and 391,000 expected by 2045.
It supports responsive delivery tailored to local needs and priorities, embedding local knowledge in decision making and service design. It focuses targeted investment in infrastructure, regeneration and community development where it will unlock the greatest benefits. It is the right size for Hertfordshire today and remains scalable as the county grows, remaining the right size for the Hertfordshire of the future.
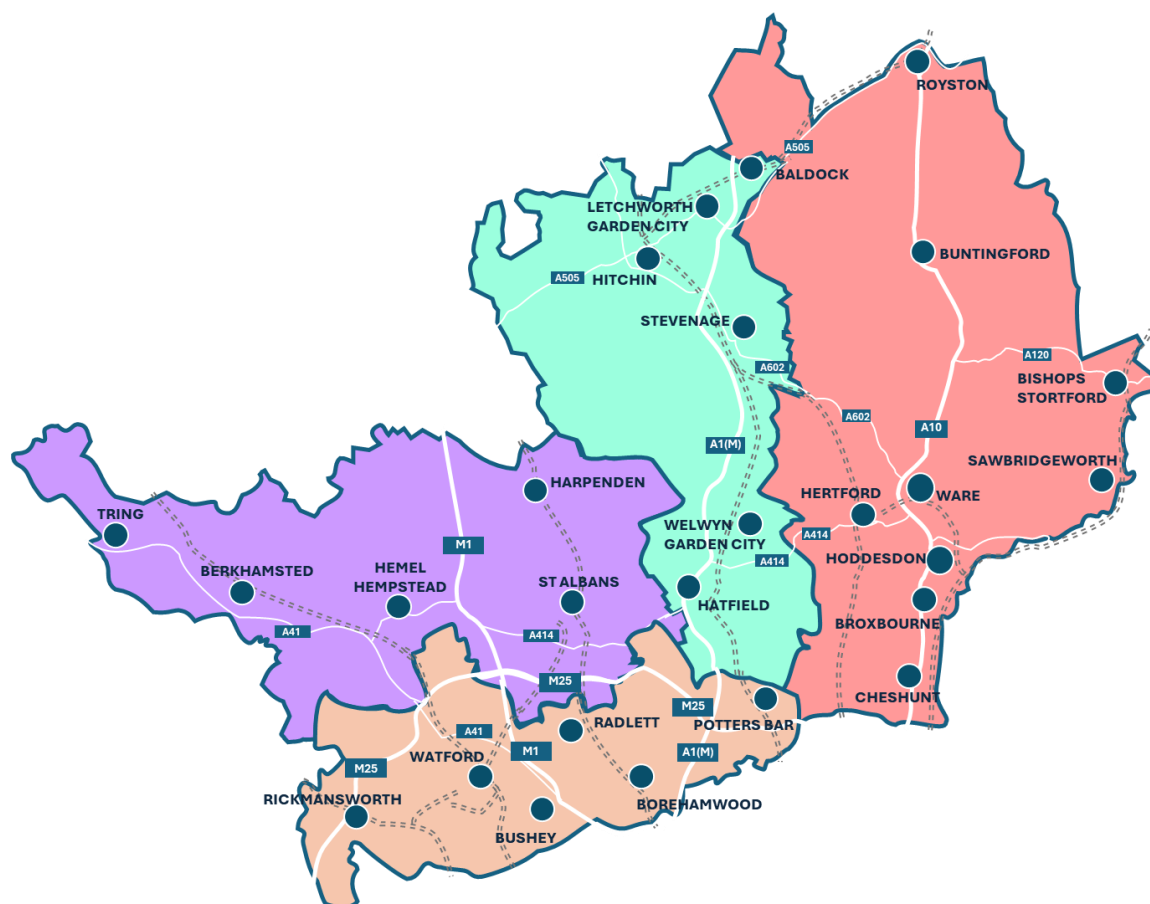
Public services in Hertfordshire already operate across a range of footprints. Some services work county wide, others use large localities, and many are delivered through local teams rooted in towns and neighbourhoods. Recent national and local changes underline the need for flexibility, from the clustering of Integrated Care Boards to adjustments in Jobcentre Plus footprints. The new councils will form deep partnerships and keep clarity for residents and partners about who does what.

This approach is founded on unitary authorities built around place that remain close enough to their communities to stay connected and deliver local priorities, and large enough to deliver well.

2. ENABLING DEVOLUTION THROUGH LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Hertfordshire is ambitious about its future and we are strongly supportive of implementing a mayoral combined authority at the earliest opportunity for a county of around 1,200,000 residents and approximately £49 billion in GVA. A directly elected Mayor will provide the mandate and tools to turn shared intent on growth, housebuilding, skills and clean energy into delivery residents can see in their towns and neighbourhoods.

Four unitary councils are the right arrangements to support a Strategic Authority because they operate at a complementary scale, giving balanced representation and clear accountability. Each council is large enough to lead major programmes, small enough to stay connected to its places and providing strong, place-based delivery. They bring deep knowledge of local markets, assets and communities, so countywide missions for growth, housing, transport, skills

and net zero can be translated into credible programmes in each area. As each of the proposed authorities are of a similar size, this fosters a fair and balanced partnership, strengthening regional leadership and collective decision-making.

With that partnership in place, early mayoral priorities should focus on what funding and freedoms can make happen fastest and at scale:

- **Build more affordable, sustainable homes**, aligning with Homes England funding streams
- **Back innovation-led growth**
- **Create skills and opportunity for local communities**

COMMUNITIES - SUSTAINING LOCAL IDENTITY THROUGH VISIBLE AND ACCOUNTABLE COUNCILS

This plan keeps decision-making close to the people it serves. Four mid-sized unitaries, built on recognisable places and ward-based representation, make councils visible, reachable and answerable. Residents can see who is responsible, how to influence decisions and where to go for help.

Local democracy is also strengthened through empowered councillors rooted in their communities. Retaining a ward-based model with fair elector ratios and practical geographies keeps casework manageable and representation visible. With a single tier of accountable leadership, residents know who to contact and councillors have the authority to get things done.

These proposals are shaped by what residents told us. Everyday services ranked highest with residents, especially infrastructure, waste and recycling, and parks and green spaces. Engagement also showed clear concern about councils becoming less connected to communities, with 57% of respondents highlighting this as a priority, and a strong desire to retain local identity and responsiveness. This feedback has fundamentally shaped our proposals: four councils rooted in recognisable places, ward-based representation that keeps accountability close, and simpler, clearer routes into help so residents know who is responsible and how to influence decisions.

3. A CO-OPERATIVE APPROACH WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

The four unitary model keeps local government close to the people it serves and, by design, needs a less complicated and less formal approach to community empowerment would be needed for a larger authority. Councils are rooted in recognisable places, so decision-making stays close to communities and without requiring additional governance by default.

Instead, it offers new councils a range of options to work with voluntary and community organisations, neighbourhood networks, local institutions and businesses. This includes citizens' panels and youth councils, targeted forums for under-represented groups, tenant engagement forums, participatory budgeting for small place-based projects, simple digital engagement and co-design.

Neighbourhood working will be a defining feature. Clear lines of responsibility make local partnership activity easier and faster to organise. Existing partnerships will be sustained and extended where they work. This combination strengthens prevention, builds community resilience and increases trust in the everyday decisions that affect homes, streets and services.

It strengthens delivery against the Government's plan for change by supporting an NHS focused on prevention through earlier, place-based action; making streets safer through shared problem solving with residents and local services; widening opportunity by creating flexible ways for people to shape decisions and access support.

4. EMPOWERED LOCAL COUNCILLORS, ROOTED IN COMMUNITIES

This model keeps councillors close to residents and visibly answerable for what happens in their communities. Representation is built around wards because they anchor democracy in local areas. The ward map is shaped by three elements that work together to keep things fair, recognisable and workable:

- **Electoral equality** - Each councillor represents a broadly similar number of electors.
- **Community identity** - Boundaries reflect neighbourhoods, centres and local ties people use.

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Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

- **Effective, convenient local government** - Wards are practical to travel and serve, so councillors can be present on the ground with residents and partners.

The local model reinforces the importance of working with residents, partners and communities in local areas, supporting the Government's plan for change by sharpening local accountability for safer streets, enabling earlier help and better wellbeing through neighbourhood-level action, and widening opportunity.

SERVICES - INNOVATIVE AND INTEGRATED SERVICES, SHAPED BY RESIDENTS' NEEDS

Our vision for services is clear: improving lives in ways residents can feel day to day. Residents should receive support that is joined-up, easy to access, and responsive to what matters most. By consolidating the responsibilities of the county with district and borough councils, the four unitary proposal will simplify structures, create clear accountability for residents, and preserve the local insight needed to shape services around communities and their needs.

As with all the proposals put forward in Hertfordshire, the four unitary model achieves cumulative net savings from moving from the current two-tier system. This proposal sets out the financial model used and highlights further levers that new councils can deploy after vesting day to strengthen the position and shorten the payback period, further strengthening financial sustainability and value for money for our residents.

5. RESPONSIVE LOCAL DELIVERY THAT IMPROVES OUTCOMES

The case for change is clear. While there has been an increase of jobs numbers and GVA in Hertfordshire, there are a number of challenges in some communities as skills, transport, and housing do not always line up with opportunity.

For example, aligning housing, social care, employment support and benefits advice into the same organisation removes the fragmentation that can exist between different organisations. Any form of reorganisation would help to resolve these splits by consolidating functions, but the four unitary model goes further by putting this integration where residents experience it through connected neighbourhood teams with an understanding of place and the tools to respond to local challenges.

6. CAPACITY TO TRANSFORM AND DELIVER VALUE

Local public services face rising demand, tighter funding and more complex needs, while residents rightly expect good quality, accessible services that meet their needs. Several national reviews are underway, focussed on Children's Social Care, SEND, the Casey Review, the Fair Funding Review and changes to the Planning and Infrastructure landscape. Ensuring that key services are safe and legal on day one is non-negotiable. At the same time, it is vital that local councils are designed to have the capability to deliver services in local areas and with partners.

There is strong evidence that unitary authorities in the 250,000 to 350,000 range are an effective scale. Analysis by the District Councils' Network finds little consistent link between very large populations and better value for money or stronger performance. In a number of services, smaller or mid-sized councils match or outperform larger ones, and larger bodies have more often sought exceptional financial support relative to their size. We will learn from high-performing authorities of a similar size, including close neighbours such as Milton Keynes and Central Bedfordshire, adopting what works.

The four-unitary structure intends to create new councils with agility to change over time. To safely manage change, robust plans will be in place for the organisations to be safe and legal on day one, with the potential to use some shared services where there is benefit to residents in doing so. Equally, some former district functions may be aggregated where a single service gives residents a better outcome. The test in every case is simple: does this choice improve experience, reliability and outcomes for people and places?

IMPLICATIONS FOR PLACE

Our vision for four unitaries in Hertfordshire is shaped by the lived experience of our residents and communities. Each has a centre of gravity and identity that people recognise in daily life, seen in how residents travel, work, learn and use services. Starting from this lived experience, we propose four new councils that are close to communities and capable of delivering broader strategic priorities. The voice of residents is at the heart of our plan, having expressed their preference for locally connected councils that recognise existing locality differences and historic traditions.

Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Our proposal for four authorities of comparable size and credible scale, provides a balanced approach bringing the right combination of scale and financial sustainability whilst also keeping identity rooted in place. The overviews that follow set out each area's distinct character, the opportunities it can unlock, and why this geography works.

SOUTH WEST HERTFORDSHIRE
World-class studios at the heart of a creative powerhouse, at the capital's edge
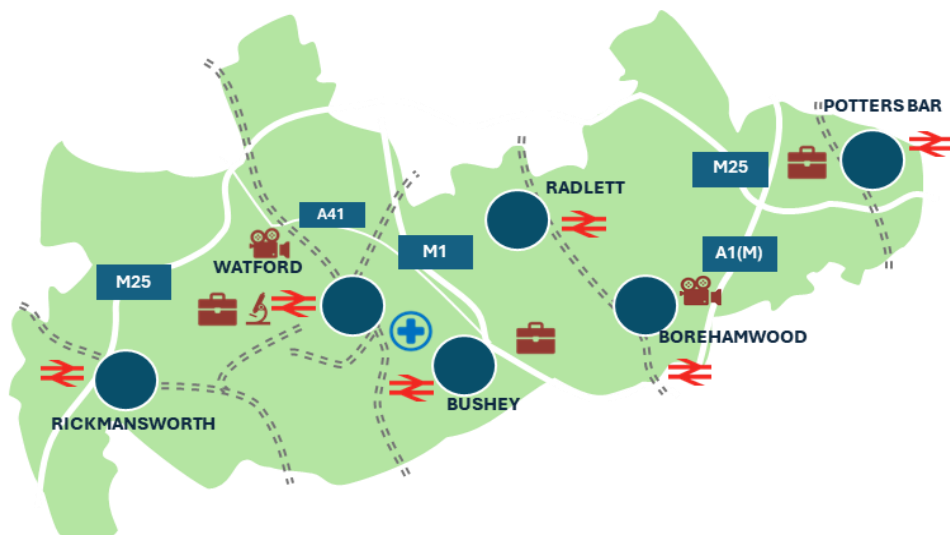
Key	
Settlement	●
Train Station	≈
Hospital	⊕
Life Science	🔬
Business Park	💼
Film & TV	🎥

Population & Place	
Population (mid-2024)	313,190
2045 Population Estimate	371,000
% Working-Aged	63.20%
Geographical Area	211.46 km²
Population Density	1,456

Economy & Skills	
GVA	£14,494*
Active businesses	15,655*
Employment Rate	87.31%*
Economic Activity Rate	82.35%
% with L4+ Qualifications	48.40%

Housing Development	
No. of Households	126,378
Housing Affordability Ratio	9.36*
Housing need	2,344*

Democracy & Representation	
No. of Wards	47
No. of Cllrs	89
Population / Cllr Ratio	3,551

Key Assets			Main Settlements	
Key Employment Sites	**NHS Hospitals**		**Settlement**	**Population Size**
Elstree & Leavesden (Three Rivers) - Film & TV	Watford General Hospital		Borehamwood	36,322
BRE (Watford) – Science Park			Bushey	28,416
Watford/Croxley Business Park (Watford) – Business Campus			Potters Bar	22,536
Potters Bar (Hertsmere) – Business Campus			Radlett	10,060
Centennial Business Park (Hertsmere) – Business Campus			Rickmansworth	25,413
			Watford	102,300

South West Hertfordshire has the closest day-to-day links to London while retaining a strong local centre of gravity. Bringing together Watford, Three Rivers and Hertsmere, the area is home to around 313,190 residents today, with growth projected to roughly 371,000 by 2045.

Settlement form is varied. Watford connects with a wider network of towns and suburbs that include Elstree & Borehamwood, Bushey, Rickmansworth and Potters Bar. These centres support active high streets and local employment, with strong civic and community infrastructure. Town and district centres are well connected and provide the social and cultural offer that keeps activity local even as many residents commute.

Place identity remains clear. Watford functions as a regional service centre, complemented by a network of towns and neighbourhoods across Three Rivers and Hertsmere which act as social and economic hubs in their own right. Green Belt landscapes provide a balance between the city and countryside with river valleys and canals, open fields, parks and wide green spaces providing an escape from city living, a place to enjoy time with family and friends, but within easy reach of all the capital has to offer.

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Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

The M25, M1, A1 and A41 frame movement within South West Hertfordshire with Watford Junction on the West Coast Main Line and London Overground, Metropolitan and Chiltern services through Three Rivers, Thameslink and Great Northern services through Hertsmere. High-frequency rail into central London and easy orbital access to the wider south of England shape daily life, with labour markets and supply chains that cross the boundary every day. Heathrow and Luton airports are also within close reach. This cluster of major arterial routes provides connectivity beyond the Hertfordshire boundaries to the whole country making the area a focus of inward investment and growth.

Combined Gross-Value Added (GVA) for South West Hertfordshire unitary is £15.744 billion (2023) and growth here is primarily about making the most of well-connected town centres with creative industry clusters including major studios and their suppliers, focused on historic and thriving film and television studios at both Leavesden and Borehamwood and Elstree. Recent investment by Warner Brothers, Sky, Oxygen Studios (at the former British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Elstree site) and at Hertsmere's own Elstree Studios reflects an ongoing commitment to the area and has a positive effect on the local economy, creating jobs and opportunities for the surrounding community.

This sector is complemented by a wider economic mix with strong professional services, biomedical life sciences, public sector employment and a budding avionics specialism developing at London Elstree Aerodrome. The area is attracting investment in new technology as illustrated by the recent planning approval of a state of the art data centre in South Mimms. The centre will be Europe's largest cloud and AI data centre making this part of Hertfordshire integral to meeting the existing cloud shortfall and catering for the anticipated increase in demand. Bringing in £21.4m of business rates once operational and generating £1.1bn pa GVA, this approved data centre will make significant financial contributions to employment, skills and opportunities locally: thus, solidifying the area as a technology and media superhub, and complementing a similar development at Abbots Langley in Three Rivers. The area remains attractive to small businesses who want close links to London and travel options whilst having access to local service centres and receiving considerable small business support. The range of highly regarded independent schools reflects the area's desirability to high net worth individuals and businesses.

Our communities are increasingly diverse with Watford (54.2% of residents are from ethnic minority groups) and Hertsmere (36.9% of residents from an ethnic minority group) being the two most diverse districts in the county with Three Rivers (32.1%) as the fourth most diverse (2021 Census). Hertsmere is also home to the largest Jewish population outside of London. Whilst the locality is generally affluent, pockets of deprivation do exist, bringing with them inequalities in health, educational attainment, housing and life chances for some parts of the community, The South West Hertfordshire Local Housing Needs Assessment identifies a notable need for affordable housing and confirms that this is an important and pressing issue. A South West Hertfordshire unitary would be well placed to address these joint challenges, utilising relationships with local Registered Social Landlords.

The environment of Three Rivers, Watford and Hertsmere is significant in influencing the character of the area and supporting the quality of life of local communities. The landscape is a complex mix of rural and urban areas, woodlands, wildlife habitats, farmland, water features and other land forms. The Rivers Colne, Gade and Chess along with Aldenham Reservoir and Tykes Water, are important resources in terms of landscape, biodiversity and access to open space, and form the basis of a Green and Blue Infrastructure network.

Set alongside the more Chilterns-facing West Hertfordshire, South West Hertfordshire retains a distinct identity. The M25 is the defining seam across the western half of the county, shaping travel choices, service catchments and development patterns. It is this orbital influence, rather than a London identity, which most clearly differentiates South West Hertfordshire and demonstrates why the two areas are best planned and led in their own right.

British Hollywood – Case Study – Investment in Film and Television in South West Hertfordshire

Film and Television have been part of South West Hertfordshire's heritage for over 100 years. Six historic studios including MGM-British, Fairbank (Former BBC Elstree Centre) and Elstree Studios have been based in Hertsmere and many stars of the big and small screen have worked in the borough with film credits including The Shining and world famous franchises like Indiana Jones and Star Wars alongside cult television classics including The Avengers and The Prisoner.
Leavesden Studios, established in 1994 was purchased by Warner Brothers in 2010 and since then has seen investment of over £150 million to create a purpose built, production facility, alongside the world famous tourist attraction; Warner Bros Studio Tour London: The Making of Harry Potter.

Borehamwood is home to BBC Elstree with the newly refurbished EastEnders set. Following recent approval for investment from Oxygen Studios, the former BBC Elstree Centre, now renamed Fairbanks Studios, will also be

transformed into a modern production facility. The project includes five brand new, state-of-the-art stages, a new landmark creative 'Media Hub', and associated workshops, backlot and staff amenities. The new studios are expected to generate £80 million inward investment per year, support the continued growth of the film and high-end television in the United Kingdom (UK) and creating new jobs and training opportunities.

The Council owned Elstree Studios, home to the original Big Brother and The Crown, is celebrating its centenary year with Strictly Come Dancing and The Chase some of the many well-loved television shows being made on the site. Sky Studios Elstree, which opened in 2023, already has blockbusters Wicked and the latest in the Paddington franchise to its name. On its own, the facility is forecast to deliver £3 billion of production activity within its first five years by Sky, and the recently approved plans for an additional 10 stages are anticipated to enable a further £2 billion of production. The area is also home to the Elstree Screen Arts Academy; a University technical college specifically focused on the creative industry. These sites continue to create jobs and opportunities for the local community and make a considerable contribution to the local economy of South West Hertfordshire.

CENTRAL HERTFORDSHIRE

Garden City heritage, New Town energy and a corridor of innovation
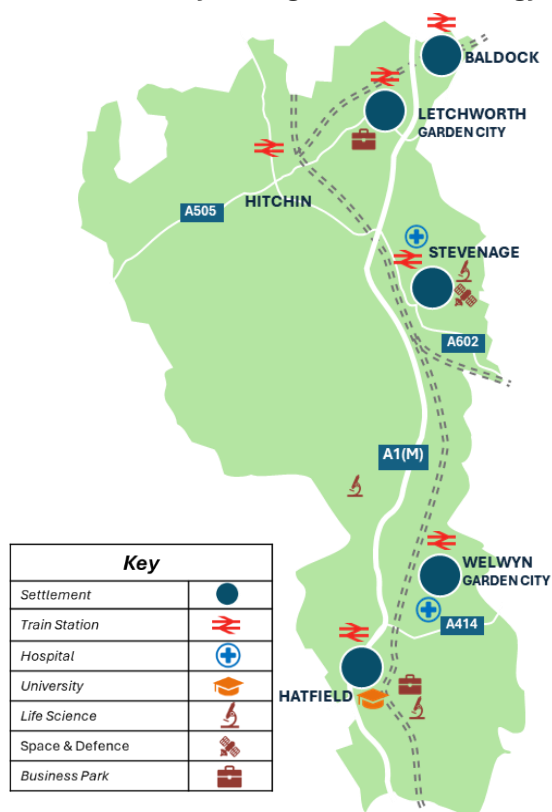
Population & Place	
Population (mid-2024)	320,795
2045 Population Estimate	391,000
% Working-Aged	64.10%
Geographical Area	337 km^2
Population Density	936.72

Economy & Skills	
GVA	£14,494*
Active businesses	15,655*
Employment Rate	87.31%*
Economic Activity Rate	82.35%
% with L4+ Qualifications	48.40%

Housing Development	
No. of Households	126,378
Housing Affordability Ratio	9.36*
Housing need	2,344*

Democracy & Representation	
No. of Wards	47
No. of Cllrs	89
Population / Cllr Ratio	3,551

Key	
Settlement	●
Train Station	⇌
Hospital	⊕
University	🎓
Life Science	🔬
Space & Defence	✖
Business Park	💼

Key Assets			Main Settlements	
Key Employment Sites	**NHS Hospitals**		**Settlement**	**Population Size**
Gunnels Wood (Stevenage) – Space & Defence, Life Sciences	Lister Hospital		Letchworth Garden City	33,990
Hatfield Business Park (Welwyn Hatfield) – Business Campus	QEII Hospital		Hitchin	35,220
Letchworth Garden City Main Employment Area – Business Campus	**Universities**		Stevenage	90,146
Marshmoor Business Park, Welham Green (Welwyn Hatfield) - Life sciences	University of Hertfordshire		Welwyn Garden City	51,524
Welwyn Garden City Industrial Area (Welwyn Hatfield) – Business Campus			Hatfield	41,265

The backbone of Central Hertfordshire is formed by a network of historic towns, new towns and garden cities and employment areas along the A1(M) and the East Coast Main Line. The area is home to an estimated 321,000 people today, with growth projected to 391,000 by 2045. Stevenage sits at the centre of the geography, with Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield to the south and Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Baldock forming a strong northern arc. Regular trips for work, study, healthcare and shopping move up and down the corridor, reinforcing a single everyday geography that people recognise.

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Rail and road closely align here and that alignment shapes daily choices. Great Northern and Thameslink services link the towns to London, Cambridge and Peterborough, with other local train connections reaching toward the south of the corridor. The A1(M) is the backbone for movement between town centres, campuses and business parks, while most cross-corridor journeys rely on the A414, A602 and A505 due to limited east to west rail options. Commuting patterns reflect this reality; the footprint sits within the Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City Travel to Work Areas (TTWA), so jobs and skills catchments run with the corridor rather than into the Lea Valley.

The settlement pattern is town-based and works in combination. Stevenage is at the centre of this corridor, with Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield forming a closely linked southern pair. Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Baldock complete the northern arc. Planned neighbourhoods, green corridors and compact high streets sit alongside stations, colleges and business parks. There is proud Garden City heritage in Welwyn Garden City and Letchworth, through which their residents continue to identify shape the feel of towns, neighbourhoods and civic centres, while Stevenage and Hatfield's New Town form provide employment space, a range of housing, green spaces and local facilities. Historic towns such as Hitchin provide attractive local services, alongside a number of smaller villages and rural areas across this part of the county.

The economic base is broad and nationally significant. Around Stevenage, a life sciences cluster spans research, scale-up and advanced therapy manufacturing, supported by specialist lab space and an experienced supply chain. Space, defence and advanced engineering add depth through major employers and their contractors. Further south, a strong headquarters economy includes corporate offices in Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield, alongside a wide mix of digital, logistics and professional services across the business parks. In the northern towns, Hitchin's independent-led centre supports creative, digital and professional services with a dense base of small firms; Letchworth Garden City's business park host manufacturing, engineering and design businesses alongside food and building products; and Baldock plays a strategic role on the A1 corridor with light industrial and logistics linking into advanced manufacturing supply chains. The result is a corridor that blends Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)-led growth with corporate services and local enterprise, spreading higher value jobs across all of the main towns.

Skills and research capacity are a defining strength and set Central Hertfordshire apart. The University of Hertfordshire in Hatfield is a major presence, with over 36,000 students across the College Lane and de Havilland campuses. The Royal Veterinary College (RVC), the UK's largest and longest established independent veterinary school, has a 230-hectare campus based in Hawkshead Lane Hatfield. Further education and sixth-form provision in the main towns adds breadth, with employer partnerships enabling routes into STEM, construction and professional services, and keeps higher-level opportunities within reach of residents across the corridor.

Case Study - University of Hertfordshire
The University of Hertfordshire is a major anchor for Central Hertfordshire's skills, research and innovation system. It convenes employers and universities, aligning teaching, research and enterprise with local growth.

In September 2024 the University opened the Spectra Building, a £100 million home for engineering and computer science that strengthens STEM teaching, spin-out potential and links with business. Its Estates Vision 2035 sets out renewal, including a new School of Health and Social Work and the creation of a School of Medicine, the first in Hertfordshire, with the inaugural cohort expected in September 2026.

UH sits at the heart of one of the UK's most dynamic life sciences corridors. Within ten miles are firms including GSK, Roche, Eisai, the Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst and the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult. These links translate into joint research, placements and employer-designed curricula, building a steady talent pipeline and supporting innovation across biotech, health and advanced manufacturing.

The University is also a committed civic partner. Through the Hatfield 2030+ Place Board it works with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and other stakeholders to shape the long-term transformation of the town centre, focusing on infrastructure, public spaces, housing and the local economy.

Across the Central Hertfordshire footprint, UH helps bridge academia and industry through research partnerships, specialist facilities, incubation space and graduate entrepreneurship. Its programmes strengthen the local workforce, draw investment and support inclusive growth. As Central Hertfordshire develops its wider innovation offer, the University's role as educator, researcher and civic institution positions it to power the next phase of growth.

The jobs outlook reflects these strengths. Current regeneration and investment programmes indicate potential for up to 15,000 additional jobs in and around Stevenage and surrounding areas by 2040, with many of these in STEM roles across

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life sciences, advanced manufacturing and engineering. That growth is expected to radiate along the corridor through supply chains and commuting, complementing the headquarters and digital economy further south and the creative-professional base in the northern towns.

Growth and renewal focus on existing centres and stations. In Stevenage, a long-term town-centre programme is reshaping the heart of the town. Proposed improvements to the station arrival area, and opening up new homes, workspace and community prospects in a walkable core. In Welwyn Garden City, the Wheat Quarter is turning the former Shredded Wheat site into a mixed urban neighbourhood beside the station, adding homes, employment space and public realm at a highly accessible location. In Hatfield, a rolling town-centre programme is bringing forward new housing and refreshed public spaces, supported by the scale of employment at the business park. In the north, Hitchin's Churchgate area is advancing on a heritage-led approach to the centre, and planned growth at Baldock provides additional capacity linked to the A1 corridor. Across the unitary, these schemes are paired with street improvements, bus priority and new cycling and walking links so that development strengthens high streets and neighbourhoods rather than outpacing them.

Housing demand is high, including for affordable homes, with local plans providing space for town centre renewal, reinvestment in neighbourhoods and a mix of affordable housing, town centre, and family homes. A mix of market, affordable and key-worker homes will be focused within locations with good access to rail, town-centre services and employment, helping more people live closer to study and work opportunities. With the population expected to rise to around 391,000 by 2045, this approach provides a credible path to new homes and jobs to benefit the communities of Central Hertfordshire.

EASTERN HERTFORDSHIRE
Market towns, attractive countryside, a growing economy and Harlow-Gilston
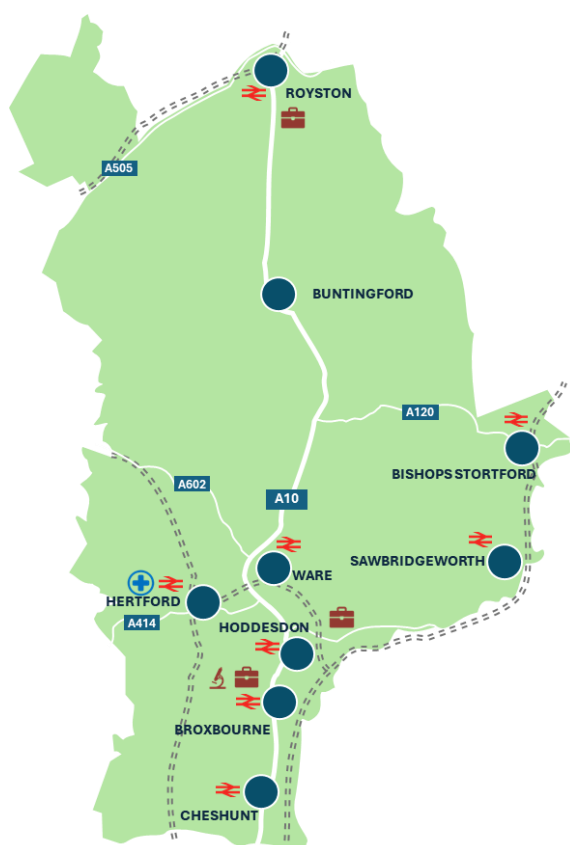
Population & Place	
Population (mid-2024)	289,774
2045 Population Estimate	366,000
% Working-Aged	62.90%
Geographical Area	721 km²
Population Density	395

Economy & Skills	
GVA	£7,945*
Active businesses	13,390*
Employment Rate	72.19%*
Economic Activity Rate	81.60%
% with L4+ Qualifications	47.04%

Housing Development	
No. of Households	114,922
Housing Affordability Ratio	9.6*
Housing need	2,040*

Democracy & Representation	
No. of Wards	43
No. of Cllrs	75
Population / Cllr Ratio	3,799

Key	
Settlement	●
Train Station	⇌
Hospital	⊕
Life Science	🔬
Business Park	💼

Key Assets			Main Settlements	
Key Employment Sites		**NHS Hospitals**	**Settlement**	**Population Size**
Park Plaza West(Broxbourne) - Business Campus, life sciences		Hertford County Hospital	Cheshunt	43,680
Hoddesdon Business Park - Business Campus			Hoddesdon	40,630
York Way Main Employment Area Royston (North Herts) – Business Campus			Hertford	28,802
			Sawbridgeworth	8,700
			Bishops Stortford	40,909
			Royston	17,448
			Ware	19,622

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Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

The new unitary authority of Eastern Hertfordshire will encompass the current East Hertfordshire District and Broxbourne Borough, which would be supplemented by the ward of Northaw and Cuffley currently in Welwyn Hatfield Borough and the North Hertfordshire District Council wards of Arbury, Ermine, Royston Heath, Royston Meridian, Royston Palace, and Weston and Sandon following the approval of boundary changes, as part of this proposal.

Eastern Hertfordshire has a distinctive local identity offering strong road connectivity via the A10 and good access to the M25. The A10 is a critical transport route that traces the line of the ancient Roman Ermine Street, running almost straight from south to north through the centre of the new authority's area, from London and the M25 in the south up to Cambridge in the north.

Rail access is provided by two mainline routes into London, with Thameslink and Great Northern services running to the capital. The pattern of rail links broadly follows the Ermine Street/A10 corridor. Stansted Airport, which is located around four miles from Bishop's Stortford, is a key driver of the local economy, directly employing residents from within Eastern Hertfordshire. It is also a pivotal component of the UK Innovation Corridor (https://innovationcorridor.uk/), highlighting its strategic importance to the region's economy.

The A414 serves as an important east-west corridor in Hertfordshire, connecting key towns, as well as linking to Harlow in Essex and the M11 motorway. The A120 is another vital east-west link, crucial to connecting Eastern Hertfordshire to Stansted Airport and beyond. However, public transport connectivity east to west is limited, with few direct rail options across the county and most services oriented north to south. Travel to Work patterns in Eastern Hertfordshire show a net commuter outflow, with significant numbers of residents in the south of the area commuting to London, in particular from Broxbourne Borough and Northaw and Cuffley. Outside these southern areas, most of Eastern Hertfordshire aligns with the Cambridge area, rather than the Stevenage and Welwyn Travel to Work area immediately to the west. The Cambridge Travel to Work Area is one of the fastest expanding in England, indicating increasing economic activity and a greater draw for workers from further afield, including from towns in East Hertfordshire such as Royston and Bishop's Stortford.

Eastern Hertfordshire is mainly characterised by market towns and villages in a rural hinterland; only in the south of the unitary area close to the M25 in Broxbourne Borough is there continuous urban development. The largest towns are Bishops Stortford, Cheshunt and Hoddesdon and Hertford. There are no large towns as there are in the other three unitary areas, such as Watford, Hemel Hempstead or Stevenage, and the overall population density is lower than in the other three unitary areas. The A10, a dual carriageway as it runs north from the M25 is reduced to a single carriageway from Bishops Stortford northward. The northern part of the area has a largely rural character, alongside Royston, Buntingford and villages.

New economic opportunities have been created in Eastern Hertfordshire by the significant growth of the pharmaceutical, biotech and other knowledge-based industries in the region, particularly around Cambridge to the north. Stansted Airport is also a magnet for jobs and has contributed to major growth in Bishops Stortford over the last fifteen years. Eastern Hertfordshire is at the heart of the developing UK Innovation Corridor, linking London and Cambridge with a new Google datacentre in Cheshunt, pharmaceutical companies in Ware (GSK) and Hoddesdon (Pharmaron), as well as the national construction company Volker Fitzpatrick in Hoddesdon. However, the local economy is currently dominated by small and medium sized enterprises. The most significant economic challenges are to improve the availability of superfast broadband in the more rural parts of the unitary area and to develop the skills of the local workforce to take advantage of high-paying new jobs in biotech, pharmaceuticals, engineering and ICT.

Eastern Hertfordshire is widely recognised as a desirable area to live and there is significant demand for housing. There is more availability of land than in other parts of Hertfordshire with large development sites such as Gilston, a new town to be built on the border with Essex next to Harlow, and Brookfield Garden Village in Cheshunt, both of which have secured planning permission. The population is expected to increase by 28% over the next 20 years to reach 366,000. A single unitary authority for Eastern Hertfordshire will be best placed to focus on driving these new housing developments forward.

A new town centre has planning permission at Brookfield within the existing Broxbourne Borough and is expected to be complete by the early 2030s. Being immediately adjacent to the A10, it will conveniently serve the needs of the residents of the Eastern Hertfordshire unitary authority.

NORTH WEST HERTFORDSHIRE

A historic city, heritage towns, Chiltern landscapes and vibrant economy
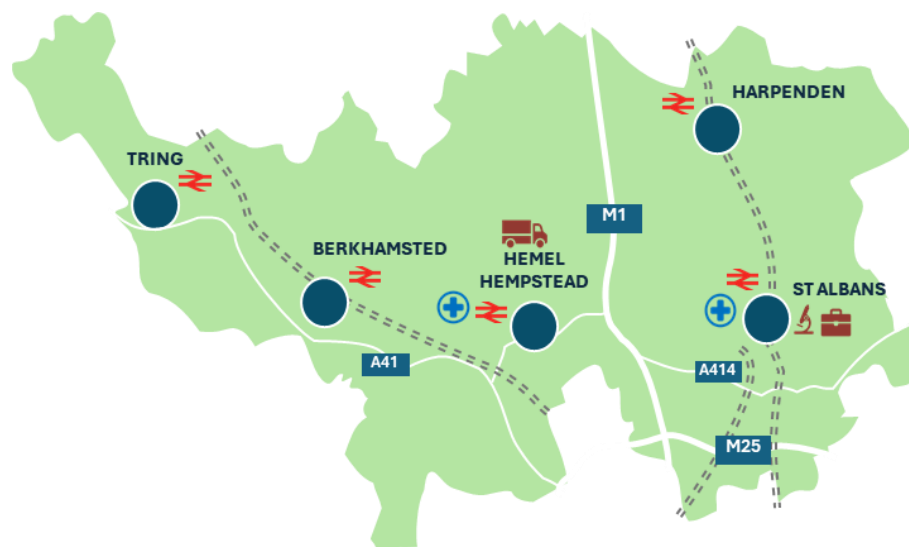
Key	
Settlement	●
Train Station	⇌
Hospital	⊕
Life Science	🔬
Business Park	💼
Logistics and Distribution	🚚

Population & Place	
Population (mid-2024)	312,432
2045 Population Estimate	371,000
% Working-Aged	63.20%
Geographical Area	211.46 km²
Population Density	1,456

Economy & Skills	
GVA	£15,744
Active businesses	19,765
Employment Rate	71.13%
Economic Activity Rate	75.37%
% with L4+ Qualifications	57.36%

Democracy & Representation	
No. of Wards	41
No. of Cllrs	79
Population / Cllr Ratio	3,897

Housing Development	
No. of Households	119,768
Housing Affordability Ratio	11.36
Housing need	2,697

Key Assets		Main Settlements	
Key Employment Sites	**NHS Hospitals**	**Settlement**	**Population Size**
BRE (St Albans) – Business Campus, Research Facility	Hemel Hempstead Hospital	Hemel Hempstead	95,961
Maylands Business Park (Dacorum/St Albans) - Logistics and Distribution	St Albans City Hospital	Berkhamsted	21,245
Rothamsted (St Albans) - Life Sciences		Tring	12,427
		St Albans	148,200

The new unitary authority of North West Hertfordshire will bring together the places currently served by Dacorum and St Albans City and District into a single council for the west of the county. Home to around 312,432 residents, it has the scale to plan transport, housing and regeneration coherently while keeping decision-making close to communities.

Settlement form is varied and complementary. An attractive cathedral city sits alongside a major post-war New Town, two market towns and a network of villages and parishes. The principal centres are Hemel Hempstead, St Albans, Harpenden, Berkhamsted and Tring. These places share deep roots, from the historic Hundred of Dacorum to St Albans' Roman city of Verulamium. Town centres across the area mix independent retail with national brands and a growing cultural and hospitality offer. Local plan work and town centre visions are steering renewal to the right places with attention to walkability, public realm and civic space. These centres also act as service hubs for surrounding villages, with secondary schools, health services, leisure venues and active parish and town councils anchoring local civic life.

The Chilterns National Landscape frames the North West of the area, giving a distinctive chalk downland setting that shapes townscape, views and routes. Well known destinations such as Ashridge Estate and Tring Park sit alongside prestigious green spaces like Gadebridge Park, Verulamium Park and the Box Moor Trust commons. A network of paths and former rail alignments provides links between neighbourhoods and stations. Chalk streams, notably the River Ver as well as the Gade and Bulbourne, and the Grand Union Canal create a connected blue-green corridor that supports nature recovery, reduces flood risk and offers traffic-free routes for walking and cycling. Tring Reservoirs and nearby woodlands add to the area's biodiversity and recreation offer. These landscapes also draw visitors year-round, supporting local hospitality and outdoor recreation alongside conservation. Ongoing chalk grassland restoration and access schemes are opening more of the landscape for everyday use, while careful management of the chalk aquifer and river catchments sustains habitats and water quality.

The economic base is broad and resilient. Maylands Business Park is one of the largest employment locations in the region, home to several hundred firms across logistics, construction, advanced manufacturing and related services.

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Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Alongside this sits a strong professional services community and a nationally significant science presence at Rothamsted Research in Harpenden, one of the world's longest running agricultural research institutions. Residents enjoy high quality of life indicators, with above-average incomes, high employment and some of the lowest deprivation levels nationally. Surveys consistently show strong satisfaction with local areas as places to live, underpinned by good schools, health outcomes and access to green space. Smaller employment areas across the main towns support creative services, professional practices and start-ups, complemented by town-centre workspaces and flexible offices that keep jobs close to high streets. Together with a well-established small and medium sized enterprise base, paired with high skillset levels, this proposal provides a balanced economy and a platform for further investment.

New development is being planned in places where transport is frequent and services can grow with it. Hemel Garden Communities will bring about 11,000 new homes and significant numbers of new jobs by 2050, with new schools, primary care capacity, local centres and green routes built in from the start. With the population projected to reach around 351,000 by 2045, town centre renewal and station-area intensification will focus higher density homes and jobs where rail and bus links are strongest, so investment strengthens high streets and neighbourhoods rather than outpacing them. Planned investment includes additional school places, expanded primary care, bus priority and mobility hubs, and new cycling and walking links tying into the Nickey Line and the Grand Union Canal towpaths.

Its shape and daily rhythms are set by two north to south rail corridors; the M1 and A41, with the A414 as the principal east to west spine linking towns across Hertfordshire and to nearby airports. It also connects with the Luton Travel to Work Area, reflecting commuting patterns that are strongly Hertfordshire facing, even with frequent rail into the capital. The West Coast Main Line serves Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring with direct services to London Euston and the Midlands, while Thameslink connects St Albans City and Harpenden into central London. Local stations at neighbourhood scale give fine-grained access for everyday trips, and peak services support frequent commuting. Orbital journeys are well served by the motorway network, with rapid access to Luton and Heathrow via the M1, M25 and rail interchanges. The M25 then forms the seam between North West and South West Hertfordshire, marking the point where day to day catchments tend to run across the county rather than into outer London. The challenge ahead for the new North West Hertfordshire authority will be to manage growth while protecting the area's countryside and ensuring all communities share in the benefits of change.

BOUNDARIES ALIGNED TO SIZE AND COMMUNITY FOOTPRINTS

This section sets out the modified proposal and explains how it differs from the base proposal, which retains existing district and borough boundaries and is set out in the Spine. We judge the modified arrangement to be the strongest solution for Hertfordshire, while recognising that the base 4UA configuration also meets the government criteria to a lesser degree. In summary, the modified configuration:

- Balances starting populations so the four authorities begin as equal partners.
- Provides a better aligned geographic fit that reflects how people live, travel and work.
- Offers the closest overall match to the government criteria, including population and functional geographies.

It is recognised that in order to seek starting populations for each unitary authority of close to 300,000 the proposal requires footprints that require some amendment to the existing district and borough boundaries. We note the Government's Guidance issued on 5 February 2025 that "Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered." We further note the guidance stated, "There will need to be a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for any proposals that involve boundary changes, or that affect wider public services, such as fire and rescue authorities, due to the likely additional costs and complexities of implementation." The explanation for the proposed changes is expanded on below, but it is our position that the proposed boundary changes do not add significant costs or complexity, in the context of the wider programme of aggregation and disaggregation of services that will be undertaken across the existing eleven Hertfordshire authorities. The proposed changes are internal to Hertfordshire and do not impact upon wider public services, or other geographical areas.

Following discussion with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), it is our position that the proposed boundary changes can simply be put in place through the Structural Changes Order which creates the new unitary authorities. It is noted that previous Structural Changes Orders included the list of existing wards or divisions which make up the new unitary authority, which means that there is a mechanism to make these changes through simple drafting of the legislation. We acknowledge the feedback

from MHCLG officials that there is a risk to this approach as it has not been tested previously, however our position is that there is a significantly greater risk and implication for the new unitary authorities of delaying these proposed boundary changes to a subsequent Principal Area Boundary Review (PABR) (the alternative mechanism for making the change). Within Hertfordshire we will be undertaking a significant programme of aggregation of existing district and borough council services and disaggregation of County Council services, with significant cost and capacity implications. We are also looking to take the opportunity to transform the delivery of our services, particularly by embedding new technology within the structures of the new unitary authorities. We hope to drive this change programme as efficiently and effectively as possible, to drive productivity and savings. If the four new unitary authorities are created on the existing district and borough footprint, this change and transformation programme will be compromised, as it may be more financially efficient to await the outcome of the PABR before undertaking this work, or alternatively if the work progresses there will be further disruption for the Central and East authorities and further aggregation and disaggregation of services after the PABR is undertaken and implemented. This prolongs the disruption of reorganisation, draws out the uncertainty for staff and councillors and will inevitably impact the new unitary authorities financially.

It is therefore our clear request to Government that the proposed boundary changes are included within the Structural Changes Order so that the new unitary authorities are able to 'go live' with their permanent footprint. We recognise that for a short time (approximately 11 months from May 2027 to April 2028) this could mean councillors from a predecessor authority being members of a different shadow authority to the majority of councillors they sit with, however this will affect a relatively small number of councillors and mechanisms will be put in place to help support those members and mitigate impact.

Summary

Under the modified proposal, Eastern Hertfordshire would include two areas separated from their previous district councils: the wards for the town of Royston and surrounding villages that are currently in North Herts, and the ward of Northaw and Cuffley, which is currently in Welwyn Hatfield borough. These areas fit more naturally within Eastern Hertfordshire than within the proposed Central Hertfordshire unitary area. Mid-2024 starting populations are approximately 290,000 in Eastern Hertfordshire and 321,000 in Central Hertfordshire. The modified configuration enables four authorities to start as equal partners, produces clearer and more coherent geographies for Central and Eastern Hertfordshire, and offers the closest match to the government criteria compared with the base configuration. Both the base and modified configurations are set out in the Spine. The following justification sets out the detailed geographic and place-based reasoning for these changes.

Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Royston

Royston and the surrounding wards sit more naturally within an authority aligned to the A10 corridor with its strong north to south links to London and Cambridge than to the A1 corridor that shapes Central Hertfordshire. The wards proposed to transfer are predominantly in and around Royston, reflecting the town's role as a hub for the northern part of the area. Historically a boundary town between Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, Royston sits at the meeting point of the A10 and A505, providing access across the county and the wider region. Commuting is reinforced by direct Great Northern services to London King's Cross and to Cambridge, reflecting the dominant north to south movement along the A10 corridor.

Transferring the Royston wards of Royston Heath, Royston Palace and Royston Meridian together with the adjacent rural wards of Ermine, Weston & Sandon and Arbury keeps the town and its hinterland intact and reflects established patterns of travel for work, learning, services and leisure. These wards together account for 25,428 residents on the 2022 mid-year estimates. Service and access patterns already look along the same corridor as East Hertfordshire and Broxbourne, which reduces cross-boundary friction and provides a clearer footprint for local services, commissioning and joint planning. The market town character, commuting flows and economic relationships align more closely with places in Eastern Hertfordshire than with those to the west. While the A505 provides an east to west connection, it is one of several lateral routes across the county and is not as central to movement and access as the dominant north to south routes.

It is acknowledged that whilst the proposal includes Arbury ward being part of the East unitary authority in order to balance population numbers, there is also an argument for Arbury to be part of the Central unitary authority due to its links to Baldock and the A1 corridor.

Northaw & Cuffley

Northaw and Cuffley is a ward with a population of approximately 5,700 residents and is at the very southern boundary of Welwyn Hatfield, as well as being immediately adjacent to both Broxbourne Borough and Hertsmere Borough. The B156 connects Northaw and Cuffley a few miles east to the A10. The village of Cuffley shares a doctor's surgery with the adjacent Broxbourne Borough village of Goffs Oak and the village hall is within the Borough of Broxbourne. Cuffley, Goffs Oak and Northaw share similar economic affluence and connections with Goffs Oak, and some residents from this part of Broxbourne Borough commute to work in central London from Cuffley station. Finally it should also be noted that from 1983 to 2024, Northaw and Cuffley were represented in Parliament by the MP for Broxbourne.

Public service arrangements in Hertfordshire

Four Councils for Hertfordshire provides a solid foundation for enhanced public sector delivery, flexibility to make change happen, alignment with communities and the flexibility to work with a range of public sector, private and community partners. The size, geography and diverse nature of Hertfordshire is reflected in the varied ways that local public services are configured on the ground. Some services operate on a county-wide footprint, some utilise a model of two large locality footprints, and others are based on localised delivery within particular districts and towns. Some strategic services now operate at a level above county administrative areas, and others are deeply embedded in neighbourhood levels. Given the different geographies, scale of the county and diversity of towns and villages, many services continue to operate through a county-wide service but with locally aligned teams.

The four councils proposal and a Hertfordshire Mayoral Strategic Authority recognises there will continue to be complexity and divergence in the organisational design and footprints of other public sector partners, but will seek to engage at the strategic level county-wide, where that can achieve the best outcomes, align closely with the crucial operational footprints of the health sector to ensure we meet the needs of vulnerable residents, and work closely with towns and neighbourhoods reflecting their different needs and opportunities.

The operational service design of public services does not remain static, and it is vital the new councils are designed to be flexible, agile and able to form deep partnerships. In recent months, several other public sector operational changes have been made including the plans to cluster Integrated Care Boards (ICB) into larger regional entities, at the same time, the NHS is strengthening neighbourhood delivery through Primary Care Networks and Neighbourhood Health Plans centred on neighbourhood health centres to develop tailored, preventative, personalised support, with active engagement from councils and local voluntary partners. This neighbourhood focus lends itself to a four councils model that can sustain consistent participation across multiple neighbourhood partnerships. Beyond health, there have been changes to the footprints of Job Centre Plus; and operational changes within Hertfordshire Constabulary to design a structure with two operational areas alongside paired district and borough policing structures. While the Government's devolution framework acts as a catalyst to reduce complexity by enabling co-terminus arrangements through partnership working, there is currently a plethora of very different public service footprints in Hertfordshire. Moving from the two tier system,

with 11 different councils being replaced by four unitary authorities, there is potential to strengthen the relationships and integration with a range of partners all of whom have their own footprint, offering clear interfaces to strategic bodies and close alignment with neighbourhood and place delivery.

For example, in relation to acute hospital care, Hertfordshire has two acute Trusts, North and East Herts Trust, and South West Herts Trust, which operate in those two localities. Many operational Adult Social Care services also operate on an east / west operational footprint providing alignment between services. In the design of the four council model, these operational geographies would remain through two unitary Councils operating alongside the NHS Trusts, and use of shared services where needed. There are examples from other parts of the region, where a health cluster such as the ICB arrangements in Bedfordshire work with four unitary authorities to organise and deliver services and where close working and experience could help inform local design.

Taking into account services used by many young people in Hertfordshire, there are four different Further Education colleges working in different geographic areas which would have a relationship with the new Strategic Authority and the relevant Council in their area(s).

This highlights the need for ongoing flexibility and agility, as Government considers the optimum service arrangements for a range of other public services outside the control of Council, and as the organisations themselves design and deliver services on locality at district or borough, town or neighbourhood level.

Key sector partnerships	Arrangements
University of Hertfordshire	Based in Hatfield across two campuses, this university has both a nationwide and local profile.
Royal Veterinary College (RVC)	The RVC operates two campuses, one in central London and one in Hawkshead Lane, Hatfield.
Further Education Colleges	Based on a model of four colleges that stretch across all four directions of Hertfordshire and each new unitary would host an FE college presence. • Oaklands College: Campuses in St Albans and Welwyn Garden City. • Hertford Regional College: Campuses in Broxbourne and Ware. • North Hertfordshire College: Campuses in Stevenage and Hitchin. • West Herts College: Campuses in Watford and Hemel Hempstead. Hertfordshire also hosts The Elstree Screen Arts Academy, a dedicated a university technical college focussed on the creative arts.
Acute Hospitals	Two NHS Trusts, covering North East and South West geographies. The four unitary model would mean that each Trust geography would work with two new unitaries.
Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust	Providing range of community-based health services focussing on both children's and adult services across Hertfordshire, with some services also provided to neighbouring services. The Trust works closely with Primary Care Networks and neighbourhood health centres through emerging Neighbourhood Health Plans to join up prevention and personalised care. Four councils can engage across multiple neighbourhood partnerships while maintaining clear lines into strategic geographies.
Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust	Providing mental health, forensic and learning disability services for children, young people, and adults in Hertfordshire but also into parts of Essex, Buckinghamshire and Norfolk.
Hertfordshire Constabulary	County wide police force that sub-divides the county into a East/West command structure with headquarters in Welwyn Garden City. Beneath this localised neighbourhood policing teams remain in place broadly corresponding to paired local district and borough areas.

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Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Key sector partnerships	Arrangements
Job Centre Plus	Hertfordshire and Essex governance, supported by local delivery teams.
Hertfordshire Futures (former Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP))	Working across the county, with a newly integrated status into Hertfordshire County Council.
Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)	A broad range of different arrangements with many VCS providers rooted in a particular town or location, some operating at district or borough level, or more broadly countywide.
Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue	29 fire stations are strategically placed across the county, with the service covering Hemel Hempstead, Stevenage and Watford, as well as St Albans and anticipated to be provided by the Strategic Authority.

ENABLING DEVOLUTION

Hertfordshire is ambitious about its future and proposes to work closely with Government and our communities to establish a Strategic Authority with a directly elected Mayor to achieve deep and lasting benefits for our residents and communities.

Adopting a four unitary model will support Hertfordshire in its ambition to secure a Strategic Authority for Hertfordshire and to move at pace toward a Mayoral model. Hertfordshire has just over 1,200,000 residents and generates around £49 billion in GVA. It is a substantial economy, with global strengths in creative and film industries, life sciences and pharmaceutical, space and defence, advanced manufacture, agricultural technology and professional services. Hertfordshire is at the heart of the UK Innovation Corridor, a £189bn GVA region of world-wide significance, with northern parts of the county well aligned with the cutting edge Oxford-Cambridge science clusters, strong connections to London, the UK's global powerhouse. The county is home to clear and distinct economic and place geographies, with strong north-south rail and road links connecting key towns with London, but also into different regional economies and economic clusters.

At the same time, the balance between prosperity and affordability is under strain. Median pay has lagged house price growth and there are pockets of deprivation in an otherwise strong set of outcomes, pointing to uneven access to opportunity and services. Demographic change will add pressure, with the 80+ population rising faster than the working age group to 2040, and different challenges impacting parts of the county, from the acute need for town centre regeneration, to unlocking more affordable homes, addressing skills gaps and extending opportunity, and considering the different transport needs across the county.

A model of having four locally rooted authorities, reflecting the strengths and opportunities in their communities and economies, with teams and capacity aligned to local priorities - from regeneration to SME growth, from sustainable transport to culture – will align local delivery with strategic priorities. A single spatial development strategy and investment pipeline can focus growth where it adds most value, protect what residents' treasure and provide certainty for investment. Four councils then translate countywide missions into programmes that reflect local priorities, keeping decisions close to communities and bringing schemes into delivery.
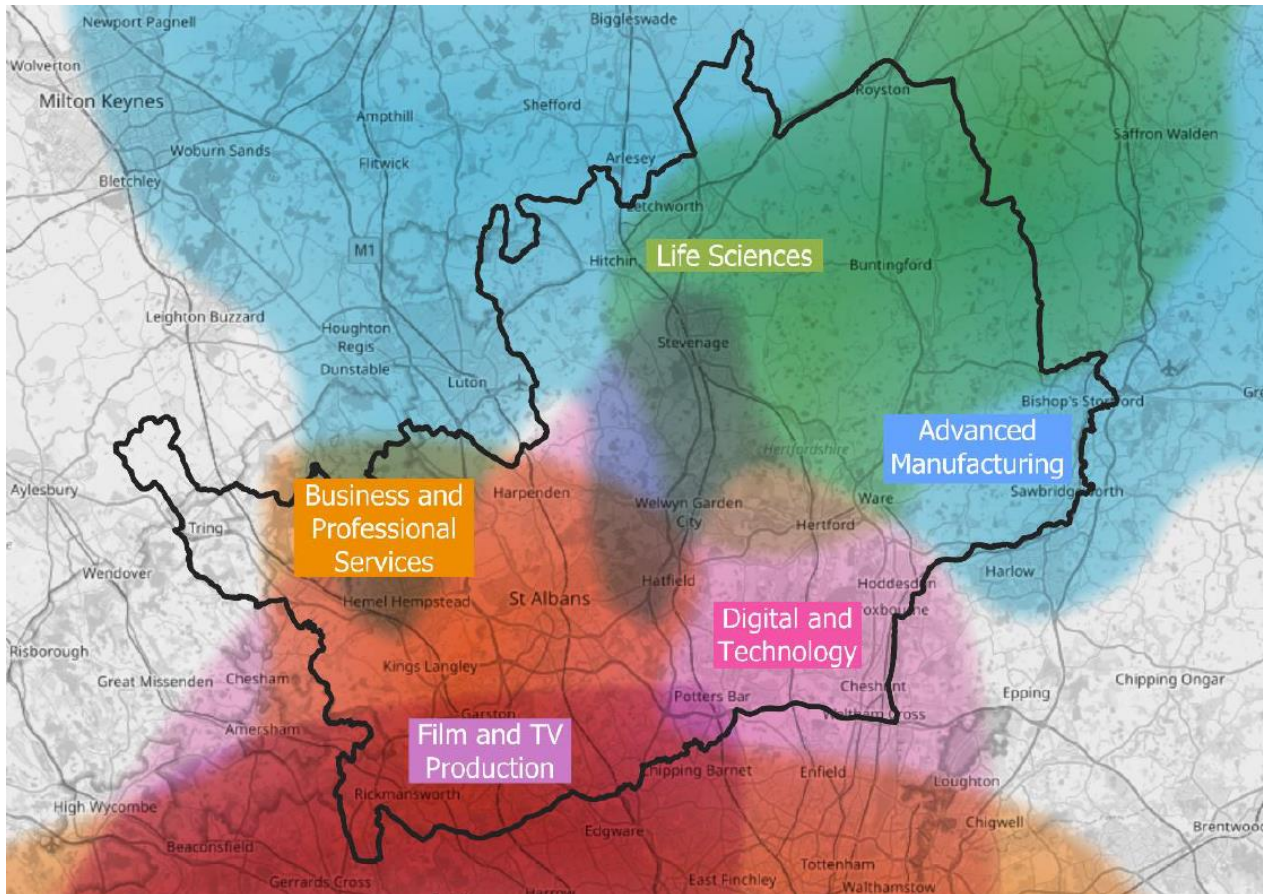
Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

The conditions that shape success differ across our four footprints and require local leadership, deep relationship with businesses and communities, and tailored plans to maximise the positive impacts for our communities. Central Hertfordshire brings university strengths, manufacturing assets, leading life science and defence research and development, as well as town centre renewal opportunities that benefit from innovation and links into the Oxford-Cambridge corridor. The east corridor blends market towns with rural neighbourhoods, and the planned growth of Harlow-Gilston. North West Hertfordshire combines high-performing centres, history, culture, and Hemel Garden Communities, with chalk streams and the Chilterns. South West Hertfordshire hosts a world-class screen and creative economy and a strong service base, with orbital travel patterns that will deliver further, studio-linked employment space, enable renewal of towns and benefit from fit-for-purpose transport. Only by working through four local, place based constituent authorities can a strategic tier fully realise this potential and turn countywide intent into credible, investible delivery in each place.

A four unitary model is the most complementary geography for this approach. Each council sits at around 300,000 people and offer a clear geography for investment, clear sponsorship of sites and centres, and practical accountability for outcomes.

This balance reflects how successful mayoral areas operate. Nationally, most combined authorities work with between three and ten constituent councils. Four partners of similar size align well with that pattern and help ensure balanced representation so no single voice overpowers the others. The strategic tier remains focused on countywide missions and multi-year funding, while four unitary councils keep delivery close to residents and employers. Together, this creates the conditions to raise ambition, speedy decisions and turn devolution into tangible benefits across Hertfordshire.

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Strategic Authority By Population and Constituent Council
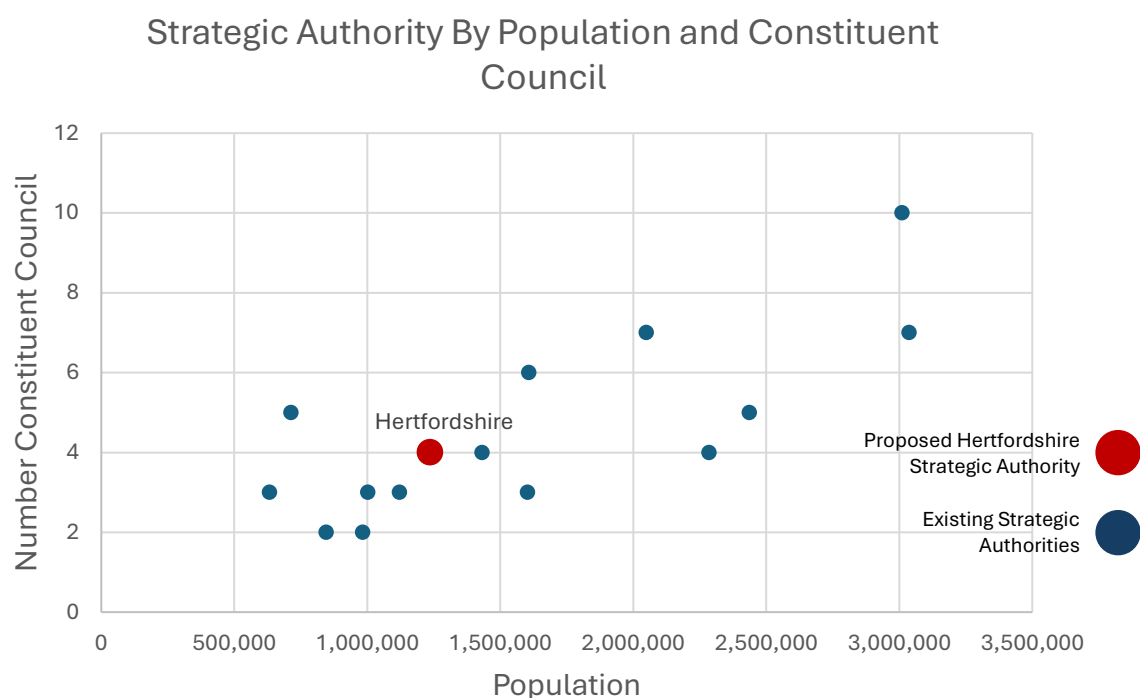
An Ambitious Agenda for Growth, Innovation & Opportunity

By pursuing a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Hertfordshire we will unlock the full range of benefits set out in the English Devolution White Paper. Our intent is to move at pace to Established Mayoral Authority status. This would enable an Integrated Settlement that brings transport, skills, housing and related budgets into a single multiyear pot, and open the door to trailblazer style enhancements where further funding and functions are devolved in areas of specific strength or need.

Using published information regarding South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority as a benchmark, an indicative 2025/26 annual total from its core devolved streams (the Devolution Investment Fund, the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement and the devolved adult skills budget) is an estimated £186 million, based on averages of published multi-year allocations. This illustration highlights the potential opportunity for Hertfordshire.

Case Study: Barnsley Pathways to Work, scaled through South Yorkshire
- *Barnsley's Pathways to Work created a place based model that links health, skills, and employment support to the realities of local labour markets. It identifies neighbourhoods of need, then builds personalised routes that combine clinical interventions where appropriate, employability support, and brokerage with local employers.*

- *South Yorkshire has scaled these principles through the Get South Yorkshire Working plan and a government backed inactivity trailblazer. The initial package is backed by about £18 million and is designed to work with more than 7,800 people in year one. The model aims to help up to 3,000 people into jobs or to stay in jobs, with a wider ambition shaped by the Barnsley model to support s residents into work over four years. The plan sets out four pathways, Prevent and Protect, Engage and Empower, Secure and Sustain, and Thrive and Elevate, and is governed jointly by the Mayoral Combined Authority, the Integrated Care Board, and local councils.*

- *Investment is targeted at places of need with a clear purpose linked to local sectors and the job market, and progress is tracked through published outcomes and metrics. The model shows how targeted, place based commissioning can reduce inactivity and support business growth at the same time.*

Strategic priorities and the determination to secure better results for communities is not solely a role for the Strategic Authority, as empowered local councils are well placed to use their resources of land, funding, team capacity, partnerships with private sector organisations as well as the community to secure delivery in their area. Whilst priorities will be set through key local strategies and refined by an elected Mayor and local leaders, there are clear headline contributors to growth that will stimulate the economy and enable further localised investment in homes, jobs and skills:

- **Build more sustainable homes that people can afford**
The country, and Hertfordshire, faces a housing crisis. The high housing costs are impacting on young people and the working age population. In Hertfordshire 16,047 residents are on waiting lists for affordable housing, and 2,523 face the insecurity of living in temporary accommodation. House prices are at an average of £534k. This impacts our communities, wellbeing and our economy, and each of the four unitary authorities can work with partners and their communities to develop responses to that best meet local needs, coupled with strategic support and potentially funding brokered with a Strategic Authority. Additional Mayoral Powers, a Strategic Partnership with Homes England and access to the £39bn additional Homes England funding for the next decade, will scale up the delivery social housing, aligned with other key worker and affordable housing and design standards that ensure new homes are part of sustainable communities.

- **Innovation-led growth in key sectors**
Concentrate support on key growth sectors, such as space and defence, life sciences, film and television production, logistics and clean energy. With overall direction set in partnership with a new Strategic Authority, the four unitary councils can respond through local tools such land availability and search, inward investment, skills programmes, social value and other interventions to help unlock growth, but also design local schemes so that t local communities benefit directly from jobs, skills and opportunities.

- **Skills and opportunity in every place**
 As we look to the future, it is vital all our communities benefit from being home to cutting edge sectors. Working locally in four unitary areas means the opportunity to co-design courses with employers and offer localised plans to address local demand and remove barriers such as travel, or caring responsibilities so people can start, progress and stay in good jobs.

Working with key local partners and communities, each council will turn them into local plans, bring forward projects with a Strategic Authority, to help secure faster progress on homes, jobs, and skills that benefits communities.

Case Study: Scaling affordable homes through mixed-tenure delivery in Stevenage
- *Stevenage Borough Council is running a housing development programme that puts social and affordable homes first, using private sale and selective land release to cross-subsidise new council housing. More than 620 homes are complete, including 529 council lets of which nearly 100 are let as supported homes. The programme also includes renewal at The Oval, one of the town's original neighbourhood centres, and new independent living that frees up larger family homes.*

- *The funding model blends external grant with reinvested returns. £41,750,000 has been secured in grants, including £20,420,000 for The Oval. The programme has realised £21,200,000 from sales and £7,080,000 from land disposals, and surpluses are recycled into further affordable delivery and the Housing Revenue Account.*

- *Momentum and timeline are clear. A further 284 homes are on site or contracted toward starting on site, tracking toward 899 completions by 2028 and an ambition of 1,000 by 2030. A major strategic land receipt is programmed for January 2027 to support wider community investment.*

- *The takeaway for a wider footprint is direct. A council-led, mixed-tenure approach can deliver social value at pace and at scale; with a larger unitary footprint and the strategic backing of a mayor's devolved powers, this model could be replicated across Hertfordshire to accelerate high quality, affordable homes. Similar approaches can be brokered via land use and Joint Venture partnerships with Registered Social Landlords, to help deliver much-needed housing.*

SCALE, EFFICIENCY AND CAPACITY (MHCLG CRITERION 2)

UNITARY SCALE & POPULATION SIZE

The English Devolution White Paper set a guiding principle of around 500,000 residents where practicable. However, we believe the right scale for Hertfordshire is determined by how places work, not by a single headline number. Instead, the four unitary model provides clear evidence based reasons that are rooted in place and long-term practicality, and diverge together from differing degrees to reach this figure. The population profiles for each footprint are set out in the table below, using mid-2024 baselines and 2045 projections.

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Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire
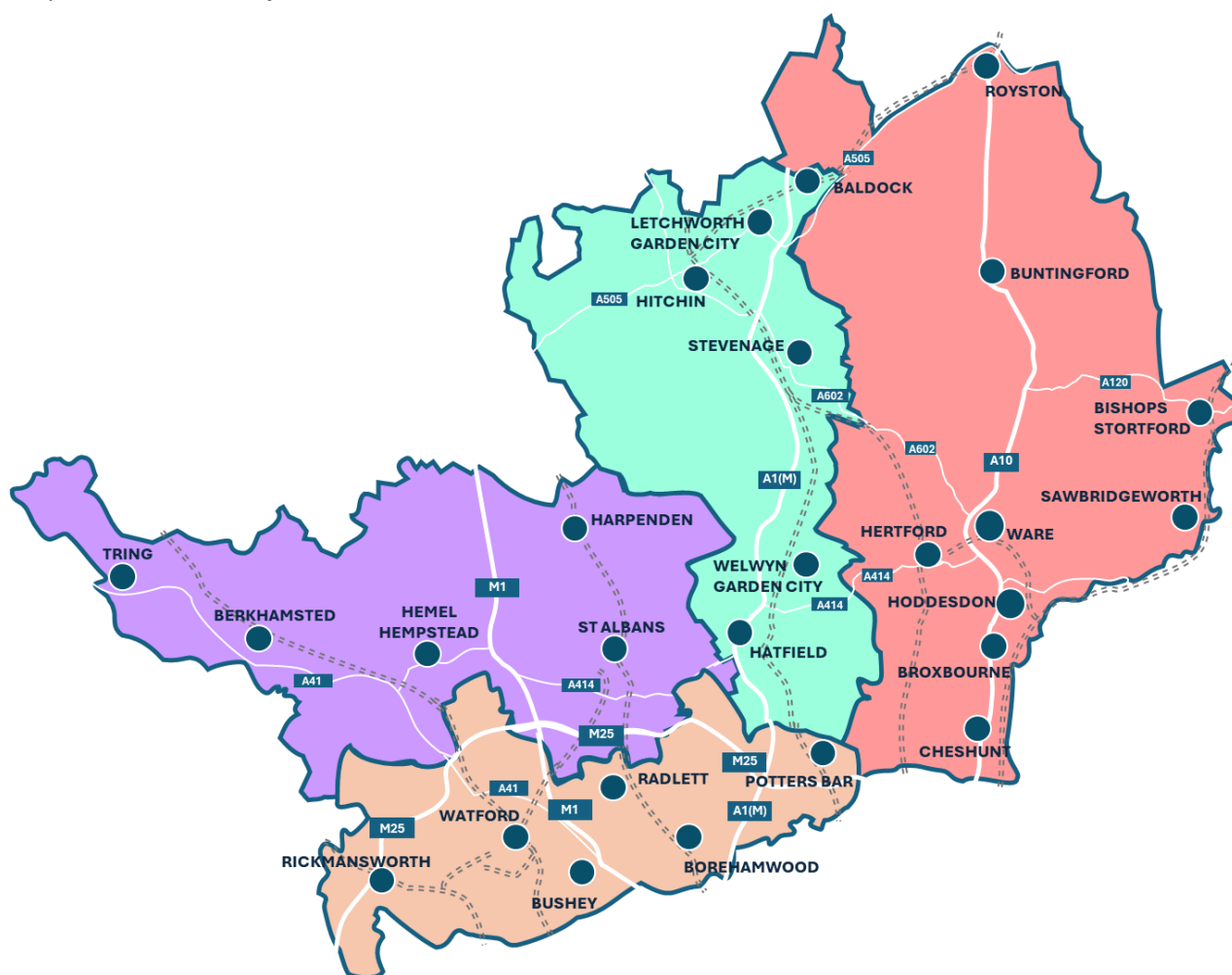
Local authority	Geography (existing districts and boroughs plus boundary changes)	Population (mid-2024)	Population (2045)
North West Hertfordshire	**Dacorum, St Albans**	**312,432**	**351,000**
South West Hertfordshire	**Hertsmere, Three Rivers, Watford**	**313,190**	**371,000**
Central Hertfordshire	**North Herts, Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield** *minus: Royston Heath, Royston Palace, Royston Meridian, Ermine, Weston & Sandon, Arbury (NHDC) and Northaw & Cuffley (WHDC)*	**320,795**	**391,000**
Eastern Hertfordshire	**Broxbourne, East Herts** *plus: Royston Heath, Royston Palace, Royston Meridian, Ermine, Weston & Sandon, Arbury (NHDC) and Northaw & Cuffley (WHDC)*	**289,774**	**366,000**

Our proposition prioritises three primary reasons that together show why four unitaries is the right scale for Hertfordshire.
- They are designed around natural geography, place and communities that make sense for Hertfordshire.
- They allow for growth over time, adopting footprints that do not dilute place identity and democratic proximity in the decades to come.
- They match or exceed the size and scale of many established unitary authorities, which provides a tangible and replicable blueprint.
- They correspond with sector analysis from the District Councils Network which shows that there is no correlation between a council's size and either its financial sustainability, or its outcomes for residents.

This configuration keeps identity and accountability close to communities while ensuring the capability to deliver the full range of local services and invest for the long term.

Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Designed around natural geography, the four footprints reflect how Hertfordshire actually works. Evidence outlined in the Implication for Place section of this proposal, alongside wider analysis, establishes a clear argument for four distinct places in Hertfordshire. Organising services to these everyday maps lets partners align investment by place, sequence regeneration, housing and transport programmes sensibly, and lock local plans to infrastructure delivery. Moving from 11 councils to four is a significant simplification, and eliminates disjointed service delivery while better retaining place identity. It provides the robustness of scale alongside the flexibility to deliver and transform services. Where a Strategic Authority is established, these four councils provide complementary scale. The strategic tier can lead on key strategic issues such as strategic planning, transport, economic growth which should be done once across Hertfordshire, while the four unitaries lead integrated local delivery and place stewardship.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to design authorities that are the best fit not only now, but over the next 50 years. On historic local plan delivery alone, Hertfordshire's population could reach at least 1,500,000 by 2045. Planning reform that accelerates plan making and housing delivery could plausibly push this towards about 1,700,000 in the same timeframe. This starting scale preserves local connection and the capability for complex services, and it remains coherent as growth materialises. By 2045 each council is projected to include a population of at least 350,000. The model is sized to absorb growth rather than be reshaped by it, preventing a drift to large and remote organisations as populations rise.

Comparisons with other unitary authorities, alongside London and metropolitan boroughs, reinforce this perspective. Councils at a similar scope and scale provide a tangible and replicable blueprint for success. The experience of these councils shows that capability, financial resilience and clear local leadership can be combined without sacrificing proximity to communities, and that scale alone does not determine performance.

Proposed Unitary Authority	English unitary authorities (62)	London boroughs (32)	Metropolitan boroughs (36)
Central Hertfordshire (320,795)	19th largest	12th	14th
South West Hertfordshire (313,190)	20th	14th	16th
North West Hertfordshire (312,432)	20th	14th	16th
Eastern Hertfordshire (289,774)	23rd	17th	20th

As set out above, national comparisons place four Hertfordshire unitaries in the upper third by population when set against English unitaries, and broadly mid-sized when viewed alongside London and metropolitan boroughs. This is further evidenced by the recent District Councils Network analysis on the relevance of scale, both in terms of cost and performance. Their analysis shows that of all existing single tier authorities, only 12 would be above the guiding principle of 500,000 population set out in the English Devolution White Paper.

Number of current councils by population range
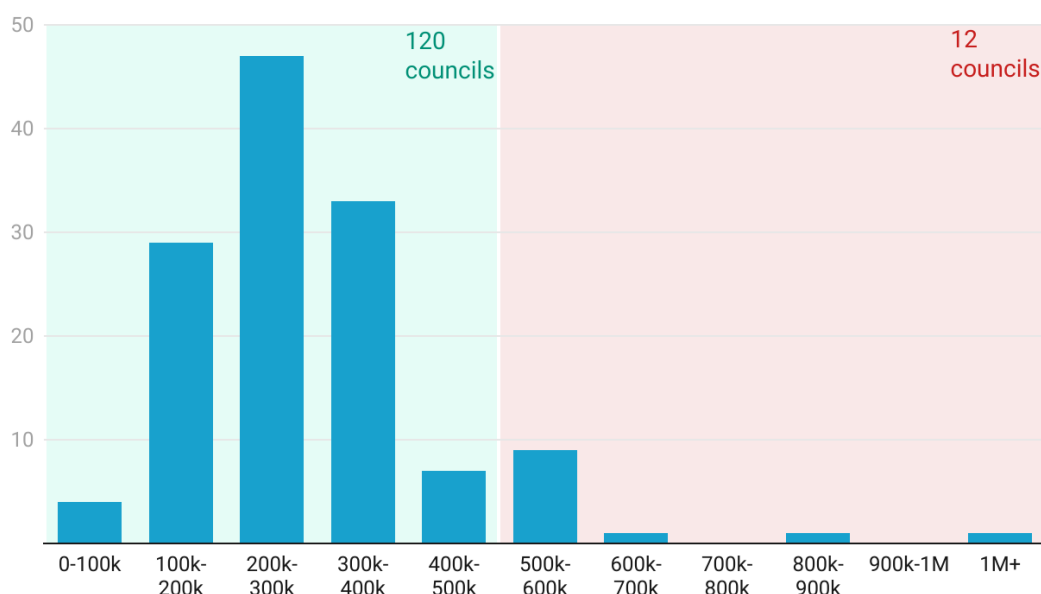
Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

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Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Locally, the same pattern holds. Read together on the map above, neighbouring authorities span compact urban unitaries through to larger county-scale bodies. The model advocated here sits comfortably within that spread, aligning with the scale at which partners plan for housing, transport and growth. Near neighbours at similar size, such as Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes, offer direct operational comparators in the sub-region, demonstrating how councils of this scale integrate prevention, neighbourhood services and growth delivery while sustaining clear local leadership.

To the east, the Greater Essex submissions as part of the Devolution Priority Programme set out proposals for three to five unitary councils, with populations ranging from 325,609 to 729,062. Our proposal is broadly similar in scale to the Essex five-unitary business case.

	Authority	Mid 2024 Population Estimate
1	Bedford Borough Council	194,976
2	Buckinghamshire	578,772
3	Central Bedfordshire	315,877
4	Luton	239,090
5	Milton Keynes	305,884
6	North Northamptonshire	373,871
7	West Northamptonshire	439,811
8	Hillingdon	329,185
9	Harrow	270,724
10	Barnet	405,050
11	Enfield	327,434
12	Waltham Forest	279,737
13	Redbridge	321,231
14	Havering	276,274
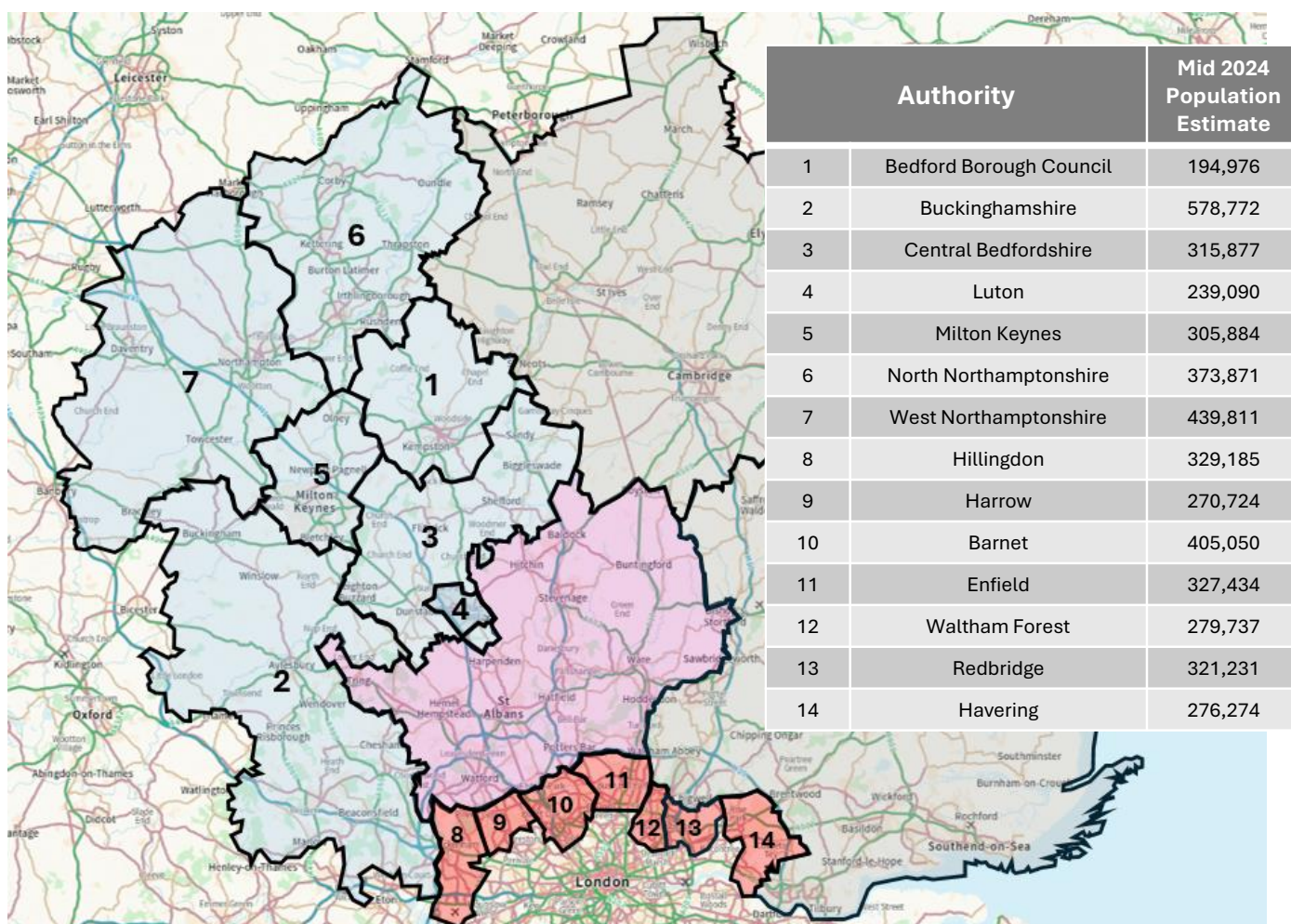
Sector analysis from the District Councils' Network (DCN) tested whether council population is linked to value for money, financial sustainability and service delivery. It compared all 132 English single tier councils using published datasets and regression analysis, controlling for factors such as deprivation and labour costs. In short:

- There is no evidence that councils above 500,000 deliver better value for money, stronger financial sustainability or improved outcomes, and no basis to assume smaller unitaries are less efficient or effective.
- Most relationships between population size and financial or performance outcomes are weak or non-existent.
- Where a relationship appears, modelled outcomes tend to be stronger around the national median of about 275,000, which aligns with the proposed Hertfordshire range of 285,000 to 316,000.

Total revenue expenditure on all services per head of population (£)

Covering councils with populations over ~157,000. This range covers all the proposed new councils being created under LGR.
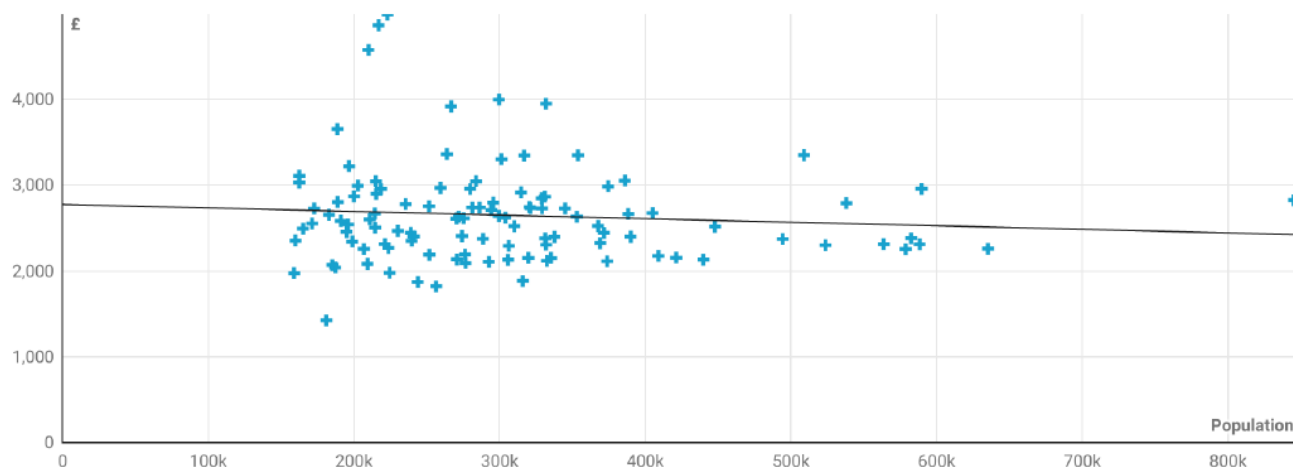
Total revenue expenditure is spending on all services, per head of population, including employee costs and running expenses | Data is missing from 7 councils | Technical definition: Adjusted R^2 < 0 | p = 0.369 and R^2 = 0.007

Chart: DCN • Source: LG Inform • Created with Datawrapper

Across England's single tier councils, the link between population size and value for money is weak. Total spend per resident is broadly flat across most sizes and shows an upward trend among councils beyond the mid-300,000s, a tendency rather than a fixed threshold. Larger councils have been more likely to require Exceptional Financial Support, and average Band D bills are higher among councils above 500,000. On performance, most indicators show no meaningful relationship with population, and where a link appears results tend to cluster around the national median scale.

With the evidence in hand, Hertfordshire should design to place, function and sensible geographies, given there no are clear links between financial and service efficiency. Four place-based unitaries of 285,000 to 316,000 population keep leadership and accountability close, and provide the capacity to plan growth and reform.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

CONTEXT

All eleven authorities in Hertfordshire have worked together with an external consultancy to develop a shared financial model and set of assumptions. The process that has been followed and the detail behind these assumptions is set out in detail within the accompanying "spine" document and technical appendix.

Important contextual points to note are:
- Chief Financial Officers of each organisation have used best endeavours to follow a robust methodology and to develop a comprehensive and reasonable set of assumptions for the purposes of assessing the likely impacts, costs and savings arising from local government reorganisation. Significant uncertainties remain in several key areas and further due diligence is required on elements of our proposal, and so the results should be seen as an indication of future impacts rather than a firm prediction.
- Modelling assumptions have been accepted by all eleven organisations, including the use of ranges in key areas as detailed separately.
- The potential impacts of the Fair Funding Review (FFR) have not been reflected in the financial model. The model also assumes no business rates growth or increases in core government grant funding beyond 2027/28. Although CFOs conducted extensive due diligence and engaged a third-party organisation to assess likely effects, the findings were unreliable due to conflicting data and government indications that modelling assumptions will change before FFR is finalised. Initial analysis based on current assumptions suggests FFR will likely reduce overall revenue funding and alter its distribution across Hertfordshire over the medium term, potentially affecting the sustainability of future unitary authorities.
- The scope of our modelling includes financial benefits and savings that arise directly and causally from the process of reorganisation; for example, removal of duplicate management posts and savings from having fewer elections. As a partnership we have not modelled any additional benefits or savings from additional

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transformation by new authorities once they have been created, which would have a further impact on the performance of new unitary authorities in practice.

- Our baseline modelling assumption is that new authorities will harmonise the District and Borough element of Council Tax at the taxbase-weighted average and then apply annual uplifts in line with government assumptions on funding. In reality the levels of annual council tax increase will be a decision for future authorities.

HEADLINE RESULTS – FOUR UNITARY AUTHORITIES

The modelling for the LGR submission has been completed with a range of costs for Social Care management costs and ICT costs which have provided a high cost and low cost scenario. The four unitary submission has focused on the lower cost scenario as this more in line with:

- Smaller unitary ICT costs without a combined HR and finance system such as SAP.
- Smaller social care management costs based on the Impower data comparators.

	Higher cost scenario	Lower cost scenario
MTFS – outperforms the two-tier baseline in	2034/35	2032/33
One-off investment costs required to deliver LGR	£120m	£97m
Annual recurring NET savings from LGR by year 5	£11m	£23m
Cumulative net savings from LGR after 5 years	(£89m)	(£15m)
Cumulative net savings from LGR after 10 years	(£1m)	£124m
Payback on LGR savings in	2038/39	2033/34

This summary scorecard shows the overall aggregate performance of the four unitary option. A further breakdown of the performance of individual authorities within this option is included later in this section. On an overall basis the headline results are:

- The four unitary authority option "outperforms" the two-tier baseline in 2032/33 in the lower-cost scenario and 2034/35 in the higher cost scenario. This means that the cumulative net savings from LGR alongside the capacity to raise additional council tax, if future authorities choose to do so, mean that there is greater financial capacity within the system at this point than would have been the case without LGR.
- Estimated up-front investment costs to deliver the four unitary option range from £97m under the lower cost scenario to £120m under the higher-cost scenario. A further breakdown of these cost estimates is provided below.
- By year 5 after LGR, assumed here to be 2032/33, all costs and savings from LGR are fully "phased-in". At this point the four unitary authority model will deliver total recurring annual savings of £11m to £23m split between four authorities.
- Adding up all costs and savings from LGR on a cumulative basis, after five years the three unitary option will still have between £15m and £89m of investment costs "pay off" with these recurring annual savings.
- After ten years, the four unitary model will achieve a total saving of £124m under the lower-cost scenario and will only just be approaching the point of payback in the higher-cost scenario.
- Excluding council tax and focusing just on the "payback" from the costs of investing in LGR, this option "pays back" in 2033/34 (six years after LGR) in the lower-cost scenario, or 2038/39 (eleven years after LGR) in the lower-cost scenario.

NEW UNITARY AUTHORITIES – MODELLED BUDGETS AND FUNDING POSITION FOR YEAR ONE (2028/29)

The graphs below show the anticipated year one budget for each proposed new unitary authority, excluding the initial costs and savings from LGR. On current assumptions and to different extents, new authorities will begin with opening surpluses or deficits based on modelled demand and service expenditure, the likely funding of each area and the capacity of each area to generate council tax.

Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

As noted above, this modelling does not reflect the future impact of the Fair Funding Review, which is likely to change both the quantum and distribution of resource within Hertfordshire.

YEAR 1 BUDGET AND FUNDING – 4 WEST

4 WEST - FY 2028/29 budget and funding position (£millions)
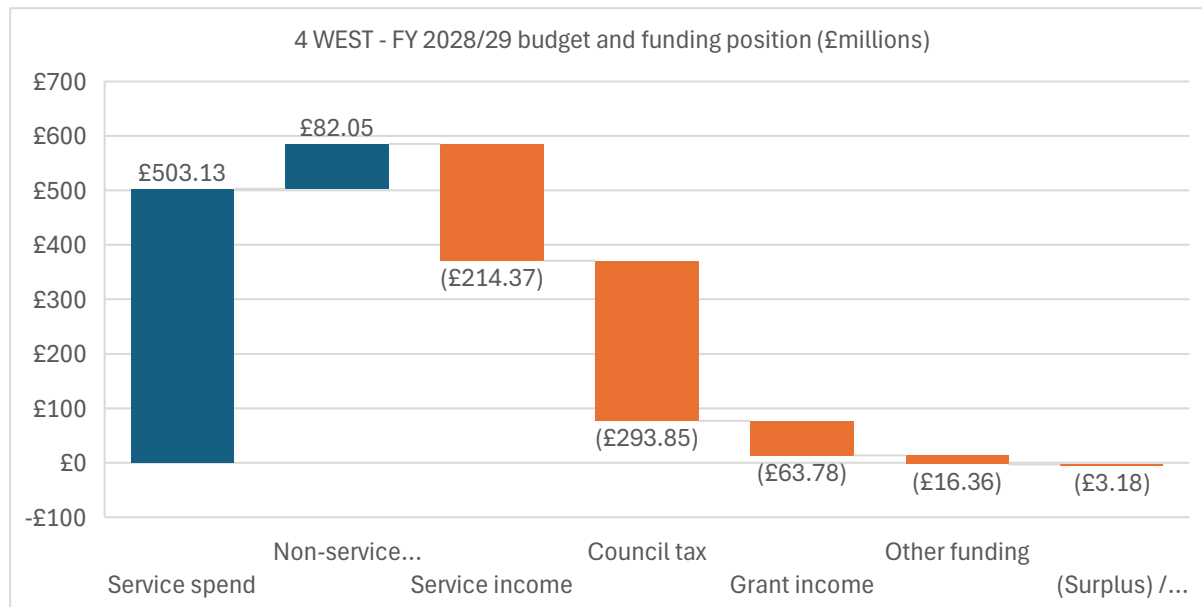
YEAR 1 BUDGET AND FUNDING – 4 SOUTH-WEST

4 SOUTH WEST - FY 2028/29 budget and funding position (£millions)

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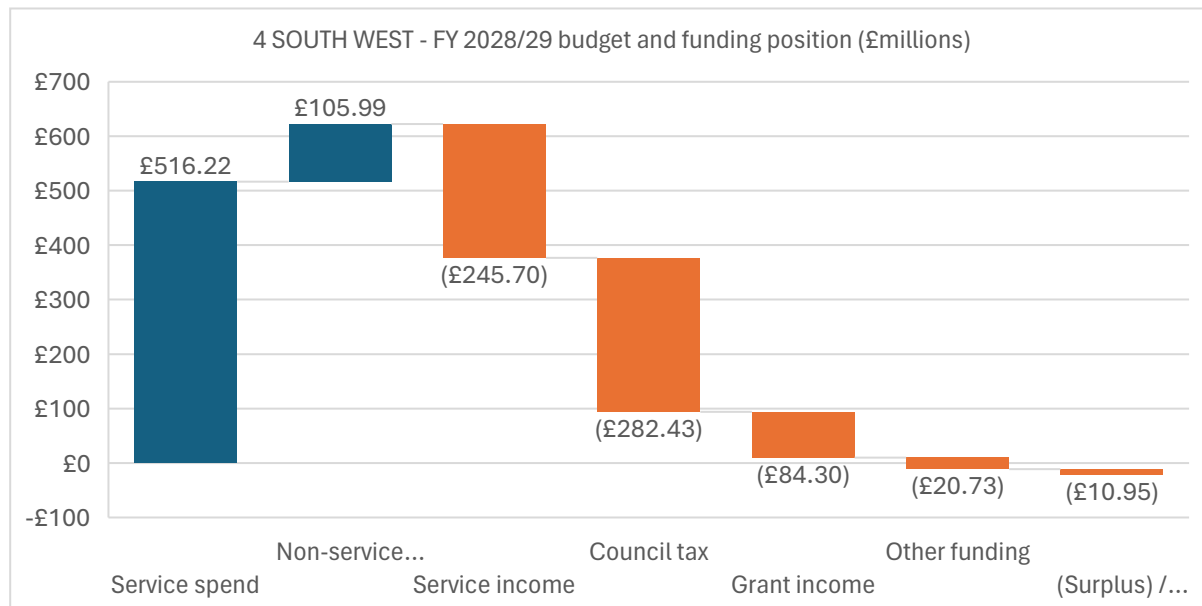
YEAR 1 BUDGET AND FUNDING – 4 CENTRAL

4 CENTRAL - FY 2028/29 budget and funding position (£millions)

Waterfall chart values:
- Service spend: £572.62
- Non-service...: £93.81
- Service income: (£243.93)
- Council tax: (£266.87)
- Grant income: (£115.75)
- Other funding: (£17.89)
- (Surplus) /...: £21.99
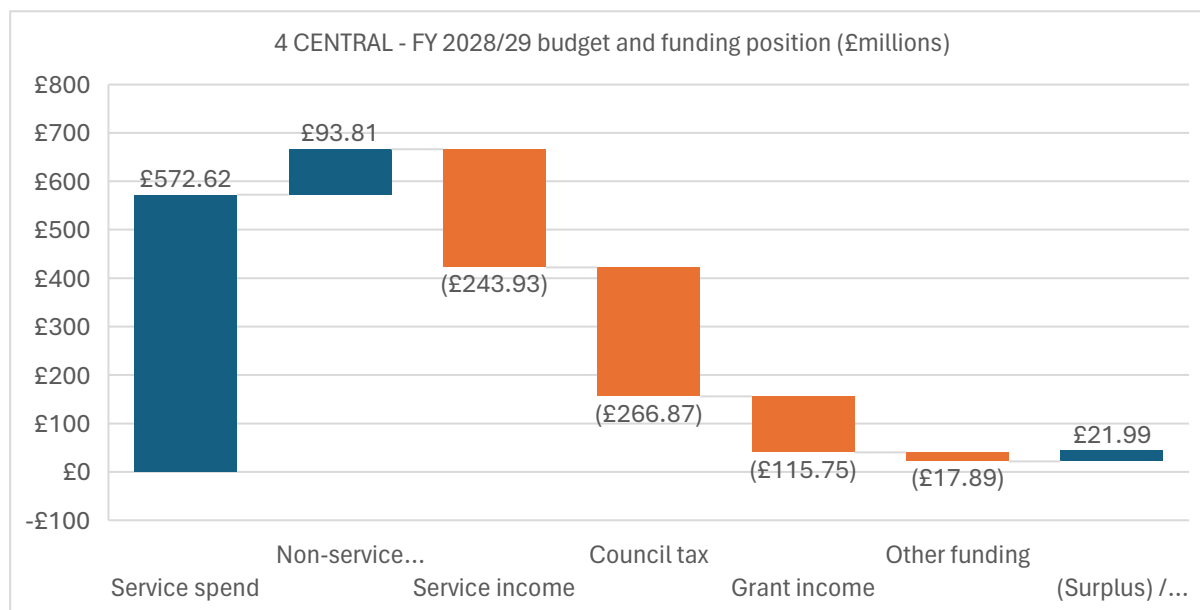
YEAR 1 BUDGET AND FUNDING – 4 EASTERN

4 EAST - FY 2028/29 budget and funding position (£millions)

Waterfall chart values:
- Service spend: £446.71
- Non-service...: £75.40
- Service income: -£193.50
- Council tax: -£263.97
- Grant income: -£68.50
- Other funding: -£16.58
- (Surplus) /...: -£20.44

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PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE TWO-TIER BASELINE OVER TIME

Four unitary authorities - lower-cost scenario
Annual budget gap (£ millions) - change from two-tier system

Four unitary authorities - higher-cost scenario
Annual budget gap (£ millions) - change from two-tier system

These two graphs show the in-year difference from the two-tier baseline that is delivered by LGR under this option. The modelled two-tier baseline is shown as zero, and the estimated impacts of LGR are shown as increases or (decreases) from that baseline. The key finding is that despite significant up-front costs, implementing this option would make Hertfordshire better off overall than the two-tier baseline in both the lower and higher-cost scenarios:

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Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

- **LGR costs** – this line adds together one-off costs (e.g. programme management) and recurring costs (e.g. duplicating management teams for social care). The majority of one-off investment costs will be incurred in the first year of LGR in 2028/29, and after five years only recurring elements of cost remain.
- **LGR savings** – this line shows the total recurring savings that are delivered by LGR (e.g. by removing duplication). These savings are higher than recurring costs so that a net annual saving is generated.
- **Additional CTAX capacity** – this line shows the extent to which future unitary authorities would be able to raise additional council tax over and above the two-tier baseline should they wish to do so. This will be a decision for future authorities themselves.
- **Annual total** – this line shows the aggregate movement from the two-tier baseline forecast under this option, adding up all of the above.

As set out in the summary table above, adding up positive and negative movement from the baseline over time means that, overall, Hertfordshire would be better off as a result of this option in 2032/33 in the lower-cost scenario and 2034/35 in the higher-cost scenario.

MEDIUM-TERM POSITION OF INDIVIDUAL UNITARY AUTHORITIES OVER TIME

Cumulative net budget deficit (surplus) in 2032/33 (five years after vesting day) (£m)
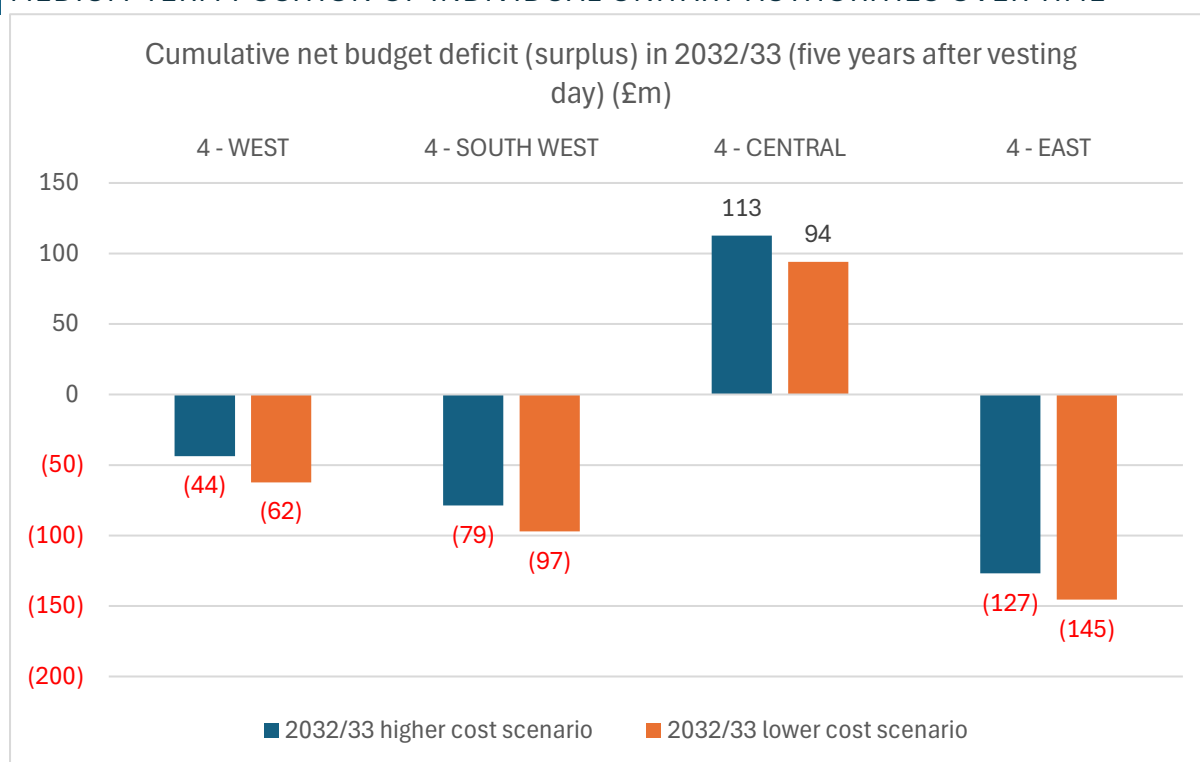
This graph combines all baseline modelling assumptions including inflation, assumed council tax increases and the impacts of LGR to show the cumulative net budget position for each unitary authority after the first five years of LGR.

The set of baseline assumptions that we have used indicate that three of the four unitary authorities will be in a surplus position after this period, with increases in Council Tax assumed to be at 4.99 % (2.90% Council tax + 2% adult social care precept) in line with government funding assumptions. In our baseline assumptions this increase drives higher funding than the cost of services as driven by inflation, combined with the investment costs of delivering LGR and resulting savings.

However, on current assumptions 4 Central would begin with a £22m budget deficit driven primarily by a combination of high demand for cost-intensive services which is not balanced by the ability of the area to raise revenue locally alongside the likely level of grant funding. With the additional implementation costs of LGR loaded on top, the net savings delivered

by LGR for this authority and assumed council tax raises would not be sufficient to overcome this challenging opening position within the medium-term.

Further sensitivities have been modelled to test this position, and existing surpluses will be quickly eroded if, for example:

- The significant savings planned in the 2025-26 to 2027-28 period (pre-vesting day) are not delivered in full, contributing to a more challenging opening position for new authorities.
- Inflation occurs at a higher rate than is assumed in our modelling.
- New authorities decide to increase council tax at a lower rate than the default assumed here, which is in line with government assumptions on future funding.
- There is any slippage in delivering the anticipated benefits from LGR.
- Further unexpected shocks occur.

The surpluses shown here for three of the four unitary authorities indicate that there will be some level of resilience in the event of any (or a combination) of the above occurring in these areas, although 4 Central is unlikely to be viable on current assumptions without further interventions.

Firstly, the model, although developed, has not considered a number of options that the new unitaries would consider such as transformation, efficiency, additional business rates growth. This is explored below in the 'additional levers to improve financial sustainability' section and highlights the various options available to make sure the 4 Central is sustainable.

Secondly, the model has assumed that circa 28% of the 2025/26 Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) net expenditure relating to resources (finance, ICT etc), central (apprentice levy, contingency) and capital financing costs would be in the central unitaries net expenditure, based on 2025/26 assumed overall weighted funding proportions. These costs will require further analysis as service design/ HCC balance sheet analysis evolves, but taking 3% of these HCC costs equates to circa £5Million in 2025/26 prices.

As noted above, this analysis does not estimate the impact of the fair funding review, which may change the distribution and quantum of resource in Hertfordshire and may affect the viability of future unitary authorities.

COSTS AND SAVINGS FROM LGR

4 unitary authorities - lower cost scenario
Cumlative net costs (savings) from LGR (£millions)

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Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire
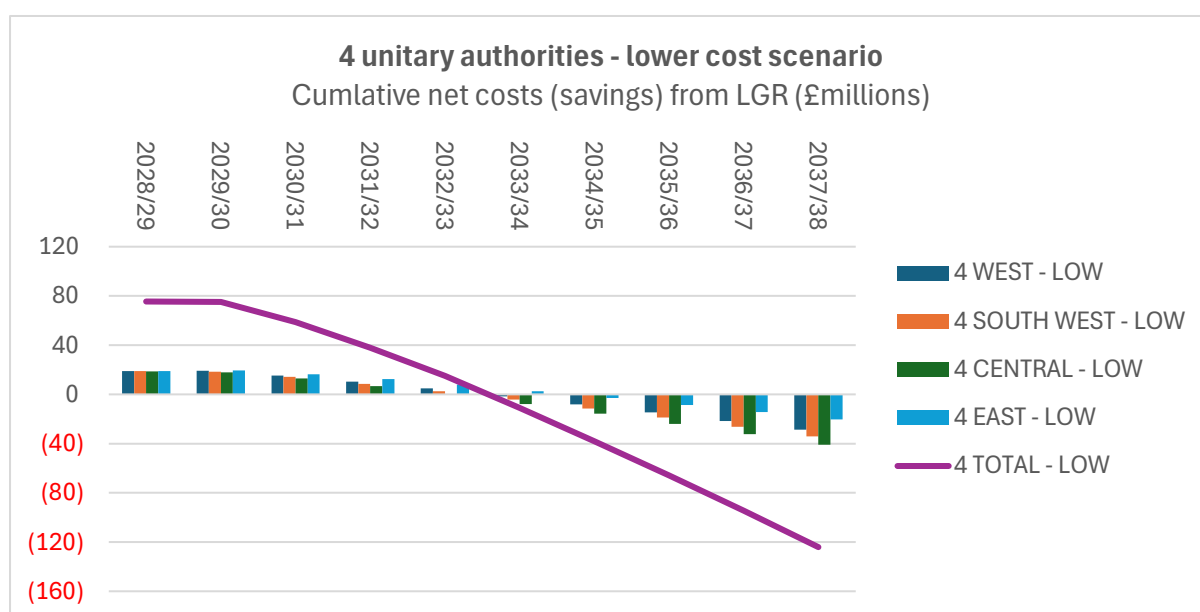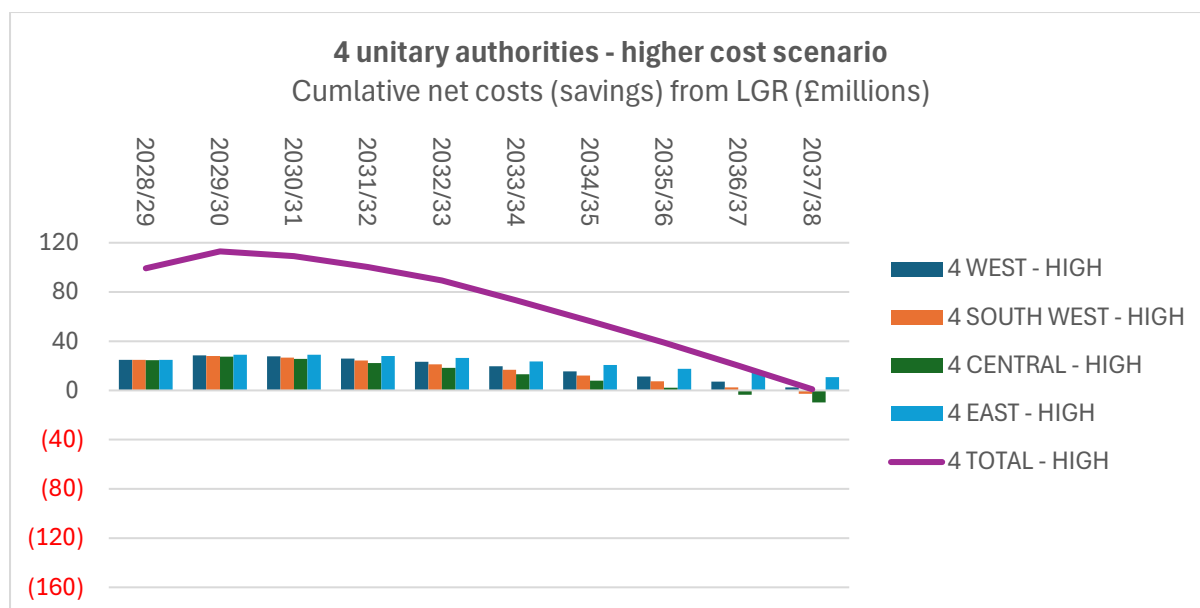
These graphs show cumulative net costs and savings from LGR over time for individual unitary authorities, with detailed assumptions included below.

CUMULATIVE NET COSTS / (SAVINGS) FROM LGR – HIGHER COST SCENARIO

£m	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38
4 WEST - HIGH	25	29	28	26	23	20	16	11	7	3
4 SOUTH WEST - HIGH	25	28	27	24	21	17	12	7	2	(3)
4 CENTRAL - HIGH	25	27	26	22	18	13	8	2	(4)	(10)
4 EASTERN - HIGH	25	29	29	28	26	24	21	18	14	11
4 TOTAL - HIGH	99	113	109	100	89	73	56	39	20	1

CUMULATIVE NET COSTS / (SAVINGS) FROM LGR – LOWER COST SCENARIO

£m	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38
4 WEST - LOW	19	19	15	10	5	(2)	(8)	(15)	(22)	(29)
4 SOUTH WEST - LOW	19	19	14	9	3	(4)	(11)	(19)	(26)	(34)
4 CENTRAL - LOW	19	18	13	7	(0)	(8)	(16)	(24)	(32)	(41)
4 EASTERN - LOW	19	19	16	12	8	3	(3)	(9)	(14)	(20)
4 TOTAL - LOW	75	75	59	38	15	(11)	(38)	(66)	(95)	(124)

LGR COST AND SAVINGS DETAILED ASSUMPTIONS

The table below shows cost and savings assumptions in detail, identifying the areas in which a range has been accepted by partners. For further detail see appendix A in the accompanying "spine" document.

Assumption	LGR costs and savings (£ m)									
	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38
One off-costs										
IT disaggregation (HIGH)	34.9	10.2	5.8	4.4	4.4					
IT disaggregation (LOW)	21.3	6.2	3.5	2.7	2.7					
IT consolidation	18.7									

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Programme management	16.5								
Contract novation and renegotiation	4.4								
Estates and facilities - reconfiguration	1.4	1.4							
Communication and rebranding	1.3								
Staff relocation	1.9								
Specialist support and advice	5.5								
Transition cost - redundancies	5.6	1.9	1.9						
Total one-off costs (HIGH)	**90.2**	**13.4**	**7.6**	**4.4**	**4.4**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**
Total one-off costs (LOW)	**76.5**	**9.4**	**5.4**	**2.7**	**2.7**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**
Recurring costs									
Additional costs of scale	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Diseconomies of scale (HIGH)	18.3	18.3	18.3	18.3	18.3	18.3	18.3	18.3	18.3	18.3
Diseconomies of scale (LOW)	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.1
Total recurring costs (HIGH)	**18.3**	**18.3**	**18.3**	**18.3**	**18.3**	**18.3**	**18.3**	**18.3**	**18.3**	**18.3**
Total recurring costs (LOW)	**8.1**	**8.1**	**8.1**	**8.1**	**8.1**	**8.1**	**8.1**	**8.1**	**8.1**	**8.1**
Recurring savings									
Staff savings	(6.3)	(12.1)	(18.2)	(18.5)	(18.9)	(19.3)	(19.7)	(20.1)	(20.5)	(20.9)
Democratic and governance reorganisation	(0.7)	(1.4)	(2.4)	(2.4)	(2.4)	(2.4)	(2.4)	(2.4)	(2.4)	(2.4)
Direct cost savings	(2.2)	(4.5)	(9.2)	(10.7)	(12.2)	(12.6)	(13.0)	(13.5)	(13.9)	(14.3)
Total recurring savings	**(9.1)**	**(18.0)**	**(29.8)**	**(31.6)**	**(33.5)**	**(34.3)**	**(35.1)**	**(35.9)**	**(36.7)**	**(37.6)**

BALANCE SHEET - BENCHMARKING

Benchmarking of the consolidated balance sheets of new organisations against existing unitary authorities was undertaken by an independent organisation in March 2025. This comparison is based on our unmodified proposal (i.e. without changes to boundaries), but the results give a clear indication of the likely position of modified authorities.

	Net Assets	URR	URR+DSG	CFR	Debt gearing
4a.1 Eastern	2ND	2ND	2ND	TOP	2ND
4a.2 West	TOP	3RD	2ND	3RD	TOP
4a.3 South West	TOP	TOP	TOP	2ND	2ND
4a.4 Central	TOP	2ND	2ND	3RD	TOP

Existing and future Hertfordshire authorities have relatively stable balance sheet financial health when compared with all existing unitaries. In this exercise they were compared to unitary authorities (excluding Mets and London Boroughs). The table above shows the results by quartile.

- **Net assets** - all options would see the proposed unitaries in the top quartile with the exception of the West authority in the 4 unitary model.
- **Usable Revenue Reserves** – only option 4a results in an authority having URR levels below the unitary median.
- **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit** – currently low when compared with other areas, but forecasting much greater deficits in future which will impact the resilience of all options.
- **Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)** – the one area with consistently low performance. There are a handful of exceptions, driven by East Herts and Broxbourne.
- **Debt gearing** - all options show above median levels in respect of debt gearing.

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OTHER KEY FINANCIAL RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Please refer to appendix A of the spine document for a further list of specific risks and assumptions that are relevant to this option. In particular:

- **Strategic Authority** – some existing costs and budgets will transfer to the Strategic Authority such as the Fire service. These have not been included in the financial model at this stage due to the complexities of splitting out budgets and resource. No additional running costs have been assumed for the Strategic Authority within the financial model.

- **Existing MTFS savings** – If the savings assumed to be achieved by vesting day are not delivered, this would reduce the projected baseline position and may require the new authorities to identify additional savings beyond those expected from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

  It should also be noted that, while annual savings are included in the MTFS up to 2027/28, non-LGR savings (to address underlying funding gaps) have already been incorporated into the financial model.

- **Savings** – while a prudent approach to savings has been adopted, it is not yet possible to fully determine which savings are cashable and which may be non-cashable—for example, where expenditure is funded by ring-fenced grants. Therefore, although expenditure may be reduced in some cases, there could be limitations on how those savings can be used.

- **MTFS forecasts** – as outlined earlier the financial models assume that cost increases – especially in Social Care and SEND, are lower in the years after LGR than in the years preceding it. Council tax increases are also assumed at the 4.99% (2.99% council tax + 2% adult social care precept) every year in line with government assumptions on funding.

- **Shared service arrangements** – Hertfordshire has a track record of successful shared services. It has been assumed for the purposes of the financial case that shared service arrangements will continue where long-term countywide contracts exist, such as for Highways and Waste Disposal. Without these arrangements, the additional costs linked to disaggregation could rise significantly.

- **DSG Deficit /HNB** – the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant funds education for children with SEND, including special schools, independent placements, and additional support in mainstream settings.

  Rising demand for SEND provision has led many councils to overspend, as grant funding has not kept pace with costs. The government's 'statutory override' allows councils to exclude these deficits from their accounts, but the financial shortfall remains. The override has been extended to March 2028 while longer-term reforms are developed.

  The County Council forecasts a cumulative DSG deficit of £255 million by March 2028, with annual overspends expected to continue. The outcome of national reforms will be critical to the financial sustainability of all three structural options. Any remaining HNB deficit would need to be divided between the new authority or authorities, creating a risk that an unfunded deficit could be transferred.

- **Pay Harmonisation** – no assumptions have been made in relation to pay harmonisation within the financial model although noting that any pay harmonisation could result in significantly increased costs

- **Borrowing** – If alternative funding sources are insufficient to cover transition costs, borrowing may be required. Borrowing costs have not been included in the financial model at this stage and could reduce projected savings and the baseline funding available

- **Housing Revenue Account (HRA)** – the HRA sits outside of General Fund revenue expenditure. Although the four HRA's in Hertfordshire receive support services/Cost of democracy from the General Fund the impact on HRA's for one off, on-going costs and savings has not been included within the financial business case

- **Assets disaggregation** – has not been accounted for within the financial model but this potentially poses risks at a later stage in terms of ensuring the transfer of assets and their corresponding revenue streams and or liabilities does

not inadvertently worsen the financial position and sustainability of the new authorities. Disposal of surplus assets may help to defray the costs of reorganisation.

- **Shared services** – whilst some shared services are already in existence across for example Audit, Fraud, Procurement and Building Control, across Hertfordshire, these may no longer align geographically with the new authority boundaries. This may pose additional costs in relation to:
  - o Disaggregating shared systems or contracts that are no longer aligned geographically.
  - o Potential duplication of effort or investment if new, separate services are required.
  - o Loss of economies of scale once shared arrangements end.

  However, in other cases existing shared services will not require disaggregation and there may be opportunities to expand these and create greater economies of scale.

- **Companies and other entities** – where they exist this may cause additional complexity in aggregating and disaggregating balance sheets and asset valuation or else amending governance and ownership arrangements. As a result additional specialist support may be required. This is assumed to be covered by the existing allocation of specialist support within the one-off costs.

- **Shadow authority costs** – it has been assumed that the costs of the shadow authority can be covered by existing budgets and one-off costs and the contingency where required. These are unlikely to have a material impact on the financial assessment of alternative unitary options being considered, nor on their ongoing financial sustainability.

ADDITIONAL LEVERS TO IMPROVE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

In addition to the net savings assumed within the modelling there are a number of levers that can be used to help deliver a financially sustainable four unitary model, reducing the payback period and improving the financial position of all unitaries.

For note while the payback period is longer, the modelling shows that if 2028/29 costs can be met from any of the measures listed below the overall position for the 4 unitaries can be met from the in-year budget, with the exception of the central unitary covering Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield and North Herts. This unitary has a larger part of the County Council demand for Adults and Social than funding assumed and will require a number of the interventions listed below.

- **Lever one – continue the annual savings programme and the transformation of services**
  The English Devolution White Paper recognises that no additional resources will be given to the local government sector as part of this change, consequently, LGR is not a silver bullet that will revitalise the sectors finances. The modelling completed is based on Hertfordshire Districts planned budgets up to and including 2027/28, in that last year there were anticipated savings required of £22.2 million, the modelling doesn't include any further savings requirements. But to manage deficits, Councils have rationalised services and used transformational change, to continue to support the diverse and changing needs of our residents within a decreasing funding envelope. The opportunity of LGR gives further potential for transformational opportunities to continue to make savings that improve services rather than reduce them. So, with a strong record of delivering savings a level of savings to the 2027/28 targets of £22Million could be assumed.

  Unitarisation brings with it new opportunities to streamline and improve services whilst staying at a size that allows connection to community. Smaller unitaries have greater agility to redesign services, embed prevention, and respond to local priorities. Four councils of this scale can collaborate where size adds value, standardise where consistency matters, and still test and adapt new approaches quickly. This combination supports ongoing improvement and innovation, building long-term efficiency and resilience rather than relying solely on savings achieved at the point of transition. Councils will work together into the coming months and years to help deliver savings quicker than the timeline set out in the modelling.

  Design will be by function enabling agile leadership across similar activities to reduce management overheads. Breaking down silo-based working that exists due to current structures, job roles, departments or council will enable benefits for our residents and our teams. By approaching this change in a positive manner focused on transformational opportunities as opposed to savings through targeted cuts, the new councils will support a development culture, encouraging existing staff to expand their current skillsets and diversify into new roles mitigating the need for redundancy in some places.

Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

While fewer, larger unitaries could deliver higher one-off and transition savings, experience from previous reorganisation programmes shows that maximising short-term savings can come at the expense of effective local government. The 4 unitary model can enable change to happen at more agile pace and deliver savings quicker and identify additional transformation change that is not currently within the model because of the potential lower spans of control in smaller councils. Smaller councils will start from a more agile place and therefore are arguably better placed to enact change quicker. As an illustration, saving a further 20 FTE's versus the 139 FTE assumed of 'General staff' would save an additional £1.1Million a year across the four unitaries.

Examples of Transformation opportunities:
- o Shared services which there are already a number in Hertfordshire, including Internal Audit, Anti- Fraud, Revenue and Benefits, ICT, procurement and legal to name a few already established that could be expanded. It is for each unitary to decide but for instance sharing social care (east and west) would save £2.9Million per annum based on the lower cost range modelling, this is before opportunities to transform are considered.
- o Asset rationalisation and improving asset usage across the enlarged estate
- o Use of digital tools

Opportunities to Transform through Adult Social care

Local government reorganisation creates space to secure productivity gains across high needs, working age adults and older adults. Hertfordshire's adult social care starts from a strong base, with a record of delivering savings while sustaining quality, putting the area in a credible position to turn reform into real financial benefits post vesting day. The County Council has already invested significantly in partnership arrangements and integrated models that go beyond traditional structures. Based on this there is already precedent and good foundations in place to look at different delivery target operating models. The analysis that follows uses high-level benchmarking completed by IMPOWER to highlight potential opportunities through comparison with statistical near neighbours. While the immediate focus is adult social care, the same approach can be applied more widely across local services to surface further efficiency opportunities and transformation gain. Figures are illustrative and intended to indicate scale and areas of focus, rather than representing certain budget commitments. In addition, some of the potential gain may be secured through Connect to Prevent programme assumed within the modelling.

Impower Index Savings Potential Range, Compared to Statistical Neighbours	High Needs	Working Aged Adults	Older Adults	Total
Low estimate	£12 million	£9 million	£25 million	**£46 million**
High estimate	£29 million	£21 million	£58 million	**£108 million**

Published data indicates that there are opportunities and particularly for smaller unitaries. National benchmark data indicates that unitary authorities with a population of 350k and below, perform better in terms of key areas of expenditure across Adult Social Care and Children's Services, as depicted in the table below. This is a high-level national benchmark assessment and there would need to be further work to determine the level of savings taking into account regional cost variations.

Average unit costs	S251 LAC unit cost	S251 residential unit cost	S251 SEN unit cost	Nursing unit cost	Residential unit cost	Residential & Nursing unit cost
Population 500-750k	**£1,949**	**£7,406**	**£123**	**£1,087**	**£1,160**	**£1,138**
Population 350-500k	**£1,946**	**£8,465**	**£118**	**£1,151**	**£1,209**	**£1,166**
Population 250-350k	**£1,718**	**£6,772**	**£96**	**£1,006**	**£1,028**	**£1,023**
Population <250k	**£1,759**	**£7,220**	**£100**	**£1,044**	**£1,059**	**£1,048**

- • **Lever two – Housing Revenue Impact (HRA)**
  There are four HRAs within Hertfordshire which would sit within two of the four new unitaries. This means set up costs need to be apportioned between the General Fund and HRA as well as savings. While the former puts pressure on HRAs this allows the initial costs to be spread over a bigger reserve base in the Central 4 unitary option. The central

unitary will have two HRAs from WHDC and SBC where a proportion of the Statutory and Tiers 1-3 redundancy cost would be funded from.

Similarly Upper Tier authorities don't have Housing Revenue Accounts which four Lower Tier authorities do in Hertfordshire. Smaller unitaries with lower social care client bases allows not only for closer working in terms of sharing management arrangements but also for accommodation provision for working age adults with disabilities and flexi care options for the elderly, enabling the delivery of savings in both the HRA and social care.

The 4 unitary option means there are 2 UAs that have substantial HRA coverage (2 out of 3 of the District areas in the Central Unitary and all of the North West Unitary) and 2UAs that have no HRA. This gives the opportunity to combine and strengthen HRAs within those 2 unitaries giving economies of scale and improved resilience due to the close proximity of the 4 Unitary stock owning geographies.

- **Lever three – Business Rates (NNDR)**
  The estimated go live date for LGR is 2028/29 which is year three of the Local Government settlement and within that period any gains are retained and can support the funding of one off costs or part fund the budget gap in the early years, furthermore (subject to fair funding revision) if government grant remains fairly static beyond 2028/29 those retained gains will be lost gradually through a three year transition phase. Notwithstanding that gains in Hertfordshire in 2025/26 were estimated to be circa £8Million which are significant and no NNDR gains have been assumed in the modelling for the two, three and four unitary options.

  - *An ask of government is that business rate gains post 2026/27 are retained for a six year period to support the four unitary option until sufficient cumulative savings are achieved.*

- **Lever four - use of Government Funding for one off costs of LGR or Capitalisation Directions to Fund upfront costs and reducing redundancy pressures:**
  In both the high and low ICT/Social care model upfront costs are significant (year 1 £90.1M -£76.5M), so this could be ameliorated by:
  - Grant funding via a fund for ICT costs like the Future Councils digital fund as implementing the new systems will be through the digital lens.
  - Capitalisation could be used to spread one off LGR costs over a longer period with the potential to fund from asset rationalisation and other capital resources.
  - Utilising staff with the relevant skill set to deliver some of the required project management. rather than using consultancy or recruiting new staff would avoid one off costs early on in the Unitary budgets.
  - The model only assumes 5% vacancy rate which by 2028/29 may be higher going into LGR therefore reducing redundancy costs.

- **Lever five- Fair Funding**
  The modelling does not currently include any Fair Funding assumptions as this has proved to be too difficult to model with certainty, furthermore the funding beyond 2028/29 may not decrease with any impact of FF2, it also doesn't increase but remains flat.

- **Lever six- Council Tax taxbase growth**
  The modelled taxbase is built on an average of 0.8% which is based on 2025/26 growth, however with bigger unitaries driving housing growth this gives opportunity to increase the taxbase beyond 0.8%. A 0.2% increase in the taxbase would increase council tax income by £2.2Million.

For reasons set out in the rest of the document we believe that 4 unitary option is the right answer on non-financial factors, so this is how the Government can help make the model work financially. There is scope for some further services (beyond those currently assumed) to be delivered county-wide, which will help generate further savings. And with support with the transition costs through grant funding capital receipts direction, retaining business rates for longer we can deliver a financially viable and sustainable model in Hertfordshire.

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HIGH-QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE SERVICES (MHCLG CRITERION 3)

GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS

The four unitary model is built on the principles of community-based local government. Electoral arrangements should start from the places people identify with, making a ward-based approach the natural fit. Wards are smaller, closer to communities, and better aligned to neighbourhood and place. The structure of local representation will define how communities relate to their council for decades to come, and it must be shaped by what best supports strong, accessible and accountable governance.

A ward-based model offers a more balanced and locally attuned approach designed with the following principles in mind:

- **Electoral equality**
  Councils should aim for each councillor to represent a similar number of electors. The starting point is the agreed council size, which sets an average electors-per-councillor figure. Individual wards should sit close to that average, with any material variances justified by clear evidence.
- **Community identity**
  Boundaries should reflect how places actually work. That means using obvious lines on the ground and recognising local ties that bring people together, such as centres, facilities, parish areas and networks that drive community interaction.
- **Effective and convenient local government**
  Wards should be workable. They need sensible internal links, practical travel within the area, and a size and workload that allow councillors to represent residents, attend committees and engage with partners without being stretched across unmanageable distances or populations.

These principles help ensure that local democratic arrangements are grounded in the places where people live their lives. Wards are typically smaller and more rooted in local identity, enabling councillors to serve recognisable and cohesive areas. Electoral boundaries are not just administrative tools. They influence how well communities are heard, how effectively councillors can engage with residents, and how services respond to local need.

By contrast, divisions were primarily designed to deliver electoral parity. While they are functional for larger-scale representation, they do not always reflect local identity or geographic coherence. In rural areas in particular, strict adherence to numerical equity can produce very large divisions that pose practical challenges for councillors in terms of travel, accessibility and casework. The boundary changes that underpin the 4U model have therefore been developed from wards as the building blocks. Trying to align them to divisions would require sub-dividing seats and cutting across coherent communities, which would weaken equity and place identity. A refined ward-based approach is more likely to strike the right balance between fair representation, community connection and geographic logic, all of which are essential to strong local government.

Starting from wards lets us hold a strong line on electoral equality while respecting community identity and day-to-day geography. It avoids the over-large patches that divisions can create, especially in rural areas, and it supports councillors to be visible, accessible and effective. Where we propose variance from a perfect mathematical average, it is because there is a clear place-based reason to do so, such as a strong boundary feature, a recognised community or practical access within the ward.

Proposed Structure

Councillor numbers across the four proposed unitaries are derived by moving all three member wards to two members, converting several two member wards to single member wards, and retaining existing single member wards. The table below provides the detailed number of councillors, the total electorate and both the average elector to population and councillor ratios for each of the new authorities:

Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Unitary Authority	Wards	Cllrs	Population	Population / Cllr Ratio	Electorate	Elector/ Cllr Ratio
Eastern	43	75	289,774	3,864	213,769	2,850
North West	45	84	312,432	3,719	228,865	2,725
South West	41	79	313,190	3,964	223,819	2,833
Central	47	89	320,795	3,604	229,379	2,577

This model has been developed after reviewing previous approaches to councillor numbers used when previous unitary councils were formed. Across the 2009 and 2019 to 2023 reorganisations, new authorities commonly retained the existing ward maps for initial elections and calibrated councillor numbers ward by ward to improve electoral equality, rather than applying a uniform rule. That established practice provides strong precedent for our approach of retaining ward boundaries while varying representation to reflect elector ratios. Notably, Bedford Borough's 2009 unitarisation adopted the same principle for its first unitary election, and there are a number of recent examples of implementing a similar approach to the model outlined above.

Committee Capacity & Governance Model
With fewer councillors overall, committee expectations must remain proportionate. Modelling shows that committee seats per councillor across the four councils sit within a tight band, keeping governance workable alongside casework, outside body appointments and parish engagement. The indicative ratios are set out below.

Unitary Authority	Councillors	Committee Seats per Councillor
Eastern	75	2.05
North West	84	1.83
South West	79	1.94
Central	89	2.05

This alignment maintains scrutiny and regulatory capacity while avoiding undue pressure on councillors.

Community Leadership
Councillors are first and foremost local leaders, visible and answerable in the places they represent, maintaining a close connection with residents. Any of the proposed models of local government reorganisation will reduce the total number of councillors across the county, which broadens each member's brief across services, scrutiny, partnerships and neighbourhood engagement. This change cannot be treated simply as a saving. Workloads must remain realistic and the role attractive to the next generation, including people who serve alongside employment or caring responsibilities.

Our design anchors each councillor in a coherent, recognisable ward with fair elector ratios and practical travel, keeps committee expectations proportionate and close to current norms, and equips members with clear schemes of delegation, strong officer support, modern digital tools, and robust locality and neighbourhood governance structures that provide the intelligence and relationships needed to resolve issues quickly and maintain a close connection with residents.

This approach uses wards as the building blocks to balance electoral equality, community identity and workable governance. Councillor numbers are calibrated to preserve access, accountability and contact with residents, and committee demands are kept close to existing practice so workloads remain sustainable. These are interim arrangements, underpinned by strong locality and neighbourhood governance, and a full boundary review will follow vesting day to refine warding in light of growth and community evidence with the clear intent to strengthen local representation further and avoid overburdening councillors.

SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS AND PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM (3A&3B)

Our aim is simple: services that are easy to access, consistent in quality, prevention led and accountable. Local Government Reorganisation is the enabler. It aligns organisations to real places, simplifies where joining up helps, and builds the capabilities a preventative system needs.

MHCLG asks proposals to set out the approach to higher risk public services. This proposal does that for Adults Social Care, Children's Social Care, Education, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and Housing and Homelessness. It also describes how we will deliver the everyday front-line services residents see most, and the planning, regeneration and development activity that enables jobs, homes and stronger places.

1 Resident centred and responsive
Start from what matters to residents with simple routes. One front door, end to end ownership, plain updates and quick recovery reduce effort, with teams, assets and decision makers close to residents and performance shown openly.

2 Integrated and preventative
Join help earlier through co-located teams and clear pathways with key partners and stakeholders. Focus on prevention, reablement and recovery, tracking outcomes and inequalities openly to cut repeats and build independence.

3 Shared where it makes sense, local where it adds value
Share specialist capacity by exception through clear inter-authority agreements with standards and review points. Keep relationship work local under one visible standard so residents do not face fragmentation and accountability stays clear.

4 Data, digital and innovation as the engine of improvement
Modernise services and invest in core IT where it improves efficiency and outcomes. Shared tools, a resident identity and open dashboards join information, enable light automation and strengthen cyber resilience so teams act sooner and performance is visible.

5 Redesigned to improve outcomes
Model councils on high performing unitaries at around 300,000, using proven operating models rather than rescaled structures. Use service design, clear roles and benefits tracking so improvements stick and value for money is visible.

6 Secure foundations before change
Keep residents and services protected from Vesting Day. Safeguard statutory services, stabilise contracts and systems, and phase change with clear communications and tested recovery so delivery stays steady and reliable.

Services that shape tomorrow

Services you can count on

Services designed to evolve

Services safeguarded for those who need them most

The case for change is clear. Jobs are growing, yet skills, transport and housing do not always line up with opportunity. Health inequalities are also widening, with more people living with long term conditions, productivity has stalled and living costs have risen. Councils still spend most money after problems escalate. Two-tier arrangements add duplication, slow decisions and blur accountability. Residents want simple answers: can I get help easily, is my neighbourhood safe and well run, are there fair routes into good work, and who is responsible when things do not join up?

The next section outlines how this comes to life through four priorities:
1. Services you can count on
2. Services that shape tomorrow
3. Services designed to evolve
4. Services safeguarded for those who need them most

> ***Case Study – Hertfordshire Building Control***
> *Hertfordshire Building Control (HBC) was established in 2016 to improve building control services for local authorities across the County by combining teams from initially seven (now eight) separate local authorities into a single, more efficient centre of excellence. Its purpose is to ensure building projects comply with building regulations, protecting the public interest and promoting quality, safe, and sustainable buildings. By consolidating services, HBC provide a more consistent and resilient statutory service to Hertfordshire's communities.*
>
> *Prior to 2016, small Building Control Teams were employed by each individual District and Borough Council. Each district faced recruitment and retention challenges trying to retain highly skilled and sought after Building Control colleagues. This*

led to internal competition for resources between local authorities, high levels of vacancies and increased market force supplements. Combining these teams and transforming ways of working has helped to resolve these issues and ensure we have a service that it fit purpose for the future.

Today, HBC has been recognised as a standard of excellence within the Building Control Community having set the bar for service transformation and customer focus. Upskilling and developing future Building Control talent remains a key focus for the company, with over a third of their workforce engaged in professional learning in 2023. By creating this centre of excellence Hertfordshire Councils have not only saved money, but developed a competent team committed to supporting the most complex of developments across the County. By standardising processes, aligning technology and developing their people, HBC ensures that constructions work across the County is compliant with health and safety regulations, that the interests of property owners are protected and that projects run smoothly and results in high quality sustainable buildings that fit with the needs of each individual area.

SERVICES YOU CAN COUNT ON

These are the services people see and feel every day. Residents judge us first by whether the basics work, how easy they are to access, and how quickly we put things right. They also shape perceptions of value for money and are a constant talking point for elected members. Local Government Association (LGA) tracking shows trust in local services remains higher than in many parts of the public sector, but has fallen over the last decade from an estimated 60% to roughly 50%. Across the UK, productivity is challenging, demand is rising and budgets are tight. The real test is whether public services answer the everyday questions that matter to people in Hertfordshire, from clean streets to safe neighbourhoods and quick, simple routes to getting help.

Scope & context

Culture & Related Services		Community Safety, Regulatory & Public Protection	
Libraries & archives	Recreation and sport	Trading standards, regulatory and environmental health services	Community safety
Green Spaces	Culture & heritage		Fire & rescue

Economy, Environment & Place		Central & Enabling Services	
Waste management & recycling	Street cleansing & grounds maintenance	Communications	Customer services

Key opportunities

Four unitaries for Hertfordshire would bring responsibility and resolution closer to streets and neighbourhoods, removing two tier friction. Choices are made by people who know the area, so issues are owned and fixed. Reliability improves as specifications and supplier arrangements are aligned at contract renewal across four authorities, not 11. Where scale helps purchasing and logistics, the Councils can collaborate. Where responsiveness matters, prioritisation is kept local. This direction supports government's national missions to take back our streets, improve health and spread opportunity by placing capability and accountability closer to place.

Residents get independent local gateways with clear updates. Parks, libraries and leisure are programmed around local demand and linked with Healthy Hubs, so the same assets support inclusion and wellbeing. Environmental health, licensing, trading standards and community safety can operate as a single route with partners, so cases move quickly and residents are not passed around. Open reporting by place helps target effort where it is most needed and shows progress plainly.

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Pride in place

Residents notice the basics first. Collections must be reliable, streets clean and parks welcoming. Closely related tasks are coordinated so visible results follow quickly, parks and play are kept to agreed local standards, and leisure offers reflect real patterns of use. When things go wrong, recovery is swift and lessons travel across places.

We will use local insight to time activity to when it matters most, cleansing before weekend peaks, leaf and gulley work ahead of heavy rain, and play inspections tied to school holidays. Parks can host community events and activity sessions that strengthen belonging, with small grants and simple permits to help groups get started. Clear plans for seasonal pressures, heat, storms and fireworks keep centres looking cared for and help neighbourhoods feel safe and well run.

Safer neighbourhoods

Working with unitary authorities, police, housing providers, youth services and the NHS can act together, based around geographies that matter to residents. They will work cooperatively to respond to local priorities, coordinating patrols and neighbourhood operations. This joint working will be augmented through formal Community Safety Partnerships, building on successful partnerships already established across the county, providing a clear spine for accountability.

Local teams will focus on prevention, pairing swift responses with early help from adults' and children's social care, housing and public health so problems are tackled before they escalate. Shared insight will flag repeat locations and vulnerable people, prompting practical support such as tenancy sustainment, debt and employment advice, youth diversion, and mental health or substance misuse outreach. Combined with coordinated neighbourhood operations, this prevention first approach reduces repeat incidents, makes streets feel safer and improves life chances.

Easy access and rapid resolution

Residents expect simple ways to get help, to be understood first time and to see swift, visible fixes without being passed around. With four unitaries rooted in recognisable places, teams know their patches and partners, decisions are taken nearby, and resolution is shorter. Smaller, more agile councils can flex to local need, adjusting priorities quickly and tailoring outcomes to what works in each place. Digital tools and AI will support self service and triage requests to the right people, whilst keeping the option to speak to a person when issues are complex or personal. We will use plain language, offer your preferred channel, avoid asking for the same information twice, and effectively hand over to partners rather than just signposting, so the experience feels quicker, clearer and more personal.

Resident voice

The needs of residents must be at the heart of new unitaries, with their views and ideas shaping provision. Involvement should be easy and timely, in ways that make sense for people. The opportunity is to engage residents in service design through a range of methods from quick pilots to walkabouts, to online testing, and co-production methods for personal or complex services. Bringing together district and county services into local footprints gives the opportunity to find better ways to support individuals, families and communities, through multi-disciplinary working rather than many separate interactions.

SERVICES THAT SHAPE TOMORROW

These are the services that set the direction for homes, jobs and the quality of place. Hertfordshire's economy has grown from about £34 billion in 2015 to about £49 billion today, creating jobs, opportunities and funding for public services. GVA per filled job is strong at around £63,630 versus a UK average of around £61,729, with strengths in life sciences, space and defence, advanced manufacturing, creative industries and green technology. Hertfordshire faces steep housing challenges and local plans to unlock 100,000 new homes including social and Council homes in sustainable, attractive places that people want to live. There remains an opportunity for this to filter down to everyday experience, and too many residents still ask whether services are helping them access good work, secure homes and better transport in their area.

Each of the four unitary councils have very different characteristics, and require different approaches to help secure a bright future for their communities. Each would be best placed to make decisions, with partners and communities, for the future of those places – identifying the best ways to provide homes, communities, job opportunities and an attractive environment.

Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Scope & context
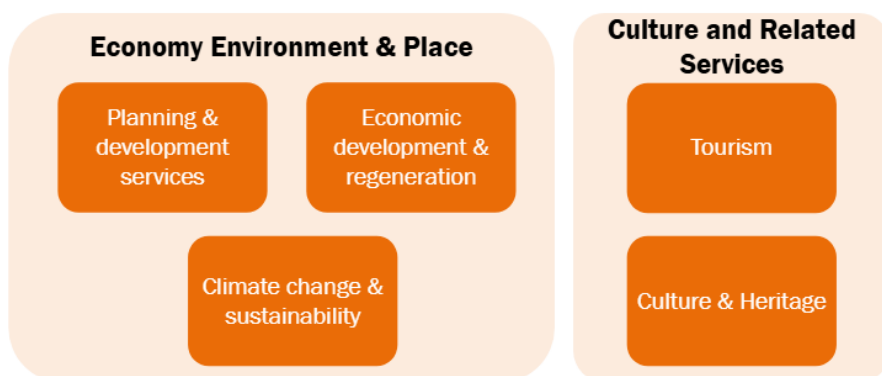
Key opportunities

With four councils, strategy turns into delivery that fits real places with local delivery plans well aligned with the needs of local business and communities. Evidence is used to target resources by place and enable faster decisions, while local policy choices protect character and work with local communities. Investors see clearer propositions by place, quicker consents supported by repeatable design approaches, and a route to the skills and infrastructure that investment depends on. This supports national missions to kickstart economic growth, make the country a clean energy leader and break down barriers to opportunity.

South Mimms in Hertsmere shows the opportunity. An 85 acre data centre campus near the M25 and the Elstree grid connection is expected to generate around £21 million per year in business rates once operational, support hundreds of construction jobs, and sustain high skilled operational roles over time.

Homes, jobs, skills and sustainability

Each council will set a deliverable pipeline of sites with local design guidance and clear infrastructure milestones, respecting local needs and identity, while working with the Strategic Authority to unlock larger scale opportunities. Growth should widen opportunity. Each area will maintain a pipeline of town centre projects; employment sites and sector priorities linked to training and careers. Local councils are well placed to convene employers, colleges and the university to align routes into priority roles, and to work with the needs of smaller businesses in the distinctive economies of different unitaries. Investment into skills and training can be designed for the different needs of towns and villages, with locally targeted outreach and support needed to connect with particular communities. As the UK is committed to longer-term climate goals and energy supply, new unitary councils will consider the different needs of the areas that they service, from sustainable travel, to retrofit, new design standards and energy efficiency.

> *Case Study – Watford Town Centre Regeneration*
> *Watford Borough Council is leading a 20 year transformative regeneration programme to revitalise the town centre. The project aims to create a mixed-use environment that supports living, working, leisure and cultural activity while promoting sustainability and active travel. The regeneration will see the development of the Town Hall Quarter, which is a partnership with Mace Developments to deliver new homes, retail and community facilities around the historic Town Hall and Colosseum. This regeneration programme reflects the council's ambition for the town, as well as our commitment to its heritage and creativity. It will revitalise Watford's Museum and Heritage service and secure the future of much-loved local landmarks.*
>
> *Watford is also a great location for entrepreneurs and growing businesses, which is why a new Innovation and Incubation hub is a key part of the scheme. Bringing it all together will be attractive public spaces and much-needed new homes. The Town Centre Strategic Framework was adopted in 2023, following public consultation. At the time of writing, the marked development has also been approved and the early phases of public realm improvements have been completed. A joint venture has been formed for the Town Hall Quarter, signalling long-term delivery commitment.*
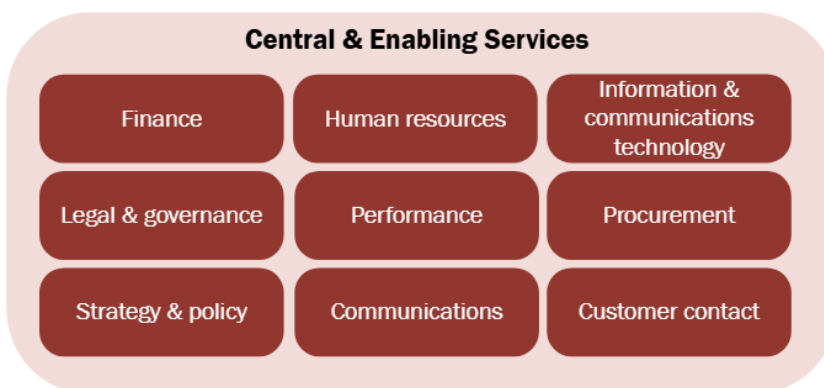>
> *The town centre regeneration programme represents a forward looking approach to revitalising a mid-sized town. Through mixed-use development, community engagement and emphasis on sustainability, the scheme aims to create a resilient and attractive urban centre fit for future generations.*

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SERVICES DESIGNED TO EVOLVE

We will build services that are reliable from day one and designed to improve year by year. The test is simple, we will directly assess if residents experience clearer updates, faster resolution and smoother contact. Good practice exists, but too often it does not reach every service or every place. Across the UK, productivity is weak, ill health is rising and budgets are tight, so local authorities must do more with less while risk and expectation both increase.

This proposal is founded on the proposal to deliver smaller, more agile councils with the capability to solve problems earlier, exploit new technology like artificial intelligence (AI), use data well and protect essential services while improving the resident experience.

Scope & context

Central & Enabling Services

Finance	Human resources	Information & communications technology
Legal & governance	Performance	Procurement
Strategy & policy	Communications	Customer contact

Opportunities to improve

This is a significant change for residents, service users, partners and our teams. It requires a rigorous and well managed approach to transition, with clear plans and broad engagement needed to give confidence to the approaches being taken. The four council model aims to provide agility so that each organisation can adapt to different challenges and opportunities over time. This requires clear leadership and is supported by a steady programme of workforce development, clear roles, supportive supervision, consistent induction and progression routes across services. Apprenticeships and local pipelines will be expanded with colleges and universities, and practical coaching will help teams adopt new tools and embed better ways of working. The focus is stability and confidence, so improvement lifts day to day reliability as well as long term value.

IT, insight and data

Local Government Reorganisation gives the opportunity to develop new approaches, harnessing AI and other technology to better meet the needs of communities. Digital foundations, networks and devices will be modern, secure, reliable and practical. With over 1,300 systems in use across Hertfordshire's Councils, there is a real opportunity for change and improvement, to invest in the right customer experience tools, integration, and new exploring greater automation to help improve customer experience. Bringing together data across different services to focus on the needs of different communities and neighbourhoods can aid prevention, help design and improve services. Data is used to understand local needs, target efforts and check results. Automation handles routine updates so people can focus on judgement and problem solving. Cyber security and recovery are crucial to trust and delivery and at the core of the transition plan. Over time, system separation aligns to organisational need, with data migration and new licences managed through transition plans.

Case Study Broxbourne Borough Council Digital Transformation
Since 2020, Broxbourne Borough Council has used business process re-engineering and digital technology to transform the customer experience and improve efficiency. Beforehand, most Council services were operating with manual and paper-based processes, alongside legacy IT systems. Surveys showed that more than 70% of residents would prefer to contact the Council online. As the first step, all technology in the Council was upgraded to provide a reliable, consistent base. This included Wi-Fi, a new, fast internet connection, software and the introduction of Office 365 across all departments.

Council staff worked with a team from the company Sopra Steria to map the stages and processes used for each type of customer transaction and consulted customers for their perspective. In just twelve weeks, recommendations were made to streamline processes and transform 30 common customer transactions.
Over the next three months a transformed customer experience was delivered, which included a new website incorporating the 30 digitised customer journeys. In the next phase, a further 120 digital services were developed,

transforming the way the Council works end-to-end. Throughout the programme, officers were supported through training into new ways of working.

Customers were now able to self-serve online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for almost all interactions with the Council. To assist customers who preferred to telephone, a strengthened customer service team was enabled to answer more of their queries at first point of contact. The immediate impact was:

- *A third more customers were now serving themselves online*
- *48% reduction in calls to the Council*
- *38% reduction in the transferring of calls, with customers are getting the right answers at first point of contact*

End-to-end digitised customer journeys also freed staff from time-consuming administrative processes, eliminated mountains of paperwork and improved accuracy. When the COVID-19 lockdown came in March 2020, most office-based staff transferred easily to working from home on their council laptops with access to all systems, minimising disruption to service delivery.

SERVICES SAFEGUARDED FOR THOSE WHO NEED THEM MOST

This section sets out how the four unitary councils will protect high risk, statutory services while shifting to prevention and early help. It draws on current demand, proven practice and sector insight to back local teams and community assets, so people get support earlier on housing, debt, employment, health and domestic abuse. The approach aligns with NHS neighbourhood models and builds capacity in towns and villages so more people can live independently.

We will balance local responsiveness with continuity and risk control. Functions will sit at the most sensible scale, and shared where specialism adds value or enables a safe transition. Clear accountability, strong quality assurance and safe and legal day one are non-negotiable.

Services in scope:

Adult Social Care
- Older people
- Adult disabilities & mental health
- Health integration
- Planning & resources
- Practice & quality
- Public health

Children's Social Care
- Safeguarding services
- Specialist services & commissuning
- Strategy & performance
- Early years service

Education
- Education provision & access
- Inclusion & skills (inc SEND)
- Virtual school
- Schools planning
- Schools standards
- Admissions & transport

Housing Services
- Housing strategy
- Private sector housing renewal
- Homelessness
- Housing benefits
- Housing welfare

Housing Revenue Account Services
- Rent collection & arrears
- Tenancy management
- Repairs & maintenance
- Estates services
- Major works & capital improvements

Highways & Transport
- Planning, policy & strategy
- Highways & road maintenance
- Traffic mangement and road works
- Parking services
- Public & passenger transport
- Schools crossing service

We include a particular focus on both Housing and on Highways and Transport because secure homes and a reliable network visibly improve daily life and reduce crisis, while strengthening outcomes across the wider system.

Implementation will run through three phases: Preparation, Transition and Transformation, each with two set milestones. We would start by agreeing the model and building readiness, move to a safe Go Live on Vesting Day with uninterrupted safeguarding and a safe and legal day one, then stabilise and optimise services so benefits are realised over time. The milestones below set clear gates for decisions, accountability and pace.

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Phase	Purpose	Milestones
Phase 1: Preparation	Lay the groundwork for reorganisation. Agree the service model, engage stakeholders, baseline operations and shape the medium-term transformation plan.	**Milestone 1:** Submission of proposal –28 November 2025 **Milestone 2:** Ministerial decision and Structural Change Order – TBC 2026
Phase 2: Transition	Move safely from existing structures to the four unitary model, including boundary changes. Stand up shadow arrangements, protect high risk services and complete Day 1 readiness.	**Milestone 3:** Elections for the Shadow Authority – May 2027 TBC **Milestone 4:** Vesting Day for new Unitary Authorities – April 2028 TBC
Phase 3: Transformation	Stabilise, harmonise and then optimise services to deliver better outcomes and the benefits case over time.	**Milestone 5:** Vesting Day + 1 year **Milestone 6:** Vesting Day + 3 to 5 years

Each service chapter sets the ambition, the need and challenge, the practical pillars for change, the three to five year end state, and how the four unitary model unlocks better outcomes with the Strategic Authority while keeping day to day relationships close to residents.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Adult social care is one of the largest and most financially pressured services delivered by local government. In 2023/24, councils in England spent £25.9 billion on adult social care, yet still overspent budgets by £586 million, the highest in a decade. The Devolution White Paper acknowledges that without reform, the system faces strain due to rising demand, workforce shortages, and fragile provider markets.

Our ambition is to place people at the heart of our work, supporting individuals to live safe, healthy, independent lives with real choice and control. We will build on a preventative, place-based care model that is proactive, personalised, and rooted in community strengths. This will be achieved through stronger integration with health, housing, voluntary and community services, underpinned by excellent practice and robust quality assurance.

For residents, this means more joined-up, preventative care. More localised unitary authorities are best placed to integrate adult social care with housing, community health, and voluntary services at the neighbourhood level, creating multidisciplinary teams that act earlier, reduce duplication, and improve outcomes and tackle potential challenges in rural or deprived areas.

The need, challenges & opportunity

Adult social care is at a critical juncture, both nationally and locally. The Government's white paper, *People at the Heart of Care*, articulates a bold and practical 10-year vision for reform—one that champions independence, personal choice, and support rooted in communities.

This aligns with the Care Act's principles and the Government's reform agenda, including the recent pledge to develop a parallel 10-year plan for social care alongside the NHS. Stability for vulnerable adults must be safeguarded, but flexibility is equally vital, especially as we anticipate the findings of the Dame Casey review and the implications of the Employment Rights Bill, which proposes a negotiating body and fair pay agreements for the sector. The emerging policy direction gives emphasis on person-centred care provides a framework is responsive, inclusive, and sustainable care.

Hertfordshire approaches LGR with a firm foundation, as services are rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission, with strong leadership, effective partnerships, and robust data use. This is positive and highlights the importance of achieving a stable transition, to retain a skilled, compassionate and committed team.

National pressures are intensifying. Inflation is driving up costs, while demand is rising, particularly among people with complex disabilities, autism, and mental health needs. These individuals require personalised support plans that build on their strengths and community networks. In Hertfordshire, over 11,700 people receive adult social care support, yet

provision is uneven. Hertfordshire County Council Market Position Statement for 2023–24 demonstrates that both North and South West and Eastern Hertfordshire rely more on residential and nursing care, while Central Hertfordshire sees higher use of domiciliary care and direct payments. Hertfordshire's Supported living is concentrated in the West, accounting for 57% of provision. The county has 254 care homes (9,893 beds), 76 nursing homes (4,823 beds), 295 domiciliary providers, and 92 supported living schemes.

This is reflected in the snapshot below:

1. Demand Mapping – Total Volumes

- Across Hertfordshire, there are **over 11,700 people** in receipt of ASC support (Working Age + Older Adults).
- Breakdown:
  - Nursing care: 916 people
  - Residential care: 1,868 people
  - Domiciliary care: 3,563 people
  - Supported living: 1,846 people
  - Direct payments: 3,557 people
- **Domiciliary care and direct payments** dominate demand, reflecting the wider shift to community-based support.

2. Demand Mapping – Percentages

- Demand is **not evenly distributed** across the county:
  - West and East Hertfordshire have a greater share of residential/nursing provision.
  - Central Hertfordshire carries a high share of domiciliary and direct payments.
  - Supported living has a concentration in the West (57% of Hertfordshire total).
- This highlights **geographic variation in care models** and demand pressures.

3. Working Age Adults (per 100k)

- High variability across areas:
  - Long-Term Supported Living rates are particularly high in some areas (e.g., West and Central).
  - Residential and domiciliary care use differs widely, showing that **local practice and market availability shape care patterns**.
- Some areas exceed Hertfordshire's average rates by 10%+, highlighting unequal distribution of need and provision.

4. Older Adults (per 100k)

- Domiciliary care is the largest area of provision, but again varies widely (West Central lower than East/South West).
- Residential and nursing care show **marked differences** – e.g., Central with high residential use, East with lower.
- Direct payments uptake is also uneven, pointing to differences in **commissioning** practice, market development and user choice support.

5. Provider Capacity Mapping

Hertfordshire has:
- 254 care homes (9,893 beds)
- 76 nursing homes (4,823 beds)
- 295 domiciliary care providers
- 92 supported living schemes

However, the average cost of long-term care per person in Hertfordshire is significantly higher—£50,384 annually. This is 18% above the nearest neighbour average (£42,715). These figures suggest that while fewer people are receiving services, those who do require more intensive, sustained, and higher-cost support, potentially reflecting complex needs.

This pattern presents both a challenge and an opportunity. It reinforces the need to invest in earlier intervention, reshape local care markets, and expand personalised, community-based support. Doing so will not only improve outcomes for individuals but also help deliver better value for money. Hertfordshire's emerging Connect and Prevent programme exemplifies this strength, promoting independence and early intervention to reduce long-term expenditure. In doing so this will reduce spend by £25m.

Benchmarking from Peopletoo shows Hertfordshire has lower-than-average demand for working-age adult services but significantly higher costs - £50,384 per person, 28% above the national average. This reflects a higher proportion of individuals with complex needs in long-term care. Market dynamics such as recruitment premiums, travel time, and supply challenges can inflate costs.

However, the system still faces inequalities, particularly in rural access and waiting times. With Hertfordshire's 65+ population projected to grow by 40% by 2043, we must increase the supply of suitable accommodation while containing costs and maintaining quality. LGR offers a chance to address these gaps by targeting resources toward community-based services. In Hertfordshire there is an opportunity continue and extend the 'Connect and Prevent' approach to target and expand early help, reablement, supported living, and step-down capacity.

The proposed four unitary authority model provides the structural opportunity to realise the vision by aligning housing, health, and care at the local level. It enables targeted investment in preventative services, digital innovation, and workforce development, while fostering joined-up commissioning and delivery. Residents benefit from a single point of contact, clearer pathways, and services that are easier to navigate.

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How the Four Unitary Model Delivers This Vision

The four unitary model offers the optimal scale to deliver adult social care that is responsive, preventative, and rooted in local communities. New unitary authorities on local footprints will need to target and respond to the distinct needs of their populations, whether that's higher residential and nursing care in the West and East, or greater use of domiciliary care and direct payments in Central. This local insight will need to tailored commissioning and services, alongside other council services and public partners.

The new unitaries will create the right conditions for integrated, place-based care. This includes co-locating adult social care with housing, community health, and voluntary services, enabling multidisciplinary teams to act earlier, reduce handoffs, and improve outcomes.

Crucially, the four unitary model supports a safer, more stable transition for residents. Changes will be phased carefully to maintain continuity of care, safeguarding arrangements, and workforce stability in the early years. A number of shared services are likely to be required to be delivered through a 'Hertfordshire Partnership' where scale adds value, where there is specialism or where there is need to protect vital frontline services.

Service Delivery Model

We recognise that any change in local government structure presents risks of disruption. Our priority is a stable transition, ensuring continuity of care, safeguarding, and workforce stability beyond vesting day. Clear leadership and oversight will manage this change effectively.

The joint local government proposal for Hertfordshire provides a high level plan for how we collectively manage the transition to stable operations of new unitary authorities on day one of operation. This proposal for four unitary councils focuses on two principal themes. The proposal recognises that the previous experience of councils going through local government reorganisations means disruption, and that many areas have looked to implement shared service for vesting day in order to help mitigate this risk, with West Northamptonshire, for example, having over 60 shared services in place on day one.

With a short window to prepare for vesting day, we will prioritise efforts to stabilise and maintain delivery, meeting the needs of vulnerable residents and meeting statutory duties. This may include broad use of shared service arrangements in the first few years of operation, based on a lead provider model centred on the current operational centre in Robertson House and Farnham House and the current Hertfordshire County Council existing operational use of two locality teams.

Public Health and Health and Wellbeing Boards will be central. Each unitary will align prevention with local priorities, integrating adult social care with health, housing, environmental health, and community safety to address risks earlier and closer to home.

Year one to two

In the first year of operation, the organisational design will feature:

Year One to Two	▪ **Local Leadership and Teams** - Each unitary authority will have a statutory Director and dedicated social work teams. In addition, to ensure continuity, a shared service model (based on East/West locality areas) may need to be used initially before transitioning to fully localised teams.
	▪ **Front Door and Core Infrastructure** - Each authority will operate its own front door system, potentially supported by shared ICT and technical support for functions such as direct payments depending on the time required to transition. Locality operations, including prevention hubs and day centres, will be absorbed into each new organisation.

	▪ **Integration and Service Alignment** - Integration with housing, community safety, and other local services will begin immediately to support prevention and unified discharge standards. Public Health will adopt a safe and legal day one configuration, with contracts and governance aligned with NHS partners.
	▪ **Shared Strategic Functions** - Longer-term shared services may include market intelligence, commissioning frameworks, analytics, and innovation. Short-term shared arrangements may cover ICT, digital and data platforms, performance reporting, and cyber security depending on the time available to manage the transition.
	▪ **Local Ownership and Market Development** - Each authority will take ownership of assessments, reviews, safeguarding, and commissioning. Disruption will be mitigated through shared oversight and quality assurance. Alignment with housing strategies will support the development of sustainable homecare and supported living markets.
	▪ **New Accommodation Models** - Will allow for more responsive commissioning, improved market sufficiency, and better alignment with housing strategies. They will support the development of sustainable homecare and supported living options, particularly in areas with high demand and fragmented supply. Integrated approaches also strengthen partnerships with NHS and voluntary sector providers, enabling place-based care and prevention that is locally attuned and financially sustainable.

Year three to five

Service change will not be on the basis of change for change's sake, but take place when a better, safer, model is ready. This means any sharing arrangements via a Hertfordshire Partnership will be kept under review, to ensure stability of services to residents while also the ability to change over time.

Longer-Term Design and Integration

The longer-term vision for adult social care under the four unitary authority model is centred on an integrated and locally delivered system. By this stage, multidisciplinary locality teams will be embedded to help strengthen links across health, housing, and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. Statutory adult social care practice will operate within each authority under a unified practice framework, with shared arrangements retained where they offer benefits in terms of specialism or scale.

Close collaboration with planning, housing development, and specialist teams will unlock opportunities to deliver new forms of accommodation that better meet local needs—enabling more people to remain independent at home. This housing-led approach will be a key enabler of preventative care and community resilience.

Integrated Care and Health Delivery

Redesigning services from the ground up allows the new authorities to prioritise preventative strategies that reduce long-term demand and improve population health. Integration will be driven by locally defined outcomes and supported by areas such as, joint commissioning and planning, potential for pooling budgets and targeted use of data.

Key features of the long term model could include:

Year Three to Five	▪ **Shared strategic functions** - By agreement for market intelligence, sufficiency planning, and specialist commissioning frameworks.
	▪ **Growth in supported living and Extra Care** - Improved homecare capacity, and outcome-based contracts that promote independence and reduce escalation to residential care.
	▪ **Scaling of direct payments, carers' support, and technology-enabled care** - Ensuring more people can remain safely at home with the right help at the right time.

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	▪ **Measurable improvements** - In timeliness, continuity, and unit cost, with progress towards benchmarked outcomes for working-age adults and sustained community-based support for older adults.
	▪ **Public Health embedded in neighbourhood prevention plans** - Across South and West, and North and East footprints, with joint outcomes and aligned programmes focused on healthy homes, physical activity, and community wellbeing

Focus on Public Health

The approach that is best for a four unitary model is either a shared service or hybrid model as set out in the main proposal and dependent on the form of the Strategic Authority. Both preserve specialist capacity while keeping prevention close to place. This keeps visible responsibility in each council, with specialist functions delivered once where scale brings quality, training and value.

Sharing specialist capacity is essential to maintain statutory compliance, professional training, oversight and incident response. Within that shared model, the leadership footprint can be configured in two ways and should be considered by shadow authorities during transition. One option is a single countywide Director of Public Health with a unified specialist team serving all four councils. This provides consistent standards, efficient commissioning and a single approach to population health intelligence and workforce development, with staff embedded alongside local adult social care and housing teams in each authority. The alternative is an East and West leadership footprint aligned to NHS Health and Care Partnership geographies. This keeps scale for specialist functions through a shared backbone while strengthening day-to-day links with local NHS partners and neighbourhood delivery, so prevention priorities reflect different needs in each footprint.

This shared leadership approach is proven in practice. In Bedfordshire, the Director of Public Health role is shared across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes, supported by a single specialist team and clear local accountability, demonstrating that a hosted or hybrid model can operate effectively across multiple unitary councils.

On vesting day we will transfer the Public Health Grant and contracts safely, maintain health protection and screening responsibilities, and set interim governance with NHS partners. Over years three to five, Public Health will embed in neighbourhood teams, align outcomes and insight with adult social care and housing, and use shared specialist commissioning only where scale clearly adds value, while keeping visible accountability within each unitary.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE, EDUCATION & SEND

Children's Services in England provide vital frontline services, including support for those who are most vulnerable or at risk. As Councils approach Local Government Reorganisation, effectively planning for a stable transition that protects vital services to children and young people must be at the heart of the approach.

In the financial year 2024/25, local authorities in England budgeted £14.1 billion for Children's Social Care. This represents a real-terms increase of £1.4 billion (10.7%) compared to the previous year (2023/24). This figure is part of a broader budgeted net current expenditure of £127.1 billion across all local authority services, with children's services continuing to be one of the most significant areas of spend. The increase reflects growing demand and cost pressures, particularly in areas such as residential care and support for children with complex needs.

In 2025/26, 30 councils across England have been granted Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) by the UK Government to help manage severe financial pressures and set legally balanced budgets, with significant pressures facing upper tier councils. This support permits councils to borrow or use capital receipts to fund day-to-day services.

A major driver of financial instability is the escalating cost of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision. National SEND deficits are projected to reach £5 billion by 2026 and potentially £8 billion by 2027. The Government has extended the statutory override, which keeps SEND deficits off council balance sheets until 2028, but concerns remain.

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The National Audit Office warns that 43% of councils could be forced to issue Section 114 notices if the override is lifted, underscoring the urgent need for long-term reform and sustainable funding solutions.

Children's Services
Our ambition for Children's Social Care through reorganisation is to create safe, stable systems with clear local accountability and sufficient scale to invest in prevention and early help so that more children stay safely cared for by their family. The aim is to support more children and families earlier, reducing escalation to statutory intervention. For children who need to be in our care and care leavers, our ambition as corporate parents, is to ensure they have homes and trusted relationships that offer love, care, protection, and stability. The aim is that children in care and care leavers receive the help they need to address experiences of adversity and trauma and develop the foundations for a healthy, happy life.

The Government's Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive strategy builds on the Stable Homes agenda, promoting multidisciplinary family help teams, kinship care, and early intervention as the foundation for providing the right support to children who may be at risk or in need of support.

Reports from the District Councils' Network and the Staff College, including the 'Building the Best Places for Children and Families' report advocates for community-rooted services that prioritise prevention, early intervention, and local accountability. The District Councils' Network and IMPOWER's 2025 report, 'The Power of Prevention and Place in New Unitary Councils', highlights examples where smaller authorities have tailored services to local needs, with strategic collaboration in specialist areas and localised delivery for prevention and early help. These examples highlight the potential benefits pooled commissioning, and integrated neighbourhood teams, aiming to balance local leadership with strategic coordination, particularly in safeguarding, residential care, and family support.

Challenges exist across the sector in England, with the National Audit Office highlighting pressures in the market of provision for children's placements with increasing placement costs, and the ongoing need to secure and retain workforce capacity meaning transition must be well planned and managed.

The current position of Hertfordshire's Children's Services reflects a system that performs well against national benchmarks for Children's Services. Hertfordshire's rate of looked-after children remains stable at 36 per 10,000, well below both the England average (70) and statistical neighbours (55), suggesting effective early help and preventative services. However, demand is uneven, particularly in areas such as Broxbourne and Stevenage, potentially related to pockets of deprivation and where there could be benefit in deeper work with community partners to address specific challenges.

Ofsted's latest inspection rated Hertfordshire's Children's Services as Outstanding, citing timely assessments, strong leadership and the positive work of multi-disciplinary safeguarding teams, and stable long-term placements that meet children's needs.

Integrating children's social care more closely with housing, health and community services supports these prevention and corporate parenting ambitions and aligns with wider goals of tackling health inequalities, supporting family resilience, and ensuring every child has the best start in life.

SEND and Education Services

Our ambition for Education and SEND through reorganisation is to build a more inclusive system that identifies and meets need earlier, reduces reliance on out-of-area placements, and ensures children with SEND can thrive in local schools and communities. The goal is to strengthen place-based support, integrate better with health and social care, and provide parents with simpler, more transparent processes. We also aim to grow local specialist provision, modernise systems and case management, and maintain Hertfordshire's strong track record in traded school support.

In setting this vision, partners in Hertfordshire recognise that tor residents, this ambition means a responsive system that meets children's needs earlier. Families will benefit from expanded early years support, smoother transitions for care-experienced and SEND children, and schools that are better equipped to include and nurture every learner. Trauma-informed practices will ensure that professionals understand the impact of adversity and respond with empathy, helping children feel safe and supported in their learning environments.

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Education and SEND services in Hertfordshire oversee a school population of around 226,000 pupils. Demand for specialist support has risen sharply: there were 14,473 children and young people supported with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) by July 2025, with annual growth between 12%-15%.

Over 90% of Hertfordshire schools are rated Good or Outstanding. Hertfordshire's schools continue to perform strongly in national benchmarking, with outcomes in core subjects and vocational pathways consistently above national averages. However, there are areas of pressure linked to population growth, rising demand for specialist services outstripping provision, and some differences across different parts of the county. The High Needs Block remains under significant financial strain, with projected spending for 2025/26 reaching £263 million—£52 million more than the funding available, further deepening the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit. Meanwhile, home-to-school transport continues to exert pressure on the budget, with services provided to over 3,100 pupils at an estimated annual cost of nearly £40 million.

Hertfordshire County Council is currently undergoing a reinspection of its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). This follows a previous inspection in November 2023, which identified failings across the local area partnership. The SEND Local Area Partnership (including the council and NHS) has been implementing a comprehensive improvement plan since early 2024. This includes: Enhancing data sharing and governance; Improving EHCP quality and timeliness; Expanding SEND school places (1,000 new places by 2025/26); Redesigning autism and ADHD assessment pathways; Investing an additional £7 million annually into SEND services.

The need, challenge and the opportunity

1. Children's Social Care Volumes – Totals & Percentages

- **Children in Need (CIN):** 1,181 children – fairly evenly spread but highest in the West (54%).

- **Child Protection Plans (CP):** 636 children – highest concentration in the East (58%).

- **Children Looked After (CLA):** 986 children – again more concentrated in the East (53%).

- Implication:

- The East carries a greater share of safeguarding demand (CP & CLA), while the West sees higher early intervention needs (CIN).

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2. Children's Social Care Rates per 100,000

- **CIN rates:** Hertfordshire average 4.4 per 100k; fairly even across options.

- **CP rates:** East and Central higher (2.8–3.5 vs avg 2.3).

- **CLA rates:** Central is highest at 5.4 vs avg 3.6, showing disproportionate care demand.

Implication:

- Demand is not evenly distributed – safeguarding risks (CP & CLA) are significantly higher in Central and East, while West/South-West sit closer to or below average.

3. EHCPs (Education, Health & Care Plans)

- Total volume: 14,686 across Hertfordshire.

- **Distribution:** East holds the largest share (54% under 2 UAs; 43% under 3 UAs).

- **Rates per 100k:** Hertfordshire average 52.4; Central and East under Option 3/4 have the highest rates (66.9 and 61.3).

- **West and South-West** sit below or around average (44.8–50.9).

Implication:

- East and Central unitaries will face higher pressures around SEND demand and provision planning, requiring robust commissioning and financial planning.

Children's Services
Demand is concentrated in certain localities with higher intensity among a smaller cohort, particularly in the more urban parts of the county and higher levels of demand in the Central area.

Hertfordshire County Council has set a strategic ambition to bring the majority of children's placements in-house by 2028. This move is designed to reduce reliance on external providers, improve placement sufficiency, and ensure better value for money across the system. One further option beyond the current plan to bring 85% of places within county by 2028, is the exploration of the potential to develop in-house buildings and teams, particularly where a robust business case to demonstrate cost reduction and improved outcomes. Where case loads are higher such as in the Central authority, use of HRA land and housing development skills could further support a localised approach to improve experiences for young people and reduce cost.

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In addition, there is a case for localised strategies relevant to each local areas. In the central area, demonstrating higher demand, integration with housing, health, and community services is central to this model, enabling wraparound support and aligning with wider goals of tackling health inequalities and supporting family resilience.

Fostering costs remain under particular pressure, currently estimated to be around 19% higher than those of our statistical neighbours. Some districts have limited in-house provision, and in-house fostering placements costing less than 50% of equivalent external placements.

As Hertfordshire transitions to a four-unitary model, there is an opportunity to create a coordinated and compelling foster carer recruitment strategy that leverages the scale and resources of the new authorities. By harmonising financial incentives, such as fostering allowances, skills-based payments, welcome bonuses, home improvement grants, targeted marking and support could secure benefits.

This approach not only addresses the urgent need for more carers but also reinforces the values of community, care, and collaboration at the heart of the new governance model.

SEND
SEND services in Hertfordshire face rising demand, with a sharp increase in Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments and long waits for autism, ADHD, and speech and language support. Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) volumes and complexity is rising faster than overall pupil numbers.

To address these challenges the SEND Local Area Partnership is investing £91 million to create 1,000 new school places by 2026 and has launched a SEND Academy to improve workforce skills. A Priority Action and Improvement Plan focuses on better data sharing, timely EHCPs, and placing children in suitable settings.

Looking ahead, Hertfordshire is developing a new SEND Strategy for 2026–2031, building on current efforts to expand local provision, embed co-production, and improve outcomes. The aim is to create a more responsive, inclusive system that meets the diverse needs of children and young people with SEND across the county.

These issues reflect a national picture, and with a new SEND policy direction anticipated, local systems must be prepared to respond with agility and to manage transition effectively to reduce risks to children, their families, carers and schools.

How the four unitary model delivers this vision
There are different needs across different parts of the county, with some rural access challenges, and pockets of deprivation. LGR offers a chance to address these gaps, through intensified partnership working with other council teams such as housing, employment and skills teams, welfare advice and guidance and community groups, to meet the specific needs of different places.

Children's safety and stability come first. The plan protects uninterrupted casework, secure placements, and clear safeguarding from day one. Each new authority will establish statutory leadership, transparent decision-making, ensuring critical systems operate and children and young people have continuity.

In Hertfordshire the multi-agency approach is seen as strength by Ofsted. The opportunity is to further enhance this approach to early intervention, with the voice of young people, and further integration with district services such as housing, environmental health and community safety.

The four unitary model will be based upon a rigorous plan to manage transition. Changes will be phased carefully to maintain continuity of care, safeguarding arrangements, and workforce stability in the early years. Shared services delivered through a 'Hertfordshire Partnership' model will be retained where scale adds value while frontline delivery becomes more locally rooted, or where there is benefit in managing stability of vital services. This approach balances strategic collaboration with local responsiveness, ensuring adult social care is not only sustainable, but compassionate, accessible, and effective for every resident across Hertfordshire.

Many children's and inclusion functions already work to neighbourhood footprints across Hertfordshire. For example, Family Centres and SASH, including Youth Justice, operate through quadrant teams; Intensive Family Support works to defined localities; and Services for Young People, SEND panels and implementation, and the Music Service follow the same pattern. Building on what already works will strengthen a preventative model built around place, enabling earlier support closer to home and consistent engagement with local partnerships.

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The four unitary authority (4UA) model proposed for Hertfordshire will support ongoing delivery of the SEND improvement plan. The model is based each authority taking responsibility for delivering its own SEND provision, ensuring statutory duties are met from day one. The priority is stability for children and young people who access these services, meaning a staged approach may required over time using a 'Hertfordshire Partnership' shared service to continue delivery of the Improvement Plan, provide access to specialist provision across unitary borders and provide reassurance.

At the same time, shared arrangements will be retained where they add value, such as joint commissioning for market intelligence, specialist placements, Herts for Learning for traded services and improvement services. These collaborative mechanisms help preserve efficiency and expertise across authorities, particularly in areas where scale and consistency are critical. The model also supports the development of Centres of Excellence and locality-based delivery, ensuring that best practice is shared and embedded. It is anticipated that changes such as schools admissions will need to be phased over an 18 month window to provide stability and continuity, and access agreements are likely to be needed to continue cross border access to schools for children and families.

Service delivery model
We recognise that any change in local government structure presents risks of disruption. Our priority is a stable transition, ensuring continuity of care, safeguarding, and workforce stability beyond vesting day. Clear leadership and oversight will manage this change effectively. This may include broad use of shared service arrangements via a 'Hertfordshire Partnership' in the first two years of operation, based on a lead provider model centred on the current operational centre in Robertson House and Farnham House. It is expected temporary hosted arrangements will be used by agreement for specialist functions where continuity is critical, for example Emergency Duty Team rota, tribunal and mediation support, pooled Educational Psychology capacity and other services depending on the length of time to prepare. There is an opportunity to prepare for transition early, working across all public partners to create further pipelines for hard to fill roles.

Year one to two
In the first year the emphasis is a well managed, safe and robust transition, so that all vulnerable children and young people have continuity of support.

Year One to Two	▪ Statutory leadership in each unitary, a clear front door linked to local support hubs, and simple, predictable panels and thresholds.
	▪ Visible accountability across four authorities. Robust planning keeps cases continuous, placements stable and statutory processes secure.
	▪ Clean contract novation, secure data migration and parallel running of critical systems where prudent to protect timeliness and data quality.
	▪ A common Emergency Duty Team as an ongoing shared function to ensure consistent 24-hour cover from day one.
	▪ Shared capacity for vital specialist services or where frontline services need to be protected
	▪ Continuity of traded school improvement through Herts for Learning as an ongoing shared service under common standards and governance.
	▪ Preparing additional recruitment campaigns, grow-your-own routes, return to practice and retention support across Adults and Children.

Years three to five
Over the longer term there are further opportunities to align each authority with the specific needs and challenges in its communities, using a range of options.
It is expected that within years 3 – 5, where transitionary shared services have been in place, they will be embedded into each unitary authority, with remaining shared arrangements being more focussed on specialist services, or where there is opportunity to collaborate to commission effectively. This may include:

Year Three to Five	▪ Longer term shared functions by agreement, including market intelligence, joint fostering and adoption recruitment pipelines, shared placements frameworks for specialist and complex, a common Emergency Duty Team rota, and Herts for Learning as an ongoing shared service.
	▪ Alignment with anticipated Government policy changes for SEND and Children's Social Care.
	▪ Larger in-house fostering and kinship networks.
	▪ Transitions planned with families, schools and employers so young people step into further learning, good work and independent living with the right accommodation and support.

HOUSING, HRA & HOMELESSNESS

Housing in this proposal comprises two connected elements: Strategic Housing in the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account; the accompanying diagram shows how they align and interact.

Strategic Housing (General Fund)		Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	
• Housing Strategy • Private Sector Housing • Allocations • Housing Welfare • Affordable Housing Enabling	• *Housing Options* • *Homelessness* • *Temporary Accommodation* • *Rough Sleeping* *Identified as critical*	• Rent Collection • Tenancy Management • New Homes Development • Resident Engagement	• Repairs & Maintenance • Major Works & Capital Investment • Estates • Asset Management
All District & Borough Authorities		Dacorum St Albans	Stevenage Welwyn Hatfield

Homelessness is identified as a critical service in the Government's Devolution White Paper, which is why this chapter is elevated within the overarching proposal. Preventing and relieving homelessness, however, relies upon a complete, coordinated and collaborative housing system. Prevention and sustainment, fair allocations, strong private rented partnerships and consistent enforcement set the tone, while council landlord services influence quality, safety and affordability. Hertfordshire has over 90,000 affordable homes, with about 33,000 in local authority ownership, therefore public landlords are a major lever for standards and supply.

Our ambition is a consistent, prevention-led system that integrates housing with adults', children's and public health, reduces avoidable variation and aligns strategy with growth and regeneration. This will contribute credibly to national ambitions on supply, with a focus on genuinely affordable and social homes that are good quality and sustainable.

For residents this means a simpler route to help, clear updates on allocations and temporary accommodation, quicker recovery when things go wrong and visible local teams who know their area. Tenants of the combined HRAs experience responsive, accountable landlords focused on safer, warmer homes.

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4 Unitary Model HRA Combinations	
North West Hertfordshire	Central Hertfordshire
Dacorum *10,061*	Stevenage *7,911*
St Albans *4,899*	Welwyn Hatfield *8,847*
Total *14,960*	Total *16,758*

General fund housing consolidates from 11 councils to four, enabling common standards and shared functions. Housing Revenue Account landlord functions combine into two larger HRAs: Dacorum with St Albans in the North West unitary, and Stevenage with Welwyn Hatfield in the Central unitary. This HRA configuration is comparable to a two unitary consolidation and aggregates more than a three unitary alternative, while keeping accountability rooted in place.

The need, challenge & opportunity
The lack of a single market view fragments purchasing power and weakens standards. Access to the PRS is constrained by affordability, landlord confidence and competition for limited supply. Incentives and sustainment support vary, leading to preventable tenancy failure and repeat presentations, while enforcement is inconsistent. Where councils are landlords, HRAs face investment backlogs, building safety and compliance duties, rising construction costs and the need to decarbonise. Data and systems are uneven, making it harder to see cross-boundary demand and track prevention, equality and performance transparently.

This sits within a strengthened regulatory environment that requires consistent compliance and visible improvement. The Housing Ombudsman sets the Complaint Handling Code and investigates maladministration, the Regulator of Social Housing regulates governance, viability and consumer standards and is rolling out routine inspections with graded outcomes from C1 to C4, with both Stevenage and Dacorum being awarded C2 judgements since the implementation of proactive regulation. Finally, the Building Safety Regulator oversees higher-risk residential buildings. Meeting these requirements reliably across four authorities and inside two combined HRAs is a central design challenge, reinforcing the need for standard operating practice, strong assurance and published performance.

Government reforms are welcome, including changes to Right to Buy, commitments to ban no-fault evictions, a multi-year social housing rent settlement, an expanded Affordable Homes Programme and additional homelessness funding. Yet fragmented allocations and inconsistent sustainment hold back social mobility and disadvantage residents who need to move for work or family. The LGA recommends investment to deliver at least 100,000 new social homes per year, which would meet need, reduce pressure on homelessness services and improve public finances over time. Reorganisation gives Hertfordshire a credible route to pair local control with shared capacity so prevention improves, temporary accommodation need reduces and investment aligns with growth.

How the four unitary model delivers this vision
Housing safety, legal compliance and resident continuity come first. On vesting day statutory Part seven functions and core HRA operations transfer intact, with contracts novated, providers paid on time and critical systems migrated or run in parallel where that protects service reliability and data quality. Each new authority puts clear decision making and visible accountability in place, with compliance and building safety embedded from the start.

Delivery sits at the scale that best serves outcomes. Day to day accountability for homelessness decisions, allocations, private sector enforcement and landlord services stays within each unitary so leaders are close to local markets and residents. Where markets are thin or specialist capability is scarce, the four share capacity by agreement under service

level arrangements, common technical standards and clear review points. Examples include a county wide temporary accommodation procurement hub, joint frameworks for specialist pathways and complex needs, a recognisable private rented access scheme and pooled expertise for building safety and asset compliance.

As the model settles, support becomes more local, more preventative and easier to navigate. Local teams work alongside adults, children's and public health and with community NHS services and the VCSE to keep people safely housed and reduce repeat presentations. Allocations are aligned to a common spine within each authority so similar need receives a similar offer and timetable, while local lettings plans and neighbourhood insight shape delivery on the ground. The two combined HRAs operate as modern, visible landlords focused on safer, warmer homes, faster repairs and stronger resident voice, while acting as delivery arms for regeneration and new social housing.

Why the four unitary configuration is the strongest choice:
1. **Local accountability, real market reach**
   Decisions stay in place, so prevention, allocations and enforcement reflect local markets. Where scale helps, the four act as one buyer and commissioner, securing better access and prices in temporary accommodation and a coherent offer to private landlords and providers.

2. **Delivery arm for strategic growth and social homes**
   Two sizeable HRAs function as visible delivery vehicles for regeneration and housing supply. Using land, borrowing, grant and devolved powers and funding through a Strategic Authority they build on existing development pipelines of genuinely affordable and social homes, especially family and specialist units that reduce temporary accommodation pressure.

3. **Flexibility and agility to transform**
   Right-sized councils create room to redesign end-to-end journeys, standardise core processes and automate routine tasks, without the drag of an oversized bureaucracy. That agility translates into faster decisions, fewer hand-offs, lower unit costs and better outcomes.

4. **Place-based integration that reduces demand**
   Housing works alongside Adults, Children's, Public Health, community safety and employment support in locality teams. Commission once where scale helps, then deliver locally with neighbourhood insight so help arrives earlier, repeat presentations fall and temporary accommodation stays shorten.

5. **Simpler integration, faster delivery**
   Moving from 11 organisations to four cuts interfaces, system variation and policy divergence. There are fewer mergers to complete and fewer platforms to align, which shortens the path to common standards, shared tools and visible performance.

Service delivery model
The operating model brings together locality delivery, targeted shared capacity and clear accountability. We begin by keeping everything safe and legal, then move in planned steps to a stable end state. Local housing support and prevention are the everyday front door. Statutory decisions and landlord services are led within each unitary so accountability stays close to residents and markets. Specialist capacity is shared only where this improves outcomes, resilience or value. The two combined HRAs act as modern landlords and visible delivery arms for regeneration and new social homes, aligned to local plans and a Strategic Authority offer on infrastructure and funding.

Year one to two
In the first year the emphasis is steadiness, clear accountability and standing up the essentials that protect resilience and value. Statutory Part 7 functions and landlord services transfer intact, with contract novation and safe data migration treated as critical path tasks. Each authority runs a prevention first gateway with named coordinators and simple updates so residents see clear next steps. Temporary accommodation and private rented access begin to benefit from shared buying power and consistent standards, while the combined HRAs focus on safe homes, responsive repairs and visible building safety programmes. Leadership teams set a practical improvement cadence so early progress can be felt by residents and landlords.

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Year One to Two	▪ Stand up statutory leadership in each unitary and stabilise core homelessness and HRA operations.
	▪ Operate a prevention first gateway with clear triage and tenancy sustainment from day one.
	▪ Continue and mature existing temporary accommodation procurement arrangements and frameworks, with options to onboard additional partner authorities and apply common quality standards.
	▪ Align allocations to a single spine within each unitary, retaining local lettings plans where appropriate.
	▪ Launch targeted damp and mould and building safety programmes across the two HRAs with consistent reporting.
	▪ Begin to defragment systems where risk is low and value is high so communication and case visibility improve.
	▪ Prepare HRA delivery plans for new social homes, including site identification, pre-development work and funding bids with the Strategic Authority and Homes England.

Years three to five

By years three to five the long term design is in place. Locality housing teams work as one system alongside adults, children's and public health and with community partners. The Hertfordshire PRS access scheme is widely recognised by landlords and households. Temporary accommodation is managed as a single market with fewer nightly paid placements and shorter stays. Allocations are fair and predictable within each unitary. The two combined HRAs are visible delivery vehicles for regeneration and new social homes, with compliance, building safety and resident engagement embedded and evidenced. Shared functions remain tightly defined and only where collaboration continues to add value.

Year Three to Five	▪ Existing temporary accommodation procurement frameworks reach full maturity, with more partner authorities participating and firmer performance management.
	▪ PRS access and incentive scheme delivers higher volumes of sustained lets and grows a trusted landlord cohort.
	▪ Expanded in county move on options and specialist pathways reduce reliance on nightly paid and bed and breakfast.
	▪ Combined HRAs deliver safer, warmer homes and faster repairs, and act as delivery arms for social housing, using land, borrowing, grant and Strategic Authority powers to accelerate pipelines.
	• Consistent compliance and assurance across regulators, with strong resident voice guiding priorities and investment.

Residents see clearer routes to help in their local area, quicker decisions and support that starts earlier to keep tenancies stable. Fewer households spend long periods in temporary accommodation and more move into decent, affordable homes locally. Landlords work with a single, confident partner for access and standards. As the combined HRAs modernise landlord services and increase supply, homes become safer and warmer, repairs are faster and resident voice strengthens. The four unitary configuration keeps decisions close to place and uses selective scale to shape thin markets, achieving better value and better outcomes without losing the responsiveness communities expect.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Our ambition for transport and highways through reorganisation is to create a safe, reliable and sustainable network that is better aligned to local priorities. New unitary authorities will have the opportunity to bring transport decisions closer to communities, strengthen accountability, and embed innovation.

Each unitary will deliver the Highways Authority role close to residents, owning inspections, routine maintenance, enforcement, small works and supported transport tailored to place. Specialist and market-facing functions that benefit from scale, such as signals, bridges and structures, strategic drainage, winter modelling and real-time information standards, can be shared by agreement.

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A new Hertfordshire-wide strategic authority will steward long-term strategy, Local Transport Plan, lead the countywide Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), coordinate major corridors and the funding pipeline.

The need, challenges and opportunity
Highways and Transport are an important foundation for growth. For example, town centres and new developments need more than reactive maintenance, they require future-proofing integrated planning. Highways and transport infrastructure must be aligned with housing, economic development and public transport so that new communities are viable, connected and sustainable. Fragmented schemes risk duplication, delay and missed opportunities. Coordinated highways services, working hand in hand with planning and regeneration teams, unlock development and deliver the infrastructure that communities expect and deserve.

The Government's Local Growth Plans and the English Devolution Bill place renewed emphasis on aligning local priorities with national missions. In this context, the four new unitary authorities will support growth-driving sectors, improve connectivity, strengthen local accountability and enable access to opportunity. Local transport is a shared priority for central and local collaboration.

Highways are among the most visible local services and residents notice when they work well and when they do not. Potholes left unrepaired, uneven pavements, unclear signage and inconsistent parking enforcement drives frustration among residents, particularly when performance varies across places. The current Hertfordshire operating model faces challenges. Standards and response times vary widely and with backlogs in some service areas. Specialist capacity is stretched in places such as signals, bridges and winter services, leaving the system vulnerable to price volatility and service gaps. Bus reliability varies significantly, and the potential for better integration with other modes of travel.
As one of the most complex and high-profile functions, Highways must be disaggregated with precision and held stable at vesting.

How the Four Unitary Model Delivers the Vision
To address the challenges outlined above, the new model will establish four Highways Authorities, each with a local gateway, clear standards and published target times.

Residents will access services through independent local gateways. Through localisation there is potential for local teams to integrate network management, inspections, parking, supported transport and member engagement so recurring issues are handled as one and joint procurement will be used where there are benefits from scale.

To aid a smooth transition, it is proposed that a countywide rulebook will be locally implemented for permits, inspections, reinstatement and traffic management. Joint procurement and pooled specialist panels will provide resilience and value. For continuity, shared network control, programme management and analytics will support phased convergence of asset, works and contact systems. The Strategic Authority will lead on Local Transport Plans (LTP), Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP) and corridor strategies, with time-limited hosting arrangements where services are not yet live.

Service Delivery Model
Our overriding priority is to ensure services remain safe, legal and uninterrupted, particularly in areas such as winter readiness, emergency response, and supplier continuity. The disaggregation and aggregation of key functions will be phased, and not a single vesting-day switch. Temporary hosted arrangements will be deployed by agreement, with robust review points to ensure accountability and readiness for future transition. Moves will be sequenced as contracts expire, supplier transition windows are implemented and statutory readiness is enabled so continuity, winter resilience and supplier stability are protected. Given the specialist nature of some key services, there will be use of a Hertfordshire Partnership to provide selected shared services, by agreement and reviewed at agreed points.

In Year One, the intention is to

Year One	▪ Appoint a lead Officer in each unitary, with a joint transition board, and local teams.
	▪ Aggregate and Disaggregate core local delivery including inspections, defects, winter operations, permits, TROs, parking and minor works, with clear local leadership and accountability and aggregate current district functions.

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	▪ Bringing together district and borough parking and related functions into each unitary, aligning policy and oversight.
	▪ Maintain existing term maintenance and street works arrangements, with interim coordination across the four authorities or a Hertfordshire Partnership to improve utility performance.
	▪ Keep passenger transport steady: concessionary fares administration maintained consistently, supported services and DRT delivered locally, with Strategic Authority leadership – or if not in place, a 'Hertfordshire Partnership' Shared Service arrangement, Enhanced Partnerships and BSIP frameworks.
	▪ Stabilise data and systems: keep current asset and works systems live, begin mapping for convergence, and establish a shared performance view that is simple and reliable.
	▪ Protect winter resilience: confirm depot access, salt supply, fleet and routes, and assure call-out, forecasting and duty rota arrangements.
	▪ Workforce and culture: retain key staff, set clear roles and escalation routes, and launch a joint development offer in permitting, network management, signals, winter and engagement.
	▪ Offering a Hertfordshire Partnership joint procurement oversight to manage specifications, frameworks and risk, while preserving local control of neighbourhood schemes and member priorities.

Dependent on funding and the policy framework, longer-term outcomes could include faster, visible repairs, higher first-time fix rates and clearer resident updates – along with the potential to trial new approaches. Local knowledge and planning can help inform the scheduling planned street works. Working with a new Strategic Authority and potential funding streams through devolution could develop a more coherent supported bus offer, consistent information and stronger links to active travel to improve public transport integration. Data-led prioritisation can shift spending towards prevention, and transparent performance will enhance accountability.

MEETS LOCAL NEEDS AND INFORMED BY LOCAL VIEWS (MHCLG CRITERION 4)

SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK AND IMPACT ON PROPOSAL (4C)

Following a coordinated programme of engagement, we reached a large audience across Hertfordshire, with strong resident participation alongside staff and partner input. This countywide exercise provided clear insights into public attitudes and residents' priorities for change. Overall, residents said councils must deliver the basics well, be financially efficient and be easy to navigate. While no single view dominated, more residents supported four unitary authorities than the alternative options. The themes below summarise feedback that strengthens the case for a four unitary model.

1. Residents prioritise visible, place-shaping services
Residents constantly tell us that they judge the Councils performance upon everyday services such as waste collection, street cleansing and local planning decisions. These themes have shaped our proposals with "services you can count on" at their heart. The aim is to give people a simple, predictable experience on the things they notice every week.

A four unitary proposal creates the most ideal conditions for these priorities to be championed. Decisions are made closer to communities and organisations would have a greater understanding of place and local challenges.

Statistics with question context	Quotes and testimony
Which local government services are most important to you? People could choose several services that matter most.	"More joined up planning for large housing and infrastructure. Make sure there are enough Transport staff." – Dacorum council staff
Responses: • Infrastructure 57%	"The basics matter most – roads, bins, and keeping our streets clean." – St Albans resident

• Waste and recycling 46%, • Parks and green spaces 42%, • Planning and development 37% • Public safety 36%	More joined up working with the highways and planning teams in the planning application process." – Three Rivers resident
	Better joined up services and fix the infrastructure." – Welwyn Hatfield resident

2. Bringing government as close as possible to local communities

People want local government that responds to their local concerns and priorities. A four-unitary model keeps representation meaningful and accountability visible in a county as large and diverse as Hertfordshire, while simplifying "who does what" so residents are not bounced between tiers.

Statistics with question context	Quotes and testimony
What concerns you most about reorganisation? People chose a single top concern. Responses: • Council becoming less connected to my community 57%	"The larger any authority is, the less effective, the more impersonal, the more bureaucratic, the more wasteful and least cost effective it becomes." - Stevenage resident
	"The larger the organisation the less efficient it will be, council taxpayers will be ill served, and it is going to cost us more." - Broxbourne resident
	"Smaller, more local government is always more efficient and knowledgeable," - St Albans resident
	"Option four, because a very large organisation is unlikely to understand the needs of local communities." – Broxbourne resident
	"Enough to be money-saving in terms of efficiency and reduced management costs, but small enough to remain connected to the community." – St Albans resident

3. Local identity and community ties

Residents want joined-up services without losing local representation. They do not want an organisation so remote that it loses sight of local priorities. A four-unitary model is best placed to retain local identity because it is functionally closer to the communities it serves and does not require complicated, layered governance to replace the proximity of today's district and borough councils.

Statistics with question context	Quotes and testimony
What concerns you most about reorganisation? People chose a single top concern related to representation and focus. Responses: • Loss of local representation 52% • Council might change its priorities 47%	"Hertfordshire is a big county that has different areas and demographics. It is important to have enough councils to cover all of this efficiently." - Welwyn Hatfield resident
	"Strong shared ties across Watford, Bushey, Three Rivers, Bricket Wood and Radlett. Residents use the same transport networks, healthcare, schools and shopping hubs." - Hertsmere resident
	"Similarities of area. Dacorum and St Albans, similar small towns and semi-rural. Three Rivers, Watford, Hertsmere more urban. East of Hertfordshire might be the moon for all it has in common with our area." - Dacorum resident
	"As a resident from Hertsmere, being joint with Watford and Three Rivers makes the most sense. We are closest to London and face more expansion pressures than other district councils further north." - Hertsmere resident
	"Four aligns well with the local flavour we will need going forward." - Integrated Care Board stakeholder

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4. Protecting our places

People want to safeguard the character and priorities of different parts of the county — from historic St Albans to the film industry in Borehamwood.

Statistics with question context	Quotes and testimony
What concerns you most about reorganisation? People chose a single top concern related to connection and representation. **Highest response:** • Council becoming less connected to my community 57%	"Of the models under discussion, the four unitary model seems the most appropriate to ensure a local focus and the ability to build." – Lee Valley Regional Park Authority "Fewer authorities may result in reduced service, particularly for smaller settlements." - Parish councillor, East Herts
	"I could see our area which is run efficiently and has no debt being sidelined by other areas that are not run as efficiently." - Broxbourne resident
	"Four as least change, but I see no reason why we are changing at all with all the cost and chaos reorganisation will cause." - North Herts resident
	"The more councils, the better, as I am totally opposed to change of the current system. More local councils mean more local democracy." - Watford respondent
	"From a local perspective, a four model could work better, even if three may work financially." - Love Hoddesdon BID

5. Safeguarding essential services

Children's Services and Adult Care in Hertfordshire currently perform well and must be protected through any reorganisation. We recognise that any change must preserve what works, maintain clear responsibility and make structural shifts invisible to people who rely on care.

Detractors of the four-unitary option cautioned that dividing the county could duplicate scarce specialist roles and risk short term disruption. The response to this is a key part of our proposal; specifically the prioritisation of a safe and legal day one, retaining countywide networks of expertise that can be deployed across all four councils, and only disaggregating services where it clearly benefits residents at a sustainable pace.

Statistics with question context	Quotes and testimony
Which local government services are most important to you? People could choose several services. **Highest response among care services:** • Adult social care 34% • Children's services 19%	"There is a risk of potential disruption to adult social care services, which could negatively affect vulnerable people." - Sunnyside Rural Trust stakeholder
	"There is a risk that we are unable to hang on to what works, and successful partnerships are undone by structural changes." - Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust stakeholder
	"Dividing the county into four would lead to unnecessary duplication of resources, for example having specialist staff in each new authority." - Detractor comment
	"Two or four unitaries better than three due to alignment with current health and care partnership geographies." – Health stakeholder.
	"Four should not prevent co-operation and standardisation across the four authorities where appropriate to reduce costs." - Dacorum resident

Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Support for the four unitary model tended to come from people who attached most importance to local voice, visible accountability and councils rooted in place, with the model seen as the best way to keep everyday services responsive and ensure each part of Hertfordshire gets sustained attention without losing sight of local identity. Although views were mixed, this option drew the broadest support among residents.

Stakeholders also stressed that collaboration will be essential. The ability to share or host services where it adds value, align policies and use common operating frameworks was highlighted as a practical way to strengthen efficiency, cut duplication and keep standards consistent across the four councils.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (MHCLG CRITERION 6)

Four unitary councils in Hertfordshire will offer the best opportunities to enable stronger community engagement and genuine opportunities for local empowerment. The new authorities will offer the closest alignment with local organisations including the voluntary sector, community groups and can partner closely with existing town and parish councils.

Case Study: Generation Hertsmere
Generation Hertsmere is an annual borough wide careers fair which brings together students from local secondary schools, SEN schools and colleges with employers, training providers and education institutions. The initiative forms part of Hertsmere Borough Council's wider economic development and youth employment strategy, addressing skills gaps and supporting local talent. Organised by Hertsmere Borough Council in partnership with Hertfordshire Careers Hub (Hertfordshire Futures) the event gives those aged 14-19 who live or go to school or college in Hertsmere the opportunity to engage their knowledge of the careers available in their area and meet local employers and training providers. Thousands of school children from across the borough have benefitted from meaningful encounters with employers and employees providing advice about the local labour market. There has been positive feedback from participants who have reported improved confidence and clarity in career planning.

Events such as Generation Hertsmere take place across the county, with Generation Events supporting the Hertfordshire Careers Hub's strategic plans by position careers education in the context of the local labour market – while aligning with each district and borough's economic development strategies. Since 2020, the Generation events have reached over 18,661 young people and parents across the county (as at September 2025). Under a 4UA model, events like this can continue to be tailored to best meet the needs of each locality, allowing young people to understand the local opportunities available to them now and in the future, building a workforce with the right skills and a strong local economy.

Councils close to communities by design
This proposal is unique. Feedback from our communities and residents highlights their preference for Councils which are closer to communities, where local voices and priorities can be heard. The proposal for four unitary Councils is based on the network of towns, villages and communities in which people live, work, study and connect.

Reflecting towns and communities
The Councils are designed to be around 300,000 population in order to be resilient, while reflecting local needs and priorities. The proposed model is based on ward representation, so that the distinctive needs of particular communities can be represented, resources targeted, and local identity respected. It reflects the county's distinct local identities and variations in community needs and support the Government's Pride in Place strategy to build stronger communities and neighbourhoods to build growth and ultimately improve socio-economic outcomes.

Local government structures should align with how people live their daily lives - including where they live, work, and access services. Residents in different areas often face very different issues, from urban housing and transport pressures to rural isolation and access to services. Doing so avoids the need to impose any specific sub-governance but instead each council will have the choice of different community engagement approaches.

Providing community representation and advocacy
With responsibility for a broader range of services, Councillors of the new unitary authorities will have a visible leadership role in their wards and with the broad range of services provided by the councils.

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Proposal for four unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Councillors in new unitary councils will choose their preferred options for engagement to best serve their residents, be that neighbourhood forums, towns and parish councils or place-based development boards, along with the ability to support a neighbourhood working approach that is backbone of the community partnership work.

Working cooperatively in neighbourhoods
The English Devolution White Paper and the NHS Long Term Plan highlight the importance of working as closely as possible with communities to build trust, advocacy, innovation and achieve the best results. In Hertfordshire, neighbourhood working will be a defining feature of the proposed four unitary model, enabling services to be delivered more responsively, tailored to local needs, and shaped by those who use them.

Long-established approaches to community engagement are already in existence, from proactive town and parish councils to Business Improvement Districts and Town Boards, and to neighbourhood-based teams. There is a positive track record of local partnership working, from Community Safety Partnerships between Councils, police, fire, community safety teams and voluntary partners who work together to address issues in each district and borough, to the network of locally designed Citizens Advice functions, to cross-council teams working directly with communities.

This neighbourhood-based approach has community partnership at its core. This includes regular local partnership activity, led by ward Members including ward walks with officer and partner teams, police priority setting and community safety meetings, engagement with health partners and focussed project work on local priorities.

Local Government Reorganisation provides a stimulus to take this neighbourhood-based working further and deeper. With four community-rooted Councils working with other partners, there is potential for further alignment through ward-based engagement with Safer Neighbourhood Teams, links with school provision, connections with local Primary Care Networks so that addressing health inequalities and other challenges can be rooted into organisations. For some issues there are effective partnerships already that cover more than one locality or even more than one local authority, and these will be supported to continue.

A range of other engagement tools are currently used by Councils in Hertfordshire and can be embedded into the new unitary organisations:
- Service co-design methods to give agency, advocacy and impact
- Citizens' panels – a representative cross-section of the public who have agreed to participate in consultation exercises
- Youth councils, Parliaments and engagement to hear the voices of young people at school or college
- Forums or other arrangements for working with groups in society whose voices may not otherwise be heard, such as Roma, Gypsy and Travellers, carers, people with learning disabilities or autism
- Tenant engagement forums for those in council housing
- Participatory budget setting

Local democratic forums
In the four unitary model, there is no requirement to establish a layer of local democratic forums, but the flexibility for new councils to choose the most appropriate methods for local engagement. If chosen, local democratic forums could also provide a further method for community engagement in particular area beyond the neighbourhood working model, or a looser and more informal model could also be adopted rather than structural governance. This could cover a cluster of council wards or divisions, following the pattern of local identity and, as far as possible, the catchment areas for the new local NHS neighbourhood health centres. As Hertfordshire has a mixture of urban, suburban and rural communities, forum areas are likely to vary in population and geography and could have a range of different powers and representation from elected Members, to other co-opted partners.

Town and Parish Councils
Approximately 38% of Hertfordshire residents live in areas with a town or parish council. These local councils vary significantly in the population size they cover, in their resources and in the services they provide. The four unitary model will continue existing relationships with parish and town councils, providing a local connection and relationship on key areas such as service provision and community engagement. As with any council model through LGR, there are existing mechanisms that can be used if there is local appetite to consider the case for further town or parish councils to represent particular areas.

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Partnership
Councils across Hertfordshire work collaboratively with the Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector on a daily basis, recognising that VCFSE partners are often best placed to deliver services that councils cannot. To support this vital work, councils in Hertfordshire provide core funding to key infrastructure organisations such as Citizens Advice, CVS organisations, Women's Refuges, and others that offer essential support to vulnerable residents. Councils also work closely with faith communities, as well as town and parish councils, to foster strong, cohesive, and resilient local communities.

In the four unitary model, voluntary and community sector organisations will have the opportunity to participate in joint planning and working on the local issues that are relevant to them, both through the local democratic process, neighbourhood working approach, through wider themed partnerships such as sustainability, welfare and children's services, and through joint projects on priority areas and advocacy. As the four unitary model does not seek to integrate VCS partners into a specific area governance model, there is flexibility to work together as partners to determine the most impactful priorities to work together, and to achieve the best results for local communities and groups.

Case Study: Bristol's Community Resilience Fund (CRF)
Bristol's CRF was a £4 million programme by Bristol City Council to help community and voluntary organisations recover, strengthen sustainability, and build long-term capacity. Targeted at deprived areas and equality groups, it responded to calls for participatory democracy, including a 2020 report and a council motion to reboot democracy.

The council replaced traditional grants with a participatory approach. A Design Group of VCSE leaders worked with officers and TPXimpact to set priorities and process. Residents, councillors and organisations co-produced the decision framework. Grants were decided by panels of local people, councillors and VCSE representatives, recruited through open calls and sortition.

The model drew community involvement, improved council and voluntary sector relationships, and upskilled staff. It was time intensive and required cultural change. Lessons included flexibility, trust building and paying participants. The council will use the model for other funds and consultations, embedding participation in governance.

Town and Place-based Boards
Across the county, several town or place boards are in place bringing together business, public partners, voluntary and community support the renewal of towns and creation of opportunity. Providing continuity to these existing boards is vital, to continue impetus and regeneration efforts, will also providing a further community engagement option for new unitary councils to consider extending to other towns to help collaboratively plan, fund, and deliver projects that have a measurable local impact.

Case Study Stevenage Development Board
The Stevenage Development Board was set up in March 2020 to formulate a bid for the national Government's Town Fund initiative. Stevenage were one of 101 towns in England invited to bid, and were successfully awarded £37.5m in March 2021 following the submission of the Stevenage Town Investment Plan, set out and ratified by the Stevenage Development Board.

The Stevenage Development Board is chaired by an Independent Chair. The Board brings together voluntary key stakeholders from public sector organisations, private businesses, not-for-profit organisations and Heritage organisations, to ensure a diverse range of views are represented. This collaborative community based approach secured Stevenage the highest bid in the country, one of only two awarded at that level. This investment will support the delivery of an extensive range of project that will improve the lives of residents:

- *Station Gateway Enabling Works*
- *Cycling & Pedestrian Connectivity*
- *Town Centre Diversification*
- *Stevenage Enterprise Centre*

- *Stevenage Innovation & Technology Centre*
- *Sports & Leisure Hub*
- *New Town Museum*

The Board continue to work in collaboration on a Town Investment Plan with a clear vision, strategy and delivery proposals, that supports local residents and businesses and has extended its vision to a Gunnels Wood Road improvement scheme and the vital Station Gateway project.

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Contents

Executive Summary

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Hertfordshire represents a major transformation in the delivery and governance of public services across the county. Aimed at reducing duplication, improving coordination, and enhancing value for money, the reorganisation will affect residents, elected members, and staff across all 11 councils.

This Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) provides an initial evaluation of the potential implications of LGR on protected and vulnerable groups, focusing on three key areas: access to services and employment, effectiveness of services and working conditions, and representation and engagement. It identifies a range of potential risks and opportunities that the 11 councils will need to take into account - particularly for disabled people, older adults, carers, ethnic minorities, care-experienced young people, and those facing socio-economic disadvantage.

The assessment highlights risks such as digital exclusion, loss of local engagement, disruption to support networks, and barriers to progression for underrepresented staff. It also outlines opportunities to embed equality, diversity, and inclusion into new governance structures, service models, and workforce practices.

Potential mitigation strategies include maintaining multi-channel service access, supporting digital inclusion, preserving workplace adjustments, and strengthening community and staff engagement. The EqIA also recommends inclusive consultation, co-production with affected groups, and ongoing monitoring of outcomes by protected characteristic.

The consideration of these equality implications will be a key focus for Hertfordshire's 11 councils as the implementation of the new unitary councils progresses. The principle of equality by design will be used to develop the new unitary councils' service offers to ensure that most vulnerable and underrepresented in our communities are not disadvantaged by this process. This EqIA will remain a live document, updated in response to feedback and evolving needs whilst also providing the foundation for more detailed consideration of specific areas of work as required.

Introduction

The proposed Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) represents a significant transformation in how local government services are delivered and governed in Hertfordshire. It is intended to reduce duplication, improve coordination, and deliver better value for money for both residents and the workforce. However, any change to public service delivery and local government structures has the potential to have the greatest impact on those most reliant on these services—many of whom are among the most vulnerable or underrepresented in our communities and on the workforce who deliver them.

In Hertfordshire, the most vulnerable or underrepresented in our communities includes disabled people, older adults, carers, women, people from certain ethnic minority backgrounds and care-experienced young people. Socio-economic disadvantage often compounds the inequalities experienced by these groups, increasing their reliance on local services and their risk of exclusion. The reorganisation will also directly affect Elected Members and council staff across all 11 councils, who may experience changes to their roles, working patterns, locations, and support structures.

This Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) will focus on the following areas for both residents and staff:

1. **Access to Services and Employment**
   The reorganisation may change how, where, and when services are delivered and how employment is structured. This could create new barriers or opportunities for inclusion, particularly for those who are digitally excluded, have mobility or communication needs, or face other structural disadvantages. The assessment will consider whether all residents can continue to access services equitably, and whether all staff can access fair employment, support, and progression. The county includes contrasting communities divided by rural and urban landscapes, which may place differing demands on any new structure. Factoring this in early could help mitigate potential pressures. Demographic characteristics and the presence—or absence—of existing infrastructure within communities are critical factors that can perpetuate inequality. For example, the rate of infrastructural development required in areas with younger families may differ significantly from that needed in communities with aging populations. Additionally, variables such as a community's proximity to London, the presence of major business enterprises, and the prevalence of commuter pressure points can influence patterns of growth, place increased demand on local resources, and potentially contribute to or exacerbate existing inequalities.

2. **Effectiveness of Services and Working Conditions**
   It is essential that services remain not only accessible but also effective for all, and that staff are able to work effectively and safely. The changes may affect the quality, responsiveness, and appropriateness of services for different groups, as well as the working conditions, wellbeing, and support available to staff. The assessment will explore whether the reorganisation risks reducing service effectiveness or staff wellbeing, particularly for those with specific needs or vulnerabilities.

3. **Representation, Engagement, and Community/Workforce Cohesion**
   The proposal may influence how communities and staff engage with local government and participate in decision-making. There is a risk that some groups—particularly those already underrepresented—may feel less connected or have reduced influence. The assessment will consider how the new structures can strengthen engagement and ensure inclusive representation for both residents and staff, including through staff networks and community forums.

4. **Mitigation and Opportunities**
   The reorganisation presents a critical opportunity to embed diversity and inclusion into new ways of working, both for service delivery and for the workforce. However, there is also a risk of unintended negative impacts if changes are not carefully assessed, communicated, and monitored. The assessment will identify opportunities to reduce inequality, promote fairness, and ensure that the voices of those with lived experience—whether as residents, service users, or staff—are heard and acted upon from the outset.

Section 1: Focus of the EqIA   [**Click here to return to contents**]

What are the main aims or purpose of the proposal?

The LGR proposal seeks to restructure how services are delivered across Hertfordshire, aiming to reduce duplication, improve coordination, and enhance value for money. Driven by financial pressures and the need for stronger strategic leadership, the reform intends to create a more streamlined and responsive system for both residents and staff. While several reorganisation models are being considered, this EqIA focuses on the overall potential equality impacts of LGR across the county, rather than assessing individual options.

What outcomes are you trying to achieve, and for whom?

The proposal seeks to ensure that:

- **All Hertfordshire residents**—especially those most reliant on public services e.g. disabled people, older adults, carers, those from certain ethnic minority groups and care-experienced young people—can access high-quality, effective, and inclusive services.
- **All staff**—including those with protected characteristics—experience fair, inclusive, and supportive working conditions, with opportunities for progression and wellbeing protected during and after the transition.
- **All Councillors**—are provided with timely, transparent information. This will support informed decision-making and enable them to act as trusted advocates for residents throughout the transition process.

Outcomes include:

- Equitable access to services and employment for all, regardless of background or circumstance.
- Effective and responsive services and internal processes to meet diverse needs.
- Enhanced community and workforce engagement, representation, and cohesion.
- Reduced inequalities and barriers to inclusion, especially for marginalised or seldom-heard groups.
- Equitable governance led by informed and inclusive leaders, underpinned by clear accountability for advancing equality of opportunity and experience across the councils and the county.

What are the reasons for the proposal e.g. financial, legal, service improvement?

- **Financial:** Achieving efficiencies and better value for money by reducing duplication and streamlining service delivery and internal processes.
- **Service Improvement:** Improving coordination and consistency across services and teams, ensuring they remain fit for purpose and responsive to changing needs.
- **Legal/Policy:** Aligning with national and local policy objectives for public sector reform and ensuring compliance with equality and inclusion duties for both residents and staff.

How does this proposal fit with other services or strategies?

The LGR proposal sits within a broader landscape of transformation and reform across Hertfordshire, and may intersect with existing priorities such as digital innovation, community

engagement, and efforts to advance equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The reorganisation is intended to complement and strengthen these efforts by embedding equality considerations into new structures and ways of working—for both service users and staff.

Which teams or organisations are involved in delivering or implementing it?

The proposal is being delivered jointly by Hertfordshire County Council, the county's district and borough councils and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Implementation will require joint working across service areas, with input from equality leads, service managers, HR, and representatives from marginalised communities and staff groups.

Which aspects are most important to equality and should be the focus of your attention?

This EqIA outlines the headline equality impacts of LGR, which will require more detailed monitoring during transition and implementation. Key considerations include:

- **Access to services and employment**: Ensuring changes do not create new barriers for residents or staff, particularly those with mobility, communication, or digital access needs.
- **Service effectiveness and internal processes**: Maintaining quality and responsiveness for all groups and ensuring staff are equipped to deliver inclusive services.
- **Community and workforce representation**: Supporting diverse participation in decision-making and safeguarding the civic voice.
- **Risk mitigation and opportunity realisation**: Embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion into all aspects of new structures.
- **Elected member representation**: Assessing how changes to roles, boundaries, and governance may impact councillors from underrepresented groups.
- **Geographic and place-based equity**: Recognising the distinct needs of Hertfordshire's rural and urban communities to ensure fair access and representation.

These themes should guide future governance design to ensure inclusive outcomes for all residents and staff.

Section 2: Data & Information   [**Click here to return to contents**]

What existing data is available on access, outcomes, or service use by protected groups?

Hertfordshire councils hold a range of equalities data, including demographic insights by geography and protected characteristic e.g., age, disability, ethnicity, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and caring responsibilities for both residents and staff.

- **Residents:**
  Community-level data / Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) / service-level datasets e.g., Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Housing. This includes information on service use and outcomes by protected group.
- **Staff:**
  Workforce EDI data is collected on age, disability, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and caring responsibilities. HR systems provide data on recruitment, retention, progression, and workplace adjustments.

It is acknowledged that EDI data from staff may be incomplete due to its voluntary nature. This presents a risk to comprehensive analysis. To mitigate this, anonymised surveys and staff network engagement will be used to supplement existing data and ensure diverse perspectives are captured.

Are there gaps in data that need to be filled?

- Intersectional Data on Gender Reassignment
- Effect on services dependant on county structure chosen from 3 options

What does local or national data say about needs and barriers?

- **Residents:**
  - Local data shows disabled people, older adults, and those on low incomes are more likely to face barriers to digital and physical access.
  - National research e.g., Ofcom, Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index highlights that digital transformation can widen inequalities without targeted support.
  - Language barriers, lack of accessible information, and limited transport options restrict access for some ethnic minority and rural communities.
- **Staff:**
  - Older staff may be less likely to engage with digital HR systems or remote work.
  - Disabled staff may face barriers with new digital systems or physical relocations; risk of losing workplace adjustments.
  - Ethnic minority staff may be concentrated in roles that are more vulnerable to change; there may be language barriers or reduced engagement in consultation processes.

What feedback or complaints have been received from service users and staff?

- **Residents:**
  - Concerns about accessibility of new service models, and risk of reduced local engagement.
  - Issues raised about clarity and accessibility of communications regarding proposed changes.
  - Marginalised groups value face-to-face and community-based services; concerns about centralisation or digital-only approaches.
- **Staff:**

- o Feedback from staff networks highlights anxiety about job security, loss of workplace adjustments, and the need for clear communication during transition.
- o Concerns about the accessibility of new HR systems and the risk of isolation for remote/hybrid workers.
- o Staff value ongoing engagement and opportunities to shape changes.

Feedback from elected members, particularly those from underrepresented groups, should be captured to understand concerns around role changes, representation, and influence in new governance models.

What engagement or consultation has already taken place?

Residents
A county-wide engagement programme was delivered across all ten districts, combining in-person events, online sessions, and a public survey. These activities enabled residents to ask questions, share views, and understand the LGR proposals. Stakeholder feedback and insights inform Hertfordshire's final LGR submission to Government.

Staff
All 11 authorities have engaged staff through internal communications, surveys, Q&A sessions, and union collaboration. Efforts have focused on transparency, inclusion, and supporting staff through the transition. District-led and county-level engagement activities were coordinated to ensure balanced representation across the workforce.

This inclusive approach to engagement supports the EqIA by ensuring that both resident and staff voices are reflected in the development of future governance models.

Section 3: Analysis and Assessment [**Click here to return to contents**]

Who uses the service now, and who doesn't? Why?

- **Residents:**
  All residents use local government services in Hertfordshire, but reliance is highest among disabled people, older adults, carers, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, care-experienced young people, and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.
  Some groups are less likely to access services due to, language barriers, limited transport, or lack of accessible information. Rural communities and those with limited digital skills may be particularly affected by changes to service delivery models.
- **Staff:**
  The workforce is diverse, but some groups e.g., disabled staff, older staff, carers, ethnic minorities may be underrepresented in certain roles or grades, or face barriers to progression and inclusion.
  Staff with limited digital skills, those in rural locations, or those with caring responsibilities may be less able to engage with new digital systems or remote/hybrid working models.

What are the potential positive and negative impacts of the proposal?

- **Potential Positive Impacts (Residents & Staff):**
  - Improved coordination and consistency of services and internal processes may benefit all, especially those who currently experience fragmented or duplicated provision.
  - Opportunities to embed equality, diversity, and inclusion into new structures, service models, and workforce practices.
  - Potential for more efficient use of resources, enabling targeted support for marginalised groups and staff development.
- **Potential Negative Impacts (Residents & Staff):**
  - Risk of increased barriers for those who are digitally excluded or have limited access to transport if services and HR processes become more centralised or digital-first.
  - Potential loss of local knowledge, representation, and informal support networks, which may reduce trust and engagement among underrepresented communities and staff groups.
  - Disruption to established community and staff networks, particularly for seldom-heard or marginalised groups.

Councillors:

- Positive: Opportunity to redesign governance structures that better reflect community diversity and improve strategic leadership.
- Negative: Risk of reduced representation, especially for councillors from minority backgrounds, if fewer roles are available or if ward boundaries dilute community voices.

Which protected groups are most likely to be affected?

- **Residents:**
  Disabled people, older adults, carers, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, care-experienced young people are most likely to be affected, as they're more reliant on local services and may face barriers to access.
  Those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage may be disproportionately impacted by changes to eligibility, digital provision, or physical service locations.
- **Staff:**
  Disabled staff, older staff, carers, ethnic minorities, and lower-paid staff may be most affected by changes to working patterns, digital systems, relocation, or redundancy risk.

Are there differences in outcomes or access for different groups?

- **Residents**
  Certain groups—such as disabled people, older adults, ethnic minorities, care-experienced young people, and those on low incomes—may face barriers to accessing services, particularly where language, transport, or digital exclusion are

factors. Rural communities may also experience reduced access due to geographic isolation.

- **Staff**
  Disabled and older staff may face challenges with new digital systems or relocations, while carers and those on lower pay bands could be disproportionately affected by changes to working patterns. Ethnic minorities staff may be concentrated in roles vulnerable to restructuring and may face barriers to engagement.

- **Councillors**
  Reorganisation will impact councillor roles, responsibilities, and representation. Changes to governance structures and digital platforms may affect how councillors engage with communities. Inclusive consultation and transition planning are essential to safeguard democratic accountability and support diverse leadership.

Section 4: Action Planning   [**Click here to return to contents**]

What actions could be taken to mitigate negative impacts?

To ensure equitable access during and after LGR, it is important that services remain available through multiple channels—including telephone, face-to-face, and outreach—for those unable to use digital platforms. Digital inclusion is a key priority, and targeted support, training, and resources should be provided for groups at risk of exclusion, such as disabled people, older adults, and those on low incomes. The EqIA recognises that digital inclusion is not binary; technology can also be an enabler. Hybrid models—such as co-browsing support in customer service centres, chatbot functions, and tools for residents with hearing impairments or limited English proficiency—should be explored to enhance accessibility.

Accessible communication is another critical area. Auditing and adapting communications to meet accessibility standards—including plain English, 'easy read' formats, and compatibility with assistive technologies—will help ensure all residents can engage with services and information. Community engagement structures should also be maintained and strengthened to ensure that marginalised and seldom-heard groups can participate meaningfully in decision-making and service design. The engagement programme has prioritised input from under-represented groups, and future outreach should continue to centre these voices through co-production workshops and targeted engagement.

Monitoring service access, outcomes, and satisfaction by protected characteristic will be essential to identifying and addressing emerging disparities. Where possible, services should be co-produced with affected communities and those with lived experience of exclusion to inform ongoing improvements. The EqIA should be reviewed regularly and updated in response to new data, feedback, and service changes. All 11 authorities involved in Hertfordshire's LGR have committed to maintaining accessible services for all residents, regardless of digital capability.

Staff Considerations

Supporting staff through TUPE and restructuring will require clear communication, accessible HR guidance, and fair processes for all affected employees. Promoting good

mental health and wellbeing—through Employee Assistance Programmes, wellbeing resources, and regular check-ins—will be especially important during transition periods.

Inclusive recruitment and progression should be maintained, with monitoring by protected characteristic to ensure transparency and fairness. Reasonable workplace adjustments should be retained wherever possible, and accessibility audits should be conducted for new systems and physical spaces. Disabled staff should be actively involved in planning and testing, and inclusive facilities—such as gender-neutral toilets and prayer rooms—should be considered, subject to feasibility and site constraints.

Flexible and remote working options should be offered, particularly for carers, disabled staff, and those facing transport barriers. Staff networks e.g., disability, LGBTQ+, carers, ethnic minorities should be supported and promoted to ensure ongoing engagement and feedback. Recognised trade unions should be actively involved in consultation and negotiation, with early engagement recommended to collaboratively address emerging issues.

All workforce-related mitigations outlined in this document are subject to feasibility assessments and resource availability. While these actions reflect best practice and shared ambitions across Hertfordshire councils, implementation will depend on operational constraints, funding, and legal frameworks. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion is embedded across the programme—through governance, service design, workforce strategy, and engagement—to ensure inclusive outcomes throughout the LGR process.

Proposed Mitigations (by Protected Characteristics)

Age   [**Click here to return to contents**]

Hertfordshire is experiencing a demographic shift toward an ageing population, with a growing proportion of older residents and a stabilising or shrinking working-age population. These trends will increase demand for adult social care, healthcare, and age-friendly infrastructure, while reducing pressure on early years services. Gender differences are also evident, with older women disproportionately represented in both ageing and caregiving roles. Employment patterns show a resilient labour market overall, but disparities persist across age, gender, and geography. Middle-aged cohorts are highly economically active, while younger and older groups face greater barriers to participation. Some districts show elevated unemployment, particularly among younger men, highlighting the need for targeted support.

As LGR progresses, governance models should be responsive to these demographic pressures. This includes age- and gender-sensitive workforce planning, support for older workers and carers, and strategies to enable youth employment. EqIA processes should consider how structural changes may affect political representation and ensure inclusive participation across all age groups.

For further available data on this characteristic visit Herts Insight:

- **Source 1**
- **Source 2**
- **Source 3**

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigations	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Risk of digital exclusion for older adults and low-income groups	Provide alternative access routes and digital inclusion support	Reduced digital access barriers	Digital access rates and feedback from excluded groups
Anxiety about job security and relocation	Transparent communication and redeployment support	Reduced staff anxiety and improved retention	Staff engagement and retention rates
Potential language barriers for ethnic minorities	Explore options for resident translation and interpretation services if feasible	Improved service accessibility	Usage rates of translated materials and feedback
Potential loss of workplace adjustments	Audit and retain necessary adjustments during transition	Maintained accessibility and inclusion	Adjustment retention rates and staff satisfaction
Potential loss of local engagement and concerns heard	Maintain community forums and outreach	Sustained local involvement	Participation rates in local engagement activities
Loss of informal support networks due to centralisation	Maintain local engagement structures (e.g. community forums, staff networks)	Sustained community and staff cohesion	Participation rates in local forums and staff networks
Reduced trust and engagement among underrepresented groups	Co-produce with affected communities and staff; ensure representation in decision-making	Increased trust and inclusive engagement	Feedback from marginalised groups; engagement survey results
Intersectional impacts (e.g., disabled ethnic minorities)	Test feasibility of conducting intersectional analysis; tailor support and services to overlapping needs	More equitable outcomes for complex identity groups	Disaggregated outcome data; satisfaction by intersectional identity
Risk of unmet needs for marginalised groups, e.g: care-experienced / Not In Education, Employment or Training (NEET)	Explore including targeted service design and outreach for these groups	Improved service access and satisfaction for specific communities	Uptake and satisfaction metrics for care-experienced

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigations	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Potential transport limitations for rural residents	Maintain or enhance physical service locations in key rural hubs; explore mobile/outreach services	Improved physical access to services for rural residents	Service usage rates in rural areas; feedback from rural communities
Potential for barriers to progression for staff with protected characteristics	Explore implementing inclusive recruitment, retention, and promotion policies; monitor progression by protected characteristic	Increased representation and career progression for underrepresented groups	Diversity in senior roles; promotion rates by protected characteristic; staff survey results
Underrepresentation in certain roles or grades	Explore targeted development programmes and mentoring for affected groups	More equitable distribution of staff across grades and departments	Workforce diversity dashboards; uptake of development programmes
Risk of exclusion from decision-making and strategic roles	Work toward diverse representation in governance and transformation workstreams	Inclusive decision-making and visibility of diverse voices	Representation in strategic groups; feedback from staff networks

Care- experienced   [**Click here to return to contents**]

Care-experienced children and young people—including those currently looked after and care leavers—are among the most vulnerable groups in Hertfordshire. They often face compounded challenges across education, employment, housing, and mental health. The LGR should ensure that future governance and service models are responsive to their needs and do not exacerbate existing inequalities. Hertfordshire's Children Looked After (CLA) population shows high ethnic diversity and persistent challenges in placement stability and education, employment and training (EET) outcomes.

Care-experienced individuals may be disproportionately affected by structural changes, especially if services become more centralised or digital-first. They may rely on face-to-face support, consistent relationships, and tailored interventions. LGR should embed trauma-informed, inclusive, and accessible service design principles to safeguard outcomes for this group.

For further available data on this characteristic, visit the Hertfordshire County Council Children's Services Strategies and Reports page: Children's Social Care – Q1 2025/26 Performance Report

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Risk of reduced access to education, employment, or training.	Strengthen EET pathways, mentoring, and targeted support for care leavers.	Increased EET rates and progression.	EET metrics; uptake of support programmes.
Risk of digital exclusion or disengagement from centralised services.	Ensure multi-channel access and outreach for care-experienced young people.	Improved service access and engagement.	Service usage data; feedback from care leavers.
Risk of unmet mental health needs.	Explore expanding access to trauma-informed counselling and wellbeing services.	Improved mental health outcomes.	Uptake of mental health services; wellbeing indicators.
Risk of underrepresentation in governance and consultation.	Review guaranteed interview schemes, mentorship programmes, and inclusive recruitment practices.	Increased employment rates and career progression for care-experienced individuals.	Workforce diversity data; uptake of schemes; progression tracking.
Risk of reduced housing stability for care leavers	Review housing policies; explore priority schemes and tenancy support.	Improved housing security and reduced homelessness among care-experienced individuals.	Housing access data; tenancy sustainment rates.

Disability   [**Click here to return to contents**]

Disability prevalence and the degree of activity limitation vary significantly across Hertfordshire. LGR should embed disability- and age-inclusive planning into future governance arrangements. This includes:

- Differentiated funding allocations based on local levels of need
- Inclusive service design across health, housing, and transport
- Robust data systems to monitor health and care disparities over time

A uniform approach risks overlooking the complex, place-specific needs of disabled and older residents. Councillors from these groups may also face barriers to continued representation due to structural changes. The EqIA should explore how governance redesigns can support inclusive political participation and leadership, particularly for those affected by age-related disability.

For further available data on this characteristic, visit Herts Insight:

- [Source 1](#)
- [Source 2](#)

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Disabled people may be excluded if services become digital-first without alternatives.	Consider ensuring non-digital access routes and assistive technologies.	Reduced digital exclusion among disabled users.	Digital access and satisfaction metrics.
Disabled staff may lose workplace adjustments during relocation or system changes.	Audit and retain adjustments; consult affected staff.	Continuity of support and improved staff wellbeing.	Adjustment retention rates; staff feedback.
Centralisation may reduce physical access for those with mobility impairments.	Maintain accessible service hubs and transport support.	Improved access to physical services.	Access audits; service usage by disabled residents.
Disruption may increase stress and anxiety for those with mental health needs.	Review resources for mental health support and clear communication.	Improved resilience and reduced stress.	Wellbeing survey results; uptake of support services.
Invisible disabilities may be overlooked in redesigns.	Include diverse disability profiles in consultation and design.	More inclusive services and policies.	Representation in consultation; feedback from affected groups.

Gender – Reassignment   [**Click here to return to contents**]

There is a risk that structural changes may disrupt support networks or reduce visibility of transgender needs. However, the reorganisation also presents an opportunity to embed inclusive practices into new governance models, service frameworks, and workforce strategies. Future governance should ensure that transgender residents and staff are represented, supported, and able to participate fully in civic and professional life. This includes inclusive communication, gender-affirming facilities, and staff networks that promote awareness, dignity, and belonging.

For available data on this characteristic, visit:

- Equality and Diversity Hub

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Risk of exclusion if services do not reflect gender diversity.	Review if services are inclusive of all gender identities.	Improved access and reduced exclusion.	Service usage and feedback from gender-diverse users.
Potential for discrimination or lack of support for gender-diverse staff.	Maintain anti-discrimination training and inclusive HR policies.	Safer and more supportive workplace.	Staff survey results; incident reports.
Risk of unmet mental health needs due to lack of tailored support.	Explore resources and access to gender-informed mental health services.	Improved mental health outcomes.	Uptake and satisfaction with mental health services.
Gender-diverse individuals may be excluded from consultation and decision-making.	Actively engage with LGBTQ+ networks and individuals.	More inclusive and representative governance.	Participation metrics and feedback.

Pregnancy & Maternity   [**Click here to return to contents**]

As LGR progresses, it is vital that both staff protections and resident-facing services are preserved and strengthened. EqIA processes should ensure continuity of care, inclusive workplace policies, and equitable access to support for pregnant individuals, new parents, and carers.

For available data on this characteristic, please visit:

- **Hertfordshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026**

- **Herts Insight**

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Risk of reduced support or flexibility during maternity leave or pregnancy.	Maintain policies protecting maternity rights and explore flexible arrangements.	Protected rights and improved retention.	Policy compliance checks; staff feedback.

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Pregnant women and new mothers may face barriers to accessing centralised or digital services.	Maintain physical access points and offer telephone/face-to-face options.	Improved access and reduced exclusion.	Service access audits; user feedback.
Risk of stigma or exclusion for pregnant staff or those returning from leave.	Promote inclusive culture and support networks.	Improved inclusion and staff morale.	Staff survey results; participation in networks.
Consultation materials may not be accessible to new parents or those with limited time.	Explore flexible engagement formats and targeted outreach.	Greater engagement and representation.	Engagement metrics and feedback.
Families with limited resources may be disproportionately affected by service changes.	Link to financial support and community resources.	Reduced hardship and improved wellbeing.	Uptake of support schemes; service satisfaction.

Race   [**Click here to return to contents**]

Hertfordshire's population includes a significant proportion of residents from minority ethnic backgrounds, with notable variation across districts. More diverse areas tend to have younger populations, which has implications for education, employment, and long-term service planning.

LGR should respond to these demographic differences by embedding inclusive practices into governance structures. This includes ensuring representative decision-making, culturally competent services, and targeted engagement strategies—particularly for younger minority groups. Equality and inclusion frameworks should reflect local diversity and be integrated into service design, communications, and resource allocation.

Failure to account for these differences risks undermining trust and equity in newly formed authorities. EqIA processes should explore how governance redesigns can support inclusive political participation and leadership across all ethnic identities and age groups.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Communities

While Hertfordshire-specific data on GRT communities remains limited, regional insights from the East of England provide a useful lens for understanding potential inequalities. These patterns are likely to reflect, at least in part, the experiences of GRT individuals in Hertfordshire and should inform inclusive planning—particularly in the context of LGR.

Key areas of concern for GRT communities include housing and living conditions, where individuals are more likely to reside in mobile or overcrowded accommodation, impacting health, safety, and access to services. Despite having a younger demographic profile, GRT individuals report poorer health outcomes, indicating systemic barriers to healthcare and wellbeing. Educational attainment is also significantly lower, with many lacking formal qualifications, particularly among younger adults. Employment rates are comparatively low, with a higher reliance on self-employment, which may reflect both cultural practices and limited access to formal job opportunities. These disparities underscore the importance of considering GRT needs in service design, policy development, and community engagement strategies to ensure inclusive and equitable governance.

For further available data on this characteristic, visit Herts Insight:

- [Source 1](#)
- [Source 2](#)
- [Source 3](#)

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Resident language barriers may prevent access to services and information.	Explore feasibility of providing translated materials and multilingual staff support.	Improved access and reduced exclusion.	Service usage and feedback from non-English speakers.
Potential discrimination may reduce trust in public services.	Build relationships through community-led engagement and transparency.	Increased trust and participation.	Engagement survey results; participation in consultations.
Ethnic minority groups may experience poorer health outcomes.	Consider targeted health interventions and culturally competent care.	Reduced disparities in health outcomes.	Health outcome data by ethnicity; service uptake.
Refugees and asylum seekers may experience isolation and lack of support.	Review peer networks and community integration programmes.	Improved social inclusion and wellbeing.	Participation in community programmes; wellbeing surveys.
Speakers of other languages as their first language may struggle to find suitable employment.	Review resources offering language training and support.	Improved employment access and retention.	Employment rates and feedback from affected groups.

Religion or Belief   [**Click here to return to contents**]

Census data highlights a shift in religious identity across Hertfordshire, with a notable decline in Christian affiliation and a rise in residents identifying with no religion. Minority faith communities, including Muslim populations, have also grown, reflecting increasing religious diversity.

These trends align with broader national patterns and have implications for inclusive governance. The rise in secularism suggests evolving public expectations around neutrality in civic spaces and public services. Future governance models should ensure that both faith-based and secular communities are considered in policy development, communications, and service delivery.

Additionally, structural changes linked to LGR may impact political representation for councillors from minority faith backgrounds. EqIA processes should explore how governance redesigns can support inclusive participation and leadership across all belief systems.

For further available data on this characteristic, visit Herts Insight:
- **Source 1**
- **Source 2**

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Risk of exclusion if services do not accommodate religious needs or beliefs.	Consult with diverse belief groups; provide inclusive service options.	Improved access and reduced exclusion.	Service usage and feedback by religion or belief.
Potential for indirect discrimination through uniform or scheduling policies.	Explore potential for indirect discrimination through uniform or scheduling policies.	Review policies to allow religious dress and observance.	More inclusive and respectful workplace.
Lack of prayer spaces or inflexible schedules may disadvantage religious individuals.	Explore provision of prayer rooms and flexible scheduling.	Improved comfort and inclusion.	Facility availability; staff and user satisfaction.
Discrimination may reduce trust in public services.	Work with Faith forums to build relationships and transparency.	Increased trust and engagement.	Engagement metrics; feedback from faith communities.
Underrepresentation of faith groups in decision-making.	Include faith representatives in consultation and governance.	More representative and inclusive policies.	Participation rates; diversity in governance structures.

Sex   [**Click here to return to contents**]

Mid-2024 population estimates show that Hertfordshire continues to have a female-majority population across all districts. This demographic pattern has important implications for LGR, particularly in shaping equitable service delivery and inclusive governance. The consistent gender distribution highlights the need for targeted investment in women's health services, including reproductive health, mental wellbeing, and support for long-term conditions. It also reinforces the importance of enhanced support for unpaid carers—many of whom are middle-aged women—through access to respite care, financial assistance, and recognition in service planning. Gender-sensitive workforce strategies are essential, especially in sectors such as health, education, and social care, where women are disproportionately represented. Inclusive transport and public safety planning should also address mobility and safety concerns that more frequently affect women, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas.

Age and gender data reveal a growing older population, with older women significantly outnumbering older men due to longer life expectancy. This trend underscores the need for robust adult social care systems, accessible infrastructure, and community-based support tailored to older residents. Gender-sensitive ageing policies are particularly important, as older women may face compounded disadvantages linked to lower lifetime earnings, caregiving responsibilities, and health inequalities. The female age structure also shows a concentration in the 45–59 age group—a cohort often balancing employment, caregiving, and personal health needs. Their experiences should inform workforce policy, including flexible working arrangements, carer leave, and occupational health support. Health outreach, housing adaptations, and community design should also reflect the needs of this group to support ageing in place and social inclusion.

From a governance perspective, structural changes under LGR may affect councillor representation, particularly for women active in caregiving and community leadership roles. EqIA processes should explore how governance redesigns can support inclusive political participation and promote leadership diversity, recognising the value of lived experience in shaping responsive and equitable local governance.

For further data on this characteristic, visit Herts Insight:
- **Source 1**
- **Source 2**
- **Source 3**

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Risk of disproportionate impact on women due to caring responsibilities and part-time work.	Maintain inclusive policies and support for carers.	Reduced gender disparities in employment.	Staff survey results; retention and progression data.
Lone parents and families with limited resources may face barriers to	Seek to maintain physical access points and offer	Improved access and reduced exclusion.	Service access audits; user feedback.

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
accessing centralised or digital services.	telephone/face-to-face options.		
Risk of gender bias or exclusion in leadership and decision-making.	Continue to promote gender equity in leadership and governance.	More inclusive and representative workplace.	Leadership diversity metrics; staff feedback.
Families with limited resources may be disproportionately affected by service changes.	Link to financial support and community resources.	Reduced hardship and improved wellbeing.	Uptake of support schemes; service satisfaction.
Underrepresentation of male carers and lone fathers in consultation.	Explore targeted engagement with underrepresented gender groups.	Improved representation and service relevance.	Engagement metrics and feedback.

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation   [**Click here to return to contents**]

The 2021 Census introduced a voluntary question on gender identity, with 5.4% of Hertfordshire residents aged 16+ choosing not to respond. Among those who did, the vast majority identified with the gender assigned at birth. Hertfordshire's response rates are broadly consistent with regional and national patterns, suggesting cautious engagement with this topic.

While the data shows limited variation, it highlights the importance of recognising gender-diverse communities in future governance models. LGR presents an opportunity to embed EDI principles into:

- Service design, including gender-affirming healthcare and inclusive education.
- Public engagement and representation, ensuring visibility and voice for gender-diverse residents.
- Safe and welcoming spaces, such as gender-neutral facilities and inclusive public environments.

The relatively high non-response rate also points to the need for trust-building and privacy assurance in data collection and service delivery. EqIA processes should ensure that minority gender identities are not overlooked and that future governance structures are respectful, representative, and inclusive.

To improve visibility, data visualisations may exclude respondents whose gender identity matches their sex at birth or who did not respond, allowing clearer representation of minority gender identities. Councillors from these communities may face barriers to continued

representation due to structural changes. EqIA should explore how governance redesigns can support inclusive political participation and leadership.

For further data on this characteristic, visit Herts Insight:

- [Source 1](#)
- [Source 2](#)

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Risk of exclusion if services do not reflect sexual orientation diversity.	Review services to assess inclusivity of all sexual orientations.	Improved access and reduced exclusion.	Service usage and feedback from LGBTQ+ users.
Potential for discrimination or lack of support for LGBTQ+ staff.	Review anti-discrimination training and inclusive policies.	Safer and more supportive workplace.	Staff survey results; incident reports.
Lack of inclusive facilities may compromise safety and dignity.	Ensure inclusive spaces.	Improved safety and comfort.	Facility audits; feedback from users.
Risk of unmet mental health needs due to lack of tailored support.	Maintain access to LGBTQ+-informed mental health services.	Improved mental health outcomes.	Uptake and satisfaction with mental health services.
LGBTQ+ individuals may be excluded from consultation and decision-making.	Actively engage with LGBTQ+ networks and individuals.	More inclusive and representative governance.	Participation metrics and feedback.

Marriage & Civil Partnerships   [**Click here to return to contents**]

The 2021 Census captured legal marital and civil partnership status, including whether relationships were same-sex or opposite-sex. Following legislative changes in 2013–2014, Hertfordshire saw a modest increase in same-sex marriages and civil partnerships. While these groups represent a small proportion of the population, their inclusion is vital for equitable governance.

Younger cohorts are more likely to identify within LGBTQ+ communities and may have distinct expectations around representation, service access, and civic participation. As LGR progresses, governance models should:

- Recognise diverse relationship types in service design and civic representation.
- Ensure inclusive engagement strategies that reflect the needs of LGBTQ+ residents across age groups.
- Embed EDI principles into policy, communications, and infrastructure planning.

Structural changes under LGR may affect representation and service access, particularly in districts with higher levels of minority populations, disability, unpaid care, or socio-economic disadvantage—such as Stevenage, Broxbourne, and Dacorum. Larger governance units may offer efficiency but risk diluting local responsiveness; more localised models may improve representation but introduce inconsistency.

EqIA processes should be data-driven and equity-focused, ensuring that LGBTQ+ residents are not marginalised in governance redesigns. This includes considering how councillor representation and leadership opportunities can remain inclusive across all identities and age groups.

For further available data on this characteristic, visit Herts Insight:

- [Source 1](#)
- [Source 2](#)

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Risk of exclusion if services only recognise marriage and not civil partnerships.	Review and revise service documentation and eligibility criteria.	Reduced exclusion and improved access.	Complaints and feedback analysis; service usage data.
Potential for unequal treatment in policies or benefits.	Implement training and policy reviews to ensure parity.	More equitable workplace experience.	Staff feedback; HR policy compliance checks.
Civil partners may be excluded from certain benefits or recognition. Civil partners may be underrepresented in decision-making processes.	Align all benefit schemes with legal standards for civil partnerships. Proactively include civil partners in consultation and governance.	Equal access to entitlements. More inclusive governance structures.	Audit results; uptake data. Engagement participation rates.
Language used in communications may unintentionally exclude civil partnerships.	Update all communications to use inclusive terminology.	Improved clarity and inclusivity.	Review of communication resources; feedback from users.

Carers []

According to the 2021 Census, over 92,000 Hertfordshire residents provide unpaid care, with 24,038 delivering 50 or more hours per week—equivalent to full-time work. Districts such as Stevenage, Broxbourne, and North Hertfordshire show above-average rates of intensive care, placing significant pressure on local health and social care systems.

Unpaid care is closely linked to health inequalities, employment limitations, and financial strain. Carers often face reduced income, limited career progression, and increased physical and mental health challenges. These impacts are particularly acute for those providing intensive care, and for carers in areas with higher socio-economic vulnerability.

As LGR progresses, future governance models should be responsive to the needs of unpaid carers. This includes:

- Respite and adult social care services that reduce pressure on informal carers and improve wellbeing.
- Carer support programmes, including financial assistance, advocacy, and access to flexible employment.
- Integrated health and wellbeing initiatives that recognise carers as part of the wider care ecosystem.

Although unpaid carers are not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, they are protected by association—particularly when caring for individuals with protected characteristics such as disability. This principle extends to housing, benefits, and other services where indirect impacts may arise.

Age-standardised proportions (ASPs) offer a more accurate basis for comparing care burdens across districts and should inform resource allocation and service planning. Districts such as Dacorum, North Hertfordshire, and Welwyn Hatfield have the highest numbers of intensive carers, while Stevenage and Broxbourne show elevated rates relative to population size. These areas should not be disadvantaged by structural changes under LGR.

For further available data on this characteristic, visit Herts Insight:
- **Source 1**
- **Source 2**

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Risk of carers being overlooked in service design.	Include carers in consultation and co-production activities.	More inclusive and responsive services.	Engagement metrics; feedback from carers.
Potential for increased stress due to lack of flexibility.	Explore carer-friendly HR policies and awareness training.	Reduced stress and improved work-life balance.	Staff wellbeing indicators; policy uptake.

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Carers may not be aware of or able to access support.	Maintain visibility and accessibility of carer support services.	Increased uptake and satisfaction.	Service usage data; feedback surveys.
Poor communication may leave carers uninformed or unsupported.	Explore targeted communication strategies for carers.	Improved engagement and clarity.	Feedback from carers; communication audits.
Carers may miss out on development due to time constraints.	Where possible provide flexible and modular learning options.	Greater access to development opportunities.	Training participation rates; feedback from carers.
Risk of reduced representation of councillors from protected groups	Explore monitoring councillor diversity pre- and post-reorganisation; consider inclusive candidate support.	Maintained or improved diversity in elected leadership	Councillor diversity metrics; feedback from elected members

Other Relevant Groups   [[Click here to return to contents]](#)

In addition to the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010, it is essential to consider the needs and experiences of other groups who may be disproportionately affected by LGR. These groups often face structural barriers or compounded disadvantage, and their inclusion is critical to ensuring equitable outcomes.

LGR should account for the needs of individuals experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, including those with low income, limited educational attainment, or insecure employment. These groups often face heightened barriers to accessing services and opportunities. Residents in rural or isolated areas, or those who are digitally excluded due to lack of skills, connectivity, or resources, may also experience reduced access to essential services and civic participation.

People experiencing homelessness or insecure housing are particularly vulnerable to service disruption and require targeted outreach and support. Refugees, asylum seekers, and separated migrants may face language barriers, trauma-related needs, and unfamiliarity with local systems, necessitating culturally competent and trauma-informed service design. Individuals with low literacy or limited English proficiency may struggle to engage with communications and digital platforms and should be supported through accessible formats and interpretation services.

Other groups requiring tailored consideration include people involved in the criminal justice system, who may face stigma and barriers to reintegration. Members of the Armed Forces Community—including veterans, reservists, serving personnel, their families, and the

bereaved—may have distinct needs related to health, housing, employment, and civic engagement. Ensuring equitable access to public services for these groups will require recognition of the diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic factors that shape their experiences and engagement.

For further available data on these characteristics, visit Hertfordshire Heroes and Herts Insight:
- **Source 1**
- **Source 2**
- **Source 3**

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
Risk of worsening health outcomes if services are not inclusive or accessible.	Assess if services are culturally competent and physically accessible.	Reduced health inequalities.	Health outcome data; service usage by group.
Armed Forces Community including the bereaved may face barriers to accessing services.	Apply Armed Forces Covenant Duty and consult with Armed Forces networks.	Improved access and satisfaction.	Feedback from Armed Forces community; service audits.
Risk of increased tension if groups feel excluded or stereotyped.	Use inclusive language and ensure representation in decision-making.	More cohesive and respectful community relations.	Complaints data; engagement feedback.
Marginalised groups may be disproportionately affected by service changes.	Where appropriate conduct impact assessments and provide financial support where needed.	Reduced negative impact and improved equity.	Equality monitoring; uptake of mitigation measures.
Failure to address domestic abuse or reoffending risks.	Strengthen partnerships with specialist services and ensure safe access.	Increased protection and reduced harm.	Incident reports; service usage data.
Councillors may feel they lack the support needed to lead effectively through transition.	Provide timely, transparent information and access to training/development.	Informed leadership and trusted advocacy.	Participation in training; leadership feedback; decision-making confidence.
Migrants may face barriers to accessing services due to	Ensure services are culturally competent, linguistically	Improved service access and integration.	Service usage by migrant groups;

Potential Impact / Risk	Mitigation	Expected outcome	Measure of success
language, cultural, or legal factors.	accessible, and inclusive.		feedback and engagement data.
Refugees may experience trauma-related or systemic barriers to rebuilding their lives.	Signpost to trauma-informed, culturally sensitive support across key services.	Enhanced wellbeing, safety, and stability.	Uptake of support services; wellbeing indicators; integration metrics.

Who is responsible for actions, and what is the timeline?

- **Equality Leads:** Oversee EqIA updates, data analysis, and monitoring of equality outcomes.
- **Service Managers:** Implement mitigation actions within their service areas and report on progress.
- **Community Engagement Teams:** Lead on inclusive engagement and co-production activities.
- **Communications Team:** Ensure all communications are accessible and inclusive.
- **HR/Workforce Teams:** Lead on staff support, workplace adjustments, and inclusive recruitment.
- **Timeline:** Actions will be implemented throughout the transition period, with regular reviews and updates at key project milestones. Ongoing monitoring and engagement will continue post-implementation.

Are there plans for ongoing engagement with affected groups?

Yes. Hertfordshire Councils are committed to ongoing engagement with residents, service users, staff, and community organisations throughout the LGR process. This includes regular forums, surveys, focus groups, and co-production workshops to ensure diverse voices continue to shape decisions.

Staff and residents have already participated in dedicated surveys and live Q&A sessions, with further engagement planned. Feedback mechanisms will remain available, and the Equality Impact Assessment will be treated as a live document—updated in response to new insights, data, and changing needs. Councillors should be included in ongoing engagement activities to ensure their perspectives—particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds—inform the design of new governance structures and electoral arrangements.

The approach prioritises transparency, inclusion, and continuous improvement, ensuring that equality, diversity, and inclusion are embedded in both service delivery and workforce structures.

Agenda Item 6

EAST HERTS COUNCIL REPORT

EXECUTIVE

Date of meeting: Tuesday 18 November 2025

Report by: Councillor Carl Brittain – Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

Report title: Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Summary

- To consider the latest available information around the current local Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme at East Herts and comment on the proposal that there be no change made for 2026/27.

RECOMMENDATION FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

A.   To recommend to Council that there be no change to the local council tax support scheme for 2026/27.

1.0   Proposal(s)

1.1.   That Executive Committee consider, in accordance with the Governments requirement for an annual approval of the Council Tax Support scheme, that no changes be made for 2026/27.

2.0   Background

2.1   The Government made a provision within the Local Government Finance Bill to replace the former national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme from 1 April 2013 with localised schemes for Council Tax Support Schemes (CTS) devised by individual local authorities (LA's). The schemes are valid for one year and must be approved by Council before the 11 March immediately preceding the financial year in which it is to take effect.

2.2   If the Council were to choose to consider any material revisions to the scheme, this would be the subject of public consultation,

which would need to be considered by both those entitled to receive support as well as the general taxpayers of East Herts.

2.3   The Government require that major preceptors (County and Police) are consulted each year, and if there is any change to the scheme a full consultation open to all taxpayers in the district is required. There is no specific timescale prescribed but the period must allow for meaningful consultation.

2.4   Neither the County nor Police have raised any objection to the proposals for 2026/27.

2.5   Additionally, consideration must be given to providing transitional protection where the support is to be reduced or removed. The financial impact of any decision on CTS needs to be included when setting the Council budget and Council Tax levels at the same time.

2.6   Since the introduction of CTS in April 2013 various changes have been considered but the scheme has remained the same.

2.7   A report was previously presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 June 2025, outlining proposals to introduce a Council Tax Support (CTS) banded scheme for 2026/27. The key advantage of a banded scheme is that it allows for income fluctuations within a band without triggering a reassessment, offering greater stability for claimants.

2.8   However, due to the complexity of the proposed changes, significant work was required to ensure the scheme would remain broadly cost-neutral compared to the current model, while also ensuring that individuals would not be materially worse off. As a result, there was insufficient time to finalise and consult on the scheme ahead of its inclusion in the Tax Base for 2026/27. Therefore, the CTS scheme will remain unchanged for 2026/27. Work on the banded scheme will continue, with a view to consulting early in the new financial year.

3.0   Reasons

3.1   In 2013 the Council initially devised a scheme which replicated the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme but limited the Council Tax liability that was used to assess entitlement to 91.5% for

working age customers. The Council has maintained this position for the current scheme.

3.2 The cost of the scheme is reflected in the tax base, in the same way as other discounts which reduce the collectable debit.

3.3 Currently (2025/26) 79% of the tax base income us precepted by Hertfordshire County Council and 12% by the Police, and accordingly they have vested interest in the value of the CTS scheme as it directly impacts on their ability to raise funds. The lower the cost of the scheme, the higher the tax base on which they can precept.

3.4 The level of spend on Council Tax Support (CTS) since its introduction is shown below and demonstrates that cost of the scheme has increased over the last few years.

Cost of CTS (£'000)
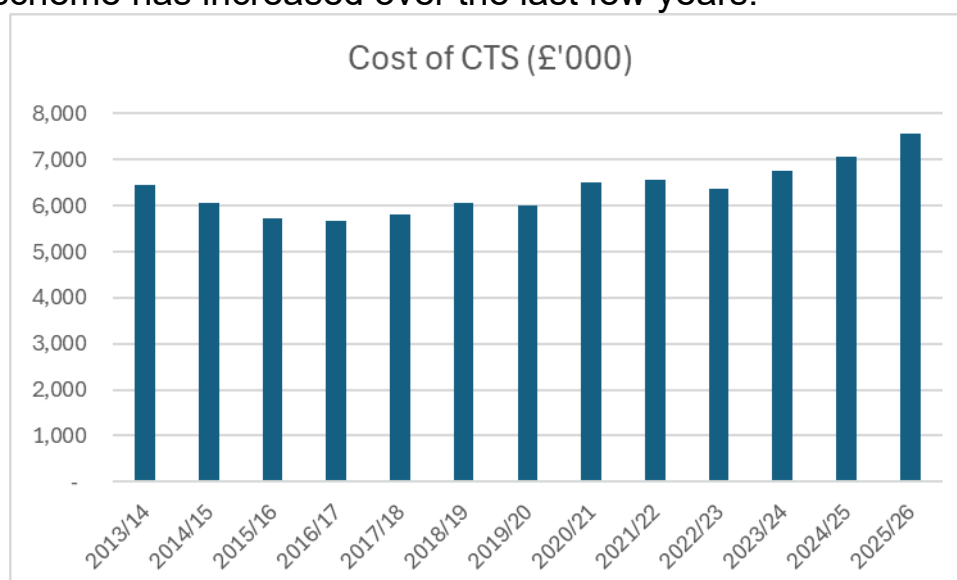
3.5 The main drivers for the increase from around £5.6m in 2016/17 to a projected £7.5m by 2025/26, are annual council tax increases, which raise the value of awards even if caseload remains stable, and economic pressures such as inflation and cost-of-living impacts, which increase entitlement levels.

3.6 The table below shows changes in caseload, highlighting a steady decline in pensioner claimants (from nearly 3,000 in 2015/16 to about 2,180 by 2025/26) alongside a relatively stable working-age caseload, which experienced a spike in 2020/21 linked to the pandemic. This shift is significant because working-age claimants generally receive higher levels of support. The

introduction of Universal Credit (UC) has also influenced this trend: while UC has simplified benefits, it has increased CTS claims among low-income working-age households, as UC recipients often qualify for maximum support.

CTS Caseload

	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Working Age	3,278	3,238	3,235	3,144	3,077	3,374	3,020	2,912	2,942	2,857	3,069
Pensioners	2,988	2,793	2,705	2,582	2,483	2,405	2,269	2,172	2,201	2,177	2,183
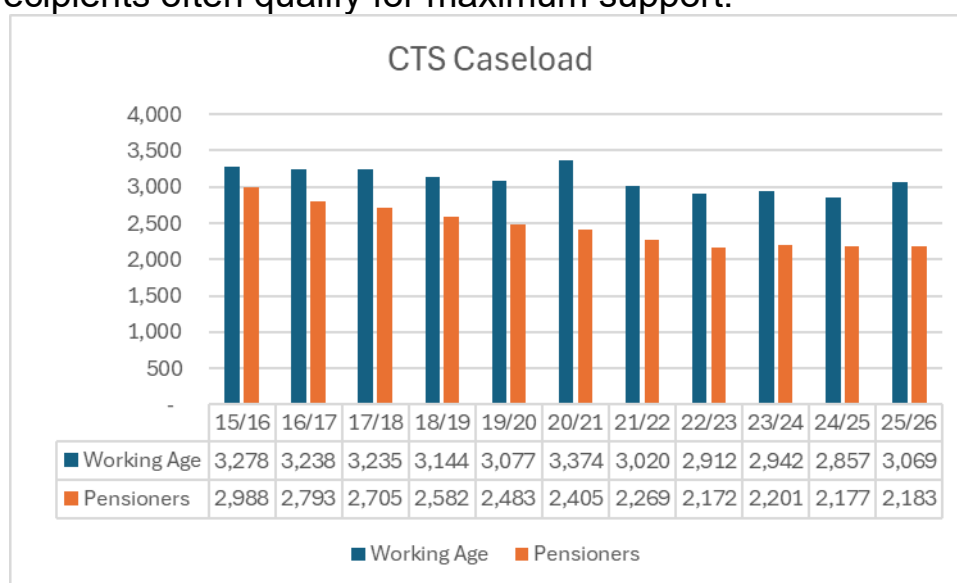
3.7   The impact of any change in trend will be built into the taxbase for 2026/27 when it is constructed in October 2025.

3.8   The taxbase for 2025/26 was calculated in October 2024 and assumed CTS would cost the equivalent of 3,597.68 band D values. At 1 August 2025 the actual band D cost of CTS was 3,516.37, which is £190K less expensive. In context the taxbase is set to produce £144 million and has many variables.

3.9   The CTS scheme for 2025/26 can be summarised as follows:

- That the CTS scheme for all working age claimants will be based on 91.5% of their current tax liability;
- All local discretions currently in place continue e.g. war pension disregards;
- Other aspects of the new CTS scheme to mirror the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme.

3.10   This means all working age customer have to pay at least 8.5% towards their bill.

4.0   Options

4.1   Alternative approaches to the current CTS scheme could include introducing a banded scheme (where support is based on income bands rather than exact income), applying a minimum payment requirement for all working-age claimants, reducing the maximum level of support, or revising income disregards to reduce entitlement. These options could help manage costs and provide greater predictability, but they represent significant policy changes that would directly affect residents' contributions.

4.2   Under statutory requirements, any such changes would require a formal public consultation, typically lasting several weeks, before they can be lawfully implemented. Given the current timescales and the need to finalise the scheme for the forthcoming financial year, there is insufficient time to complete this process. As a result, continuing with the existing scheme remains the only viable option for 2025/26.

4.3   **What others are doing:** the table below summarises other Hertfordshire CTS schemes (at the time of writing the report).

	Current scheme for maximum entitlement
Broxbourne	75% Liability, only up to Band E restriction
Dacorum	75% plus restrict to band D so it can be 75% of band D
Hertsmere	80% plus restrict to band D so it can be 80% of band D
North Herts	100% if income is below maximum bands. Bands are 100%, 75%, 45%, 25% and 0%
St Albans	100%
Stevenage	91.5% - same scheme as East Herts
Three Rivers	100%
Watford	100%
Welwyn Hatfield	75%

5.0   Risks

5.1   As detailed in the report.

6.0   Implications/Consultations

Community Safety
No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

As detailed in the report

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

As detailed in the report

Specific Wards

No

7.0   Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1   None

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL REPORT

EXECUTIVE

Date of meeting: Tuesday 18 November 2025

Report by: Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward– Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Report title: East Herts New District Plan- Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary – Members have agreed to undertake a review of the District Plan, including an update of the evidence documents needed to support the new District Plan. The Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy 2025 replaces the previous playing pitch strategy, published in 2017. This report summarises the findings and seeks agreement to use the document as part of the new District Plan evidence base, and to inform Development Management decisions. It also seeks to delegate responsibility for future updates to the Action Plan to the Director for Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE to recommend to Council that:

a) **The Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy, attached as Appendix A, B and C be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform the new East Herts District Plan and as a material consideration for Development Management purposes in the determination of planning applications.**

b) **Future updates of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Action Plan be delegated to the Director for Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth.**

1.0   **Proposal**

1.1   The purpose of this report is to agree that the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) can be used as part of the

evidence base for the new District Plan and as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.   It also seeks approval for updates to the Action Plan to be delegated to the Director for Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth.

1.2   The role of the PPOSS is to inform future planning policy and planning application decisions in relation to the protection, enhancement and provision of outdoor sport in East Herts, including S106 funding. It may also have wider value for local clubs and facilities as they could use as evidence to help secure funding from National Governing Bodies and Sport England.

2.0   Background

2.1   Local planning authorities are required to complete a review of their local plans at least once every 5 years from the adoption date to ensure that plans remain relevant. In October 2023, the Council agreed that East Herts District Plan 2018 needs updating and that work should commence in 2023/24 on updating the technical studies and other preparatory work required to provide a robust evidence base to support this Review.

New District Plan Evidence Base

2.2   A clear, relevant and proportionate evidence base is essential for efficient and sound plan-making to ensure that all future planning policy and decisions are based on up-to-date information. The National Planning Policy Framework (2024) sets out the requirement for the preparation and review of all policies to be 'underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence' (paragraph 32).

2.3   The evidence base consists of supporting documents that will help inform the future policies and site allocations in the new District Plan. It will cover a range of social, economic, and environmental topics and help identify local needs, constraints and opportunities. Some of the evidence will update previous studies prepared to support the current adopted District Plan. Many of these are now around 10 years old and need updating to reflect contextual and policy changes. Equally, additional evidence will be needed to

address new issues and topics that have become more prevalent in recent years.

2.4 The evidence base will be developed throughout the preparation of the new District Plan. As revised and updated studies are finalised, the planning policy team will seek agreement from Executive and Council to include them as part of the evidence base.

Scope and preparation of Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy

2.5 Access to high-quality, well-maintained sports facilities is vital to the health, wellbeing and social cohesion of communities in East Herts. An up-to-date Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) provides a robust framework to guide the protection, enhancement and future provision of outdoor sports facilities. Sport England advise that assessments should be refreshed every 3-5 years, so the current Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy, published in 2017 to inform the adopted District Plan (2018), is out of date.

2.6 Therefore, the Council commissioned consultant Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP) jointly with North Herts Council (NHC) and Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), to develop a PPOSS for each individual local authority area. KKP are also currently undertaking an Indoor Built Facilities Strategy and an Open Space Study for the Council. These two documents will be finalised soon and reported to Members in early 2026.

2.7 Work on the PPOSS started in June 2024 and has been governed by a steering group made up of representatives from the Council (officers from planning policy and leisure and parks development), Sport England, Herts Sport and Physical Activity Partnership and the National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs).

2.8 The PPOSS includes data from a range of sports: football (grass and 3G pitches), rugby, cricket, tennis/ padel, hockey, netball, athletics, lawn bowls, watersports and golf. Padel and golf were not covered by the previous assessment but have now been included on the advice of Sport England. In accordance with Sport

England requirements the development of the PPOSS has followed the stages set out below:

- Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach.
- Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision.
- Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views.
- Stage D: Develop the strategy.
- Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date.

2.9 The assessment of supply and demand (Stage B) was undertaken during 2024-2025. A variety of consultation methods have been used to collate information about the facilities, leagues, clubs and national governing bodies including surveys, desktop assessments, site visits, desk-top assessments and face-to-face meetings. The site visits, to assess the quality of provision, were undertaken between August 2024 and March 2025, to ensure both winter and summer sports were assessed.

2.10 To help analyse supply and demand, the district is divided into five sub-areas (named after the largest settlement within the area). This sub-division reflects the approach taken in the previous 2017 study, using Middle Super Output Areas, and is based upon the presence of common characteristics, including the prevailing economic, social, and environmental conditions and the existence of connections to, and the influence of, surrounding areas and centres. However, cross boundary issues have also been explored to determine the level of imported and exported demand, recognising, for example, that people travel to and make use of strategic facilities irrespective of administrative boundaries.

3.0 Reasons

3.1 The Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) is an in-depth assessment of the district's pitches and outdoor sport sites and delivers a robust and objective justification for future playing

pitch provision and enhancement throughout East Herts. In particular, the PPOSS provides:

- Evidence of supply and demand of playing pitch and outdoor sport provision.
- A vision for the future improvement and prioritisation of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities.
- A number of aims to help deliver the recommendations and actions.
- A series of strategic recommendations which provide a strategic framework for the improvement, maintenance, development and, as appropriate, rationalisation of the playing pitch and outdoor sport facility stock.
- A series of sport-by-sport recommendations which provide a strategic framework for sport led improvements to provision.
- A prioritised area-by-area Action Plan to address key issues on a site-by-site basis.

3.2   The PPOSS has been produced in accordance with Sport England guidance and reflects requirements in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to plan positively for high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation, ensuring policies are based on robust and up to date assessments (paragraphs 98 and 103).

3.3   As part of the evidence base for the new District Plan, the PPOSS will inform planning policy and be a material consideration for planning decisions. It will also help inform S106 developer contributions. In addition, the PPOSS can also support those organisations, including the Council, involved in the delivery, provision and protection of outdoor sport facilities in the district. It is often a requirement that an area has an up-to-date PPOSS to access funding from Sport England, National Governing Bodies and other organisations. As such, the PPOSS can be used to help clubs and providers gain access to funding and investment.

3.4   The PPOSS is divided into three parts. These are:

- An Executive Summary- attached as **Appendix A** to this report.
- The Assessment Report (encompassing Stages A, B and C of the process set out in paragraph 2.8 above)- attached as **Appendix B** to this report.
- The Strategy and Action Plan Report (Stage D of the process set out in paragraph 2.8 above)- attached as **Appendix C** to this report.

Key findings

3.5   The Assessment Report (**Appendix B**) sets out the context to the PPOSS, the supply and demand assessment process and the conclusions by sport. The main findings in the Assessment Report are that:

- There are some shortfalls for sports played on grass pitches (football, rugby and cricket), that further increases when considering future demand to 2043.
- The quality of grass pitches is one of the biggest influences on participation, particularly for football. It is notable that 31% of football pitches, 53% of rugby pitches and 10% of grass wicket cricket pitches with community use are assessed as poor quality.
- There is an insufficient supply of 3G Pitches (mainly for training), so new provision is required. This could also alleviate grass pitch issues.
- Broadly, demand is being met for non-pitch sports (tennis bowls, athletics, golf, netball), although several tennis and bowls clubs are operating over capacity. There is a need for more padel courts, given the growth in demand for this new sport.
- Where spare capacity exists or where demand is being met, this does not equate to a surplus of provision. Rather any spare capacity is instead considered as a solution to overcoming shortfalls.

3.6 The assessment uses ONS population projections, so the future demand analysis does not account for housing growth. As the new District Plan emerges and the scale and location of new development is determined, planning officers will need to use Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator to identify the demand and pitch requirements of housing growth scenarios, to ensure future demand is not under-estimated.

Strategy and Action Plan

3.7 Building upon the Assessment Report, the PPOSS's Strategy and Action Plan (**Appendix C**) provides a clear, strategic framework for the provision, maintenance and improvement of playing pitches and outdoor sport (including ancillary provision) up to 2043. Part 2 of the report sets out that the PPOSS vision is to work with key local partners to ensure East Herts is serviced by high quality sports facilities to meet the needs of its residents and improve their health and wellbeing. To achieve this vision, three aims are identified in Part 3: to protect existing supply, to enhance existing provision and to provide new facilities where required.

3.8 Part 4 develops a series of recommendations for each sport, informed by different demand scenarios, such as club ambition (information gathered during consultation) and participation trend changes. There is a clear need to protect existing playing pitch provision, in line with planning policy, unless replacement provision meets NPPF and Sport England requirements and is agreed upon and provided.

3.9 Many of the identified shortfalls can be met by utilising current provision by improving pitch quality, providing additional lighting, improving ancillary facilities, increasing match play on 3G pitches, reinstating unused provision and increasing community use agreements at schools.

3.10 Building on the sport specific recommendations, Part 5 of the report identifies strategic recommendations, which have been

developed via the combination of information gathered during consultation, site visits and analysis which culminated in the production of an assessment report, as well as key drivers identified for the Strategy. They reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed, which apply across playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities and may not be specific to just one sport. The identified **strategic priorities** are:

- **Protect** all existing facilities, including disused/poor sites, until shortfalls are addressed.
- **Enhance** quality through maintenance programmes (e.g., GMA Pitch Advisory Service, PitchPower app) and ancillary upgrades.
- **Provide** new facilities where required, prioritising:
  - Additional 3G pitches, current shortfall of four 11v11 3G pitches for football use.
  - New full-size hockey Artificial Grass Pitch to service East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Stevenage.
  - Padel courts, need to develop 10 new courts to service demand.
  - Secure tenure and access via long-term leases and formal community use agreements, especially at education sites.
- Maximise developer contributions using Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator; prioritise multi-pitch/multi-sport hubs.
- Inclusive and sustainable provision, ensuring accessibility for women, girls, and under-represented groups.

3.11 The site-by-site action plan (Part 6 of the Strategy report) seeks to address key issues identified in the assessment and strategy. It provides actions based on current levels of usage, quality and future demand, as well as the potential of each site for enhancement. It is organised by Analysis Area and includes information on expected timescales, costs, partners and priority. Each action is linked to one or more of the aims (protect, enhance, provide) and provides guidance for how improvements would be

made should the resources become available. It should be noted that in many instances the Council will not be responsible for the delivery of the recommendations and actions in the PPOSS, as clubs, national governing bodies, town/ parish councils, education providers and landowners can also be responsible.

3.12 The action plan is considered a 'live' document and should be regularly monitored and reviewed by the steering group, to ensure it is kept up to date. This is identified as Stage E in the Sport England guidance (set out in paragraph 2.8 of this report) As a guide, if no review and subsequent update is carried out within three years, Sport England and the national governing bodies will consider it to be out of date. If kept up to date, its lifespan can be extended. On this basis the action plan will be reviewed annually by the steering group.

Next Steps

3.13 The PPOSS has been signed off by the steering group, including Sport England. It is the view of officers that the PPOSS provides detailed, robust and up-to-date information about playing pitch and outdoor sport provision in East Herts, so it is recommended the study is agreed as part of the new District Plan evidence base and as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

3.14 In order to allow regular updates to the Action Plan, it is recommended that approval for future updates to the PPOSS Action Plan is delegated to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth. This report seeks approval for that arrangement.

4.0 Options

4.1 The endorsement of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy ensures there is an up-to-date evidence base for the protection, enhancement and provision of sports facilities, which play a

significant contribution to the health and wellbeing of East Herts residents.

4.2 The Council could choose not to agree to the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy, but this would be contrary to Sport England advice and would mean reliance on the previous PPOSS, which is now 8 years old and out of date. This is contrary to the Government policy to have up-to-date evidence base and would undermine the Council's position in terms of successfully bringing forward the new District Plan. It would also mean that the evidence would have less weight in the determination of planning applications.

5.0 Risks

5.1 If the PPOSS is not agreed as part of the evidence base, it may be considered as having reduced weight in informing the strategy and the policy in the new District Plan. This would mean that significant information about playing pitch and outdoor sport provision could be undervalued. This would be contrary to Government policy to have robust evidence and could undermine the Council's position in terms of successfully bringing forward the new East Herts District Plan. Equally, without the 2025 PPOSS the Council will not be able to ensure that the development management process takes into account the latest recommendations about outdoor sport requirements in the district.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 Targeted consultation as part of the assessment was undertaken with facility providers, clubs, local leagues, schools, National Governing Bodies, town and parish councils and Sport England. The Strategy will also be subject to a number of statutory public consultations as part of the production of the new District Plan.

Community Safety

There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising from this report.

Equalities

There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

Environmental Sustainability

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Grass playing pitches are part of the district's green infrastructure, which alongside social benefits, has many environmental benefits, such as climate change mitigation, habitat creation and sustainable drainage.

Financial

By agreeing a robust strategy, the Council will be in a better position to achieve external grant funding, if required, and secure S106 developer contributions to assist in delivery of the action plan.

Health and Safety

There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.

Human Resources

There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

Human Rights

There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Specific Wards

No

7.0   Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1   **Appendix A**: Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy - Executive Summary

7.2 **Appendix B**: Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy – Assessment Report

7.3 **Appendix C**: Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy – Strategy and Action Plan

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KNIGHT, KAVANAGH & PAGE

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
OCTOBER 2025

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) has been jointly commissioned by East Hertfordshire Council (EHC), North Hertfordshire Council (NHC) and Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) to develop a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) for each individual local authority area.

The commission also encompasses an Indoor Built Facilities Strategy for all three councils and an Open Space Study for EHC. This document focuses solely on the East Hertfordshire District Council PPOSS.

This is the executive summary for the PPOSS for East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC). Both the Assessment Report and Strategy have been produced in accordance with Sport England guidance and have achieved sign off from national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) and Sport England through a Steering Group.

The PPOSS provides a comprehensive evidence base and strategic framework for outdoor sports provision in East Hertfordshire. It aligns with Sport England's PPS Guidance/Assessing Needs & Opportunities Guide and supports the District Plan (2018–2033). The strategy aims to protect, enhance, and provide facilities to meet current and future demand, ensuring inclusive, high-quality provision for health and wellbeing.

Scope

The scope of the PPOSS focuses geographically on all local provision, regardless of ownership and management arrangements. Provision included within the project is as follows:

- Football
- Football (3G pitches)
- Rugby union
- Rugby league
- Hockey (artificial grass pitches AGPs)
- Cricket
- Tennis
- Athletics
- Lawn bowls
- Water sports
- Golf

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SPORT BY SPORT SUMMARIES

Football:
- There are 184 grass pitches of which 178 are open to community use.
- As a breakdown in quality 16% of pitches are good, 53% standard, 31% poor.
- There are 511 teams, including 44 women/girls' teams.
- There are shortfalls in youth 11v11 and 9v9 pitch formats.
- 3G pitches: There is a current shortfall of four 11v11 3G pitches. Future demand based on ONS projections increases the shortfall to 4.75 3G pitches.

Rugby union:
- There are 53 pitches in the Authority, of which 42 are open to community use.
- There are four clubs In the Authority which generates demand of 63 teams.
- There is a current shortfall of 20.75 match equivalent sessions for rugby union.
- Key issues: improving pitch quality, utilising education sites to reduce shortfalls, increasing the number of sports lit pitches where possible and supporting Bishop's Stortford RFC, Hertford RFC and Datchworth RFC in enhancing ancillary facilities.

Cricket:
- There are 46 natural turf squares across 30 sites.
- There are 23 clubs which collectively provide 108 teams.
- There is a shortfall in provision for Saturday peak time demand (-29 match equivalent sessions), future shortfall -41 match equivalent sessions.
- Spare capacity midweek/Sunday; five disused squares could be reinstated.

Hockey:
- There are eight full size AGPs across six sites. Seven of the full size AGPs are open to community use and sports lit. Both Bishop's Stortford College and Simon Balle School need resurfacing.
- Bishop's Stortford HC and Hertford HC are the two clubs in the district which has the combined demand of 28 senior teams and 30 junior teams across all ages.
- The three pitches used for Saturday peak time demand are Herts & Essex Sports Centre, Hockerhill Anglo-European College and Simon Balle School.
- With the combined demand from clubs within East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Stevenage there is the need for a new full size AGP to service all three authorities.

Tennis/padel:
- There are 135 courts of which 116 are open to community use.
- There are 13 clubs in the Authority. Total known membership figures equates to 1,432 senior members and 820 junior members giving a total figure of 2,252 members.
- The LTA Padel calculator indicates there is demand for 12 Padel courts in East Hertfordshire. There are currently two courts at Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust, meaning new provision is needed to meet the needs of the Authority.

Netball:
- There are 81 courts of which 55 are open to community use. Only 31 of the courts are open to community use and sports lit.
- The Bishop's Stortford District Netball League and Hertford and District Netball League have 30 clubs identified as competing within both leagues.
- This is a good level of supply for the district and seems to service the demand well.

Athletics:
- The Wodson Park Sports Centre track adequately meets the needs of the Authority. The track was last resurfaced in 2005 and has a TrackMark accreditation until March

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2026. At this point the track will likely need respraying in order to retain its certification.

Lawn bowls:
- There are 13 greens across 13 sites.
- There are 14 clubs in the Authority. Where membership figures are known there are 560 members across 11 clubs, giving an average membership of 56 individuals.
- Buntingford BC, Datchworth BC, Hertford Castle BC and Shire Park BC are all operating above Bowls England capacity guidelines.

Golf:
- There is a good variety of golf courses within the Authority. The existing facilities are clearly servicing demand as evidenced by high membership figures cross each site.

Water sports:
- The Authority is well serviced with facilities such as River Stort, Abbots Lake and Ware Priority Lido.

Rugby league:
- There are no pitches within the Authority.
- There are no clubs in the Authority and demand is exported to North Herts Crusaders RLFC or St Albans Centurions RLFC.

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SPORT BY SPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of relevant scenarios have been tested against key issues for each sport, resulting the following recommendations.

Football – grass pitches

- Protect the existing quantity of pitches (unless replacement provision meets NPPF and Sport England Playing Field Policy requirements and is agreed upon and provided).
- Where pitches are overplayed and assessed as poor or standard quality, prioritise investment and review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to sustain use and improve quality.
- Utilise the Football Foundation's PitchPower app to assist in the improvement and ongoing maintenance of provision.
- Work to accommodate future demand at sites which are not operating at capacity.
- Seek to regain access to Albury Football Ground where access was removed from BSC FC, mid-season.
- Improve ancillary facilities where there is a demand to do so and where it can benefit the wider footballing offer, such as Hertford Heath Playing Fields (Hertford Heath FC) where the Club is looking to use its pitch for non-league football; Richard Hale School to support Bury Rangers FC and Watton-at-Stone FC with developing a new site.
- Where appropriate, help to facilitate partnerships and/or lease arrangements with large, sustainable, development-minded clubs to manage its own sites.
- Work to obtain more formal community use agreements at education sites listed in table 4.12 so clubs can have longer security of tenure.

3G pitches

- Protect current stock of 3G pitches.
- Work with relevant partners to deliver additional 3G pitches in the district to cater for football training demand and reduce shortfalls.
- Work with partners such as the FA, FF, the RFU, Sport England and other NGBs as applicable to identify the most suitable locations to build new 3G pitches to alleviate known shortfalls.
- Ensure that any new 3G pitches have community use agreements in place.
- Ensure that all other 11v11 and larger smaller sized pitches remain on the FA register and are re-tested every three years to sustain certification.
- Ensure all current and future providers have in place a sinking fund to ensure long-term sustainability.
- Ensure that all new 3G pitches are constructed to meet FA recommended dimensions and quality performance standards.
- Monitor supply and demand via Stage E meetings, to better understand the impact on the future 3G need enabling partners to clarify whether the shortfall position is being addressed or increasing.
- Look to increase the number of 3G pitches within East Hertfordshire at relevant sites by using the findings from the PPOSS and the 2025 LFFP, with priority sites such as Watton YFC new site, The Bury and The Sele School.
- Look to transfer mini demand from grass pitches to 3G in line with the FA ambition for 50% of all mini match play to take place on 3G pitches.

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cricket

- Protect existing quantity of cricket squares.
- Retain a supply of disused sites to serve as a strategic reserve for future demand.
- Improve quality at sites assessed as poor and standard quality and ensure quality is sustained at sites assessed as good through partnership working with HCCC.
- Address overplay via quality improvements and consideration of hybrid wickets in the future.
- Pursue improved security of tenure for clubs without ownership or a long-term lease arrangement in place, particularly those engaging in lease renewals.
- Improve the changing and ancillary facilities where there is a need to do so, with priorities placed Thorley CC, St Margaretsbury CC, and Town Fields (Sawbridgeworth CC).
- Consider options to increase and improve stock of suitable practice facilities, as six clubs raise the need for additional training facilities at its home sites.
- Continue to support ECB initiatives such as All Stars and Dynamos and ensure unaffiliated demand and recreational cricket is provided for.
- Undertake PitchPower assessments at sites to support clubs in accessing ECB Grass Pitch Improvement Fund.
- Look to reinstate disused and un-used provision as a means of increasing the total number of squares in the Authority.

Rugby union

- Protect the existing quantity of rugby union pitches including those used for curricular and extra-curricular demand.
- Support clubs in taking part in the GMA pitch advisory service to explore technical requirements to improve pitch quality to address overplay.
- Work with clubs to improve its ancillary offering.
- Look to increase the number of sports lit pitches with priority placed on a further sports lit senior pitch at Hertford RFC.
- Ensure that any residential development considers potential increases in demand for the sport and that new provision or contributions are properly sought through utilisation of the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator.
- Support Bishop's Stortford RFC, Hertford RFC and Datchworth RFC in improving the ancillary provisions provided.
- Ensure once the WR compliant 3G pitch is open for use, that community use is utilised to its full potential, with Bishop's Stortford RFC making the most sense to be a partner club.
- Explore options at education sites such as St Edmunds College & Prep School and the Bishop's Stortford College to utilise senior rugby pitches to reduce overall shortfalls across the District.

Hockey

- Protect the sand based AGPs at Herts & Essex Sports Centre, Simon Balle School and Hockerill Anglo-European College for continued hockey use.
- Work with partners to provide replacement surfaces to the AGPs at Simon Balle School and Bishop's Stortford College.
- Ensure all hockey suitable AGPs have a sinking fund in place for its eventual refurbishment.
- Consider an additional hockey suitable AGP in East Hertfordshire as the current stock is at capacity for peak time usage and is inhibiting hockey growth in the District.

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◄ Explore a community use agreement at St Edmunds College & Prep School which is only eight miles away from Simon Balle School and could provide a good option to increase affiliated hockey participation in East Hertfordshire. If the school has spare capacity at peak time on Saturday's it could be more feasible than a new pitch.

◄ The steering group will explore a feasibility study comparing options for a new sports lit hockey suitable AGP.

◄ Enhance the changing rooms at Hockerill Anglo-European College which are of a poor quality and highlighted as in need of improving. This will support both Bishop's Stortford Hockey Club and curricular use.

Rugby league

◄ If any demand does exist for rugby league in East Hertfordshire, if not already, it should be signposted to North Herts Crusaders and St Albans Centurions.

Tennis/padel

◄ Protect existing quantity of courts.

◄ Improve court quality at sites assessed as poor or standard quality and sustain quality at sites assessed as good, especially at sites in use by clubs or that are (or could be) well used for recreational demand.

◄ Sustain park courts quality as a priority to create a year-round recreational tennis option to meet local demand.

◄ Explore options to further improve the recreational tennis offer via utilisation of technology provided by the LTA (e.g., ClubSpark) to support the customer journey and through investment into facilities and accompanying ancillary provision.

◄ Ensure sinking funds are put into place by providers for long-term sustainability.

◄ Explore installation of additional sports lighting at club-based venues, such as Aston Tennis Club and Datchworth Tennis Club. Tewin Tennis Club currently uses portable sports lighting and would like to upgrade. Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club would also like to upgrade its lighting to LED.

◄ Support the development of new Padel courts as a means of addressing the shortfall of Padel provision in the Authority.

Lawn bowls

◄ Protect existing quantity of currently used greens and, as a minimum, sustain quality.

◄ Ensure that any proposed development of currently used greens is mitigated in line with NPPF.

◄ Assist clubs, where possible, with any future ancillary provision improvements such as Shire Park BC, Hertford Castle BC and Sele Farm BC.

◄ Monitor capacity levels of highly supported clubs such as Buntingford BC and Hertford Castle BC to ensure they have sufficient capacity.

◄ Support clubs with plans to increase membership so that growth can be maximised.

Athletics

◄ Ensure the track and supporting facilities at the Wodson Park Sports Centre are retained with a priority placed on resurfacing the track to maintain UKA TrackMark accreditation.

◄ The compact track at Hockerill Anglo-European College is retained and remains in good condition for as long as possible.

◄ Support clubs, running groups, events and England Athletics initiatives such as Park Run and pursue increased participation, where possible.

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◄ Continue to increase participation both within affiliated clubs and the wider running market, signposting potential club members from the likes of Parkrun events and other health initiatives.

◄ Consider the need to include 'Active Tracks' within strategic housing allocations to provide a health and wellbeing offer on site.

Netball

◄ Protect quantity of courts.

◄ Seek to improve poor quality courts quality through resurfacing or improved maintenance.

◄ Explore options to increase sports lighting across East Hertfordshire.

◄ Open discussions with sites that already allow community use of other facilities to determine whether provision could be opened for community use, such as Birchwood High School and The Sele School.

◄ Look to continue and expand the use of courts for England Netball initiatives such as Back to Netball and Walking Netball.

◄ Facilitate improved engagement between England Netball and schools.

◄ Look to install sports lights to the provision at The Birchwood High School and The Sele School as a means of increasing the total number of sports lit courts.

Golf

◄ Protect and retain all existing golf provision unless separate needs assessments are completed that evidence that a facility can be lost or reduced without it impacting upon demand.

◄ Sustain course and ancillary facility quality and seek improvements where necessary.

◄ Support clubs in membership retention and potential growth and encourage clubs and providers to work more collaboratively in terms of creating pathways for players.

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. **Protect** all existing facilities, including disused/poor sites, until shortfalls are addressed.
2. **Enhance** quality through maintenance programmes (e.g., GMA Pitch Advisory Service, PitchPower app) and ancillary upgrades.
3. **Provide** new facilities where required, prioritising:
   ◀ Additional 3G pitches, current shortfall of four 11v11 3G pitches.
   ◀ New full-size hockey AGP to service East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Stevenage.
   ◀ Padel courts, need to develop 10 new courts to service demand.
4. **Secure tenure and access** via long-term leases and formal community use agreements, especially at education sites.
5. **Maximise developer contributions** using Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator; prioritise multi-pitch/multi-sport hubs.
6. **Inclusive and sustainable provision**, ensuring accessibility for women, girls, and under-represented groups.

Delivering the Strategy

The Strategy Report has presented a thorough Action Plan with recommendations for every site. This covers all playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities covered within the scope.

The PPOSS seeks to provide the necessary robustness and direction to ensure that the Council has a framework for the prioritisation, provision and development of sports facilities across the public, private and independent sectors. It covers all formal playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities across the authority area to assist it to strategically plan for the future.

It is important that the steering group undertakes regular monitoring of the PPOSS and reviews how the position has changed since the adoption of the report. This monitoring should be led by the local authority and supported by all members of the steering group. If no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years, Sport England and the NGBs will consider the PPS and the information on which it is based to be out of date.

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KNIGHT, KAVANAGH & PAGE

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

ASSESSMENT REPORT
JULY 2025

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

Cert Num: 6543-QMS-001

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

3G	Third Generation (artificial turf)
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
ANOG	Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance
AP	Active Partnership
BC	Bowls Club
BCGBA	British Crown Green Bowling Association
CC	Cricket Club
CFA	County Football Association
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EH	England Hockey
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FE	Further Education
FF	Football Foundation
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GMA	Grounds Management Association
HE	Higher Education
HC	Hockey Club
IRB	International Rugby Board
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page
LFFP	Local Football Facility Plan
LMS	Last Man Stands
LTA	Lawn Tennis Association
LP	Local Plan
NGB	National Governing Body
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
PPOSS	Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sports Strategy & Outdoor Sports Strategy
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RFL	Rugby Football League
RUFC	Rugby Union Football Club
S106	Section 106 agreement
TC	Tennis Club
TGR	Team Generation Rate
U	Under
WR	World Rugby

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT REPORT

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1: Introduction

Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) has been jointly commissioned by East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC), Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) and North Hertfordshire Council (NHC) to develop a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) for each individual local authority area. The commission also encompasses an Indoor Built Facilities Strategy for each of the three councils.

This is the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) Assessment Report for East Hertfordshire. It presents a supply and demand assessment of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) Guidance (for playing pitch sports) and Sport England's Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide (ANOG) for "non-pitch" sports. The PPS Guidance details a 13-stepped approach, separated into 5 distinct sections:

◂ Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach (1, 2 & 3).
◂ Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision (4 & 5).
◂ Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views (6, 7 & 8).
◂ Stage D: Develop the strategy (9 & 10).
◂ Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date (11, 12 & 13).

ANOG guidance follows a similar process to the Sport England PPS guidance, and this is split into three formal stages which are:

◂ Stage A – Prepare and tailor the approach.
◂ Stage B – Gather information on supply and demand.
◂ Stage C – Assessment – Bringing the information together.

Stages A to C are covered in this report with Stage D covered in the subsequent strategy document.

1.2: Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach

The primary purpose of the PPOSS is to provide a strategic framework which ensures that the provision of outdoor playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities meets the local and community needs of both existing and future residents across East Hertfordshire. The Strategy will be produced in accordance with national planning guidance and will provide a robust and objective justification for future sporting provision.

One of the core planning principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs. Paragraph 103 discusses the importance of access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity that can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

For the full national context, including for each of the sports covered please refer to Appendix 1.

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Why the PPOSS is being developed

The PPOSS will form part of the evidence base for the new District Plan. It will provide a strategic framework to ensure that the provision of outdoor playing pitches meets the needs of residents (both existing and future) and visitors to the East Hertfordshire District Council area. It will also support those organisations, including the Council, involved in the delivery, provision and protection of outdoor sports facilities in the District. The Strategy will be produced in accordance with Sport England guidance and provide robust and objective justification for future playing pitch provision and enhancement throughout East Hertfordshire.

In addition to this, the other key drivers for a new strategy are to:

◄ Improve our resident's health and wellbeing and increasing participation in sport.
◄ Provide a clear strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities.
◄ Inform assessments of planning applications, ensuring there is sufficient outdoor sports facilities and playing pitches provided on and off site as deemed appropriate.
◄ Monitor potential changes to the supply and demand due to capital programmes e.g., for educational sites.
◄ Providing evidence of need for capital funding. As well as proving the need for developer contributions towards pitch and facilities.
◄ Identify any cross-boundary issues specific to each authority and its neighbouring local authorities.
◄ Ensure that all clubs have access to facilities of appropriate quality to meet current needs and longer-term aspirations.
◄ Provide evidence to help secure internal and external funding.

Local context

The East Hertfordshire District Plan was adopted in 2018 and outlines the plan for housing, jobs, community facilities and infrastructure to 2033. The plan seeks to provide a minimum of 18,458 new homes up to 2033, alongside new jobs, community facilities and infrastructure. The Plan sets out the importance of implementing this growth sustainability, to protect the natural and historical environment and the quality of life of people who live, work and visit the district.

The District Plan directs development across the district including urban extensions to the main towns and strategic development to the east of Stevenage, east of Welwyn Garden City and in the Gilston Area. These developments are at various stages of implementation, with a number of the larger sites coming forward in phases. The Council's latest Annual Report (2023-24) outlines that 9518 dwellings have been completed in the plan period to date.

The Gilston Area is a key component of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT), a large-scale development initiative designated as a Garden Town. Located north of Harlow and across the River Stort in East Hertfordshire, the Gilston area of the Garden Town will feature 10,000 homes and associated infrastructure for seven new villages. Gilston will also be connected to Harlow town centre by a new public travel route known as a Sustainable Transport Corridor, prioritising walking, cycling and high-quality public transport routes.

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The District Plan has outlined the following objectives for the Authority to achieve:

- Reduce carbon dioxide emissions and greener energy options.
- Support mixed communities which provide the needs for old, young and vulnerable people.
- Provide a balanced housing market.
- Protect the district's landscape from inappropriate developments.
- Encourage entrepreneurialism and maximising existing employment opportunities.
- Improve the travel network to ease road congestion and reduce carbon footprint.
- Provide good quality facilities for arts, culture, community, leisure, entertainment, recreation, faith and health.
- Reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of all residents.

To support the improvement of the health and well-being of the whole community, District Plan policies require the provision of open space, sport and recreation and new community facilities in conjunction with new development. Policy CFLR1- Open Space, Sport and Recreation expects provision on-site, or if appropriate, financial contributions towards new or enhanced off-site provision. Facilities should be provided in accordance with the Council's latest evidence and in consultation with Sport England and the Council's Leisure and Environment team. Policy CFLR7- Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation requires that provision of adequate and appropriately located community facilities will be sought in conjunction with new development.

New District Plan

In October 2023 East Herts Council agreed to update the adopted District Plan (2018). The Council will commence formal work on the District Plan Review in late 2025 once the Government has published secondary legislation to implement the plan-making reforms.

Currently, the Council is updating the evidence base and undertaking other preparatory work needed to support the District Plan Review. The PPOSS is a key part of this evidence base and will ensure that existing facilities are the most appropriate in terms of quantity, quality and location and consider how best to meet the additional needs generated by the planned housing and economic growth.

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document

The Council adopted an Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in 2020, following the publication of an open space and sports assessment in 2017. The SPD supplements policies in the District Plan, providing guidance on the type and scale of open space, sport and recreation required in, and funded by, new development.

North East Central (NEC) Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan (JSP)

The ten Hertfordshire local authorities, together with Hertfordshire County Council, established the Hertfordshire Growth Board in 2019. The purpose behind the Growth Board is to collaborate on place-based working across Hertfordshire to address sustainable growth. This joint approach is the development of two Joint Strategic Plans (JSPs), for South West and NEC Hertfordshire.

The purpose of the JSPs is to provide a long-term growth strategy where future collaboration is needed to deliver strategic-scale growth. The polycentric geography of Hertfordshire, with no dominant town or city, together with a number of tightly constrained new towns lends itself to a strategic approach that considers growth needs across administrative boundaries. The plans will identify a joint vision, long-term development needs, strategic development locations and strategic transport infrastructure, green infrastructure and climate change issues and policy responses.

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The authorities undertook a comprehensive scoping exercise to understand better some of the challenges and issues associated with the preparation of a JSP, including the issues where support was needed. These include the relationship of a JSP to local plans, the type of strategic plan that would best meet the area's needs and how its preparation would be resourced, as well as how long it would take.

The local authorities of Broxbourne, East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire, Stevenage and Welwyn Hatfield, together with Hertfordshire County Council make up the group for North East Central (NEC) Hertfordshire. Part one of a growth study was completed in October 2022 to understand the strategic elements affecting these authorities. Following this, visioning work was undertaken throughout late 2023 and 2024 and after public consultation it is expected to finalised in 2025.

Vision and Corporate Priorities

On 28th February 2024, the Council approved its "LEAF" corporate priorities. These set out the strategic priorities of the Council and are grouped under the following four headings: -
- Listening, Open and Transparent
- Environmentally Focused
- Acting with the Community
- Fair and Inclusive

Under each heading are a series of sub objectives and actions which officers are tasked with delivering. These LEAF priorities are kept under review and in July 2025, the Council approved some updates to priorities.

Housing Strategy 2022-2027

Homelessness, poor condition homes or low levels of energy efficiency and an insufficient supply of affordable homes are all challenges in East Herts. The Housing Strategy 2022-2027 looks to address these issues by delivering more affordable homes, enabling a wider range of high-quality accommodation for vulnerable residents and improving the sustainability of existing properties.

Thriving Together Health and Wellbeing Plan 2024-2027

The plan promotes an integrated approach to tackling health and wellbeing, working alongside national and regional health agencies, the Herts and Essex Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), the Integrated Care System (ICS) and the Integrated care Board (ICB), as well as Hertfordshire County Council and Parish Councils and the voluntary sector. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Public Health has a key role to play in supporting good health and wellbeing and is tasked with the overall responsibility for achieving this across Hertfordshire.

The main priorities are to:

- Ensure that every child has the best start to life.
- Support communities to be healthy and sustainable.
- Support residents to maintain healthy lifestyles.
- Support people living with dementia.
- Improve support for people living with life-long conditions, long term health conditions, physical disabilities and their families.
- Improve residents' mental health.
- Supporting individuals to improve their health and wellbeing
- Enabling groups in the community to support themselves and each other

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◄ Using partnership co-operation and clear actions to improve community health and wellbeing.

An action plan has been developed to address these aims, with a range of actions including supporting and engaging with the voluntary sector and tackling inactivity and improving physical wellbeing by supporting residents to access sport, leisure and recreation opportunities.

East Herts Cultural Strategy 2021-2025

The East Herts Cultural Strategy 2021-2025 outlines how strategic partners can contribute to highlighting the great physical and human assets of the District. The vision is that: "East Herts will lead the way in demonstrating that when residents, community organisations and the creative industries come together extraordinary, surprising and delightful things can happen that enrich and enhance everyone's health, wellbeing and sense of inclusion".

For the purposes of this Strategy, which places inclusion at its heart, arts and culture is considered to include the performing and visual arts, festivals, tourism and leisure, heritage and historical buildings, sports and physical activity, parks and open spaces, children's play and common interest voluntary groups. The Strategy recognises that culture can be a key drive for prosperity in East Herts.

Population projections estimate that the number of people in all age groups are growing in the District. Housing developments in new neighbourhoods and garden villages will bring new cultural opportunities to East Herts through unlocking developer contributions. Ensuring that all residents have access to activities is a challenge, particularly those living in more deprived areas. Providing cultural activities is also seen to tackle wider societal issues such as crime and loneliness and improve educational attainment in young people. Residents need to be able to access these events in sustainable ways.

Management arrangements

A project team from the Council has worked with KKP to ensure that all relevant information is readily available and to support the consultants as necessary to ensure that project stages and milestones are delivered on time, and to the required quality standard to meet Sport England guidance.

Further to this, a Steering Group is and will continue to be responsible for the direction of the PPS from a strategic perspective and for supporting, checking and challenging the work of the project team. The Steering Group is made up of representatives from East Herts District Council, Sport England, Herts Sport and Physical Activity Partnership and National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs). The responsibilities of the Steering Group have been:

◄ Setting a strategic framework.
◄ Ensuring that the process is robust and meets the methodology requirements of the PPS guidance as currently available.
◄ Preparing and signing off project management documents e.g., the project plan and project brief.
◄ Establishing the context and tailoring the approach.
◄ Setting club survey response targets.
◄ Assisting in the identification and engagement of those who should be consulted to gather the supply and demand of information.
◄ Check and challenge key finding, issues, solutions, recommendations and actions.
◄ Reviewing draft documents.

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It will be important for the Steering Group to continue once the PPOSS has been finalised to contribute to Stage E and help keep it up to date.

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Scope

The following are the key outdoor sports in East Hertfordshire and as such are included within the scope:

‹ Athletics.
‹ Bowls.
‹ Cricket.
‹ Football
‹ Golf.
‹ Hockey.
‹ Netball.
‹ Rugby league.
‹ Rugby union.
‹ Tennis.
‹ Water sports.

Extent of the study area

The study area is the East Hertfordshire District Council administrative area. Due to the size of the District, the array of influences acting upon it and the diverse and dispersed nature of its settlements there are a great variety of issues facing its communities. In order to establish a policy approach, appropriate to meeting these differing needs it is necessary to sub-divide the District. This sub-division is based upon the presence of common characteristics, including the prevailing economic, social, and environmental conditions and the existence of connections to, and the influence of, surrounding areas and centres.

As a result of this process five distinct and internally cohesive areas within the District have been identified as follows:

‹ Bishop's Stortford.
‹ Buntingford.
‹ Hertford, Ware.
‹ Sawbridgeworth.
‹ Watton-at-Stone.

Cross boundary issues have been explored to determine the level of imported and exported demand, recognising, for example, that people travel to and make use of strategic facilities irrespective of administrative boundaries. As can be seen the Buntingford Analysis Area as an example is much larger than the town of Buntingford itself. This is because the agreed analysis areas have been named after prominent settlements within each area.

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Figure 1.1: Map showing analysis areas

Figure 1.2: Map showing analysis areas and wards
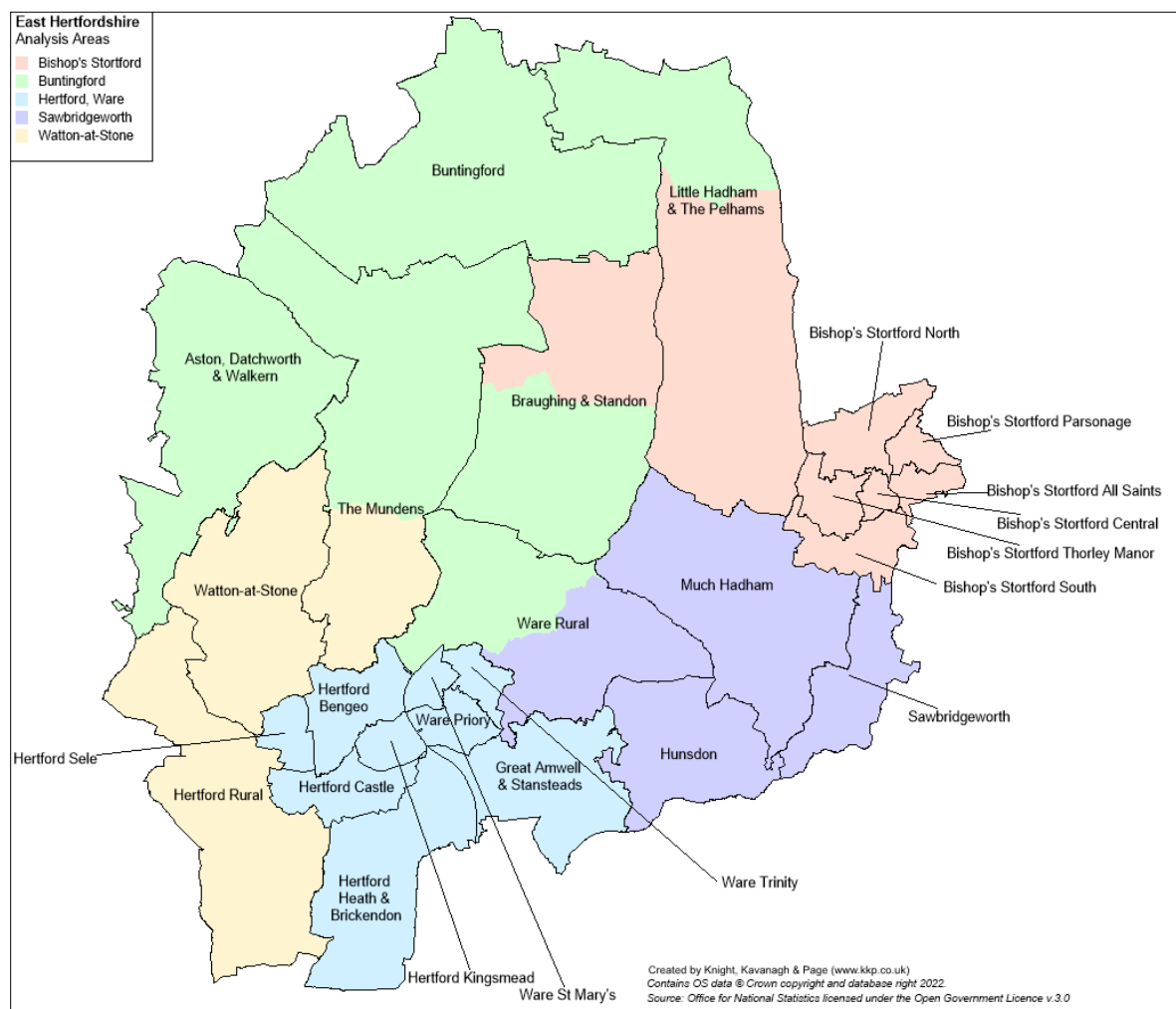
1.3: Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision

A clear picture of supply and demand for outdoor sports facilities in East Hertfordshire needs to be provided to include an accurate assessment of quantity and quality. This is achieved through consultation with key stakeholders to ensure that they inform the subsequent strategy. It informs current demand, adequacy, usage, future demand and strategies for maintenance and investment for outdoor sports facilities.

Gather supply information and views – an audit of playing pitches

Sport England's PPS guidance uses the following definitions of a playing pitch and playing field. These definitions are set out by the Government in the 2015 'Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order'.[1]

◄ **Playing pitch** – a delineated area which together with any run off area, is of 0.2ha or more, and is used for association football, rugby, cricket, hockey, lacrosse, rounders, baseball, softball, American football, Australian football, Gaelic football, shinty, hurling, polo or cycle polo.
◄ **Playing field** – the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch.

Page. 520 [1] www.sportengland.org>Facilities and Planning> Planning Applications

Although the statutory definition of a pitch is one that meets a minimum size of 0.2ha, this PPS takes into account smaller size pitches that contribute to the supply side, for example, a site containing a mini 5v5 football pitch. This PPS counts individual grass pitches (as a delineated area) as the basic unit of supply. The definition of a playing pitch also includes artificial grass pitches (AGPs).

As far as possible the assessment report aims to capture all of the outdoor sports facilities within East Hertfordshire; however, there may be instances, for example, on school sites or private sites where access was not possible and has led to omissions within the report. Where pitches have not been recorded within the report, including those which are disused or lapsed, they remain as pitches and for planning purposes continue to be so. Furthermore, exclusions of a pitch does not mean that it is not required from a supply and demand point of view.

Quantity

Where known, all outdoor sports facilities are included irrespective of ownership, management and use. Sites were initially identified using Sport England's Active Places web based database, with the Council and NGBs supporting the process by checking and updating this initial data. This was also verified against club information supplied by local leagues.

For each site, the following details were recorded in the project database (which will be supplied upon completion of the project as an electronic file):

◄ Site name, address (including postcode) and location.
◄ Ownership and management type.
◄ Security of tenure.
◄ Total number, type and quality of outdoor sports facilities.

Accessibility

Not all outdoor sports facilities offer the same level of access to the community. The ownership and accessibility of provision also influences actual availability for community use. Each site is assigned a level of community use as follows:

◄ **Community use** - facilities in public, voluntary, private or commercial ownership or management (including education sites) recorded as being available for hire and currently in use by teams playing in community leagues.
◄ **Available but unused** - facilities that are available for hire but are not currently used by teams which play in community leagues; this most often applies to school sites but can also apply to sites which are expensive to hire.
◄ **No community use** - facilities which as a matter of policy or practice are not available for hire or used by teams playing in community leagues. This should include professional club pitches along with some semi-professional club pitches, where play is restricted to the first or second team.
◄ **Disused –** provision that is not being used at all by any users and is not available for community hire either.

Quality

The capacity of provision to regularly provide for competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by their quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of provision affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of a sport. In extreme circumstances it can result in a facility being unable to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times.

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It is not just the quality itself which has an effect on its capacity but also the quality, standard and range of ancillary facilities. The quality of both the outdoor sports facility and ancillary facilities will determine whether provision is able to contribute to meeting demand from various groups and for different levels and types of play.

The quality of all outdoor sports facilities identified in the audit and the ancillary facilities supporting them are assessed regardless of ownership, management or availability. Along with capturing any details specific to the individual facilities and sites, a quality rating is also recorded within the audit for each. These ratings are used to help estimate the capacity to accommodate competitive and other play within the supply and demand assessment.

In addition to undertaking non-technical assessments (using the templates provided within the guidance and as determined by NGBs), users and providers were also consulted on the quality and in some instances the quality rating was adjusted to reflect this.

Gather demand information and views

Presenting an accurate picture of current demand for outdoor sports facilities (i.e. recording how and when provision is used) is important when undertaking a supply and demand assessment.

Demand for outdoor sports facilities in the District tends to fall within the following categories:

‹ Organised competitive play.
‹ Organised training.
‹ Informal play.

Current and future demand for outdoor sports facilities is presented on a sport-by-sport basis within the relevant sections of this report.

In addition, unmet, latent, imported and exported demand for provision is also identified within each section. Unmet demand is known to currently exist but is unable to access sports facilities; latent demand is demand that evidence suggests may be generated from the current population should they have access to more or better quality provision. Exported and imported demand refers to those sports users who are playing outside of their local authority of choice.

A variety of consultation methods were used to collate such demand information. Firstly, face to face consultation was carried out with key clubs from each sport, thus allowing for the collection of detailed demand information and an exploration of key issues to be interrogated and more accurately assessed. For all remaining clubs, an online survey (converted to postal if required) was utilised.

Local sports development officers, county associations and regional governing body officers advised which of the clubs to include in the face-to-face consultation and Sport England was also included within the consultation process prior to the project commencing. Issues identified by clubs returning questionnaires were followed up by telephone or face to face interviews.

As key providers and users of outdoor sports facilities, educational establishments were also consulted. This involved face to face meetings with secondary schools and colleges and an online survey being sent to primary schools.

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Future demand/population growth

It has been agreed to project future demand to 2043 in East Hertfordshire as the Council is currently updating its adopted District Plan (2018-2033), so the revised housing targets will be set for beyond 2033.

The current resident population in East Hertfordshire is 150,158 (ONS 2021 Census). By 2043 (the period to which this assessment projects population based future demand) the East Hertfordshire's population is projected to increase 8% according to ONS data.

Alongside current demand, it is important for the PPOSS to assess whether the future demand for playing pitches can be met. Using ONS population projections, as well as likely participation growth informed through consultation, an estimate can be made of the likely future demand for playing pitches.

Team generation rates are used to provide an indication of how many people it may take to generate a team (by gender and age group) in order to help estimate the change in demand for pitch sports that may arise from any population change.

Future demand for pitches is calculated by adding the percentage increases to the population increases in each analysis area. This figure is then applied to the team generation rates and is presented on a sport-by-sport basis.

Other information sources that were used to help identify future demand, especially for non-pitch sports (where team generation rates are not applicable) include:

◄ Recent trends in the participation.
◄ The nature of the current and likely future population and their propensity to participate.
◄ Feedback from clubs on their plans to develop additional teams/attract additional members.
◄ Any local and NGB specific sports development targets (e.g. increase in participation).

1.4: Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views

Supply and demand information gathered is used to assess the adequacy of playing pitch provision in East Hertfordshire. It focuses on how much use each site could potentially accommodate (on an area-by-area basis) compared to how much use is currently taking place.

Understand the situation at individual sites

Qualitative pitch ratings are linked to a pitch capacity rating derived from NGB guidance and tailored to suit a local area. The quality and use of each pitch is assessed against the recommended pitch capacity to indicate how many match equivalent sessions per week (per season for cricket) a pitch could accommodate.

This is compared to the number of matches actually taking place and categorised as follows, to identify:

Potential spare capacity: Play is below the level the site could sustain.	
At capacity: Play is at a level the site can sustain.	
Overused: Play exceeds the level the site can sustain.	

As a guide, the FA, RFU, EH and the ECB have set a standard number of matches that each pitch type should be able to accommodate without adversely affecting its quality.

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Table 1.1: Capacity of playing pitches

Sport	Pitch type	Good	Standard	Poor
Football	Adult pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Youth pitches	4 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Mini pitches	6 per week	4 per week	2 per week
Rugby union	Natural Inadequate (D0)	2 per week	1.5 per week	0.5 per week
Rugby union	Natural Adequate (D1)	3 per week	2 per week	1.5 per week
Rugby union	Pipe Drained (D2)	3.25 per week	2.5 per week	1.75 per week
Rugby union	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	3.5 per week	3 per week	2 per week
Cricket	One grass wicket	5 per season	4 per season	0 per season
Cricket	One synthetic wicket	60 per season	60 per season	0 per season
Hockey AGPs	One AGP	4 matches per day	4 matches per day	0 matches per day

For non-pitch sports, capacity is not linked to the number of matches taking place but rather the number of members (and other users) attracted to a site. For example, for tennis, a hard court with sports lighting is said to have capacity for 60 members, whereas a hard court without sports lighting has capacity for 40 members (this varies for grass courts). For bowls, the capacity of a green is thought to be 60 members, although this can vary depending on how active the membership is and how many teams are fielded.

Develop the current picture of provision

Once capacity is determined on a site-by-site basis, actual spare capacity is calculated on an area-by-area basis via further interrogation of temporal demand. Although this may have been identified, it does not necessarily mean that there is surplus provision. For example, spare capacity may not be available when it is needed, or the site may be retained as a 'strategic reserve' to enable pitch rotation to reduce wear and tear.

Capacity ratings assist in the identification of sites for improvement/development, rationalisation, decommissioning and disposal.

Identify the key findings and issues

By completing Steps 1-5 it is possible to identify several findings and issues relating to the supply, demand and adequacy of outdoor sports provision in East Hertfordshire. This report seeks to identify and present the key findings and issues prior to development of the Strategy and Action Plan for East Hertfordshire.

Develop the future picture of provision (scenario testing)

Modelling scenarios to assess whether existing provision can cater for unmet, latent, exported and future demand is made after the capacity analysis. This will also include, for example, removing sites with unsecured community use to demonstrate the impact this would have if these sites were to be decommissioned in the future. The scenario testing generally occurs in the Strategy report that follows on from this document and therefore does not form part of the Assessment Report.

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PART 2: FOOTBALL PITCHES

2.1: Introduction

The organisation primarily responsible for the development of football in East Hertfordshire is Hertfordshire FA. It is also responsible for the administration, in terms of discipline, rules and regulations, cup competitions and representative matches, development of clubs and facilities, volunteers, referees, coaching courses and delivering national football schemes.

This section of the report focuses on the supply and demand for grass football pitches. Part 3 captures supply and demand for third generation pitches (3G pitches) which are the preferred AGP (artificial grass pitch) surface type for football. In future, it is anticipated that there will be a growing demand for the use of 3G pitches for competitive football fixtures, especially to accommodate mini and youth football.

To support in delivery of both the current and superseding FA National Game Strategy (NGS), the FA commissioned a nationwide consultancy project. A Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) has now been produced for every local authority across England.

The LFFP is strategically aligned to the National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS); a 10-year plan to change the landscape of football facilities in England. The NFFS represents a major funding commitment from the national funding partners (The FA, Premier League and DCMS) to inform and direct an estimated one billion pounds of investment through the Football Foundation into football facilities over the next ten years.

Each LFFP builds upon PPS findings (where present and current) regarding the formal and affiliated game, to also include strategic priorities for investment across small sided football (recreational and informal including indoors). LFFP's also incorporate consultation with groups outside of formal football, as well as underrepresented communities. This includes those which may be key partners with regards to football for behavioural change and groups which may be key drivers of FA NGS priorities around participation in the likes of women and girls' football, disability football and futsal.

LFFPs identify key projects to be delivered and act as an investment portfolio for projects that require funding. As such, around 90% of all national football investment through the funding partners will be identified via LFFPs.

It is important to recognise that an LFFP is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential investment - it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. Consequently, it cannot be used in place of a PPS and is not an accepted evidence base for site change of use or disposal.

The original East Hertfordshire LFFP[2] was developed in 2019 and is currently being updated. It identifies 15 potential projects for investment which are outlined in this section and the 3G pitch section of the report. The updated LFFP has been published in 2025 and explores potential 3G pitch and ancillary provision projects for the Authority and will be published prior to the PPS strategy completion. The 2025 LFFP has not applied priority sites for grass football pitches as they are now funded under the Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund and the Home Advantage fund.

There is a total of 58 football clubs identified as playing in East Hertfordshire. The larger clubs in the District were offered an opportunity to engage in face-to-face consultations to allow them to provide feedback in greater detail on issues relating to supply and demand.

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[2]https://localplans.footballfoundation.org.uk/local-authorities-index/east-hertfordshire/east-hertfordshire-executive-summary/

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The remaining clubs were issued an online survey which was distributed by KKP and Hertfordshire FA. The following clubs were consulted with face to face or via virtual meetings:

- Bengeo Tigers FC.
- Bishop's Stortford Community YFC (BSC FC).
- Buntingford Cougars FC.
- Bury Rangers FC.
- Hertford Town YFC.
- Ware FC Academy.
- Ware YFC.
- Watton YFC.

Through face-to-face interviews, survey responses and phone calls, an 85% team response rate (432/511 teams) has been achieved having consulted with 18/58 (31%) of clubs. The difference in percentages is caused by consultations prioritising clubs that have the higher number of teams, such as BSC FC which has 65 teams identified as playing within the District.

The following clubs completed online surveys or were consulted with through telephone calls:

- Bishops Stortford Swifts Youth FC.
- Bullsmoor Utd.
- Buntingford Town FC.
- Enfield FC.
- Forest Hall Park FC.
- Hertford Heath.
- Hertford Heath Junior FC.
- Sawbo FC.
- St Margaretsbury FC.
- Thorley Manor FC.
- Ware Lions FC.

2.2: Supply

The audit identifies a total of 184 grass football pitches in East Hertfordshire across 70 sites. Of the pitches, 178 are available, at some level, for community use across 66 sites. All non-community accessible pitches are located at education sites, other than Albury Football Ground where community access was removed by the council due to noise complaints. Site assessments reviewing the quantity and quality of provision across the Authority was undertaken by KKP during December 2024.

As presented in the table below, the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area contains the most football pitches in East Hertfordshire with 66 identified (equating to 36% of all provision). In contrast, the Watton-at-Stone Analysis Area contains the least provision with 10 pitches identified (5% of overall provision).

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Table 2.1: Summary of all grass football pitches

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Bishop's Stortford	11	8	6	13	6	**44**
Buntingford	10	8	6	13	9	**46**
Hertford, Ware	19	15	14	8	10	**66**
Sawbridgeworth	7	5	4	1	1	**18**
Watton-at-Stone	2	2	2	1	3	**10**
Total	**49**	**38**	**32**	**36**	**29**	**184**

In East Hertfordshire, out of the 184 pitches, 49 are adult size (27%) and makes up the majority of pitches with the next biggest allocation of pitches being youth 11v11 with 38 (21%). It can be common for youth 11v11 teams to play on adult pitches as a result of a lack of youth 11v11 pitches which is not in line with the FA Youth Review.

Table 2.2: Summary of grass football pitches available to the community

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Bishop's Stortford	10	8	6	11	4	**39**
Buntingford	10	8	6	13	9	**46**
Hertford, Ware	19	15	14	7	10	**65**
Sawbridgeworth	7	5	4	1	1	**18**
Watton-at-Stone	2	2	2	1	3	**10**
Total	**48**	**38**	**32**	**33**	**27**	**178**

Of the community available pitches, 38 are of a youth 11v11 size representing 21% of the available supply, which is low in relation to the proportion of youth teams (128 teams – 25% of all teams) which should be playing matches on this size pitch. This issue often results in teams fast tracking youth sides to play on adult pitches given the relatively recent introduction of youth 11v11 pitches within football in the UK.

In accordance with the FA Youth Review, U17 and U18 teams can play on adult pitches. The FA's recommended pitch size for adult football is 100x64 metres. Please refer to the table below for more detail.

Table 2.3: FA recommended grass/3G pitch sizes

Age group	Playing format	Recommended pitch dimensions (metres excluding run offs)	Recommended pitch dimensions (metres including run offs)
Mini-Soccer U7/U8	5v5	37x27	43x33
Mini-Soccer U9/U10	7v7	55x37	61x43
Youth U11/U12	9v9	73x46	79x52
Youth U13/U14	11v11	82x50	88x56
Youth U15/U16	11v11	91x55	97x61
Youth U17/U18	11v11	100x64	106x70
Over 18/Adult	11v11	100x64	106x70

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Of the 85 pitches located at 33 education sites in East Hertfordshire 81 across 30 sites are open to community use. Meaning that 95% of schools allow community use of their pitches. The following schools do not allow community access of their respective pitches:

‹ Saint Mary's Catholic School (CM23 2NQ).
‹ Richard Whittington Primary School (CM23 3NP).
‹ Abel Smith Primary School (SG13 8AE).

In most cases the sites do not allow community use due to the small quantity of pitches provided meaning it would not be worthwhile opening up the whole site such as Richard Whittington Primary School and Abel Smith Primary School. Typically, smaller schools like these do not have any other sporting provision that is open to community use, so it is not used to hiring a lettings department or having its site team manage out of hour bookings. Conversely, St Mary's has more pitch space alongside tennis courts and could have more potential for community use.

Playing field sites which have previously accommodated formal pitches are categorised as disused. A disused site is not being used at all by any users and is not available for community hire either. In the case of East Hertfordshire there are no known disused sites across the District.

There are, however, several sites which previously provided formal playing pitch provision that no longer does. The below sites are all open spaces and can still be accessed by the community. The following findings were picked up from site visits and consultations.

Albury Football Ground (SG11 2JG) previously accommodated one adult and one 7v7 pitch each and was accessed by BSC FC. However, access was removed during the season by Albury Parish Council after noise complaints from neighbours.

The Meads (SG9 0DY) previously marked out one adult, one youth 11v11, one 9v9, two 7v7 and one 5v5, however, there is no longer football pitches marked out, and it is operating as a play park and general amenity open space.

Horseman's Meadow (SG12 0LP) and Widford Playing Field (SG12 8SH) both previously accommodated one adult pitch, however, there was no pitch markings at the time of site visit. Consultation with both local clubs and the Hertfordshire FA confirms that there are no clubs playing at either site.

County Hall (SG13 8EH) previously provided two 9v9 and two 7v7, however, has not marked out pitches recently after a fire at the pavilion. The Council confirms the site has been proposed for redevelopment, but the plans are unclear at present.

Both Norfolk Road Playing Fields (SG9 9BT) in Buntingford town centre and Much Hadham Recreation Ground (SG10 6BS) previously provided one adult pitch. Neither site had pitches marked out or posts up at the time of site visits undertaken in December 2024. There are also no affiliated teams stating use of the playing fields for organised play. The sites are mainly used as open spaces now, although it is worth noting that Norfolk Road Playing Fields still has a cricket square.

Avanti Grange Secondary School is a recently built school with brand new community available grass pitches just across the A120. The pitches have not yet been marked out and are not accessible as of yet as a footbridge still needs to be built. BSC YFC is also planning to obtain a new site beside the new school pitches and has held several discussions with different parties. The land belongs to a local farmer which the Club states is in favour, although provision will be subject to planning permission.

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Buntingford Cougars FC is concerned around its future tenure position at London Road Playing Fields. The site is owned by both the Buntingford Relief in need and Diocese Church of England St Albans in equal shares and there appears to be some risk of the land being sold.

Hertford Town YFC has identified a grass area behind the 3G pitch it shares with Hertford Town as a potential space to develop a mini 7v7 grass pitch. Alongside this, the Club would like a youth 11v11 pitch to be marked out near the River Lea which originally had a pitch on the marked out but an agreement with the Town Council could not be reached. It feels that it is at capacity and cannot grow without additional pitch space.

Consultation with Sawbridgeworth Sports Association confirmed there is an ambition to develop a new site to be accessed by Sawbridgeworth Town FC and Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club. Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club raises frustrations with accessing Leventhorpe School as a second ground. Both clubs are seeking a shared new site to further growth ambitions.

Regarding the adopted District plan there have been several new community grass football pitches proposed in line with new major housing developments which will significantly increase the supply within East Hertfordshire. The Gilston development which will build 10,000 new homes has 15 new pitches proposed spread across adult, youth and mini pitches. North of Ware development will see 1,800 new homes built and provide one new adult and one new youth pitch. The Bishop's Stortford North development will add one new adult football pitch (Hoggates Park stadia pitch) that is designed to meet ground grading regulations for Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC. Initially the pitch will be grass but the club hopes to fundraise for a 3G pitch in the future.

Two new primary schools have been built in Bishop's Stortford and have community use agreements for sports provision. Avanti Brook and Avanti Meadows Primary School's may have football pitches marked out (layout and formats currently unknown which would be available for community use for the 25/26 season.

Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2 overleaf identifies all football pitches servicing East Hertfordshire. For a key to the map, see Table 2.18.

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Figure 2.1: Football pitch locations

The quality of football pitches across East Hertfordshire has been assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments as determined by the FA) undertaken in December 2024, PitchPower reports for 10 sites which can be found in Table 2.6 and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

‹ Good.
‹ Standard.
‹ Poor.

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows: Good (>80%), Standard (50-80%), Poor (<50%).

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Pitch quality primarily influences the carrying capacity of a site; often pitches lack the drainage and maintenance necessary to sustain levels of use. Pitches that receive little to no ongoing repair or post-season remedial work are likely to be assessed as poor, therefore limiting the number of games they are able to accommodate each week without it having a detrimental effect on quality.

Conversely, well maintained pitches that are tended to regularly are likely to be of a higher standard and capable of taking a number of matches without a significant reduction in surface quality.

The table below summarises the quality of pitches that are available for community use. In total, 28 pitches are assessed as good quality (16%), 94 as standard (53%) and 56 (31%) as poor. Table 2.18 outlines the quality ratings of all grass pitches in the Authority.

Table 2.4: Pitch quality assessments (community use pitches)

Pitch type	No. of good quality pitches	No. of standard quality pitches	No. of poor quality pitches
Adult	8	28	12
Youth 11v11	7	19	12
Youth 9v9	5	16	11
Mini 7v7	4	15	14
Mini 5v5	4	16	7
Total	**28**	**94**	**56**

There are 56 poor quality pitches available to the community (31%), most of which are found at education or public open space sites. Pitches at the aforementioned types of site generally do not receive continued and stringent maintenance programmes and are used for other activities other than formal football demand. Consequently, pitch quality can suffer. Good quality pitches are commonly located at sites where Grass Pitch Maintenance Funding is being accessed, the site is fenced and not accessed by the general public and there is a paid groundsman.

The six pitches unavailable for community use are all of standard quality and at education sites other than Albury Football Ground. Albury Parish Council removed Bishop's Stortford Community FC's access to this site mid-season due to various noise complaints from neighbours.

The following clubs raised specific issues during consultation with regards to the quality of their pitches.

Hertford Town YFC raises concerns about the quality of pitches it accesses at Hartham Common and Kingsmead. The pitches are rated poor, and the Club states that the grass does not get cut frequently enough, alongside a basic maintenance regime with no off-season work being carried out. The site is an open space, so is subject to dog walkers and informal football use. Everyone Active manage the pitches on behalf of East Herts District Council.

Bury Rangers FC accesses Presdales Recreation Ground which is currently managed and maintained by East Herts District Council. The pitches are rated standard quality; however, there are issues relating to wider public access as it is within an open space. Ideally the Club would like to take on maintenance and management of the site. The pitches are chalk based so do not hold surface water which is common with most other clay based pitches in East Hertfordshire.

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BSC FC reports that the pitches at Pearce House Playing Fields (Birchwood High School) are poor quality as they are based on clay soil. This typically results in the pitches suffering from inclement weather with drainage problems. It also raises quality inconsistencies at Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre as the site is on a floodplain as well as being an open space site. It states that the pitches are a mix of poor and standard. Site assessment notes concur with these findings as most of the mini pitches were waterlogged at the time of the audit.

Ware YFC which is partnered with Ware United FC accesses its namesake site as well as Allenburys Sports & Social Club pitches which it deems good quality as it is privately maintained. Ware YFC home site is a mix of poor and standard pitches which it maintains itself. The Club does not access any grass pitch maintenance funding but are considering doing so in the future.

The FA has a general pitch improvement strategy which has been developed in partnership with the Grounds Management Association (GMA) to develop a grass pitch maintenance service that can be utilised by grassroots clubs with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and therefore the quality of pitches. The key principles behind the service are to provide clubs with advice/practical solutions in a range of areas, with the simple aim of improving playing surfaces. The programme is designed to help clubs on sites that they themselves manage and maintain but can also be used to advise council-maintained sites.

In addition, the FA's Strategy also aims to focus on developing improved maintenance with local authorities that can be utilised at local authority-maintained sites.

Further to the above, the Football Foundation and the FA has recently developed a new pitch maintenance grant fund that allows clubs and sports organisations to apply for funding for maintenance assistance, consumables and/or equipment. Local authorities are currently ineligible applicants through this fund; however, clubs, leagues and or charitable organisations using local authority sites can apply provided they have security of tenure and/or a proforma is in place.

With quality of grass pitches becoming one of the biggest influences on participation in football, the FA has made it a priority to work towards improving quality of grass pitches across the country. This has resulted in the creation of the Football Foundation Grass Pitch Improvement Programme. As part of this, grass pitches identified as having quality issues undergo a pitch inspection from a member of the Grounds Management Association (GMA, formerly Institute of Groundsmanship).

The football funding partners (Premier League, The FA, Sport England, and Department for Culture, Media and Sport) are increasing efforts to improve the quality of grass pitches in England with the launch of the PitchPower app. Launched in 2020 alongside the Football Foundation Pitch Preparation Fund, The app is a new digital self-assessment tool to allow reports and recommendations to be made more quickly and easily once submitted for review by GMA regional pitch advisors.

The tool across mobile app and desktop is open to access by all providers, for example clubs, schools and local authorities. Following a PitchPower Assessment Report, organisations can work towards the recommended dedicated maintenance regime identified to improve the quality of their pitches.

The PitchPower assessments use the new five step Performance Quality Standard rating system developed by the Grounds Management Association (GMA), with the Football Foundation and Sport England agreeing alignment with the capacity guidance within the existing PPS guidance.

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Alignment was agreed as follows:

Table 2.5: Equivalent PPS quality rating for pitch Performance Quality Standard ratings

PQS Rating	PPS Quality Rating
Poor	Poor
Basic	Standard
Good	Good
Advanced	Good
High	Good

The following sites have received an existing PitchPower report, the equivalent PPS Quality Ratings for which have been accepted and applied within the PPS audit and analysis.

- Bengeo Sports Ground.
- Bishops Stortford Swifts FC.
- Crouchfields.
- Freman College.
- Leventhorpe School.
- Presdales School.
- Ralph Sadleir School.
- The Sele School.
- Ware Lions FC.
- Ware Youth Football Club.

Table 2.6: PitchPower report results

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	PitchPower rating
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Adult	Poor
20	Bishops Stortford Swifts FC	Adult	Standard
20	Bishops Stortford Swifts FC	Mini 7v7	Good
20	Bishops Stortford Swifts FC	Mini 7v7	Poor
20	Bishops Stortford Swifts FC	Youth 11v11	Poor
35	Crouchfields	Adult	Poor
35	Crouchfields	Mini 5v5	Standard
35	Crouchfields	Mini 7v7	Standard
35	Crouchfields	Youth 11v11	Standard
35	Crouchfields	Youth 9v9	Standard
40	Freman College	Adult	Good
40	Freman College	Youth 11v11	Good
62	Leventhorpe School	Adult	Standard
62	Leventhorpe School	Youth 11v11	Poor
62	Leventhorpe School	Youth 9v9	Standard
75	Presdales School	Mini 5v5	Standard
75	Presdales School	Mini 7v7	Standard
75	Presdales School	Youth 11v11	Standard
75	Presdales School	Youth 11v11	Standard
75	Presdales School	Youth 9v9	Standard
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Mini 5v5	Good
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Mini 5v5	Standard
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Mini 7v7	Good
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Mini 7v7	Good

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Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	PitchPower rating
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Mini 7v7	Good
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Youth 9v9	Standard
108	The Sele School	Mini 5v5	Good
108	The Sele School	Mini 7v7	Standard
108	The Sele School	Youth 11v11	Standard
108	The Sele School	Youth 11v11	Standard
108	The Sele School	Youth 11v11	Good
108	The Sele School	Youth 9v9	Good
118	Ware Lions FC	Mini 5v5	Poor
118	Ware Lions FC	Mini 7v7	Standard
118	Ware Lions FC	Youth 11v11	Standard
118	Ware Lions FC	Youth 9v9	Standard
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Adult	Poor
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Adult	Poor
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Mini 5v5	Poor
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Mini 5v5	Good
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Mini 7v7	Poor
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Mini 7v7	Poor
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Youth 9v9	Standard
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Youth 9v9	Standard

With quality of grass pitches becoming one of the biggest influences on participation in football, the FA has made it a priority to work towards improving quality of grass pitches across the country. This has resulted in the creation of the GPMF. As part of this, grass pitches identified as having quality issues by the GMA via PitchPower assessment can apply to access funding to improve pitches to good quality or sustain them at good quality.

Once a PitchPower grass pitch assessment report has been produced for the site, eligible organisations can then apply for grant funding support through the FF Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund, a fund offering six-year tapered grants to help eligible organisations such as clubs and leagues enhance or sustain the quality of their grass pitches. The fund is a key part of the FF's Grass Pitch Improvement Programme - an ambition to deliver 20,000 quality grass pitches by 2030. If a site is categorised as 'poor' or 'basic' then organisations can apply for funding to enhance pitch quality, whilst clubs with good or standard quality pitches can also apply for a lower level of funding to sustain quality.

All applicants must have the landowner's permission (as a minimum) and have received a PitchPower Pitch Assessment Report, with the fund currently open to football clubs (excluding stadia pitches used for National League System play), leagues, education establishments and parish and town councils.

Several clubs/schools within East Hertfordshire have been awarded funding from the FF to improve pitch quality, such as, Ware Lions FC, Bengeo Tigers FC, Leventhorpe School, Bengeo Trinity FC, Standon & Puckeridge Hares FC, Wodson Park Youth FC and Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC.

Ancillary facility ratings are primarily influenced by the type of amenities which are available on a site accompanied by their quality, such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, car parking, dedicated official and spectator facilities. Good quality ancillary facilities are particularly important for football clubs as they can assist with income generation. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly important for the provision to be inclusive, particularly due to growing women's and girls', disability and junior/mini demand.

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Although the size and configuration of ancillary provision may alter based on the sports using the provision, and the number of pitches it services, generally the same principles are recommended to allow for varied use from all demographics:

◄ Accessible changing areas which can be separated, or are private/self-contained, to allow for separate male/female/all gender or senior/junior separation.
◄ A private accessible changing room (with relevant changing and showering provision) for someone who requires assistance.
◄ Separate female / male / all gender toilet provision.
◄ Suitably designed and specified showering cubicles to all users to maintain dignity and privacy whilst showering.

Open plan changing, toilets and particularly showering facilities can provide a significant barrier to many people resulting in them either not taking part or having a poorer sporting experience.

As a result of the above, those ancillary facilities that do not meet the above criteria, cannot be rated anything higher than standard quality for the purposes of this document. Additional context behind the rationale is provided below.

The table below presents a quality summary of provision at sites which provide dedicated changing rooms and pavilions based on consultation feedback. Furthermore, some sites have been excluded as ancillary provision is not available, additionally, education sites are not included within the list.

Table 2.7: Summary of ancillary facility quality

Site ID	Site name	Analysis Area	Management	Ancillary facility quality
1	Albury Football Ground	Bishop's Stortford	Albury Parish Council	Standard
7	Aston Playing Field	Buntingford	Aston Village Hall Committee	Standard
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Hertford, Ware	Sport Club	Standard
20	Bishops Stortford Swifts FC	Bishop's Stortford	Sport Club	Standard
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Watton-at-Stone	Bramfield Parish Council	Standard
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Braughing Parish Council	Standard
31	Cottered Playing Field	Buntingford	Cottered & Throcking Parish Council	Standard
35	Crouchfields	Watton-at-Stone	Wodson Park FC	Poor
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Sport Club	Standard
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Everyone Active	Good
49	Hertford Heath Playing Fields	Hertford, Ware	Hertford Heath Parish Council	Poor
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	Hertford, Ware	East Herts District Council	Standard
77	RDA Stadium	Bishop's Stortford	Sport Club	Good
84	Sawbridgeworth Town Football Club	Sawbridgeworth	Sport Club	Standard
86	Seth Ward Community Centre	Buntingford	Buntingford Town Council	Standard

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis Area	Management	Ancillary facility quality
94	St Margaretsbury FC	Hertford, Ware	Sport Club/Association	Standard
98	Standon Memorial Playing Field	Buntingford	Standon Parish Council	Standard
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	Tewin Parish Council	Standard
104	The Bury	Buntingford	Sport Club	Good
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	Buntingford	Thundridge Parish Council	Poor
118	Ware Lions FC	Buntingford	Sport Club	Standard
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Sport Club	Poor
122	Westmill Recreation Ground	Buntingford	Westmill Parish Council	Poor
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Hertford, Ware	Private	Standard
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	Private	Standard
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Buntingford	Walkern Parish Council	Standard
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	Sport Club	Good
141	St. George's Playing Field	Sawbridgeworth	High Wych Parish Council	Standard

Of the 28 ancillary facilities, four are rated good (14%), 19 are rated standard (68%) and five are rated poor (18%) quality. Sites which are listed as poor quality are all dated and have clear evidence of wear and tear throughout. Each requires modernisation to ensure it remains fit for usage in the future.

Ware YFC has 44 teams and accesses poor quality ancillary provision at its home site, it funded a new social room in 2024 as well as having home and away changing rooms and a kitchen. However, the site has a boiler, toilets and communal showers that do not work, while the changing rooms themselves are dated and need refurbishing. It also does not have suitable car parking to service its current demand although does have plans to extend this.

Hertford Heath Playing Fields currently has poor rated ancillary provision. The site is accessed by Hertford Heath FC which has two adult mens and one U16 boys team. The Club states it is planning to investigate rebuilding its changing rooms/clubhouse, however, does not currently have the funding to do so.

Crouchfields has a poor-quality ancillary provision that is accessed by Wodson Park FC which fields 11 teams ranging from U7's through to U18's teams. Westmill Recreation Ground has a poor-quality ancillary provision and one adult pitch. The site is accessed by Westmill Open FC which has two adult mens teams.

Thundridge Sports Ground has a basic poor quality ancillary provision servicing its three grass pitches. The site is not used for football and was formerly accessed by Thundridge Cricket Club which has folded since the previous PPS was written. Improving the ancillary provision could facilitate re-introducing demand to the site and utilising actual spare capacity.

BSC FC reports that Friedberg Playing Fields has three changing rooms and a referee's room which have limited use. The facility has no showers but does have a kitchen and social room. The building is dated and there is a lack of car parking at the site for the number of pitches.

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The Bury which is accessed by Buntingford Cougars is rated good quality and has two changing rooms with self-contained showers in each changing room. Alongside this, the site has a social room and bar with plenty of parking. The Club also states it only uses the toilets at Seth Ward Community Centre and Braughing Playing Fields without accessing the changing facilities as its teams generally come ready to play.

The Richard Hale School is working with Bury Rangers FC to enhance the changing rooms in the school and develop a new classroom and kitchen to be managed by the football club. Bury Rangers FC currently has 81 teams and is a 3* England Accredited club and as such is seeking better facilities to support its off-field development.

Bury Rangers also access Presdales Recreation Ground which has standard quality facilities. There are eight changing rooms with one communal shower space and the boiler does not work. Consequently, the Corinthian League which also use pitches at this venue will not access the changing rooms.

As above mentioned, a barrier to women and girls' participation in grassroots football is the lack of suitable ancillary changing provision. Currently, there are only four sites (14%) which have dedicated female changing rooms to support women's and girls' participation in football, which are, Grange Paddocks, Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC, The Bury and Ware FC.

Many teams in East Hertfordshire access pitch provision associated with the District Council or town and parish councils. The tenure of these sites is classified as secure, i.e., unless known otherwise, there is a guarantee that pitches will continue to be provided over the lifespan of the PPOSS. An exception to this is usually found at schools and academies which although may allow community use, are able to terminate community access at any time, unless a written community use agreement is in place.

As an example, in East Hertfordshire, Datchworth Primary School is a site which is used for affiliated football through an agreement of good will, but as there is no long-term agreement in place with the site user Watton YFC, it could in theory, be asked to vacate the site at short notice.

Of education sites in the District, 19 are used for competitive football. In total, affiliated football use at education sites equates to 183 teams from 15 clubs as detailed in the table overleaf.

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Table 2.8: Affiliated football demand at education providers

Site ID	Site	Clubs accessing site	Tenure position
8	Aston St Mary's VA School	Watton YFC	The Club pays a donation toward the school to use the football pitches and has a good relationship.
15	Birchwood High School	BSC FC	The Club part funded the 3G pitch and is a partner club. It has an annual agreement in place for this and the two 9v9 pitches it access.
16	Bishop's Stortford College	BSC FC Thorley Manor FC	BSC FC pays an annual fee toward the school for use of its pitches. Thorley Manor FC rents the pitch from the school with no long-term agreement in place.
36	Datchworth All Saints C Of Primary School	Watton YFC	The Club pays a monthly fee to the school for use of the pitches. There is no official agreement in place.
40	Freman College	Buntingford Cougars FC	The Club pays an annual fee toward the school for use of its pitches.
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth Town FC	Position unknown.
66	Manor Fields Primary School	Thorley Manor FC	The Club rents the pitch from the school with no long-term agreement in place.
68	Morgans Field	Bury Rangers	Position unknown.
75	Presdales School	Hertford Town FC Bury Rangers FC	Position unknown for Bury Rangers. The tenure position for Hertford Town FC is unknown.
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Standon & Puckeridge Hares FC	Position unknown.
78	Reedings Junior School	Sawbridgeworth Town FC	Position unknown.
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Bully's Crusaders Watton YFC	Watton YFC pays a monthly fee to the school for use of the pitches. There is no official agreement in place. Bully's Crusaders position is unknown.
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC BSC FC	BSC FC pays an annual fee toward the school for use of its pitches.
105	The Chauncy School	Deaconsfield Vets FC Hartham United FC	Positions unknown.
108	The Sele School	Bengeo Tigers	The Club has a rolling two-year agreement with the school and have been there for over 25 years.
113	Walkern School	AFC Walkern	Position unknown.
120	Watton-At-Stone Primary School	Watton YFC	The Club pays a monthly fee to the school for use of the pitches. There is no official agreement in place.
132	Hertfordshire & Essex High School Sports Centre	Thorley Manor FC	The Club rents the pitch from the school with no long-term agreement in place.
166	Layston C of E First School	Buntingford Cougars	The Club pays an annual fee toward the school for use of its pitches.

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Outside of education settings, many clubs have more complex tenure agreements in place with different landowners. Buntingford Cougars FC has a long-term lease with Hertfordshire County Council for the building and pitches at The Bury for 30 years. The other sites it accesses are all on annual rental agreements.

Ware YFC has a 30-year lease with Hertfordshire County Council for its home site with the same name. The lease applies to the pitches, building and car park all of which the Club is keen to invest into to enhance.

BSC FC signed a seven-year lease agreement in 2019/20 with East Hertfordshire District Council for the ancillary provision at Friedberg Playing Fields. The Club has a license agreement for the grass pitches at the site which runs until 2027. The Club maintains both the building and pitches. All other sites it accesses are annual rental agreements.

Sawbridgeworth Town FC has a long-term lease for its site, as the ground is in trust for the provision of sport.

Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC has a long-term lease in place with Silver Leys for the use of the football pitches and ancillary facilities at its site. The site is shared with Bishop's Stortford RFC.

Buntingford Cougars FC is concerned around the future of its lease at London Road Playing Fields. The site is owned by both the Buntingford relief in need and Diocese Church of England St Albans in equal shares and there appears to be some risk of land being sold.

As for other clubs, in most cases they access provision that is owned and managed by either the Council or a town or parish council. In such instances, it is safe to assume that the access to these sites is secured over the lifespan of the PPS.

The football pyramid is a series of interconnected leagues for adult men's football clubs in England. It begins below the Football League (the National League) and comprises of six steps and a regional feeder league, there are with various leagues at each level and more leagues lower down the pyramid than at the top. The step system has a hierarchical format with promotion and relegation between the steps, allowing even the smallest club the theoretical possibility of rising to the top of the system.

Clubs playing within the National League System (NLS) must adhere to ground grading requirements set out by the FA. The higher the level of football being played the higher the requirements. Clubs cannot progress into the league above if the ground grading requirements do not meet the correct specifications. Please refer to the FA website[3] for the full specifications for each.

In East Hertfordshire, there are five clubs which compete in the NLS which can be seen in the table overleaf.

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[3] http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/player/ground-grading

Table 2.9: Non-league football teams in East Hertfordshire

Team	League	Level
Bishop's Stortford FC	Southern League Premier Division Central	Step 3
Enfield FC	Southern League Division One Central	Step 4
Ware FC	Southern League Division One Central	Step 4
Hertford Town FC	Southern League Division One Central	Step 4
Sawbridgeworth Town FC	Essex Senior League	Step 5

The general principle for clubs in the football pyramid is that they must achieve the appropriate ground grade by March 31st of their first season after promotion, which therefore allows a short grace period for facilities to be brought up to standard.

It is important to note that from a ground grading perspective, the jump from a regional feeder league to Step 6 is significant and that as a minimum, sites require a sports lit pitch with hardstanding areas for fans, turnstiles for fan entry and therefore clubs currently at this level ordinarily require a serious overhaul of their existing sites to meet the relevant criteria.

Hertford Heath FC states that its pitch does not meet FA regulations and the first team plays its games at St Margaretsbury FC. It currently plays at step 7 so initially needs to enhance its current provision to meet these regulations, specifically ancillary provision. If the Club was to gain promotion it would need a lot of investment to meet ground grading regulations for step 6.

Correspondingly there is a Women's National League System (WNLS) similar to the adult men's system which provides structure to the women's game. As seen in the table below this ranges from Tier 1 to Tier 7 with each tier requiring differing ground grading requirements.
Table 2.10: Summary of ground grading for women's football

Level	League	Grading category
Tier 1	FA Women's Super League	Step S1
Tier 2	FA Women's Championship	Step S2
Tier 3	FA Women's National League Premier Division (Northern and Southern)	Step W1
Tier 4	FA Women's National League Division 1 North / Midlands / South East / South West	Step W2
Tier 5	Regional Premier Division	Step W3
Tier 6	Regional Division One	-
Tier 7	County Leagues	-

Although women's clubs within the WNLS still require ground grading requirements set out by the FA, these differ from the men's NLS. Ratings range from Step S1 to W3 each with differing minimum requirements. Step S1 and S2 in the WNLS is akin to Step 3 and 4 of the men's NLS, however, not identical. The system is also a hierarchical format with promotion and relegation between the levels, allowing even the smallest club the theoretical possibility of rising to the top of the system.

In 2017, the FA announced plans to restructure the women's league for the highest performers in the football pyramid. The changes were implemented from the start of the 2018-19 season and saw the top league, FA Women's Super League Tier 1, expand from ten clubs to 14 and the creation of a new national league established at Tier 2 for a maximum of 12 teams. Hertford Town is the only club in East Hertfordshire which has a women's team competing in the WNLS, at Tier 6.

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2.3: Demand

Through the audit and assessment, 511 teams from 58 clubs are identified as playing in East Hertfordshire. This consists of 75 adult men's (15%), nine adult women's (2%), 194 youth boys' (38%), 35 youth girls' (7%) and 198 mini mixed teams (39%).

East Hertfordshire affiliated demand has increased by 104 teams since the previous Playing Pitch Strategy was written in 2017 when there were 407 teams. Women's and girls' football has also increased in demand since the writing of the previous PPS from 23 teams to 44 teams currently.

The Hertford, Ware Analysis Area provides for the highest number of teams by a large margin, with a total of 277 teams. The analysis area with the fewest number of teams is Watton-at-Stone, with 15 teams identified.

Table 2.11: Summary of competitive teams currently playing in East Hertfordshire

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Bishop's Stortford	19	21	23	31	13	**107**
Buntingford	9	21	18	20	22	**90**
Hertford, Ware	50	73	50	52	52	**277**
Sawbridgeworth	4	7	5	3	3	**22**
Watton-at-Stone	2	6	5	2	-	**15**
Total	**84**	**128**	**101**	**108**	**90**	**511**

Youth 11v11 football is the most prominent format of play, whilst mini 5v5 has the fewest number of teams.

There are 44 dedicated women/girls' teams across six clubs playing in East Hertfordshire, representing 9% of the total number of teams. These are provided at the following clubs:

‣ AFC Walkern.
‣ Bengeo Tigers.
‣ BSC FC.
‣ Buntingford Cougars.
‣ Buntingford Town.
‣ Bury Rangers.
‣ Hartham United FC.
‣ Hertford Town.
‣ St Margaretsbury.
‣ Ware United Football Club.
‣ Ware YFC.
‣ Watton Youth.

The FA currently has a drive to increase women's and girls' participation by 50%. As such, it is imperative that sufficient facilities become suitable for female access, particularly in relation to toilets and appropriate changing facilities.

With the success of the 2022 UEFA Women's Euros and legacy plan of the event paired with the upcoming 2025 Women's World Cup, women's and girls' football is outlined to significantly develop across the country. Hertfordshire FA will be working to use this event as a catalyst for an increase in localised participation in East Hertfordshire.

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Exported demand refers to teams that are currently accessing pitches for home fixtures outside of the study area, despite being registered in East Hertfordshire. Likewise, imported demand is demand from neighbouring authorities accessing pitches in East Hertfordshire to play competitive matches.

In total, there is one club and two teams accessing provision outside of East Hertfordshire for matchday purposes, Buntingford Town FC. The Club reports that its women's and vets' teams have to access Barkway Recreation Ground in North Hertfordshire when the Bury is unplayable after Saturday fixtures. Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC reports its men's team has to travel to Harlow to access training provision as it cannot find facilities locally.

Regarding imported demand, Forest Hall Park FC states it is based in Stansted Mountfitchet in Essex yet affiliates as a Hertfordshire team due to a lack of pitches in the area. Enfield FC are originally an Enfield Team which previously played in Enfield, however, have since relocated to ground share with Hertford Town FC. It states it is looking for its own ground in the Hertfordshire area with aspirations of one day relocating back to Enfield.

Latent demand refers to potential demand; clubs that would like to field more teams but currently do not do so. This can be for a variety of reasons including a lack of pitches, appropriate facilities, and qualified coaches. Clubs that report latent demand relating to facilities and the reasons provided for this latent demand can be seen below.

Table 2.12: Latent demand summary

Club	Analysis Area	Need for more match pitches	Need for more/better training facilities	Need for better/more appropriate changing provision
Bishops Stortford Swifts Youth FC	Bishop's Stortford	X	X	
BSC FC	Bishop's Stortford	X	X	
Forest Hall Park FC	Bishop's Stortford	X	X	X
Thorley Manor FC	Bishop's Stortford	X	X	
Sawbo FC	Bishop's Stortford	X		
Bullsmoor United	Buntingford		X	
Buntingford Cougars	Buntingford	X	X	
Buntingford Town	Buntingford	X	X	
Watton YFC	Buntingford	X	X	
Bengeo Tigers	Hertford, Ware		X	
Bury Rangers	Hertford, Ware		X	
Enfield FC	Hertford, Ware	X	X	
Hertford Heath FC	Hertford, Ware	X	X	X
Hertford Heath Junior FC	Hertford, Ware	X		X
Hertford Town YFC	Hertford, Ware		X	
St Margaretsbury FC	Hertford, Ware		X	
Ware Football Club	Hertford, Ware	X	X	
Ware Lions FC	Hertford, Ware	X	X	
Ware YFC	Hertford, Ware	X	X	

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As can be seen in the table above, the greatest issue identified is the need for additional match pitches located within East Hertfordshire, with 14 clubs stressing this as a problem. Several clubs also made reference to the need for greater access to 3G pitches for training and poor ancillary provision impacting upon the possibility of expanding.

Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to pitches. It is usually expressed, for example, when a team is already training but is unable to access a match pitch, or when a league has a waiting list due to a lack of pitch provision, which in turn is hindering the growth of the league.

Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC confirms it has teams that it could field should more pitches become available. It is also important to note that BSC FC are currently operating a waiting list for new members to join. The Club would like to grow but states it cannot do so due to a lack of pitch space for both training and match play.

Future demand can be defined in three ways through club growth aspirations, population forecasts, and participation trends. Participation trends shall be covered in the Strategy Report where the growth in demand from the 2017 PPS will be forecasted for the upcoming years. The FA and Football Foundation stresses there are expectations of significant growth in demand during the lifespan of the PPOSS.

There are eight clubs which report aspirations to increase the number of teams they provide by the 2025/26 season. In total, these potential demand increases would lead to the creation of 25 teams (if aspirations are realised).

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Table 2.13: Potential team increases identified by clubs

Club	Analysis area	Future demand	Pitch size	Match equivalent sessions
Bishops Stortford Swifts Youth FC	Bishop's Stortford	1x Adult men 1x Youth 11v11 boys' team 2x 9v9 boys' teams 3x Mini teams	Adult Youth 11v11 Youth 9v9 Mini 7v7	3.5
Forest Hall Park FC	Bishop's Stortford	1x Youth11v11 boys' team 2x 9v9 boys' teams 3x Mini teams	Youth 11v11 Youth 9v9 Mini 5v5	3
Thorley Manor FC	Bishop's Stortford	1x 9v9 boys 2x Mini teams	Youth 9v9 Mini 5v5	1.5
Buntingford Cougars FC	Buntingford	1x U11 girls 1x U9 mixed	Youth 9v9 Mini 7v7	1
Bengeo FC	Hertford, Ware	1x U9	Mini 7v7	0.5
Hertford Town YFC	Hertford, Ware	2x U9/10	Mini 7v7	1
St Margaretsbury FC	Hertford, Ware	1x Youth 11v11 1x Mini teams	Youth 11v11 Mini 5v5	1
Ware YFC	Hertford, Ware	2x U7/8	Mini 5v5	1

Future demand aspirations have been aggregated by analysis area and pitch format and are detailed in table 2.14.

Table 2.14: Potential increases by analysis area

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Totals
Bishop's Stortford	1	2	5	3	5	**16**
Buntingford	-	-	1	1	-	**2**
Hertford, Ware	-	1	-	3	3	**7**
Sawbridgeworth	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Watton-at-Stone	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Total	**1**	**3**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**25**

In the case of Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC the future demand ambitions outlined above are dependent upon securing additional match pitches through relocating the club to new sites.

Team generation rates (TGRs) are used to provide an indication of how many people it may take to generate a team (by gender and age group), in order to help estimate the change in demand for pitch sports that may arise from any population change in the study area.

ONS population growth is applied to the TGRs to identify a predicted number of teams that will be generated. As such, TGRs are used below as the basis for calculating the number of teams likely to be generated in the future based on population growth up to 2043 (in line with East Hertfordshire District Plan timeline).

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Table 2.15: Team generation rates (2043)

Age group	Team generation rate	No. of new teams generated by the new population	No. of new teams generated by the new population - rounded figure	Match equivalent session per week[4]
Adult Mens (18-45)	1:279.98	6.66	6	3
Adult Women's (18-45)	1:2,924.18	0.67	-	-
Youth Boys (12-17)	1:48.17	6.59	6	3
Youth Girls (12-17)	1:247.52	1.18	1	0.5
Youth Boys (10-11)	1:24.24	6.51	6	3
Youth Girls (10-11)	1:107.45	1.41	1	0.5
Mini Mixed (8-9)	1:29.71	9.32	9	4.5
Mini Mixed (6-7)	1:52.49	5.18	5	2.5

As seen above, based on ONS projections, it is forecasted that there will be an increase in football demand equivalent to six adult mens teams, 12 youth boys, two youth girls and 14 mini teams. Once team generation rates are broken down by analysis area, this growth decreases to generate only one adult, five youth 11v11 teams, three youth 9v9 teams, three mini 7v7 mixed teams and one mini 5v5 team.

Table 2.16: Future demand through ONS projections by analysis area

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Totals
Bishop's Stortford	0.5	0.5	1	1	-	**3**
Buntingford	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	**2**
Hertford, Ware	2	2	1.5	2	1.5	**9**
Sawbridgeworth	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Watton-at-Stone	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Total	**2.5**	**3**	**3**	**3.5**	**2**	**14**

The predicted level of growth in table 2.18 is exclusively based on ONS projections and does not account for societal factors or changes in the way people may wish to play sport. As a comparison the East Hertfordshire 2017 PPS identified the Authority as having 407 teams, meaning there has been the growth in 104 teams in the last seven years. This gives an increase in demand of 15 teams per year, meaning the ONS projection of an additional 28 teams by 2043 would be noticeably below the growth rate experienced in recent years.

Similarly, they cannot account for specific targeted development work within certain areas or focus on certain groups, such as NGB initiatives or coaching within schools. For example, there is a focus on developing female participation within East Hertfordshire and nationally which, as mentioned previously, is likely to lead to more women's and girls' teams in the future and therefore increase demand for pitches.

Outside of women's and girls' increases, given the large amounts of future demand identified through population forecasts, it is considered unlikely that aspirations from clubs will happen exclusively of population growth. Instead, it is thought that the ambitions will generally be absorbed within the increases. However, the strategy and action plan will further test the impact of participation increases including trend based analysis from affiliation data over the last few years.

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[4] Two teams require one pitch to account for playing on a home and away basis; therefore, one team accounts to 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week on their relevant pitch type.

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FA Wildcats centres work with County FA qualified coaches to deliver local weekly sessions, which provide opportunities for girls aged five to 11 to develop fundamental skills and experience football in a safe and fun environment.

In East Hertfordshire, Wildcat centres are run by BSC FC (numbers unspecified) and Ware FC with 32 members. Bengeo FC and Bury Rangers do not do wildcats sessions however do a different club specific version instead.

In light of The FA's aspirations to increase female participation in football by 50% (Game Changer Strategy) and the establishment and foreseen future effect of the Wildcats programme, it is likely that the growth in affiliated women's and girl teams may exceed that shown through population growth. However, this is not able to be quantified through the Wildcats programme due to it being dependent on the localised success of the programme.

Future demand in this report will be applied via the application of population growth. This equates to the growth of six adult, 12 youth boys, two youth girls and 14 mini teams.

The growth in teams outlined through club aspirations will be scenario tested in the forthcoming Strategy, equating to 25 additional teams through the ambitions of eight clubs.

The Strategy will include a scenario showing the participation trends for the upcoming five years based in previous year on year growth.

2.4: Capacity analysis

The capacity for pitches to regularly provide for competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of a pitch affect the playing experience and people's enjoyment. In extreme circumstances, it can result in the inability of a pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times. As a guide, The FA has set a standard number of matches that each grass pitch type should be able to accommodate without it adversely affecting its quality.

The following ratings were used in East Hertfordshire:

Adult pitch quality	Matches per week	Youth pitch quality	Matches per week	Mini pitch quality	Matches per week
Good	3	Good	4	Good	6
Standard	2	Standard	2	Standard	4
Poor	1	Poor	1	Poor	2

Table 2.18 applies the above pitch ratings against the actual level of weekly play to determine a capacity rating as follows:

Potential capacity	Play is below the level the site could sustain
At capacity	Play matches the level the site can sustain
Overused	Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

For clarity, the following section applies the methodology that one team accessing a pitch equates to 0.5 MES of demand during the peak period.

To account for curricular/extra-curricular use of education pitches it is likely that the carrying capacity at such sites will need to be adjusted. The only time this would not happen is when a school does not use its pitches at all and the sole use is community use. The adjustment is

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typically dependent on the amount of play carried out, the number of pitches on site and whether there is access to an on-site AGP.

In some cases, where there is no identified community use, there is little capacity to accommodate further play. Internal usage often exceeds recommended pitch capacity, which is further exacerbated by basic maintenance regimes that may not extend beyond grass cutting and line marking.

In East Hertfordshire, one match equivalent session per week of demand has been attributed to each pitch based at school sites to account for curricular demand. This is based on consultation and the expectation that all pitches are in use, as well as experience of how school sites use pitches from other strategies both locally and nationally. In instances where a school site is already overplayed or the inclusion of one match equivalent session from curricular demand would create overplay it has been discounted.

Many football pitches in the area are located within open access sites. As such, these pitches are subject to informal use in the form of dog walkers, unorganised games of football and exercise groups. Informal use is not accounted for in the capacity analysis on the basis that it cannot be quantified on a site-by-site basis. However, it can be expected at popular sites such as Hartham Common & Kingsmead, that there will be a higher level of demand on each pitch (from informal use) over and above that identified.

It is important to understand what the peak time for football pitch access is, to accurately understand the supply and demand balance for football pitches. Peak time access translates to when the high demand is for pitch access during a week. In East Hertfordshire, the peak time for adult football is Saturday afternoon, Saturday morning for youth 9v9 and youth 11v11 and for mini 5v5 and 7v7 football it is Sunday mornings.

In the table overleaf, please note that, on occasions, spare capacity in the peak period is identified despite the pitch being played to capacity or overplayed or more spare capacity is identified in the peak period that what exists overall. This is because most of the use on those particular pitches occurs outside of the peak period, therefore the identified spare capacity at peak time should not be utilised over and above overall capacity unless quality improvements are made that increases overall capacity.

A pitch is only said to have 'actual spare capacity' if it is available for community use and available at the peak time for that format of play. Any pitch not meeting this criterion is therefore not considered to have additional capacity, although it may have capacity outside of peak time.

There may also be situations where, although a site is highlighted as potentially able to accommodate some additional play, this should not be recorded as spare capacity against the site. For example, a site may be managed to operate slightly below full capacity to ensure that it can cater for a number of regular friendly matches and activities that take place but are difficult to quantify on a weekly basis.

Pitches that are of a poor quality are not deemed to have actual spare capacity due to the already low carrying capacity of the pitches. Any identified spare capacity should be retained in order to relieve the pitches of use, which in turn will aid the improvement of pitch quality.

Furthermore, any pitches with unsecured tenure are not considered to have actual spare capacity as no further play should be encouraged on such sites given that future access cannot be guaranteed.

Table 2.18 identifies the way capacity balance is represented in Table 2.17.

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Table 2.17: Capacity balance examples

Spare capacity in peak period (examples)	Explanation of capacity balance
1	Highlighted in green with a number denotes that the pitches have actual spare capacity at peak time.
-	With a dash, this indicates that the pitch is unavailable in the peak period. If it were to be made available, actual spare capacity could exist.
0	Highlighted in orange with a zero, this indicates the pitch is played to capacity, either overall or during the peak period.
1	Not highlighted by with a value, this indicates that the pitch has spare capacity in the peak period; however, capacity has been discounted. This may be due to unsecure tenure and/or poor pitch quality.
1	Highlighted in red with a number denotes that the pitches are overplayed and have no spare capacity across the week. This includes at peak time, despite any availability at peak time which may exist.

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Table 2.18: Football pitch capacity analysis

Site ID	Site	Clubs accessing site	Postcode	Analysis area	Community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch sizes	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play (match sessions)	Pitch capacity (match sessions)	Overused, at capacity or spare capacity	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
1	Albury Football Ground	-	SG11 2JG	Bishop's Stortford	No	Albury Parish Council	Unsecure	Adult	1	Standard	-	2	2	-	This pitch was previously used for community use; however, this was revoked by the Council during the season due to noise complaints. Consequently, spare capacity has been discounted from the supply.
1	Albury Football Ground	-	SG11 2JG	Bishop's Stortford	No	Albury Parish Council	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	-	4	4	-	This pitch was previously used for community use; however, this was revoked by the Council during the season due to noise complaints. Consequently, spare capacity has been discounted from the supply.
7	Aston Playing Field	Watton YFC	SG2 7HR	Buntingford	Yes	Aston Village Hall Committee	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	No actual spare capacity.
7	Aston Playing Field	Watton YFC	SG2 7HR	Buntingford	Yes	Aston Village Hall Committee	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	0.5	4	3.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 MES.
8	Aston St Mary's VA School	Watton YFC	SG2 7HA	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
8	Aston St Mary's VA School	Watton YFC	SG2 7HA	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Bengeo Trinity	SG14 3JL	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Adult	1	Poor	2.5	1	1.5	-	Overplayed by 1.5 MES.
14	Benington Recreation Ground	Watton YFC	SG2 7QZ	Buntingford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	-	1	1	-	No actual spare capacity due to poor quality.
14	Benington Recreation Ground	Watton YFC	SG2 7QZ	Buntingford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	Used at capacity.
16	Bishop's Stortford College	BSC FC	CM23 2PJ	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	1	Poor	1.5	1	0.5	-	Overplayed by 0.5 MES.
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Thorley Manor	CM23 2PJ	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Thorley Manor	CM23 2PJ	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.

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Site ID	Site	Clubs accessing site	Postcode	Analysis area	Community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch sizes	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play (match sessions)	Pitch capacity (match sessions)	Overused, at capacity or spare capacity	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
16	Bishop's Stortford College	BSC FC	CM23 2PJ	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Thorley Manor	CM23 2PJ	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	2.5	1	1.5	-	Overplayed by 1.5 MES
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Thorley Manor	CM23 2PJ	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	1.5	1	0.5	-	Overplayed by 0.5 MES
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Thorley Manor	CM23 2PJ	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	Used at capacity.
20	Bishops Stortford Swifts FC	Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC	CM23 2QE	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
20	Bishops Stortford Swifts FC	Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC	CM23 2QE	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Good	1	6	5	-	No actual spare capacity.
20	Bishops Stortford Swifts FC	Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC	CM23 2QE	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
20	Bishops Stortford Swifts FC	Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC	CM23 2QE	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	0.5	1	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Golden Griffin	SG14 2QL	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	Bramfield Parish Council	Secure	Adult	1	Poor	0.5	1	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Buntingford Cougars	SG11 2QL	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Braughing Parish Council	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	1.5	2	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Buntingford Cougars	SG11 2QL	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Braughing Parish Council	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
24	Brewery Field	Casuals & Pelham	SG9 0LL	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Furneux Pelham Parish Council	Secure	Adult	1	Poor	0.5	1	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
25	Bullfields	Sawbridgeworth Town	CM21 9EA	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Sawbridgeworth Town Council	Secure	Adult	1	Poor	-	1	1	-	No actual spare capacity due to poor quality.
25	Bullfields	Sawbridgeworth Town	CM21 9EA	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Sawbridgeworth Town Council	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	0.5	1	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
29	Christ Church C Of E (VA) Primary School And Nursery	-	SG12 7BT	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
30	Church Lane Playing Field	-	SG14 3ND	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	Stapleford Parish Council	Secure	Mini 5v5	1	Poor	-	2	2	-	No actual spare capacity due to poor quality.
31	Cottered Playing Field	Buntingford Cougars	SG9 9QW	Buntingford	Yes	Cottered & Throcking Parish Council	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	-	2	2	1	Actual spare capacity of 1 MES
31	Cottered Playing Field	Buntingford Cougars	SG9 9QW	Buntingford	Yes	Cottered & Throcking Parish Council	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.

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35	Crouchfields	-	SG12 0PS	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	Wodson Park FC	Secure	Adult	1	Poor	-	1	1	-	No actual spare capacity due to poor quality.
35	Crouchfields	-	SG12 0PS	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	Wodson Park FC	Secure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	-	4	4	1	Actual spare capacity of 1 MES
35	Crouchfields	Wodson Park FC	SG12 0PS	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	Wodson Park FC	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	No actual spare capacity.
35	Crouchfields	Wodson Park FC	SG12 0PS	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	Wodson Park FC	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	2.5	2	0.5	-	Overplayed by 0.5 MES
35	Crouchfields	Wodson Park FC	SG12 0PS	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	Wodson Park FC	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
36	Datchworth All Saints C Of Primary School	Watton YFC	SG3 6RE	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	0.5	4	3.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
36	Datchworth All Saints C Of Primary School	Watton YFC	SG3 6RE	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	0.5	4	3.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
36	Datchworth All Saints C Of Primary School	Watton YFC	SG3 6RE	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
39	Edwinstree C Of E Middle School	-	SG9 9AW	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
40	Freman College	-	SG9 9BT	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	1	Good	1	3	2	-	2 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
40	Freman College	Buntingford Cougars	SG9 9BT	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Good	1.5	4	2.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	BSC FC	CM23 4RF	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 5v5	1	Poor	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	BSC FC	CM23 4RF	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	4.5	2	2.5	-	Overplayed by 2.5 MES
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	BSC FC	CM23 4RF	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	2.5	1	1.5	-	Overplayed by 1.5 MES
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	BSC FC	CM23 4RF	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	3.5	1	2.5	-	Overplayed by 2.5 MES
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Community Church Stortford BSC FC	CM23 2HH	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Football For Fathers	CM23 2HH	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Athletico Corvale	CM23 2HH	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.

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42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Grange United	CM23 2HH	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Sawbo Open Sawbo FC	CM23 2HH	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	BSC FC	CM23 2HH	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to poor quality.
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	BSC FC	CM23 2HH	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to poor quality.
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	BSC FC	CM23 2HH	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	1.5	1	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Forest Hall Park	CM23 2HH	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	Used at capacity.
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	-	SG13 7NU	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Complex	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Good	-	6	6	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	-	SG13 7NU	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Complex	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Good	-	4	4	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	-	SG13 7NU	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Complex	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Good	-	4	4	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	-	SG13 7NU	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Complex	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Good	-	4	4	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	-	SG13 7NU	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Complex	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Good	-	4	4	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	-	SG13 7NU	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Complex	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Good	-	4	4	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	-	SG13 7NU	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Complex	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Good	-	4	4	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	Green Rangers Hartham United FC Hertford Club de Futbol	SG14 1QR	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	1.5	2	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	Hertford Stags Hertford Unite Lord Haig FC Northside Spartans	SG14 1QR	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	-	SG14 1QR	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	-	2	2	1	Actual spare capacity of 1 MES.

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49	Hertford Heath Playing Fields	Hertford Heath	SG13 7QS	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Hertford Heath Parish Council	Secure	Adult	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	Used at capacity.
62	Leventhorpe School	-	CM21 9BY	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	1	Standard	1	2	-	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth Town	CM21 9BY	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	Used at capacity.
62	Leventhorpe School	-	CM21 9BY	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
65	London Road Playing Fields	Buntingford Cougars	SG9 9HZ	Buntingford	Yes	Sport Club	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	2	1	1	-	Overplayed by 1 MES
66	Manor Fields Primary School	Thorley Manor	CM23 4LE	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
66	Manor Fields Primary School	Thorley Manor	CM23 4LE	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	1.5	4	2.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
68	Morgans Field	-	SG13 8DR	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	1	Standard	-	2	2	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
68	Morgans Field	Bury Rangers	SG13 8DR	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	3	4	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
68	Morgans Field	Bury Rangers	SG13 8DR	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	3	4	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
68	Morgans Field	Bury Rangers	SG13 8DR	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	4	4	-	-	Used at capacity.
68	Morgans Field	Bury Rangers	SG13 8DR	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	Angel Open	SG12 9PD	Hertford, Ware	Yes	East Herts District Council	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 MES.
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	Broxbourne Albion	SG12 9PD	Hertford, Ware	Yes	East Herts District Council	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 MES.
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	WGC Stormers	SG12 9PD	Hertford, Ware	Yes	East Herts District Council	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 MES.
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	Red Star Eagles Ware Herts FC	SG12 9PD	Hertford, Ware	Yes	East Herts District Council	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	Bury Rangers	SG12 9PD	Hertford, Ware	Yes	East Herts District Council	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	-	4	4	1	Actual spare capacity of 1 MES
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	Bury Rangers	SG12 9PD	Hertford, Ware	Yes	East Herts District Council	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	2.5	2	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	Bury Rangers	SG12 9PD	Hertford, Ware	Yes	East Herts District Council	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.

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75	Presdales School	Bury Rangers	SG12 9NX	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	4	4	-	-	Used at capacity.
75	Presdales School	Hertford Town Bury Rangers	SG12 9NX	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	1.5	4	2.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
75	Presdales School	Bury Rangers	SG12 9NX	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
75	Presdales School	Hertford Town Bury Rangers	SG12 9NX	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
75	Presdales School	Hertford Town Bury Rangers	SG12 9NX	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	6	2	4	-	Overplayed by 4 MES.
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Standon & Puckeridge Hares FC	SG11 1TF	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Good	1	6	5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Standon & Puckeridge Hares FC	SG11 1TF	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	0.5	4	3.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Standon & Puckeridge Hares FC	SG11 1TF	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Good	0.5	6	5.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Standon & Puckeridge Hares FC	SG11 1TF	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Good	0.5	6	5.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Standon & Puckeridge Hares FC	SG11 1TF	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Good	0.5	6	5.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Standon & Puckeridge Hares FC	SG11 1TF	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
77	RDA Stadium	Bishop's Stortford FC	CM23 5RG	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Adult	1	Good	1	3	2	-	No actual spare capacity.
78	Reedings Junior School	Sawbridgeworth Town	CM21 9DD	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	0.5	4	3.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
80	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	-	SG12 9HY	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	1	2	-	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
80	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	-	SG12 9HY	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	1	2	-	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
81	Saint Mary's Catholic School	-	CM23 2NQ	Bishop's Stortford	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
81	Saint Mary's Catholic School	-	CM23 2NQ	Bishop's Stortford	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular

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															use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
84	Sawbridgeworth Town Football Club	Sawbridgeworth Town	CM21 0DE	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Adult	1	Good	1	3	2	-	No actual spare capacity.
84	Sawbridgeworth Town Football Club	Sawbridgeworth Town	CM21 0DE	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Adult	1	Good	1	3	2	-	No actual spare capacity.
86	Seth Ward Community Centre	Buntingford Cougars	SG9 9SG	Buntingford	Yes	Buntingford Town Council	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 MES.
86	Seth Ward Community Centre	Buntingford Cougars	SG9 9SG	Buntingford	Yes	Buntingford Town Council	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
89	Simon Balle School	-	SG13 8AJ	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
89	Simon Balle School	-	SG13 8AJ	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
89	Simon Balle School	-	SG13 8AJ	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Bully's Crusaders	SG11 1DS	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	1	Good	0.5	3	2.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	-	SG11 1DS	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	1	Good	1	3	2	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	-	SG11 1DS	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	1	Good	1	3	2	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	-	SG11 1DS	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Good	1	4	3	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Watton YFC	SG11 1DS	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Good	1.5	4	2.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.

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91	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	-	CM23 2NL	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	1	2	1	1	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity of 1 MES.
94	St Margaretsbury FC	Hertford Heath St Margaretsbury	SG12 8EH	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Club/Association	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
94	St Margaretsbury FC	Hoddesdon FC AFC Abbotts	SG12 8EH	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Club/Association	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
95	St Marys Junior School	-	SG12 0RL	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
95	St Marys Junior School	-	SG12 0RL	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
98	Standon Memorial Playing Field	Standon & Puckeridge Hares FC Standon & Puckeridge Vets	SG11 1TF	Buntingford	Yes	Standon Parish Council	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	Used at capacity.
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	-	AL6 0LE	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	Tewin Parish Council	Secure	Mini 5v5	1	Poor	-	2	2	-	No actual spare capacity due to poor quality.
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	-	CM23 3LU	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	-	CM23 3LU	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	1	2	1	1	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare of 1 MES.
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	-	CM23 3LU	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	1	2	1	1	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare of 1 MES.
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	BSC FC	SG10 6FB	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	-	SG10 6FB	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.

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102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	-	SG10 6FB	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	BSC FC	SG10 6FB	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	BSC FC	SG10 6FB	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC	SG10 6FB	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC BSC FC	SG10 6FB	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	Used at capacity.
103	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	BSC FC	CM23 2TD	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Sport Club/Association	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
104	The Bury	Buntingford Town	SG9 9HZ	Buntingford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
104	The Bury	Buntingford Cougars	SG9 9HZ	Buntingford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	2	4	2	-	No actual spare capacity.
104	The Bury	Buntingford Cougars	SG9 9HZ	Buntingford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	2.5	4	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
104	The Bury	Buntingford Cougars	SG9 9HZ	Buntingford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	No actual spare capacity.
105	The Chauncy School	Deaconsfield Vets Hartham United FC	SG12 0DP	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Adult	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
105	The Chauncy School	-	SG12 0DP	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
105	The Chauncy School	-	SG12 0DP	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
108	The Sele School	Bengeo Tigers	SG14 2DG	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Good	4.5	6	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.

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108	The Sele School	Bengeo Tigers	SG14 2DG	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	3	4	1	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
108	The Sele School	Bengeo Tigers	SG14 2DG	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
108	The Sele School	Bengeo Tigers	SG14 2DG	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
108	The Sele School	Bengeo Tigers	SG14 2DG	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Good	1.5	4	2.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
108	The Sele School	Bengeo Tigers	SG14 2DG	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Good	3	4	1	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	-	SG12 0SU	Buntingford	Yes	Thundridge Parish Council	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	-	2	2	1	Actual spare capacity of 1 MES.
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	-	SG12 0SU	Buntingford	Yes	Thundridge Parish Council	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	-	4	4	1	Actual spare capacity of 1 MES.
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	-	SG12 0SU	Buntingford	Yes	Thundridge Parish Council	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	-	4	4	1	Actual spare capacity of 1 MES.
113	Walkern School	AFC Walkern	SG2 7NS	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	0.5	4	3.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
118	Ware Lions FC	Ware Lions	SG12 0SJ	Buntingford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 5v5	1	Poor	3	2	1	-	Overplayed by 1 MES.
118	Ware Lions FC	Ware Lions	SG12 0SJ	Buntingford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	2.5	4	1.5	-	No actual spare capacity.
118	Ware Lions FC	Ware Lions	SG12 0SJ	Buntingford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
118	Ware Lions FC	Ware Lions	SG12 0SJ	Buntingford	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	2.5	2	0.5	-	Overplayed by 0.5 MES.
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Ware United FC	SG12 7NN	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Adult	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	Used at capacity.
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Ware YFC	SG12 7NN	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Adult	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	Used at capacity.
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Ware YFC Ware FC	SG12 7NN	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 5v5	1	Poor	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Ware YFC Ware FC	SG12 7NN	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 5v5	1	Good	6	6	-	-	Used at capacity.
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Ware YFC	SG12 7NN	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	3	2	1	-	Overplayed by 1 MES.
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Ware YFC	SG12 7NN	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	2.5	2	0.5	-	Overplayed by 0.5 MES.
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Ware YFC	SG12 7NN	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	3	2	1	-	Overplayed by 1 MES.
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Ware YFC	SG12 7NN	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
120	Watton-At-Stone Primary School	Watton YFC	SG14 3SG	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	1.5	1	0.5	-	Overplayed by 0.5 MES.

Site ID	Site	Clubs accessing site	Postcode	Analysis area	Community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch sizes	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play (match sessions)	Pitch capacity (match sessions)	Overused, at capacity or spare capacity	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
122	Westmill Recreation Ground	Westmill Open	SG9 9LH	Buntingford	Yes	Westmill Parish Council	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	1	2	1	-	No actual spare capacity.
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Ware United FC	SG12 0UQ	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Private	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 MES.
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Bury Rangers	SG12 0UQ	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Private	Secure	Adult	1	Standard	0.5	2	1.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity of 0.5 MES.
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Allenbury Vets Allenburys Sports Allenburys Mangrove Vets Boca Seniors FC The Herts Prodigies Ware YFC	SG12 0AW	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Private	Secure	Adult	1	Good	3	3	-	-	Used at capacity.
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	-	SG12 0AW	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Private	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Good	-	4	4	1	Actual spare capacity of 1 MES.
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	AFC Walkern Walkern Vets	SG2 7NP	Buntingford	Yes	Walkern Parish Council	Secure	Adult	1	Poor	1.5	1	0.5	-	Overplayed by 0.5 MES.
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	AFC Walkern	SG2 7NP	Buntingford	Yes	Walkern Parish Council	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	Used at capacity.
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton YFC	SG14 3SF	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	Sport Club	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	Used at capacity.
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	-	SG13 7JY	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Adult	1	Poor	-	1	1	-	No actual spare capacity due to poor quality.
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	Hertford Town	SG13 7JY	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Adult	1	Poor	0.5	1	0.5	-	No actual spare capacity due to poor quality.
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	Hertford Town	SG13 7JY	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	2	1	1	-	Overplayed by 1 MES.
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	Hertford Town	SG13 7JY	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Everyone Active	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	2	1	1	-	Overplayed by 1 MES.
132	Hertfordshire & Essex High School Sports Centre	Thorley Manor	CM23 5LH	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 11v11	1	Poor	1.5	1	0.5	-	Overplayed by 0.5 MES.
139	Pearce House Playing Fields	BSC FC	CM23 5BD	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	2	1	1	-	Overplayed by 1 MES.
139	Pearce House Playing Fields	BSC FC	CM23 5BD	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	2	1	1	-	Overplayed by 1 MES.

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Site ID	Site	Clubs accessing site	Postcode	Analysis area	Community use?	Management	Security of tenure	Pitch sizes	No. of pitches	Quality rating	Current play (match sessions)	Pitch capacity (match sessions)	Overused, at capacity or spare capacity	Spare capacity in peak period	Comments
141	St. George's Playing Field	-	CM21 0JJ	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	High Wych Parish Council	Secure	Mini 5v5	1	Poor	-	2	2	-	No actual spare capacity due to poor quality.
142	Hillmead Primary School	-	CM23 4PW	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
143	Richard Whittington Primary School	-	CM23 3NP	Bishop's Stortford	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
148	Thundridge Primary School	-	SG12 0SY	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Poor	1	2	1	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
149	Abel Smith Primary School	-	SG13 8AE	Hertford, Ware	No	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	1	4	3	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
166	Layston C of E First School	Buntingford Cougars	SG9 9EU	Buntingford	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	2	2	-	-	Used at capacity.
167	Mandeville Primary School	-	CM21 0BL	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Poor	1	1	-	-	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality.
167	Mandeville Primary School	-	CM21 0BL	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	Secure	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	1	2	1	1	1 MES of demand attributed to curricular use. Actual spare capacity of 1 MES.
169	St John the Baptist CE VA Primary	-	SG12 9SE	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	Unsecure	Mini 5v5	1	Standard	-	4	4	-	No actual spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.

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To determine 'actual spare capacity', each site with 'potential capacity identified in Table 2.18 has been reviewed. A pitch is only said to have 'actual spare capacity' if it is available for community use and available at the peak time for that format of the game. Any pitch not meeting this criterion has consequently been discounted.

Pitches that are of a poor quality are not deemed to have actual spare capacity due to their already low carrying capacity. Any identified spare capacity should be retained in order to relieve the pitches of use, which in turn, can aid the improvement of pitch quality.

Unless tenure is considered secure through the operator, school sites that are currently available for community use but unused are also not considered to have actual spare capacity as the full availability of these pitches cannot be relied upon in the long term.

The table below identifies actual spare capacity by site and pitch type across East Hertfordshire. It totals 15.5 match equivalent sessions per week and is identified across 19 pitches at 12 sites.

Table 2.19: Summary of actual spare capacity by pitch

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Pitch Type	Capacity rating (sessions)
7	Aston Playing Field	Buntingford	Mini 7v7	0.5
31	Cottered Playing Field	Buntingford	Adult	1
35	Crouchfields	Watton-at-Stone	Mini 5v5	1
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	Hertford, Ware	Youth 11v11	1
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	Hertford, Ware	Adult	0.5
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	Hertford, Ware	Adult	0.5
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	Hertford, Ware	Adult	0.5
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	Hertford, Ware	Mini 7v7	1
86	Seth Ward Community Centre	Buntingford	Adult	0.5
91	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	Bishop's Stortford	Mini 7v7	1
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 11v11	1
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 9v9	1
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	Buntingford	Adult	1
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	Buntingford	Mini 7v7	1
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	Buntingford	Mini 7v7	1
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Hertford, Ware	Adult	0.5
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Hertford, Ware	Adult	0.5
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	Youth 11v11	1
167	Mandeville Primary School	Sawbridgeworth	Youth 9v9	1

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Actual spare capacity has been aggregated by area and by pitch type below.

Table 2.20: Summary of actual spare capacity (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Totals
Bishop's Stortford	-	1	1	1	-	3
Buntingford	2.5	-	-	2.5	-	5
Hertford, Ware	2.5	2	-	1	-	5.5
Sawbridgeworth	-	-	1	-	-	1
Watton-at-Stone	-	-	-	-	1	1
Total	**5**	**3**	**2**	**4.5**	**1**	**15.5**

In addition to the above, it is worthy of note that 31.5 match equivalent sessions per week of potential spare capacity at community use sites has been discounted due to either sites having unsecure tenure or poor pitch quality.

Overplay occurs when there is more play accommodated on a site than it can sustain (which can often be due to reduced quality). Once pitches become overplayed, their ability to accommodate match fixtures deteriorates due to issues relating to wear and tear and a difficulty in recovering after match play.

In total, 22 pitches across 13 sites are identified as being overplayed. Total overplay equates to 25.5 match equivalent sessions per week.

Table 2.21: Summary of overplay by pitch

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Pitch type	Capacity rating (sessions)
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Hertford, Ware	Adult	1.5
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Adult	0.5
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 11v11	1.5
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 9v9	0.5
35	Crouchfields	Watton-at-Stone	Youth 11v11	0.5
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Mini 7v7	2.5
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 11v11	1.5
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 9v9	2.5
65	London Road Playing Fields	Buntingford	Youth 9v9	1
75	Presdales School	Hertford, Ware	Youth 9v9	4
118	Ware Lions FC	Buntingford	Mini 5v5	1
118	Ware Lions FC	Buntingford	Youth 9v9	0.5
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Mini 7v7	1
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Mini 7v7	0.5
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Youth 9v9	1
120	Watton-At-Stone Primary School	Watton-at-Stone	Youth 9v9	0.5
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Buntingford	Adult	0.5
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	Hertford, Ware	Youth 11v11	1
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	Hertford, Ware	Youth 9v9	1
132	Hertfordshire & Essex High School Sports Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 11v11	0.5
139	Pearce House Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 9v9	1
139	Pearce House Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 9v9	1

Table 2.22: Summary of overplay by analysis area (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	MES
Bishop's Stortford	0.5	3.5	5	2.5	-	**11.5**
Buntingford	0.5	-	1.5	-	1	**4**
Hertford, Ware	1.5	1	6	1.5	-	**10**
Sawbridgeworth	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Watton-at-Stone	-	0.5	0.5	-	-	**1**
Total	**2.5**	**5**	**13**	**4**	**1**	**25.5**

Most overplay taking place in East Hertfordshire is situated in the Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area with 11.5 MES. Most of this (8.5 MES) is at youth football with 3.5 MES at youth 11v11 and five MES at youth 9v9. This can be attributed to big clubs such as BSC FC who field several teams at this level with the biggest overplay at its own site Friedberg Playing Fields and Birchwood High School.

Youth 9v9 pitches being overplayed is a common theme across East Hertfordshire with it being the most overplayed pitch type across all Analysis Areas, equating to 13 MES. The least overplayed pitch type is mini 5v5 equating to one MES.

Most of the pitches that are overplayed not only receive a lot of use but are also of poor quality, meaning the capacity is reduced. Should these pitches improve in quality the volume of overplay across the District would ease.

2.5: Supply and demand analysis

Having considered supply and demand, the tables below identify the current demand and future demand balance (i.e. spare capacity taking away overplay) in each of the analysis areas for each pitch type, based on match equivalent sessions per week.

Total future demand in East Hertfordshire accounts for population growth. As a reminder, growth from population increases equates to three adult men's teams, six youth boys', one youth girls and seven mini teams. Future demand from club ambitions and participation trends will be included as a scenario in the forthcoming Strategy.

On a districtwide basis, there is a currently a sufficient supply of adult provision to accommodate existing demand. However, should future demand be realised there would be a shortfall in adult pitches. The Buntingford and Hertford, Ware analysis areas show current spare capacity. Comparatively, the Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area has a shortfall of 0.5 MES for adult provision.

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Table 2.23: Supply and demand balance of adult pitches (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity[5]	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Bishop's Stortford	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	1
Buntingford	2.5	0.5	2	-	2
Hertford, Ware	2.5	1.5	1	2	1
Sawbridgeworth	-	-	-	-	-
Watton-at-Stone	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**5**	**2.5**	**2.5**	**2.5**	**-**

Table 2.24: Supply and demand balance of youth 11v11 pitches (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity[6]	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Bishop's Stortford	1	3.5	2.5	0.5	3
Buntingford	-	-	-	0.5	0.5
Hertford, Ware	2	1	1	2	1
Sawbridgeworth	-	-	-	-	-
Watton-at-Stone	-	0.5	0.5	-	0.5
Total	**3**	**5**	**2**	**3**	**5**

The current picture is that there is an insufficient supply of provision of youth 11v11 pitches in East Hertfordshire to accommodate existing demand. This is largely caused sites such as Friedberg Playing Fields (BSC FC) contributing to three match equivalent sessions per week of overplay. This shortfall is exacerbated to six match equivalent sessions per week once future demand from population growth is considered.

If this is broken down by analysis areas it can be seen that there is a shortfall of youth 11v11 pitches in the Bishop's Stortford and Watton-at-Stone analysis areas, the Buntingford and Sawbridgeworth analysis areas are used at capacity and Hertford, Ware has actual spare capacity of one MES.

Table 2.25: Supply and demand balance of youth 9v9 pitches (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity[7]	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Bishop's Stortford	1	5	4	1	5
Buntingford	-	1.5	1.5	0.5	2
Hertford, Ware	-	6	6	1.5	7.5
Sawbridgeworth	1	-	1	-	1
Watton-at-Stone	-	0.5	0.5	-	0.5
Total	**2**	**13**	**11**	**3**	**14**

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[5] In match equivalent sessions
[6] In match equivalent sessions
[7] In match equivalent sessions

There is insufficient supply of youth 9v9 pitches in East Hertfordshire to accommodate current demand due to 11 match equivalent sessions per week of overplay being identified. When considering future demand, this shortfall increases to 14 match equivalent sessions. Only the Sawbridgeworth Analysis Area has actual spare capacity for youth 9v9 pitches. All remaining analysis areas have a shortfall of provision for this pitch type.

Table 2.26: Supply and demand balance of mini 7v7 pitches (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity[8]	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Bishop's Stortford	1	2.5	1.5	1	2.5
Buntingford	2.5	-	2.5	0.5	2
Hertford, Ware	1	1.5	0.5	2	2.5
Sawbridgeworth	-	-	-	-	-
Watton-at-Stone	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**4.5**	**4**	**0.5**	**3.5**	**3**

The table above shows that there is an insufficient supply on mini 7v7 pitches in East Hertfordshire to accommodate future levels of demand. There is current actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week, a figure that decreases to three sessions of overplay once future demand is considered. There is actual spare capacity in the Buntingford Analysis Area for mini 7v7 pitches. Sawbridgeworth and Watton-at-Stone are both used at capacity and the Bishop's Stortford and Hertford, Ware analysis areas have a shortfall of mini 7v7 pitches.

Table 2.27: Supply and demand balance of mini 5v5 pitches (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity[9]	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Bishop's Stortford	-	-	-	-	-
Buntingford	-	1	1	0.5	1.5
Hertford, Ware	-	-	-	1.5	1.5
Sawbridgeworth	-	-	-	-	-
Watton-at-Stone	1	-	1	-	1
Total	**1**	**1**	**-**	**2**	**2**

Mini 5v5 pitches in East Hertfordshire are currently at capacity meaning there is currently a sufficient supply to accommodate demand. However, future demand from population growth would take the match equivalent sessions to two of overplay per week. The Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Ware and Sawbridgeworth analysis areas are currently used at capacity for 5v5 pitches, and there is actual spare capacity in the Watton-at-Stone Analysis Area. There is a shortfall of one MES for mini 5v5 pitches in the Buntingford Analysis Area.

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[8] In match equivalent sessions
[9] In match equivalent sessions

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The following five tables break the capacity balance down by analysis areas.

Table 2.28: Summary of supply and demand in Bishop's Stortford (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch format	Actual spare capacity[10]	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	1
Youth 11v11	1	3.5	2.5	0.5	3
Youth 9v9	1	5	4	1	5
Mini 7v7	1	2.5	1.5	1	2.5
Mini 5v5	-	-	-	-	-

As can be seen the Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area has overplay across four of the five pitch types. Only mini 5v5 pitches are not showing overplay as they are used at capacity. Future demand exacerbates the shortfalls for all overplayed pitch formats.

Table 2.29: Summary of supply and demand in Buntingford (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch format	Actual spare capacity[11]	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	2.5	0.5	2	-	2
Youth 11v11	-	-	-	0.5	0.5
Youth 9v9	-	1.5	1.5	0.5	2
Mini 7v7	2.5	-	2.5	0.5	2
Mini 5v5	-	1	1	0.5	1.5

In Buntingford there is actual spare capacity present for adult and mini 7v7 pitches, whilst youth 9v9 and mini 5v5 pitches are overplayed. Youth 11v11 pitches are used at capacity. Future demand creates overplay for youth 11v11 pitches.

Table 2.30: Summary of supply and demand in Hertford, Ware (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch format	Actual spare capacity[12]	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	2.5	1.5	1	2	1
Youth 11v11	2	1	1	2	1
Youth 9v9	-	6	6	1.5	7.5
Mini 7v7	1	1.5	0.5	2	2.5
Mini 5v5	-	-	-	1.5	1.5

In Hertford, Ware there is actual spare capacity for adult and youth 11v11 pitches whilst mini 5v5 pitches are used at capacity. Shortfalls are present for youth 9v9 and mini 7v7 pitches. Future demand from ONS projections shows there will be an increase in teams across all pitch formats. If this takes place all pitch formats will become overplayed in Hertford, Ware.

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[10] In match equivalent sessions
[11] In match equivalent sessions
[12] In match equivalent sessions

Table 2.31: Summary of supply and demand in Sawbridgeworth (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch format	Actual spare capacity[13]	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	-	-	-	-	-
Youth 11v11	-	-	-	-	-
Youth 9v9	1	-	1	-	1
Mini 7v7	-	-	-	-	-
Mini 5v5	-	-	-	-	-

In Sawbridgeworth there is actual spare capacity for youth 9v9 pitches and all other pitch types are used at capacity. Future demand from ONS projections did not result in any growth meaning this position is unchanged in the future.

Table 2.32: Summary of supply and demand in Watton-at-Stone (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch format	Actual spare capacity[14]	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	-	-	-	-	-
Youth 11v11	-	0.5	0.5	-	0.5
Youth 9v9	-	0.5	0.5	-	0.5
Mini 7v7	-	-	-	-	-
Mini 5v5	1	-	1	-	1

Finally, the Watton-at-Stone Analysis Area is showing overplay for youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches. There is actual spare capacity for mini 5v5 pitches and adult and mini 7v7 pitches are used at capacity. Future demand from ONS projections did not result in any growth meaning this position is unchanged in the future.

2.6: Conclusion

Having considered the supply and demand position for each football pitch type, it is evident that the overall position is broadly an insufficient supply of grass pitches in the District.

Currently, youth 11v11, 9v9 and 7v7 pitches have a shortfall of provision whilst, 5v5 pitches are at capacity and adult pitches have spare capacity of 2.5 match equivalent sessions per week. When accounting for future demand the actual spare capacity for adult pitches disappears and becomes played at capacity. Mini 5v5 pitches which are currently used at capacity becomes a shortfall of two match equivalent sessions and the rest of the current shortfalls are exacerbated.

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[13] In match equivalent sessions
[14] In match equivalent sessions

Table 2.33: Summary of supply and demand in East Hertfordshire (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch format	Actual spare capacity[15]	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	5	2.5	2.5	2.5	-
Youth 11v11	3	5	2	3	5
Youth 9v9	2	13	11	3	14
Mini 7v7	4.5	4	0.5	3.5	3
Mini 5v5	1	1	-	2	2

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[15] match equivalent sessions

Football – grass pitch summary

- The current supply of football provision is broadly sufficient in accommodating football demand on adult, 7v7 and 5v5 pitches.

- Comparatively, youth 11v11 and 9v9 pitches are showing a combined shortfall of 13 match equivalent sessions.

- Future demand through population increases creates a further 14 match equivalent sessions of demand which exacerbates existing shortfalls on youth 11v11 and 9v9 pitches whilst making mini 7v7, 5v5 overplayed and adult pitches played at capacity. This could be impacted further should growth scenarios in the forthcoming strategy demonstrate that higher future demand may be experienced.

- The audit identifies a total of 184 grass football pitches across 70 sites. Of these, 178 are available, at some level, for community use across 66 sites. All unavailable pitches are located at education sites other than Albury Football Ground where community access was removed by the parish council due to noise complaints.

- Of the 96 pitches which offer community use, 28 pitches are assessed as good quality, 94 as standard quality and 56 as poor quality. The unavailable pitches are all of standard quality.

- Through the audit and assessment, 511 teams from 58 clubs are identified as playing in East Hertfordshire. This consists of 75 adult men's, nine adult women's, 194 youth boys', 35 youth girls' and 198 mini mixed teams.

- Since the previous PPS was developed in 2017 football teams in East Hertfordshire have increase by 104 teams. Alongside this, women's and girls' demand has increased by 21 teams.

- Future demand equates to the growth of six adult teams, 12 youth boys, two youth girls and 14 mini teams based on team generation rates. Club growth ambitions of 25 teams have been discounted.

- The PPOSS has not taken into account future demand generated through housing growth as the scale and location of new development is not yet know. As the new District Plan emerges, the Council can use Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator to explore the pitch requirements of housing growth scenarios.

- Of the 28 ancillary facilities, four are rated good (14%), 19 are rated standard (68%) and five are rated poor (18%) quality.

- Currently, there are only four sites (14%) which have dedicated female changing rooms to support women's and girls' participation in football, which are, Grange Paddocks, Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC, The Bury and Ware FC.

- There is a sufficient supply of provision in East Hertfordshire to accommodate current demand on adult, mini 7v7 and mini 5v5 pitch types.

- There are existing shortfalls on youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches.

- Future demand exacerbates shortfalls on youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 and makes adult pitches played to capacity and mini 7v7 and 5v5 pitches overplayed, to give an overall picture of 24 match session per week of overplay in the District.

- There are shortfalls for grass pitches in four of the five analysis areas. Only the Sawbridgeworth Analysis Area is not showing any shortfalls in provision for any pitch type. Comparatively, the Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area has a shortfall of 8.5 MES across all pitch types which makes it the most overplayed analysis area within East Hertfordshire.

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PART 3: THIRD GENERATION TURF (3G) PITCHES

3.1: Introduction

Third generation (3G) artificial grass pitches utilise longer fibres with a combination of rubber and sand infill to offer heightened performance. They are predominately used for football matches but most commonly for football training. They can also be used for rugby matches dependent upon being constructed to World Rugby Regulation 22.

Competitive football can take place on 3G artificial grass pitches that have been FIFA or International Matchball Standard tested and approved by the FA for inclusion on the FA Pitch Register[16]. As such, a growing number of 3G artificial grass pitches are now used for competitive match play, provided that the performance standard meets FIFA Quality (previously FIFA One Star), as well as for training purposes. Football training does, however, take place on hockey suitable artificial grass pitches (please refer to Part 5: Artificial grass pitches for greater explanation on pitch specifications) but is not the preferred option.

World Rugby produced the 'Performance Specification for artificial grass pitches for rugby'[17,] more commonly known as 'Regulation 22' that provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for rugby union. The artificial surface standards identified in Regulation 22 allows matches to be played on surfaces that meet the standard, meaning full contact activity, including tackling, rucking, mauling and lineouts, can take place.

The specification includes a rigorous test programme that assesses ball/surface interaction and player/surface interaction and has been modified to align the standard with that of FIFA. Any 3G artificial grass pitch used for any form of competitive rugby or contact training must comply with this specification and must be tested every two years to retain compliance.

England Hockey's Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy (updated June 2018)[18] advises that third generation artificial grass pitches should not be used for hockey matches or training and that they can only be used for lower level hockey (introductory level) as a last resort when no sand-based or water-based artificial grass pitches are available.

Table 3.1: 3G type and sport suitability

Surface	Category	Comments
Rubber crumb	Long Pile 3G (60mm with shock pad)	Rugby surface – must comply with World Rugby regulation 22 and/or RFL Community Standard, requires a minimum of 60mm pile.
Rubber crumb	Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)	Preferred football surface. Suitable for non-contact rugby union/league practice or play.
Rubber crumb	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	Acceptable surface for some competitive football, able to be used for low level curricular hockey.

It should be noted that the FA generally refers to 3G pitches as 3G football turf pitches, though this term is not adopted in this PPS as 3G pitches can be and are used for other sports including rugby union, rugby league, lacrosse and American football, amongst others.

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[16] Football Foundation | 3G Pitch Register
[17] https://www.world.rugby/handbook/regulations/reg-22/
[18] Deliver - Developing Your Project | England Hockey

3.2: Current provision

An 11v11 size 3G pitch is considered by the FA to measure at least 91 x 57 metres; however, for the purposes of this report, all pitches measuring this size and above will be considered as 11v11 pitches. Pitches of this size threshold are able to accommodate competitive adult football. Anything measuring below than this is considered small sided due to its inability to accommodate such activity.

On the above basis, there are eight 11v11 3G pitches provided in East Hertfordshire located at as many sites as seen below. All eight 11v11 3G pitches are sports lit and open to community use.

There are a further two small sided 3G pitches within the District across as many sites.

A breakdown of the supply is below.

Table 3.2: 3G pitch supply summary

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Community use?	Pitch size	Surface type	No. of pitches	Sports lit?
15	Birchwood High School	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	92m x 53m	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	1	Yes
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	105m x 70m	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	1	Yes
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	Hertford, Ware	Yes	35m x20m	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	1	Yes
54	Hertingfordbury Park	Hertford, Ware	Yes	105m x 70m	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	1	Yes
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	100m x 60m	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	1	Yes
75	Presdales School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	103m x 64m	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	1	Yes
79	Richard Hale School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	106m x 70m	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	1	Yes
116	Ware Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	105m x 69m	Long Pile 3G (60mm)	1	Yes
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Hertford, Ware	Yes	102m x 63m	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	1	Yes
126	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	Hertford, Ware	No	40m x 25m	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	1	Yes

All existing 11v11 size 3G pitches in East Hertfordshire are available for community use and are accompanied by sports lighting. One of the small sided 3G pitches is open to community use. The Allenburys Sports and Social Club pitch is managed by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) a private business and it services employees of the company.

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Management

The management and availability of sites is summarised in the table below.

Table 3.3: 3G pitch operator and opening times breakdown

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Community use?	Pitch size	Operator	Opening times
15	Birchwood High School	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	11v11	School	18:00- 22:00 midweek 09:00-13:00 weekends
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	11v11	Everyone Active	06:00- 21:00 midweek 08:00-18:00 weekends
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	Hertford, Ware	Yes	35m x20m	Everyone Active	06:00-22:00 midweek 07:00-17:00 weekends
54	Hertingfordbury Park	Hertford, Ware	Yes	11v11	Sports Club	17:00-21:00 midweek 09:00-18:00 weekends
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	11v11	School	17:00-22:00 midweek 09:00-16:00 weekends
75	Presdales School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	11v11	School	17:00-22:00 midweek 10:00-18:00 weekends
79	Richard Hale School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	11v11	School	18:00-22:00 09:00-17:00 weekends
116	Ware Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	11v11	Sports Club	07:00-22:00 midweek 09:00- 16:00 Saturdays 09:00- 14:00 Sundays
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Hertford, Ware	Yes	11v11	Registered Charity	07:00-22:00 midweek 09:00- 16:00 Saturdays 09:00- 14:00 Sundays
126	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	Hertford, Ware	No	40m x 25m	Private membership Club	No community use

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Potential future provision

The East Hertfordshire 2025 LFFP identifies five potential investment projects for the District. This has been informed by the shortfalls for 3G pitches presented in the PPS. Table 3.4 below outlines the detail in the LFFP.

The validity of these projects will be assessed in the Strategy & Action Plan with recommendations around portfolio inclusions or expulsions.

Table 3.4: Site identified in the LFFP for new 3G provision and rationale provided

Site ID	Site name	LFFP rationale
104	The Bury	The site has four grass pitches and is accessed by Buntingford Cougars FC which has 32 teams. A pitch at the site will support the development of junior girls' football and align to the Football Foundation KPI of developing 11v11 3G pitches at Club managed sites.
105	The Chauncy School	The site has three grass pitches and is located centrally within the town of Ware. Given the scale of the site, the on-site management, the location within the town and the dual use form curricular and community demand the site is identified for an 11v11 3G pitch.
108	The Sele School	The site has six grass pitches that are accessed by Bengeo Tigers FC which fields 29 teams. A 3G pitch at the site will look to meet the 3G pitch shortfalls in the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area presented in table 3.9.
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Ware YFC have 44 teams and has a 30-year lease for its site with eight grass pitches. Given the shortfalls identified in the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area, the scale of the site and the Club managed operating model the site is identified for an 11v11 3G pitch.
-	New site Watton Youth Football Club	There is a shortfall of 3G provision in the Watton-at-Stone area. Watton YFC has 19 teams and is exploring developing a new site in the South East of the village which could result in a small sided 3G pitch, grass pitches and a new ancillary provision if developed.

The validity of these projects will be assessed in the Strategy & Action Plan with recommendations around portfolio inclusions or expulsions.

In addition to the LFFP potential 3G pitch developments, the following were identified through club consultation as part of the PPOSS.

Bishop's Stortford High School and Freman College are in the process of installing 11v11 3G pitches. Both pitches will be sports lit and open to community use for the 2025/26 season. Neither pitch has currently been counted in the current supply as they are not operational at the time of writing, however, they will play a role in meeting the training need across the Authority during the lifespan of the PPS. Additionally, the pitch at Bishop's Stortford High School will be a WR22 compliant pitch.

Bishop's Stortford Swifts is planning a move to a new site, Hoggates Park, from its current location at Bishop's Stortford RFC. The new site will initially be a stadia grass pitch and is located beside Hoggates Wood in Bishop's Stortford. However, the Club has aspirations to fundraise to upgrade the pitch to 3G.

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Watton YFC is working towards the possibility of building a 3G pitch and accompanying ancillary facilities at the site of a former depot for the A602 works on Ware Road. The Club has also agreed, in principle, a long-term lease with the landowner (Woodhall Estate). However, funding for the development is still uncertain. The Club confirms it has no home ground local to Watton-at-Stone and resorts to accessing multiple sites out of the area.

St Margaretsbury FC is seeking a business partner to help the Club change its main adult grass pitch to a 3G pitch. This only aspirational currently.

Consultation with Buntingford Cougars FC confirms that it uses the small sided AGP at Norfolk Road Playing Fields. The pitch was last resurfaced in 2010 so has surpassed its lifespan. The Club states that Buntingford Town Council is planning to convert this pitch to a 3G in 2025.

There are three major developments planned that will potentially add further 3G provision in the District. Firstly, The Gilston development which is providing 10,000 new homes is proposing four new pitches, 2 in a football hub site and two more in schools. Secondly, the North of Ware development, creating 1,800 new homes will generate a single 3G pitch whilst Birchall Garden Suburb will provide two more pitches servicing East Hertfordshire.

Figure 3.1 identifies all 3G pitches servicing East Hertfordshire. For a key to the map, see Table 3.3.

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Figure 3.1: 3G pitches servicing East Hertfordshire

FA Pitch Register

In order for competitive matches to be played on 3G pitches, the pitch should be FIFA or IMS tested and approved and added to the FA Pitch Register, which can be found at: https://footballfoundation.org.uk/3g-pitch-register

In the case of East Hertfordshire, all eight 11v11 3G pitches are on the FA Register and the Leventhorpe School and Presdales School pitches are on the FIFA register.

Table 3.5: Accreditation of provision

Site ID	Site	Accreditation type	Accreditation expiry
1	Birchwood High School	FA approved	31/05/26
12	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	FA approved	31/05/26
26	Hertingfordbury Park	FA approved	31/05/26
45	Leventhorpe School	FIFA approved	31/05/27
39	Presdales School	FIFA approved	31/05/27
57	Richard Hale School	FIFA approved	31/05/28
91	Ware Football Club	FIFA approved	31/05/26
92	Wodson Park Sports Centre	FA approved	31/05/28

World Rugby (WR) compliant pitches

To enable 3G pitches to host competitive rugby union matches, WR has developed the Rugby Turf Performance Specification.

This is to ensure that the surfaces replicate the playing qualities of good quality grass pitches, provide a playing environment that will not increase the risk of injury and are of an adequate durability.

The specification includes a rigorous test programme that assesses ball/surface interaction and player/surface interaction and has been modified to align the standard with that of FIFA. Any 3G pitch used for any form of competitive rugby and contact training must comply with this specification and must be tested every two years to retain compliance.

In East Hertfordshire there are currently no WR22 3G pitches, however the new Bishop's Stortford High School 3G pitch will be WR22 compliant.

Quality

Depending on use, it is considered that the carpet of a 3G pitch usually lasts for approximately ten years and it is the age of the surface, combined with maintenance levels, which most commonly affects quality. It is therefore recommended that sinking funds be put into place by providers to enable long-term sustainability, ongoing repairs and future refurbishment beyond this period.

Taking the above into account, the quality of third generation artificial grass pitches across East Hertfordshire have been assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments as determined by the FA) during December 2024 and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

‹ Good.
‹ Standard.
‹ Poor.

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The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows; Good (>80%), Standard (60-79%), Poor (<60%). The quality ratings assigned to the sites also consider the user quality ratings gathered from consultation.

The quality of 11v11 size 3G provision is varied with four good, three standard and one poor quality pitch within the Authority. The pitches at Wodson Park Sports Centre are of a poor quality and is now in need of a replacement surface. Of the sites providing small sided provision, both pitches are of a poor quality.

Table 3.6: Age and quality of 3G pitches in East Hertfordshire

Site ID	Site	Pitch type	Year installed or resurfaced	Quality
15	Birchwood High School	92m x 53m	2007 / 2017	Standard
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	105m x 70m	2022	Good
54	Hertingfordbury Park	105m x 70m	2021	Good
62	Leventhorpe School	100m x 60m	2024	Good
75	Presdales School	103m x 64m	2025	Good
79	Richard Hale School	106m x 70m	2017	Standard
116	Ware Football Club	105m x 69m	2018	Standard
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	102m x 63m	1995 / 2015	Poor
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	35m x20m	2016	Poor
126	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	40m x 25m	2009	Poor

Ancillary facilities

The ancillary facilities at Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre, Richard Hale School and Birchwood High School are all of a good quality. The Leventhorpe School, Hertingfordbury Park, Presdales School, Ware Football Club and Wodson Park Sports Centre changing rooms were all of a standard quality.

3.3: Demand

The following table summarises the availability of all 3G pitches in East Hertfordshire which are available for community use. In addition, it records the availability of provision within the peak period. Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) applies an overall peak period for AGPs of 34 hours a week (Monday to Thursday 17:00-21:00; Friday 17:00-19:00; Saturday and Sunday 09:00-17:00). This equates to a peak time midweek available usage of 18 hours and a peak time weekend usage of 16 hours.

Table 3.7: Availability and capacity of provision summary

Site ID	Site	Management	Total hours available during peak period	Comments
15	Birchwood High School	School	18:00- 22:00 midweek 09:00-13:00 weekends	Site is fully booked during the week. There is spare capacity on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings.
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Everyone Active	06:00- 21:00 midweek 08:00-18:00 weekends	Site is fully booked during the week. Pitch is underutilised on weekends.
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	Everyone Active	06:00-22:00 midweek 07:00-17:00 weekends	Usage of the pitch is limited. Pitch is potentially outlined to

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Site ID	Site	Management	Total hours available during peak period	Comments
				be converted into Padel provision.
54	Hertingfordbury Park	Sports Club	17:00-21:00 midweek 09:00-18:00 weekends	Site is fully booked on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. There is some spare capacity on Mondays and Fridays.
62	Leventhorpe School	School	17:00-22:00 midweek 09:00-16:00 weekends	Site is fully booked other than Friday evenings.
75	Presdales School	School	17:00-22:00 midweek 10:00-18:00 weekends	Pitch has only recently become operational. Bury Rangers FC is outlined as the partner Club and fields 81 teams.
79	Richard Hale School	School	18:00-22:00 09:00-17:00 weekends	Pitch is fully booked other than from 20:00 on Fridays.
116	Ware Football Club	Sports Club	07:00-22:00 midweek 09:00- 16:00 Saturdays 09:00- 14:00 Sundays	Pitch is fully booked, Ware YFC field 44 teams and manages and accesses the pitch.
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Registered Charity	07:00-22:00 midweek 09:00- 16:00 Saturdays 09:00- 14:00 Sundays	Pitch is fully booked.

All eight 11v11 3G pitches within East Hertfordshire are open to community use and accessed by affiliated teams. Only the small sided pitch at Hartham Leisure Centre has limited use by affiliated teams.

Football

The FA considers high quality 3G pitches as an essential tool in promoting coach and player development. The pitches can support intensive use and as such are great assets for football use. Primarily, such facilities have been installed for social use and training, however, they are increasingly used for competition, which The FA wholly supports.

Training demand

Getting access to good quality, affordable training facilities is a problem for many clubs throughout the country. In the winter months, midweek training is only possible at sports lit facilities.

Of the responsive football clubs, 16 clubs report that they require additional training facilities and specifically mention demand for 3G pitches. When asked a follow-up question of how many teams do not access a 3G pitch midweek training slot only five clubs state that it fields teams that do not train on a 3G pitch midweek. Club consultation states there are 39 teams not training on a 3G pitch midweek as outlined in the table below.

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Table 3.8: Latent demand for 3G pitches

Club	Number of teams not currently training	Analysis area	Need for more/better training facilities
Bengeo Tigers	0	Hertford, Ware	✓
Bishop's Stortford Swifts Youth FC	0	Bishop's Stortford	✓
BSC FC	22	Bishop's Stortford	✓
Buntingford Cougars	13	Buntingford	✓
Buntingford Town	1	Buntingford	✓
Bury Rangers	0 (once Presdales School becomes operational)	Hertford, Ware	✓
Enfield FC	1	Hertford, Ware	✓
Forest Hall Park FC	0	Bishop's Stortford	✓
Hertford Heath FC	2	Hertford, Ware	✓
Hertford Town YFC	0	Hertford, Ware	✓
Sawbo FC	0	Bishop's Stortford	✓
St Margaretsbury FC	0	Hertford, Ware	✓
Thorley Manor FC	0	Bishop's Stortford	✓
Ware Football Club	0	Hertford, Ware	✓
Ware Lions FC	0	Hertford, Ware	✓
Ware YFC	0	Hertford, Ware	✓
Total	**39 teams**	-	✓

Football supply and demand analysis

The FA's long-term ambition is to provide every affiliated team in England the opportunity to train once per week on a sports lit 3G surface, together with priority access for every England football accreditation club through a partnership agreement. In order to calculate the number of football teams a 3G pitch can service for training, peak time access is considered to be from 18:00 until 22:00 Tuesday-Thursday resulting in an overall peak period of 12 hours per week. Mondays and Fridays are not included within this calculation as it is considered that most teams do not want to train in such close proximity to a weekend match (although these times slots are often popular as a recreational offer).

To ensure the current supply and any future supply is of a good enough standard to accommodate demand, providers are encouraged to put sinking funds in place to ensure long-term sustainability. This will allow for re-surfacing to take place when required and will ensure that FA certification remains in place.

An 11v11 3G pitch is divided into thirds or quarters for training purposes meaning they can accommodate either three or four teams per hour and either 36 or 48 teams per week (during the peak training period). Based on an average of these numbers, it is estimated that 38 teams can be accommodated on 11v11 3G pitch for training.

Given the above, with 511 teams currently accessing playing provision within East Hertfordshire, there is a theoretical need for 13.5 11v11 3G pitch equivalents to accommodate all affiliated training demand.

The contribution each pitch makes towards the 1:38 model is summarised in the table below. This then informs the proceeding modelling tables. Any pitch too small to

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accommodate training demand are discounted, as well as any pitches that are unavailable for community use.

Table 3.9: Contribution of 3G pitches in meeting training requirements

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Size (meters)	Context	Contribution towards 1:38 model
15	Birchwood High School	Bishop's Stortford	92m x 53m	11v11 3G pitch fully available to the community.	1
40	Freman College	Buntingford	11v11 scale	11v11 3G pitch outlined to be accessible for the 2025/26 season	1
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Bishop's Stortford	105m x 70m	11v11 3G pitch fully available to the community.	1
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	Hertford, Ware	35m x20m	Too small to accommodate training demand.	0
54	Hertingfordbury Park	Hertford, Ware	105m x 70m	11v11 3G pitch fully available to the community.	1
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth	100m x 60m	11v11 3G pitch fully available to the community.	1
75	Presdales School	Hertford, Ware	103m x 64m	11v11 3G pitch fully available to the community.	1
79	Richard Hale School	Hertford, Ware	106m x 70m	11v11 3G pitch fully available to the community.	1
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Bishop's Stortford	11v11 scale	11v11 3G pitch outlined to be accessible for the 2025/26 season. Used by rugby union demand midweek.	0.75
116	Ware Football Club	Hertford, Ware	105m x 69m	11v11 3G pitch fully available to the community. Used during the week for NLS fixtures.	0.75
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Hertford, Ware	102m x 63m	11v11 3G pitch fully available to the community.	1
126	Allenburys Sports and Social Club	Hertford, Ware	40m x 25m	Too small to accommodate training demand.	0

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As there are currently 9.5 11v11 3G pitches open to community use across the District, there is a theoretical need for an additional 4 11v11 3G pitches to accommodate football training demand. Neither of the small sided pitches have contributed to the 1 to 38 model below.

Table 3.10: Current demand for 3G pitches in East Hertfordshire (based on 38 teams per pitch)

Analysis area	Current number of teams	11v11 3G requirement	Current number of 3G pitches	Theoretical shortfall
Bishop's Stortford	107	3	2.75	0.25
Buntingford	90	2.25	1	1.25
Hertford, Ware	277	7.25	4.75	2.5
Sawbridgeworth	22	0.5	1	0.5
Watton-at-Stone	15	0.5	0	0.5
Total	**511**	**13.5**	**9.5**	**4**

As can be seen above the shortfalls in the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area are greatest as there is the need for 2.5 additional 3G 11v11 3G pitches. Demand in the Sawbridgeworth Analysis Area is met by the one pitch at Leventhorpe School. With the Bishop's Stortford High School pitch contributing to the 1:38 model it is determined that the need for 3G pitches in Bishop's Stortford is showing a shortfall of 0.25 pitches. It should be stressed that the Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth analysis areas have imported demand from Essex and that growth in teams is expected during the lifespan of the PPOSS.

The table below examines what the need for 3G pitches is based on future demand identified in the football section of this report (Part 2: Football Pitches). Future demand is based on ONS projections which equates to the growth of a further 28 teams.

Table 3.11: Future demand for 3G pitches in East Hertfordshire (based on 38 teams per pitch)

Analysis area	Future number of teams	11v11 3G requirement	Current number of 3G pitches	Theoretical shortfall
Bishop's Stortford	113	3	2.75	0.25
Buntingford	94	2.5	1	1.5
Hertford, Ware	295	7.75	4.75	3
Sawbridgeworth	22	0.5	1	0.5
Watton-at-Stone	15	0.5	0	0.5
Total	**539**	**14.25**	**9.5**	**4.75**

Based on the above, the overall shortfall increases to 4.75 11v11 sports lit 3G pitches. This is based on future demand through ONS projections of 28 teams. Increases of facility from ONS projections are broken down by analysis areas. The Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford and Hertford, Ware analysis areas have all seen growth.

The Freman College (Buntingford Analysis Area) and Bishop's Stortford High School (Bishop's Stortford) will be operational for the 2025/26 season. Therefore, both pitches have contributed to the 1:38 model above.

The number of additional teams identified through club ambitions is 25 teams. Combining both ONS projections and club ambitions gives a total potential future demand of 53 additional teams. The forthcoming Strategy & Action Plan will explore how future demand through club ambitions and participation trend modelling impacts the need for more 3G pitches.

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The East Hertfordshire LFFP presents that FA forecasting is predicting significantly more growth than the ONS projections used the PPOSS and anticipated there will be an additional 216 teams by 2030 if national growth trends are achieved.

Improving grass pitch quality is one way to increase the capacity at sites but given the cost of doing such work and the continued maintenance required (and associated costs), alternatives need to be considered that can offer a more sustainable model for the future of football. The substitute to grass pitches is the use of 3G pitches for competitive matches, providing that the pitch is FA approved, sports lit and available for community use during the peak period, and the location does not have an impact on other pitch sports.

The forthcoming Strategy & Action Plan will explore scenarios for the 3G pitch requirement for competitive match play. This will include a focus on accommodating both mini and youth football.

3.4: Conclusion

In conclusion, there is an insufficient supply of 11v11 3G pitches to meet current and anticipated future football training demand based on the FA training model, in East Hertfordshire. As such, it is determined that an increase in provision is required, with the most explicit need identified in the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area.

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3G summary

Supply:

◀ There are eight 11v11 3G pitches within East Hertfordshire, located at as many sites. All eight pitches are serviced by floodlights and open to community use.

◀ There are also two small sided 3G pitches, both of which are open to community use.

◀ All eight 11v11 3G pitches in the Authority are on the FA Register and the Leventhorpe School, Richard Hale School, Ware Football Club and Presdales School pitches are on the FIFA register.

◀ The pitches at Richard Hale School, Hertingfordbury Park, Ware Football Club and Wodson Park Sports and Leisure Centre have been tested in June 2025 and have retained their FA or FIFA accreditations.

◀ Two new 11v11 3G pitches at Freman College and Bishop's Stortford High School are outlined to be operational for the 2025/26 season.

◀ The Bishop's Stortford High School 11v11 3G pitch will have a World Rugby compliant shock pad once delivered. This will be the only WR22 3G pitches in East Hertfordshire.

Quality:

◀ There are four full-size pitches located within East Hertfordshire that are of a good quality, three standard quality and one poor quality pitch. Of the small sided provision, both pitches are of a poor quality.

Supply vs demand analysis:

◀ With 511 football teams currently affiliated to East Hertfordshire, there is a need for 13.5 11v11 pitch equivalents to service current levels of demand. Future demand from ONS projections increases this requirement to 14.25 pitches.

◀ With the equivalent of 9.5 11v11 pitches within East Hertfordshire, there is the need for a further 4 of such pitch equivalents to be built. This shortfall does not include the small sided provision within the District as they are too small in scale to play a meaningful role in meeting the 3G training need. It does include the two pitches in the process of being developed at Freman College and Bishop's Stortford High School.

◀ When studying demand by analysis area, shortfalls are apparent in four of the five PPS analysis areas, with the Sawbridgeworth Analysis Area adequately catered for. The Hertford, Ware has a shortfall of 2.5 pitches, Buntingford has a shortfall of 1.25 pitches, Watton-at-Stone has a shortfall of 0.5 of a pitch and Bishop's Stortford has a shortfall of 0.25 of a pitch.

◀ Once future demand from ONS projections is considered, shortfalls in the Buntingford and Hertford, Ware analysis areas increase.

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PART 4: RUGBY UNION PITCHES

4.1: Introduction

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) is split into four areas across the country with a workforce team that covers development, coaching, governance and competitions, of which East Hertfordshire falls into the southern region.

The RFU governs a variety of formats and programmes, including 15-aside, 10-aside, 7-aside and Tag rugby as well as the Touch Union. Its aim is to increase and retain participation within the game, with facilities needing to be appropriate, affordable and accessible in order to enable this.

The rugby union playing season operates from September to May, with senior men's fixtures being held on Saturday afternoons whilst ladies, juniors and mini fixtures are held on Sundays.

There are four rugby union clubs based in East Hertfordshire. Three of which, were responsive to consultation attempts, giving a response rate of 75%. All consultation was undertaken via face to face or phone calls.

Table 4.1: Summary of consultation

Club name	Responded?
Bishop's Stortford RFC	Yes
Blackhorse RFC	No
Datchworth RFC	Yes
Hertford RFC	Yes

4.2: Supply

Rugby union in England (as specified by the RFU) is played in the following formats and as such these references are used throughout this section to refer to supply (pitch types) and demand (team types)

Table 4.2: Rugby union age group and pitch format definitions

Team reference	Age group	Team type	Max dimensions (metres)
Senior men	Over 18 years old	Senior	100x70 (with posts at either end)
Senior women	Over 18 years old	Senior	100x70 (with posts at either end)
Age Grade Boys	U13s – U18s	U13s*, U14s, U15s, U16s, U18s (as dual age band w/U17s)	100x70 (with posts at either end) *90x60 (with posts at either end)
Age Grade Girls	U12s – U18	U12 (Single age band) U14s (as dual age band w/U13s), U16s (as dual age w/U15s), U18s (as dual age band w/U17s)	100x70 (with posts at either end)

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For age grade mixed rugby (for children aged between U7 through to U12) there is no requirement for rugby posts to be provided for competitive play. However, in most cases nationally, play of this type takes place on senior pitches which are overmarked for such activity. The audit only identifies dedicated, line marked pitches with accompanying posts. The dimensions for age grade mixed rugby are detailed in the table below.

Table 4.3: Rugby union pitch dimensions

Team type (ages)	Team reference	Maximum pitch dimensions (metres)
Under 7	Age grade mixed	20 x 12
Under 8	Age grade mixed	45 x 22
Under 9	Age grade mixed	60 x 30
Under 10	Age grade mixed	60 x 35
Under 11	Age grade mixed	60 x 43

Based on the above criteria, there is a total of 53 rugby union pitches identified within East Hertfordshire across 16 sites. This consists of 35 senior and 18 junior pitches.

Of the total supply, 11 pitches are unavailable for community use. All unavailable provision is located at education sites including as detailed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.4: Supply of all rugby union pitches by analysis area

Analysis area	Number of senior pitches	Number of junior pitches	Number of community accessible pitches
Bishop's Stortford	16	15	25
Buntingford	8	-	6
Hertford, Ware	8	2	9
Sawbridgeworth	3	1	4
Watton-at-Stone	-	-	-
Total	**35**	**18**	**42**

Most provision is situated within the Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area, where a total of 31 pitches are identified (this includes pitches which are unavailable for community use). Comparatively, Sawbridgeworth has only four pitches whilst the Watton-at-Stone Analysis Area has no pitches. A site-by-site breakdown of identified provision can be found in the table overleaf.

Table 4.5: Supply of all rugby union pitches

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Community accessible?	No. of senior pitches	No of junior pitches
15	Birchwood High School	Bishop's Stortford	No	4	-
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	6	13
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	4	-
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Buntingford	Yes	3	-
40	Freman College	Buntingford	No	2	-
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	Hertford, Ware	No	2	-
51	Herford Rugby Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	5	-

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Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Community accessible?	No. of senior pitches	No of junior pitches
58	Hockerill Anglo-European College	Bishop's Stortford	No	1	1
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	1	1
89	Simon Balle School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	-	1
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Buntingford	Yes	2	-
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	1	-
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	2	-
105	The Chauncy School	Hertford, Ware	No	1	-
108	The Sele School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	-	1
168	The Avanti Grange Secondary School	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	-	1
170	Datchworth Village Hall	Buntingford	Yes	1	-
-	-	-	Total	31	18

Avanti Grange Secondary School is a recently built school with brand new community available grass pitches just across the A120. The pitches have not yet been marked out and are not accessible as of yet as a footbridge still needs to be built. However, the School has a community use agreement in place for its future grass pitches, which is reflected in Table 4.5.

In addition to the above table, there are six mini pitches that were identified during site audits and consultation with clubs. Mini pitches are located at Datchworth Sports Club and Dane O'Coys Road which borders Bishop's Stortford RFC. It should be noted that there are several pitches (including the aforementioned mini pitches) within East Hertfordshire that service demand but have been discounted from this report due to not having accompanying posts. RFU regulations stipulate that a pitch should only be accounted for if it meets the aforementioned criteria. Despite being discounted it should be stressed that the additional pitches without accompanying posts equate to a substantial amount of playing field which accommodates a high amount of demand. An example of this are two junior pitches at Hertford RFC which cannot be counted as they are not posted but will host some form of demand.

Sports lit training areas are dedicated sections of playing field which are used for the specific purpose of accommodating midweek training demand away from formal pitches (which allows them to retain exclusive use for match purposes).

These areas constitute formal playing field, despite not accommodating any formal pitches, and are important for accommodating demand from clubs. Hertford RFC confirm having a dedicated training area at its site which it can use portable sports lighting on for junior training. For the remaining clubs; training predominantly takes place on grass pitches with sports lighting.

The senior rugby pitch at Richard Hale School has not been used for two years due to an issue with the neighbours. The school is hopeful of reaching an agreement with the neighbours to allow it to be uses during the day again.

There is a new WR22 compliant 3G pitch currently being constructed at Bishop's Stortford High School which will be open for the 25/26 season.

Figure 4.1: Rugby union pitches

Security of tenure refers to the rights of occupation on playing field and infrastructure. Clubs and stakeholders generally fall into the bracket of owner-occupier, tenant or licensee.

The table below identifies the current tenure position of each rugby union club based on information collated during the consultation. The tenure position of both Bishop's Stortford RFC, Datchworth RFC and Hertford RFC is that the clubs are operating with security of tenure. In the case of Blackhorse RFC, the Club rents both a pitch on a weekly basis with the Hertford RFC.

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Table 4.6: Rugby union clubs security of tenure

Club	Tenure arrangement	Secure?
Bishop's Stortford RFC	Two senior pitches at the back are owned by the Club, two senior pitches are rented from the Silver Leys Trust, two mini pitches on another piece of land are leased (unknown owner).	Yes
Blackhorse RFC	The Club rents a pitch at Hertford RFC.	No
Datchworth RFC	Tenure is complex as the land the sports club and accompanying pitches sits on is owned by a few different parties. All the pitches are leased from two different farmers, one individual owns the three pitches surrounding the clubhouse and another individual owns the grass space behind the village hall. There are long term lease agreements between the Club and individual farmers. The land under the clubhouse and car park is common land owned by Datchworth Parish Council but is also partly owned by aforementioned farmers. The Club has a long-term lease with the Parish Council with five years remaining.	Yes
Hertford RFC	Herts County Council owns two of the adult pitches at the clubs site which the Club leases on a 20-year agreement. Two more pitches are owned by Richard Hale Association which is an all-boys school. This season the Richard Hale Association are giving the land back to the rugby club. The Club owns the other pitch.	Yes

The quality of rugby pitches has been assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments as determined by RFU) undertaken in December 2024 and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

‹ Good.
‹ Standard.
‹ Poor.

The methodology for assessing rugby pitch quality looks at two key elements: the maintenance programme and the level of drainage on each pitch. An overall quality based on both drainage and maintenance can then be generated. The agreed rating for each pitch type also represents actions required to improve pitch quality. A breakdown of actions required based on the ratings can be seen below:

Table 4.7: Definition of maintenance categories

Category	Definition
M0	Action is significant improvements to maintenance programme
M1	Action is minor improvements to maintenance programme
M2	Action is no improvements to maintenance programme

Table 4.8: Definition of drainage categories

Category	Definition
D0	Action is pipe drainage system is needed on pitch
D1	Action is pipe drainage is needed on pitch
D2	Action is slit drainage is needed on pitch
D3	No action is needed on pitch drainage

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Table 4.9: Quality ratings based on maintenance and drainage scores

		Maintenance		
		Poor (M0)	Adequate (M1)	Good (M2)
Drainage	Natural Inadequate (D0)	Poor	Poor	Standard
	Natural Adequate (D1)	Poor	Standard	Good
	Pipe Drained (D2)	Standard	Standard	Good
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	Standard	Good	Good

The figures are based upon a pipe drained system at 5m centres that has been installed in the last eight years and a slit drained system at 1m centres that has been installed in the last five years.

Based on the above criteria, of those senior pitches available for community use, five are good quality, 12 are standard and eight are poor quality senior pitches. Of the 17 (community available) junior pitches, 14 are poor quality and three are standard quality.

From a community club perspective, there is a mixture of quality ratings. Bishop's Stortford RFC has comprehensive maintenance programmes which consist of pitch aeration, sand dressing, weed killing and post season pitch seeding.

The quality of pitches within East Hertfordshire have been determined through a combination of non-technical site assessments, consultation with clubs regarding its maintenance regimes and quantity of usage.

Bishop's Stortford RFC provides the best quality provision within the District, with its first and second pitch both of a good quality. The remaining pitches at the site are of a standard quality. The Club confirms it has a maintenance budget of £60,000 for all pitches and received compliments on the pitches from the Twickenham groundsman during a visit. The first and second pitches also host Herts County matches.

Datchworth RFC is similar as it also has a good quality first pitch alongside standard and poor pitches. The Club confirms a strict maintenance regime as well as resting the pitch and only allowing match play on it. It also states that the first pitch has the best drainage whereas the other pitches would struggle with inclement weather.

Comparatively, Hertford RFC has five standard quality senior pitches with no drainage which it shares with Blackhorse RFC and does not use any 3G pitches for training. The Club does all of the maintenance itself with the help of volunteers.

Please refer to Table 4.10 overleaf for a breakdown of pitch quality.

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Table 4.10: Site quality ratings at community available rugby union sites

Site ID	Site name	Club	Analysis area	Number of senior grass pitches	Number of junior grass pitches	Sports lighting?	Non-technical assessment score	Quality rating
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	1	-	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	1	-	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	1	-	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	1	-	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	1	-	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	1	-	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	1	-	No	M2/D1	Good
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	1	-	Yes	M2/D1	Good
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	1	-	Yes	M1/D1	Standard
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	1	-	Yes	M1/D1	Standard
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth RFC	Buntingford	1	-	No	M2/D1	Good
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth RFC	Buntingford	1	-	No	M1/D1	Standard
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth RFC	Buntingford	1	-	Yes	M1/D0	Poor
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford Rugby Football Club Blackhorse RFC	Hertford, Ware	1	-	Yes	M1/D1	Standard
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford, Ware	1	-	Yes	M1/D1	Standard
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford, Ware	1	-	No	M1/D1	Standard
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford, Ware	1	-	No	M1/D1	Standard
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford, Ware	1	-	No	M1/D1	Standard
62	Leventhorpe School	-	Sawbridgeworth	1	-	No	M1/D0	Poor
62	Leventhorpe School	-	Sawbridgeworth	-	1	No	M1/D0	Poor
89	Simon Balle School	-	Hertford, Ware	-	1	No	M1/D1	Standard
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	-	Buntingford	1	-	No	M2/D1	Good
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	-	Buntingford	1	-	No	M2/D1	Good
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	-	Bishop's Stortford	1	-	No	M1/D1	Standard
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	-	Sawbridgeworth	1	-	No	M1/D1	Standard
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	-	Sawbridgeworth	1	-	No	M1/D1	Standard
108	The Sele School	-	Hertford, Ware	-	1	No	M1/D1	Standard
168	The Avanti Grange Secondary School	-	Bishop's Stortford	-	1	No	M1/D1	Standard
170	Datchworth Village Hall	Datchworth RFC	Buntingford	1	-	No	M1/D1	Standard

Ancillary facility ratings are primarily influenced by the type of amenities which are available on a site accompanied by their quality, such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, car parking, dedicated official and spectator facilities. Good quality ancillary facilities are particularly important for rugby clubs as they can assist with income generation. Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly important for the provision to be inclusive, particularly due to growing women's and girls', disability and junior/age grade demand.

Although the size and configuration of ancillary provision may alter based on the type of sport accessing provision, and the number of pitches it services, generally the same principles are recommended to allow for varied use from all demographics:

◄ Accessible changing areas which can be separated, or are private/self-contained, to allow for separate male/female/all gender or senior/junior separation.
◄ A private accessible changing room (with relevant changing and showering provision) for someone who requires assistance.
◄ Separate female / male / all gender toilet provision.
◄ Suitably designed and specified showering cubicles to all users to maintain dignity and privacy whilst showering.

Open planned changing, toilets and particularly showering facilities can provide a significant barrier to many people resulting in them either not taking part or having a poorer sporting experience.

Consequently, any ancillary facilities that do not meet the outlined criteria cannot be rated above standard quality. Further context and rationale are provided below.

Table 4.11: Ancillary provision feedback

Club	Ancillary position	Overall rating
Bishop's Stortford RFC	The site currently has five changing rooms and a function room and bar. The changing rooms are dated and do not have dedicated showers and toilets in each room. The Club has built foundations to develop five new RFU compliant changing rooms, which will come at the loss of two old changing rooms. The main driver for this project is to obtain self-contained showers and toilets in the new changing rooms. The new facility will also cater for officials changing rooms.	Standard
Datchworth RFC	The Club accesses poor quality provision at its home site, Datchworth Sports Club. It contains five changing rooms and an official's room, with a communal shower room to service all. Consultation with the Club confirms that the building is very dated and needs refurbishing and it has had planning permission accepted to do this. The Club is currently still fundraising to enable this project to go ahead.	Poor
Hertford RFC	The clubhouse currently has six changing rooms with communal showers servicing all six changing rooms. It has made space for women's and girls' changing rooms; however, it has had planning permission granted to extend and rebuild its changing rooms. The site has plenty of parking as well as a bar and function room.	Standard

The broad position is that the current facilities are not entirely inclusive and do not encourage participation of all demographics. Hertford RFC is the only club that has separate changing rooms provided for women and girls. Despite this, it still has a communal shower room servicing all the changing rooms which is why it cannot score any higher than standard quality.

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With the women's rugby World Cup on the horizon, demand for the women's and girls' game is set to increase and clubs will need to have the facilities to accommodate existing and future demand. All three clubs have plans to change current ancillary facilities to bring them in line with the RFU specifications and modernise each building.

4.3: Demand

Demand for rugby pitches in East Hertfordshire tends to fall within the categories of organised competitive play and organised training.

There are four rugby union clubs in East Hertfordshire which in total generate demand equating to 63 teams. As a breakdown, this consists of 12 senior men's, two senior women's teams, four boy's colts, 17 junior boys, nine junior girl and 19 mixed age grade teams.

Table 4.12: Demand summary

Club	Senior men's	Senior women's	Colt boys (U17/U18)	Junior boys U13 - U16	Junior girls U13 - U18	Mixed age grade U7 - U12	Club total
Bishop's Stortford RFC	5	1	2	8	3	7	**26**
Blackhorse RFC	1	-	-	-	-	-	**1**
Datchworth RFC	2	1	1	5	4	6	**19**
Hertford RFC	4	-	1	4	2	6	**17**
Total	**12**	**2**	**4**	**17**	**9**	**19**	**63**

Throughout the Country, many rugby teams train at its home ground on match pitches. As a result, usage is concentrated which reduces the capacity for match play on these pitches and means they are more likely to be overplayed. A key factor in determining the extent of training on match pitches is the presence of sports lighting.

Full details of each of the clubs training schedules are detailed in the table below. The match equivalent sessions for training relates to the demand which takes place on grass pitches only, unless otherwise stated.

Table 4.13: Training demand summary

Club	Midweek training requirements	Match equivalent sessions (MES) on match pitches
Bishop's Stortford RFC	**Bishop's Stortford RFC pitches:** **Tuesday:** 1st and 2nd teams, colts (2) and women's team. **Wednesday**: girls rugby (3) and boys' teams (8) **Thursday:** 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and colts (2) **Bishop's Stortford College** Mini teams (7) on one senior pitch	**13.25 MES total per week** 4 MES - senior men's and women's 7.5 MES - colts, junior boys and girls 1.75 MES - mini rugby **Bishop's Stortford RFC - 11.5 MES** Pitch 3 – 5.75 MES Pitch 4 – 5.75 MES **Bishop's Stortford College - 1.75 MES** Pitch 1 - 1.75 MES
Blackhorse RFC	Unknown.	Unknown.

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Club	Midweek training requirements	Match equivalent sessions (MES) on match pitches
Datchworth RFC	The Club rotates three pitches frequently for training depending on which need resting. The 1st pitch is never used for training although the pitch behind Datchworth Village Hall does get used. It has one sports lit pitch as, however, has portable sports lighting, enabling use of the other two pitches for training. All teams train once a week.	**8 MES total per week** 1.5 MES - senior men's and women's 5 MES - colts, junior boys and girls 1.5 MES - mini rugby **Datchworth Sports Club** Pitch 2 - 2 MES Pitch 3 - 3 MES **Datchworth Village Hall** Pitch 4 - 3 MES
Hertford RFC	Herford RFC pitches: **Tuesday:** 1st, 2nd and colts training (1) **Wednesday**: all youth (6), mini teams (6) and the mixed ability team **Thursday:** 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th teams	**8.5 MES total per week** 3 MES senior men's 4 MES colts, junior boys, girls and mixed ability team 1.5 MES mini rugby

To enable 3G pitches to accommodate competitive rugby union matches, WR has developed the Rugby Turf Performance Specification. This is to ensure that the surfaces replicate the playing qualities of good quality grass pitches, provide a playing environment that will not increase the risk of injury and are of an adequate durability.

The specification includes a rigorous test programme that assesses ball/surface interaction and player/surface interaction and has been modified to align the standard with that of FIFA. Any 3G pitch used for any form of competitive rugby must comply with this specification and must be tested every two years to retain compliance. The compliancy standard is known as to as WR Regulation 22 (WR22).

There are no WR22 compliant 3G pitches located within East Hertfordshire. However, as previously mentioned there is a WR22 pitch currently being constructed at Bishop's Stortford High School that will be available for use in the 25/26 season.
Nationally, clubs identify the use of 3G pitches for training as a method of protecting the match pitches and providing a high-quality surface for full contact practice. Competitive play continues to take place on grass pitches for the most part, however, the use of 3Gs for the fulfilment of competition fixtures does take place regularly in some areas if suitable provision is available, particularly on sites where Rugby 365 pitches have been provided. Further detail on use of 3G pitches can be found in Part 3: Third Generation Artificial Pitches.

In the case of East Hertfordshire Bishop's Stortford RFC delivers touch rugby sessions on the sand based AGP at Bishop's Stortford College once a week.
To actively encourage participation, rugby union clubs may provide alternative offers to traditional club competition. Touch rugby is one possible format which clubs can use. Touch rugby is non-contact rugby sessions, during which participants compete in teams to score tries, following similar laws to traditional rugby union formats. Clubs, schools or community organisations can establish their own touch rugby sessions or can become hosts of Touch Union[19] sessions.

Touch Union sessions are 90 minutes long and combine music, fitness and rugby skills. Sessions are of mixed gender, ability and age and are based on touch rugby being a social activity. Bishop's Stortford offers touch rugby sessions all year round, however, does not operate any teams currently. Whilst Hertford RFC offers a touch rugby festival in the summer. Datchworth RFC reports that it does not offer touch rugby. In December 2024, the

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[19] https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/playing/ways-to-play/the-touch-union

Sawbridgeworth Sports Association launched a new rugby skills club in which it offers non-contact rugby for children aged eight to 11.

Walking rugby is a slower game of touch rugby that is accessible for disability groups and older participants, generally aged 55 years and above.

The game is less physical than traditional rugby, but the general aim remains the same, with passing and scoring laws applying; and tackling involves a two-handed touch to the waist or below. Sessions for over 55's are an opportunity for participants to become physically active and for others to re-engage with rugby at a less strenuous pace.

In East Hertfordshire, Datchworth RFC holds a weekly walking rugby on a Monday evening and has roughly eight people attending. During consultation, Bishop's Stortford discussed that it would like to offer walking rugby sessions but states a lack of space to offer the sessions. Hertford RFC states it is due to start a walking rugby session every Monday.

Exported demand refers to existing demand, which is transferred outside of the study area. Imported demand refers to any demand from neighbouring local authorities that accesses facilities in East Hertfordshire due to a lack of available facilities in other local authorities where such team or club is based. Locally, there is no known cases of either imported or exported demand, with all clubs accommodating demand at the respective sites.
Unmet demand is existing demand at clubs which is not able to access sufficient supply of pitches for match play or training. It is usually expressed, for example, where a team is already training but is unable to access a match pitch or where a league or club operates a waiting list. Consultation did not highlight any potential unmet demand.

Latent demand is demand that evidence suggests may be generated from the current population should they have access to more or better provision. Bishop's Stortford RFC is currently operating a waiting list for its junior and mini rugby sections. It also expresses how it does not have the pitch space to offer walking rugby sessions.
Future demand can be defined in two ways, through participation increases and using population forecasts.

◄ During consultation with the District's rugby union clubs, each were asked how they would like to grow over the next three to five years (over the lifespan of the PPS). Details of aspirations are below. Bishop's Stortford RFC: Report growth equating to one senior ladies' team.
◄ Datchworth RFC: No growth ambitions identified.
◄ Hertford RFC: Report growth equating to one senior ladies' team.

Team generation rates are used below as the basis for calculating the number of teams likely to be generated in the future based on population growth (2043).

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Table 4.14: Team generation rates (2043)

Age group	Team generation rate	No. of new teams generated by the new population	No. of new teams generated by the new population	Peak time	Match equivalent session per season[20]
Senior Mens (19-45)	1:2,778.18	0.59	-	Saturday	-
Senior Womens (19-45)	1:5,891.82	0.30	-	Sunday	-
Junior Boys (13-18)	1:322.61	1.41	1	Sunday	0.5
Junior Girls (13-18)	1:812.28	0.52	-	Sunday	-
Mini Mixed (7-12)	1:627.18	1.41	1	Sunday	0.5

Based on future projections, it is forecast that there will be growth of one new junior boy and one new mini team for rugby through population increases to 2043.

It is important to note that population growth is exclusively applied to current team numbers and does not account for specific targeted development work within certain areas or focused on certain groups, such as coaching activity within schools linking to local clubs or specific RFU targets.

The RFU is focused on actively exploring opportunities to assist with the transition between late junior years and senior rugby with a specific focus on growing the senior game with the addition of adult teams (both men's and women's). This area has a strategic focus from the RFU and is being facilitated by encouraging casual play and midweek senior matches, along with touch rugby and cross pitch 7s. The RFU recognises the pressures on participation in the traditional forms of the game at this time and by offering alternative match times and formats then clubs may be able to retain a larger number of players.

With the Women's Rugby World Cup scheduled to be held in England in 2025, there is an expectance that there shall be a growth in women's and girls' demand within Rugby in the build up to the event. This shall be followed by a large push from the RFU to increase demand in women's and girls' rugby as a legacy for hosting the event.

The expanded showcase event will be hosted across eight venues and cities around England (Brighton & Hove, Bristol, Exeter, London, Manchester, Northampton, Sunderland and York) with 16 teams competing to be crowned world champions.

Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 will represent a generational moment for global rugby that will set new standards, welcome new fans and families to the sport and inspire a new generation of players, providing an exciting catalyst to nationwide and global rugby growth.

It should be noted that given the current and future levels of rugby union demand in East Hertfordshire immediate growth for women and girls demand is expected to be limited with any such demand travelling to larger clubs in neighbouring authorities.

This being said, based on current ancillary provision none of the clubs in the Authority currently have the facilities (separate changing rooms and showering facilities) to accommodate such demand. Hertford RFC has separated changing rooms but still only has a communal shower room servicing all changing rooms. As such, considerations should be made by the remaining clubs to modernise the changing and showering facilities to meet

[20] 2 teams require 1 pitch to account for playing on a home and away basis; therefore, 1 team accounts to 0.5 match equivalent sessions on their relevant pitch type.

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current RFU specifications. Bishop's Stortford is in the process of installing RFU specifications changing rooms at its site.

4.4: Capacity analysis

The capacity for pitches to regularly accommodate competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of a pitch affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of playing rugby. In extreme circumstances, it can result in the inability of a pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times. To enable an accurate supply and demand assessment of rugby pitches, the following assumptions are applied to site by site analysis:

- All sites that are used for competitive rugby matches (regardless of whether this is secured community use) are included on the supply side.
- Use of school pitches by schools increases demand by one match equivalent session, unless school activity levels are known.
- All competitive play is on senior size pitches (except for where age grade specific pitches are provided).
- U13 teams generally play on a 90 x 60m pitch and play 13 vs 13.
- From U14 upwards, teams generally play 15 v15 and use a full pitch.
- Mini teams (U6-U12) play on half of a senior pitch i.e. two teams per senior pitch or a dedicated mini pitch. See RFU Age Grade Rugby Guidance for more details.
- For senior and youth teams the current level of play per week is set at 0.5 for each match played based on all teams operating on a traditional home and away basis (assumes half of matches will be played away).
- For mini teams playing on a senior pitch, play per week is set at 0.25 for each match played based on all teams operating on a traditional home and away basis and playing across half of one senior pitch.
- Senior men's rugby generally takes place on Saturday afternoons.
- Senior women's rugby generally takes place on Sunday afternoons.
- Junior rugby generally takes place on Sunday mornings.
- Mini rugby generally takes place on Sunday mornings.
- Training that takes place on club pitches is reflected by the addition of match equivalent sessions to current usage levels.

As a guide, the RFU has set a standard number of matches that each pitch should be able to accommodate, set out below.

Table 4.15: Pitch capacity (matches per week) based on quality assessments

		Maintenance		
		Poor (M0)	Adequate (M1)	Good (M2)
Drainage	Natural Inadequate (D0)	0.5	1.5	2
	Natural Adequate or Pipe Drained (D1)	1.5	2	3
	Pipe Drained (D2)	1.75	2.5	3.25
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	2	3	3.5

Capacity is based upon a basic assessment of the drainage system and maintenance programme ascertained through a combination of the quality assessment and consultation. This guide, however, is only a very general measure of potential pitch capacity. It does not account for specific circumstances at time of use and it assumes average rainfall and an appropriate end of season rest and renovation programme.

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In order to fully establish actual spare capacity, the peak period needs to be established for all types of rugby. For senior teams, it is Saturday PM, as all senior men's teams play at this time, with senior women's teams playing on Sunday afternoons. Peak time for mini and junior rugby is Sunday AM.

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Table 4.16: Capacity table for senior rugby union pitches

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	Security of tenure	Number of pitches	Non-tech score	Quality rating	Sports lit?	Match equivalent sessions (per week)	Training equivalent sessions	Pitch Capacity (sessions per week)	Capacity rating	Comments
15	Birchwood High School	Bishop's Stortford	No	Unsecure	1	M1/D0	Poor	No	1	-	1.5	0.5	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 0.5 MES
15	Birchwood High School	Bishop's Stortford	No	Unsecure	1	M1/D0	Poor	No	1	-	1.5	0.5	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 0.5 MES
15	Birchwood High School	Bishop's Stortford	No	Unsecure	1	M1/D0	Poor	No	1	-	1.5	0.5	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 0.5 MES
15	Birchwood High School	Bishop's Stortford	No	Unsecure	1	M1/D0	Poor	No	1	-	1.5	0.5	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 0.5 MES
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D0	Poor	No	-	1.75	1.5	0.25	Curricular demand is unknown, however, Bishop's Stortford use this site for training its mixed age grade teams
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D0	Poor	No	1	-	1.5	0.5	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 0.5 MES
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D0	Poor	No	1	-	1.5	0.5	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 0.5 MES
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D0	Poor	No	1	-	1.5	0.5	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 0.5 MES
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D0	Poor	No	1	-	1.5	0.5	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 0.5 MES
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D0	Poor	No	1	-	1.5	0.5	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 0.5 MES
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Secure	1	M2/D1	Good	Yes	3	-	3	-	Pitch is used at capacity
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Secure	1	M2/D1	Good	No	3	-	3	-	Pitch is used at capacity
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Secure	1	M1/D1	Standard	Yes	1.5	5.5	2	5	One of two training pitches at the site and is overplayed by 5 MES when match play and training demand is accounted for. This is discounting mixed grade teams which play at Bishop's Stortford College.
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Secure	1	M1/D1	Standard	Yes	2	6	2	6	One of two training pitches at the site and is overplayed by 6 MES when match play and training demand is accounted for. This is discounting mixed grade teams which play at Bishop's Stortford College.
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Buntingford	Yes	Secure	1	M2/D1	Good	No	2	-	3	1	The pitch has spare capacity of 1 MES, although has no actual capacity as it is used during peak period.
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Buntingford	Yes	Secure	1	M1/D1	Standard	No	1.5	2	2	1.5	The second pitch which caters for both training and match play is overplayed by 1.5 MES. It can be used for training as the Club has portable floodlights.
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Buntingford	Yes	Secure	1	M1/D0	Poor	Yes	-	3	1.5	1.5	As it is flood lit this pitch accommodates the majority of senior team training demand and is overplayed by 1.5 MES.
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Secure	1	M1/D1	Standard	Yes	1	2	2	1	1st and 2nd team training take place on the floodlit 1st team pitch as well as games resulting in overplay of one MES.

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	Security of tenure	Number of pitches	Non-tech score	Quality rating	Sports lit?	Match equivalent sessions (per week)	Training equivalent sessions	Pitch Capacity (sessions per week)	Capacity rating	Comments
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Secure	1	M1/D1	Standard	Yes	1	1.5	2	0.5	This pitch accommodates the 3rd and 4th senior team match play and training as well as colts training.
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Secure	1	M1/D1	Standard	No	2	-	2	-	Club has a training area which it can use portable floodlights on which accounts for five MES per week which has been discounted from total training demand. This pitch caters for four youth teams match play (including colts).
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Secure	1	M1/D1	Standard	No	2	-	2	-	This pitch accommodates Blackhorse RFC, which is a single team club which plays it's home fixtures at Hertford RFC as well as three youth teams. It is worth noting that there is two junior pitches at this site which have been discounted from the total supply as they do not have posts up that could potentially cater for demand at the site.
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Secure	1	M1/D1	Standard	No	1.5	-	2	0.5	This pitch hosts six mini rugby teams at 1.5 MES leaving 0.5 spare capacity.
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D0	Poor	No	1	-	1.5	0.5	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 0.5 MES
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Buntingford	Yes	Unsecure	1	M2/D1	Good	No	1	-	3	2	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 2 MES
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Buntingford	Yes	Unsecure	1	M2/D1	Good	No	1	-	3	2	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 2 MES
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D1	Standard	No	1	-	2	1	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 1 MES
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D1	Standard	No	1	-	2	1	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 1 MES
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Unsecure	1	M1/D1	Standard	No	1	-	2	1	Pitch used for curricular demand with spare capacity of 1 MES
170	Datchworth Village Hall	Buntingford	Yes	Secure	1	M1/D1	Standard	No	4.5	3	2	5.5	This pitch is used by Datchworth RFC for junior rugby demand as well as to spread training as the Club has portable lights it can use on this pitch.

Mini (mixed age grade) pitches are accessed by Bishop's Stortford RFC and Datchworth RFC, which has been discounted from its capacity balance as per RFU regulations as to what constitutes a pitch, as these pitches are not posted. For reference, demand expressed by mixed age grade teams, on mixed age grade pitches, equates to 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week (as opposed to 0.25 when expressed on senior pitches). The demand has therefore been placed onto senior pitches at 0.25 MES.

The next step is to ascertain whether or not any identified 'potential capacity' can be deemed 'actual capacity'. There may be situations where, although a site is highlighted as potentially able to accommodate some additional play, this should not be recorded as spare capacity against the site. For example, a site may be managed to regularly operate slightly below full capacity to ensure that it can cater for a number of regular friendly matches and activities that take place but are difficult to quantify on a weekly basis.

Table 4.17: Summary of spare capacity on senior

Site ID	Site	No of pitches	Potential Spare capacity (MES)	Actual Saturday Spare capacity (MES)	Comments
16	Bishop's Stortford College	1	0.5	-	No spare capacity due to poor pitch quality.
16	Bishop's Stortford College	1	0.5	-	No spare capacity due to poor pitch quality.
16	Bishop's Stortford College	1	0.5	-	No spare capacity due to poor pitch quality.
16	Bishop's Stortford College	1	0.5	-	No spare capacity due to poor pitch quality.
16	Bishop's Stortford College	1	0.5	-	No spare capacity due to poor pitch quality.
38	Datchworth Sports Club	1	1	-	The pitch is used during the peak period
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	0.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity for one senior team on Saturdays.
62	Leventhorpe School	1	0.5	-	No spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	1	2	-	No spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	1	2	-	No spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	1	1	-	No spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	1	1	-	No spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	1	1	-	No spare capacity due to unsecure tenure.

When reviewing all potential spare capacity on senior pitches. It is evident that actual spare capacity exists on one senior pitch at Hertford RFC in the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area. No other pitches, at any site, have spare capacity at peak time.

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Five sites and eight pitches are overplayed as detailed in the table below. Overplayed pitches are based in the Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford and Hertford, Ware analysis areas.

Table 4.18: Summary of overplay (senior pitches)

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Number of pitches	Overplay (MES)
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	1	0.25
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	1	5
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	Bishop's Stortford	1	6
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Buntingford	1	1.5
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Buntingford	1	1.5
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford, Ware	1	1
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Hertford, Ware	1	0.5
170	Datchworth Village Hall	Buntingford	1	5.5
-	-	**Totals**	**8**	**21.25**

In total, overplay equates to 21.25 match equivalent sessions per week, with shortfalls deriving from eight pitches.

4.5: Supply and demand analysis

Having considered supply and demand, the tables below identify the overall spare capacity or overplay in each of the analysis areas for senior rugby union pitches based on match equivalent sessions per week.

The analysis is undertaken for play on senior pitches only. In the instance of East Hertfordshire, the analysis results are the same for the peak time modelling for Saturday afternoons (senior men's rugby peak time) and Sundays (when it is the peak time for mixed aged grade rugby and junior/colts' teams). This is due to an overall limited amount of spare capacity for additional play throughout the District. Future demand is based on club ambitions and is equating to two senior ladies' teams.

Table 4:19: Summary of supply and demand balance on senior rugby union pitches (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity[21]	Overplay	Current total demand	Future demand	Future total demand
Bishop's Stortford	-	11.25	11.25	0.5	11.75
Buntingford	-	8.5	8.5	-	8.5
Hertford, Ware	0.5	1.5	1	0.5	1.5
Sawbridgeworth	-	-	-	-	-
Watton-at-Stone	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**0.5**	**21.25**	**20.75**	**1**	**21.75**

The table above shows that there is an insufficient supply of provision to accommodate existing demand, with shortfalls equating to 20.75 match equivalent sessions per week. Shortfalls predominantly originate from concentrated midweek training demand and the sheer quantity of demand.

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[21] In match equivalent sessions

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When considering future demand shortfalls increase to 21.75 match equivalent sessions per week.

4.6: Conclusion

Based on the supply and demand analysis, it is evident that there is insufficient supply of senior rugby union pitches in East Hertfordshire to accommodate for both current and anticipated future levels of demand. The main issues are centred around pressures on midweek training opportunities as well as the volume of demand at Bishop's Stortford RFC and Datchworth RFC.

The priority for rugby union in East Hertfordshire (which will be further explored in the forthcoming Strategy & Action Plan) is to ensure that pitches are of suitable quality for demand, sufficient sports lighting is available and ancillary infrastructures are of a good quality which supports the long-term development of rugby union across the local area.

Should Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC relocate to Hoggates Park and vacate Bishop's Stortford RFC this would enable the addition of new rugby pitches that could help better spread training demand across the site and reduce the overplay significantly on the third and fourth pitches.

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Rugby union summary

◀ There is insufficient level of senior rugby union provision in East Hertfordshire to accommodate current and future demand with a current overplay of 20.75 match equivalent sessions on senior rugby pitches open to community use.

◀ There is a total of 53 rugby union pitches in East Hertfordshire across 17 sites. This consists of 35 senior pitches and 18 junior pitches. Of these, 25 senior pitches and 17 junior pitches are open to community use.

◀ There are no WR compliant 3G pitches located within East Hertfordshire. However, there will be one in Bishop's Stortford at the Bishop's Stortford High School for the 25/26 season.

◀ In terms of quality of senior pitches available for community use, five are good quality, 12 are standard and eight are poor quality pitches. Of the 17-community available junior pitches, 14 are poor quality and three are standard quality.

◀ From a community club perspective, poor quality pitch provision is an issue for Datchworth RFC with on one of its pitches.

◀ Of the three clubs in the District with sites, Bishop's Stortford RFC and Hertford RFC access standard quality ancillary provision, whilst Datchworth RFC access poor ancillary provision. All Clubs are in the process of upgrading current ancillary offerings to bring the facilities in line with RFU specifications, to encourage inclusivity and promote the women's and girls' game.

◀ Datchworth RFC has plans to rebuild and enhance its ancillary offering and has been granted planning permission to do. The Club is currently fundraising to enable this project.

◀ Hertford RFC has had planning permission to extend and rebuild its changing rooms whilst Bishop's Stortford have built foundations for its new changing rooms.

◀ There are four rugby union clubs in East Hertfordshire which in total generate demand equating to 63 teams. As a breakdown, this consists of 12 senior men's, two senior women's, four boy's colts, 17 junior boys, nine junior girls and 19 mixed age grade teams.

◀ Future demand from club ambitions equates to two senior ladies' teams.

◀ There is an overall insufficient supply of provision to cater for both current and future demand.

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PART 5: ARTIFICAL GRASS PITCHES (HOCKEY)

5.1: Introduction

Competitive league hockey matches and training can only be played on sand filled, sand dressed or water based artificial grass pitches (AGPs). Although competitive, adult and junior club training cannot take place on 3G pitches, 40mm pitches may be suitable at introductory level, such as school curriculum low level hockey. England Hockey's (EH) Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy details suitability of surface type for varying levels of hockey, as seen below.

Table 5.1: England Hockey guidelines on artificial surface types suitable for hockey

Category	Surface	Playing Level	Playing Level
England Hockey Category 1	Water surface approved within the FIH Global/National Parameters	**Essential** International Hockey - Training and matches	**Desirable** Domestic National Premier competition Higher levels of EH Player Pathway Performance Centres and upwards England
England Hockey Category 2	Sand dressed surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	**Essential** Domestic National Premier competition Higher levels of player pathway: Academy Centres and Upwards	**Desirable** All adult and junior League Hockey Intermediate or advanced School Hockey EH competitions for clubs and schools (excluding domestic national league)
England Hockey Category 3	Sand based surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	**Essential** All adult and junior club training and league Hockey EH competitions for clubs and schools Intermediate or advanced schools hockey	
England Hockey Category 4	All 3G surfaces	**Essential** None	**Desirable** Lower level hockey (Introductory level) when no category 1-3 surface is available.

In addition to the above pitch types, EH reports that it is currently trialling a different multi-sport surface in order to better accommodate lower levels of hockey demand on a pitch that is also suitable for other sports such as netball and tennis. The surface type, known as Gen 2[22], is a versatile surface that will ensure that the sports do not need to compromise on the playing experience; it will be a sand dressed synthetic turf with a compatible shock pad. The concept is designed to provide facilities, including schools, with a dynamic surface which reduces the amount of space required and enables the provision to be utilised to its full potential.

For senior teams, a full-size pitch for competitive matches must measure at least 91.4 x 55 metres excluding surrounding run-off areas, which must be a minimum of two metres at the sides and three metres at the ends.

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[22] Deliver - Developing Your Project | England Hockey

EH's preference is for four-metre side and five-metre end run offs, with a preferred overall area of 101.4 x 63 metres, though a minimum overall area of 97.4 x 59 metres is accepted.

It is considered that a hockey pitch can accommodate a maximum of four matches on one day (peak time) provided the pitch has sports lighting Training is generally midweek and also requires access to a pitch with sports lighting.

There are two hockey clubs in East Hertfordshire, Bishop's Stortford Hockey Club and Hertford Hockey Club. Both clubs were consulted with either via telephone interview or a face-to-face meeting.

Table 5.2: Summary of consultation

Club name	Responded?
Bishop's Stortford Hockey Club	Yes
Hertford Hockey Club	Yes

5.2: Supply

There are eight full size hockey suitable artificial grass pitches in East Hertfordshire located across six sites. All sites are serviced by sports lighting and are open to community use, other than St Edmunds College which has no community use.

Table 5.3: Summary of full-size hockey suitable AGPs

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	Quantity of provision	Size (metres)	Sports lit?
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	One pitch	100m x 63m	Yes
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	One pitch	100m x 62m	Yes
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	One pitch	100m x 60m	Yes
58	Hockerill Anglo-European College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	One pitch	98m x 62.5m	Yes
89	Simon Balle School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	One pitch	101m x 64m	Yes
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Buntingford	No	One pitch	97m x 60m	Yes
163	Haileybury College	Hertford, Ware	Yes	One pitch	100m x 60m	Yes
163	Haileybury College	Hertford, Ware	Yes	One pitch	100m x 60m	Yes

There are also a further three small sided AGPs provided at Amwell View School, Heath Mount School and Norfolk Road Playing Fields. The latter being the only pitch open to community use and to have sports lighting.

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Table 5.4: Summary of small-size hockey suitable AGPs

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	Quantity of provision	Size (metres)	Sports lit?
3	Amwell View School	Hertford, Ware	No	One pitch	29m x 13m	No
46	Heath Mount School	Watton-at-Stone	No	One pitch	70m x 44m	No
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Buntingford	Yes	One Pitch	51m x 32m	Yes

Consultation with the school operators within East Hertfordshire failed to raise any potential developments for additional AGP pitches in the District. Bishop's Stortford Hockey Club confirms it has an ambition to develop a second full sized hockey pitch at Herts & Essex Sports Centre alongside the existing pitch and references potential Bishop's Stortford Town Council Section 106 funding available. The Club states its long-term ambition is to operate two full sized AGPs at the site to reduce its dependency on the other school pitches in the town.

In line with the Gilston development a new full size hockey AGP has been proposed as part of one of the new secondary schools. In terms of delivery this is likely to be further down the line and will potentially not happen if the lifetime of this PPOSS.

There are no disused AGPs in East Hertfordshire.

A map of the current hockey provision is provided in Figure 5.1 overleaf.

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Figure 5.1: Location of full size AGPs

Sport England's Facilities Planning Model applies an overall peak period for artificial grass pitches of 34 hours per week (Monday to Thursday 17:00-21:00; Friday 17:00-19:00; Saturday and Sunday 09:00-17:00).

The table below identifies the availability of AGP provision (where known) which is available for community use. As can be seen both Herts & Essex Sports Centre and Hockerill Anglo-European College open its facilities for the full 34 hours per week in line with the Sport England Facilities Planning Model. Regarding Bishop's Stortford College one of its AGPs is used solely for school use during typical community use hours. Its other pitch is open for 28 hours and is used for school team use on Saturday's.

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Table 5.5: Management and availability (full size pitches)

Site ID	Site name	Management	Availability	Total hours available in peak period
16	Bishop's Stortford College	School	School use only during CU hours	0
16	Bishop's Stortford College	School	17:00-21:00 midweek 09.00-17.00 Sunday	28
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	Sport centre	08:00-21:00 midweek 09:00-18:00 Saturday 09:00-17:00 Sunday	34
58	Hockerill Anglo-European College	School	18:00-22:00 midweek 09:00-18:00 Saturday 09:00-17:00 Sunday	34
89	Simon Balle School	School	Midweek and Sunday unknown 09:30 - 17:30 Saturday	8
163	Haileybury College	Sport complex	19:00-20:30 midweek 17:30-18:30 Saturday 09:00-18:30 Sunday	15.5

Hertford HC is currently accessing Simon Balle School, Haileybury School and Queenswood School (Welwyn Hatfield) for training and match play. There are no official agreements between the Club and any of the schools, it accesses its pitches on a weekly rental basis.

Bishops Stortford HC accesses Herts & Essex Sports Centre and Hockerill Anglo-European School for training and match play as well as Bishop's Stortford School infrequently. The Club raised half the required funds for the pitches at Herts & Essex Sports Centre and Hockerill Anglo-European and currently pay an annual fee to each to access them.

Taking the above into account, the quality of hockey suitable artificial grass pitches have been assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments as determined by EH) undertaken in December 2024 and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

‹ Good.
‹ Standard.
‹ Poor.

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows; Good (>80%), Standard (60-79%), Poor (<60%). The quality ratings assigned to the sites also consider the user quality ratings gathered from consultation.

In addition, depending on use, it is considered that the carpet of an artificial grass pitch usually lasts for approximately ten years and it is the age of the surface, combined with maintenance levels, which most commonly affects quality. The table overleaf summarises the quality of artificial grass pitches in East Hertfordshire.

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Table 5.6: Summary of quality

Site ID	Site name	Surface type	User	Quality rating	Built/resurfaced
3	Amwell View School	Sand filled	-	Poor	2013
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Sand dressed		Standard	2016
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Sand dressed	Bishop Stortford Hockey Club	Poor	2012
46	Heath Mount School	Sand dressed	-	Poor	2004 / 2014
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	Sand dressed	Bishop Stortford Hockey Club	Good	2019
58	Hockerill Anglo-European College	Sand filled	Bishop Stortford Hockey Club	Standard	1993 / 2017
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Sand filled	-	Standard	1980 / 2010
89	Simon Balle School	Sand filled	Hertford Hockey Club	Poor	1965 / 2012
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Sand filled	-	Standard	2001
163	Haileybury College	Sand filled	Hertford Hockey Club	Standard	1989 / 2013
163	Haileybury College	Sand filled	Hertford Hockey Club	Standard	2014

Simon Balle School currently provides a poor AGP with it last being resurfaced in 2012 it has surpassed its suggested life span. Hertford Hockey Club also reports that the pitch has three nights of football bookings throughout a typical week, causing damage to the surface. The Club's biggest priority is to resurface the pitch and has tried to start discussions with the school. The school confirms it has a sinking fund in place to resurface the pitch.

Both pitches at Haileybury College are rated standard quality, despite having exceeded the suggested lifespan for an AGP, both pitches are still in a decent playing condition. Consultation with the school confirms that a regular and rigorous maintenance schedule is carried out as well as ensuring that there is a sufficient sinking fund in place to resurface both pitches. It also confirms that one pitch is used solely for hockey usage while the other allows both football and hockey.

The pitch at Heath Mount School is rated poor as it was last refurbished in 2014, meaning it has surpassed its lifespan. During the site assessment it was picked up that the pitch looked very tired and worn with poor line markings. Consultation with the school confirms that its main users are football clubs, mainly, Monday to Thursday. The school states that the surface is getting replaced in 2025 and is a self-funded project.

The Bishop's Stortford College has two AGPs on site, one rated poor and one rated standard quality. Both pitches are well used with the first pitch being solely used for the schools curricular and extracurricular use with very limited community use. It was last resurfaced in 2016, however, appears to be well used. The second pitch was last resurfaced in 2012 and is heavily used by clubs as well as the school therefore is more worn than the first pitch, resulting in a poor rating. There are sinking funds in place for both pitches to be resurfaced.

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Consultation with Buntingford Cougars FC confirms that it uses the small sided AGP at Norfolk Road Playing Fields 90% of the time 5pm – 9pm Monday – Friday. The pitch was last resurfaced in 2010 so has surpassed its lifespan. However, site visits carried out by KKP confirm that the pitch is still in a useable condition considering its age, with no rips, tears or clear signs of wear and tear. The Club states that Buntingford Town Council is planning to convert this pitch to a 3G in 2025.

Hockerill Anglo-European College last had its pitch resurfaced in 2017 and is of standard quality which is congruent with club consultation and the site audit. The School is partnered with Bishop's Stortford HC which use the pitch throughout the week and at weekends, alongside several football clubs.
The term ancillary facilities, relates to built facility infrastructures at sites. Typically, this includes (but is not limited too) clubhouses, changing rooms, showers, car parking and toilet facilities.

The facilities at The Herts & Essex Sports Centre are in good condition with four changing rooms for its users. There is also a viewing balcony overlooking the pitch for spectators accompanied by a bar, offering food and drink.

Hockerill Anglo-European School currently offer poor changing room provision with issues such as the floorboards giving in. The School confirms that it will have to soon cease allowing teams to use the spaces due to health and safety concerns.

When using the AGP at Simon Balle School, Hertford Hockey Club share ancillary facilities with Hertford Cricket Club. The clubhouse is rated good quality, with plenty of parking, bar facilities with an outdoor patio and four changing rooms. Two of the changing rooms were only added 10 years ago. However, the hockey club would like to refurbish the men's changing rooms and showers but realise that fundraising for such a project is difficult.

5.3: Demand

Bishop's Stortford Hockey Club has seven adult men's teams, 10 adult women's teams, three junior girl's teams, three junior boy's teams, six mixed junior teams and one mini under eight team. Additionally, there are over 35s and over 45's men's and women's teams. The Club considers itself at capacity as it has seen an increase in membership over recent years, specifically in women's teams. It uses several sites for training and match play including, Bishop's Stortford College, where use is limited, Herts & Essex Sports Centre, and Hockerill Anglo-European College.

Hertford Hockey Club currently has seven men's teams, four ladies' teams, seven junior boys' teams and 10 junior girls' teams. Alongside both a men's over 35 and over 45 team and women's over 35 team. Demand has mostly stayed consistent over recent years, although has seen a slight increase for senior women's numbers. The Club is hoping to add an extra senior women's team, however, it states it will struggle for pitch space, umpires and coaches. It plays and trains at various sites yet, has no long-term lease agreements for any site it accesses and has demand for more midweek pitch time for training. It is currently playing out of Simon Balle School, Haileybury College and Queenswood School, located in Welwyn Hatfield.

Both Bishop's Stortford HC and Hertford HC delivers back to hockey sessions. Bishop's Stortford HC currently runs a six week back to hockey programme and has 20 members attend whilst Hertford HC mainly run it in the summer and couldn't quantify attendance. Bishop's Stortford reports it will be offering walking hockey starting in 2025, whilst Hertford HC do not offer it.

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Imported demand refers to teams which originate outside of the East Hertfordshire, accessing facilities within the area for its home fixtures and/or training needs, normally because its pitch requirements cannot be met, which is usually because of pitch supply, in some cases quality issues or stipulated league requirements for access to certain facilities.

There are no known cases of imported demand to East Hertfordshire from neighbouring authorities.

Exported demand refers to teams which originate within the East Hertfordshire, accessing facilities outside the area for its home fixtures and/or training needs, normally because its pitch requirements cannot be met, which is usually because of pitch supply, in some cases quality issues or stipulated league requirements for access to certain facilities.

Hertford Hockey Club reports playing some of its games at Queenswood School, in Welwyn Hatfield.

Access to artificial grass pitches for midweek training is important to sustain and grow all formats of hockey.

Bishop's Stortford HC trains at Hockerill Anglo-European College 19:00 – 22:00 on Tuesdays, 19:00 – 21:00 on Wednesday's and 19:00 – 20:30 on Friday's. It also accesses The Herts & Essex Sports Centre 18:00 – 19:30 on Monday's, 19:00 – 21:00 on Tuesday's, Wednesday's and Thursday's. it also runs coaching at both sites on a Sunday morning from 09:00 - 13:30 as well as Bishop's Stortford College 09:00 – 12:00 for master's and mixed training.

Hertford HC trains at Simon Balle School, Tuesday – Thursday for an hour and a half each night, Haileybury on Tuesday's and Wednesdays for an hour and a half and for three hours Sunday mornings. The Club finds it very difficult to book Haileybury as it is heavily used by the School and other clubs.

Growing participation is the number one aim within EH's Strategic Plan and key drivers include working with clubs, universities and schools, regional and local leagues, developing opportunities for over 40s and delivering a quality programme of competition. Growth in participation will not only come from the traditional 11 a side game but from the informal, recreational ways to play hockey such as small-sided hockey, which can be played at any time during the week or at weekends.

There remains a desire from EH to increase participation within the club/ league-based game, not all future demand may be realised entirely as new formalised teams playing at peak time. Some clubs may decide to offer pay and play opportunities to participants or offer small-sided formats such in a bid to increase participation and club memberships by providing a different hockey offer.

Increased demand from new participants will lead to a requirement for increased capacity on available artificial grass pitches at peak time, but also midweek and on Sundays to deliver other formats of hockey activity. At present, it is not necessarily clear as to what format this may take or when it is likely to take place, however, it is clear that there will be a requirement for access to increased capacity on artificial grass pitches across the area. This should be considered when assessing demand for artificial grass pitches in the future, as not only will they be needed for peak match play times and midweek training to accommodate increased participation within the formalised hockey environment, but also throughout the week and at non-peak times to offer wider opportunities for play.

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Unlike other pitch sports, EH do not use team generation rates to determine future demand and instead likes to understand growth by participation, rather than dedicated teams. As such, team generation rates have not been used to calculate future growth for hockey in East Hertfordshire.

Bishop's Stortford HC recognises that it is at capacity with its current number of Saturday teams while Hertford HC is considering adding a fifth senior women's team but realises it might struggle for pitch space, umpires and people to run the team.

The Player Pathway (PP) is the junior talent development pathway. It encompasses the whole of the hockey landscape which includes club and school activity as well as the PP Development Centres (DCs). The purpose of the PP is to provide development opportunities for young people, which is fair, equitable and consistent. It is to ensure that a suitable level of coaching and competition is offered for people at the appropriate stage of their development and to maximise the chance they have of fulfilling their potential whether that potential is as a club or international player, coach or official. The PP can be accessed by playing at school, a local club or attending one of the local centres. There is one entry point into the PP centres which is at DC level. The first time a player accesses the player pathway they must enter at DC level.

To enter an Academy Centre (AC) players must be nominated by their DC coaches, school or must display a consistent high performance at club level. This is a PP into higher performance hockey.

DCs and ACs are local training centres for the U13 to U17 age groups. DCs are open to any hockey player who has been nominated by their club, school or coach, with ACs open to any player who has been nominated by a DC coach. After attending a DC, an AC is the next step on the player pathway. Included in the DCs/ACs are Goalkeeper (GK) Academies, which provide specific coaching sessions for goalkeepers.

There are no England Hockey DC or AC sites located within East Hertfordshire with the nearest talent academy located at Cambridge. Bishop's Stortford HC states it is hoping to become a Development Centre in 2025.

Most men's and women's hockey teams currently play matches on a Saturday which is therefore the peak time for use of artificial grass pitches for competitive play.

5.4: Supply and demand analysis

The PPS Guidance suggests that a sports lit pitch is able to accommodate four match equivalent sessions on a Saturday with teams playing in a home and away format, as such this equates to one artificial grass pitch being able to cater for eight "home" teams. Teams play matches on home v away formats and therefore one team requires 0.5 match sessions per week on its "home" artificial grass pitch. On this basis, a pitch can cater for eight teams from a home club (with four playing away on the home vs away rotation) with each pitch considered to have a total capacity equating to four MES in the peak period.

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Table 5.7: Supply and demand analysis of peak time (Saturday) pitch access

Site ID	Site name	Number of pitches	Site user	Current use in peak period (MES)	Spare capacity?	Comments
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	1	Bishop's Stortford HC	5 MES	No	The site is open 09:00-18:00 with Bishop's Stortford HC using the pitch all day with the first push back at 10am.
58	Hockerill Anglo-European College	1	Bishop's Stortford HC	4 MES	No	Hockerill Anglo-European College is open for community use 10:00 - 18:00 with Bishop's Stortford accessing it from 11:00 and the first push back at 11:30.
89	Simon Balle School	1	Hertford HC	4 MES	No	Hertford HC use this pitch 09:30 - 17:30 with the first push back at 10am. Three of its teams have to travel to Queenswood School in Welwyn Hatfield to fulfil its Saturday fixtures.

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Bishop's Stortford HC accesses two sites for its Saturday match play, Hockerill Anglo-European College and The Herts & Essex Sport Centre. The Club splits its teams between the two sites with 10 teams accessing The Herts & Essex Sport Centre on a home and away basis, allowing for five games. The other seven teams' access Hockerill Anglo-European College on a home and away basis meaning there is space for four games to be played. Consequently, there is no spare capacity at either site, the Club confirms it considers itself at capacity for its Saturday fixtures. It further uses both pitches on a Sunday morning 09:00-13:30 with youth fixtures taking place 13:30–17:30, however, no games are played at Herts & Essex at these times due to planning stipulations. It accesses Bishop's Stortford College 09:00-12:00 for master's and mixed training.

Hertford HC has 11 senior teams accessing pitches for Saturday fixtures, eight of which play at Simon Balle School with the remaining three travelling to Welwyn Hatfield to play at Queenswood School. The Club accesses Simon Balle School all day Saturday meaning there is no spare capacity at this site. It further uses both Simon Balle School and Haileybury School on Sunday mornings for training and youth games. It points out that Haileybury can be difficult to book due to other users, but this is not an issue as it has priority at Simon Balle School. Queenswood School has good access as no other clubs use it on a Saturday. It expresses a want to add a fifth women's team but realises that a lack of pitch space is an inhibiting factor.

5.5: Conclusion

Within East Hertfordshire there are seven full-size AGPs available for community use with the two clubs accessing three of these, Simon Balle School, The Herts & Essex Sport Centre and Hockerill Anglo-European College for weekend match play.

The two pitches at Haileybury College are used all day on Saturdays by its own borders so are not available for clubs to access. The last two pitches are at Bishop's Stortford College, one of which is used solely for school use on midweek evenings and saturdays so is not available to hire. The second pitch is available to hire and is heavily used midweek with some spare capacity on Sunday's which is intermittently taken by Bishop's Stortford HC as and when it needs it.

Both Hertford HC and Bishop's Stortford state that to grow the clubs would require more pitch space. Currently there is sufficient provision to cater for hockey demand, however, if the clubs aspire to grow the number of teams, then new pitch space will have to be provided. It is also important to note here that Hertford HC already has three teams displaced and using the pitch at Queenswood School in Welwyn Hatfield for home games.

With the pitches at Simon Balle School and Bishop's Stortford School having surpassed the suggested lifespan of an AGP questions surrounding funds to replace the surfaces will arise. Should these pitches become unsafe and not be replaced then the current lack of weekend pitch space will be multiplied, and more teams will have to export to play games outside of East Hertfordshire.

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Hockey summary

- There is no spare capacity at any of the pitches available for weekend match play and there are currently teams exporting to play home games.
- Regarding future demand, both Hertford HC and Bishop's Stortford HC realise that growth cannot happen without more pitch space. Despite this, Hertford HC is looking to add a fifth women's senior team.
- With the AGPs provided at the Simon Balle School and Bishop's Stortford College having surpassed end of life, there is the need to provide a pitch replacement at each site in order to accommodate existing and future hockey demand. There are eight full size hockey suitable AGPs in East Hertfordshire located across six sites. Seven of these pitches are open to community use on, with only three available to hire at peak time on weekends.
- The full-size pitch at Herts & Essex Sports Centre resembles the only good quality playing provision within the District, with the AGP being built in 2019.
- Provision found at Bishop's Stortford School and Simon Balle School is poor quality with both having surpassed the suggested lifespan of an AGP. The condition of the pitches is now at a point where a replacement surface shall be required during the lifespan of the PPS.
- Finally, the pitch at Hockerill Anglo-European College is standard, however, the accompanying ancillary facilities are poor and need enhancing to continue to host external bookings.
- There are two hockey clubs within East Hertfordshire, those being Hertford HC and Bishop's Stortford HC.
- Bishop's Stortford Hockey Club has seven adult men's teams, 10 adult women's teams, three junior girl's teams, three junior boy's teams, six mixed junior teams and one mini under eight team. Additionally, there are over 35s and over 45's men's and women's teams.
- Hertford Hockey Club currently has seven men's teams, four ladies' teams, seven junior boys' teams and 10 junior girls' teams. Alongside both a men's over 35 and over 45 team and women's over 35 team.
- Hertford HC would like to add a fifth women's team however both it and Bishop's Stortford HC raise that there is a lack of peak time pitch space and would struggle to add teams.
- Based on high levels of demand there is an insufficient supply of provision to accommodate existing demand and should pitch replacements not be undertaken, both clubs will struggle to field current number of teams.
- Future demand cannot be accommodated with existing provision and would require an additional pitch.

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PART 6: CRICKET PITCHES

6.1: Introduction

Hertfordshire County Cricket Club (HCCC) is the main governing and representative body for Cricket within East Hertfordshire. Working closely with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), HCCC is responsible for the management and development of every form of recreational cricket for men, women and children. HCCC is currently working with the ECB on delivering its recently refreshed Strategy, 'Inspiring Generations', which has been live since 2020. See Appendix One: Sporting Context for more details.

For adult cricket in East Hertfordshire there are three main offerings: Saturday, Sunday and midweek cricket. The youth league structure tends to be club-based matches which are played mid-week, although some matches are also played on Sundays.

Consultation

In total, 23 cricket clubs are identified as playing within East Hertfordshire, of which, 19 responded to consultation requests, equating to an 83% response rate. Club responses are listed in the table below.

Table 6.1: Cricket club response rate

Club name	Club response?
Ardeley Walkern Cricket Club	Yes
Albury Cricket Club	No
Aston CC	Yes
Aspenden, Standon & Puckeridge CC	Yes
Allenburys & County Hall Cricket Club	Yes
Bayford & Hertford Nondescripts Cricket Club	Yes
Bengeo Cricket Club	Yes
Bishop's Stortford Cricket Club	Yes
Bramfield Cricket Club	No
Braughing Cricket Club	Yes
Buntingford Cricket Club	Yes
Datchworth Cricket Club	Yes
Hare Street and The Hormeads Cricket Club	No
Hertford Cricket Club	Yes
Hertingfordbury Cricket Club	Yes
Little Berkhamsted Sahibs Cricket Club	No
Little Munden Cricket Club	Yes
Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club	Yes
St Margaretsbury Cricket Club	Yes
Tewin Cricket Club	Yes
Thorley Cricket Club	Yes
Ware Cricket Club	Yes
Watton-At-Stone Cricket Club	Yes

Thundridge CC has been discounted from the assessment, as since the last PPS was completed, the Club has folded.

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6.2: Supply

In total, there are 46 natural turf cricket squares (across 30 sites). Hertford Cricket Club, Datchworth CC and The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust all have a non turf pitch (NTP) on their second squares. There are also standalone NTPs situated at Morgans Field and Haileybury Sports Complex.

Heath Mount School, Haileybury Sports Complex, Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields and St Edmunds College & Prep School do not currently offer community use for their cricket facilities. There are therefore 38 community accessible squares across 26 sites.

Table 6.2: Summary of grass wicket cricket sites

Analysis area	No. of sites	No. of squares
Bishop's Stortford	6	15
Buntingford	9	10
Hertford, Ware	6	11
Sawbridgeworth	4	5
Watton-at-Stone	5	5
East Hertfordshire	**30**	**46**

Bishop's Stortford Area provides the highest number of squares with 15 (33% of all provision), whilst the Sawbridgeworth Analysis Area has the fewest squares with only four (11%).

Non-turf pitches (NTPs)

There are 11 standalone NTPs across nine sites in East Hertfordshire as listed below. Each site contains one NTP each, other than Haileybury Sports Complex and St Edmunds College and Prep School which both have two. None of the schools are open to community use other than Avanti Grange Secondary School.

- Avanti Grange Secondary School.
- Edwinstree C Of E Middle School.
- Haileybury Sports Complex (x2).
- Hockerill Anglo-European College.
- Morgans Field.
- Presdales Recreation Ground.
- St Edmunds College & Prep School (x2).
- The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields.
- The Chauncy School.

There are also non-turf wickets accompanying natural turf cricket squares at six sites. All of which are available for community use, other than Heath Mount School.

- Heath Mount School.
- Hertford Cricket Club.
- Leventhorpe School.
- The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields.
- The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust.
- Datchworth Sports Club.

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NTPs, particularly when located at club sites, can also aid with training and practice, and can help reduce overplay on grass wickets when used for matches. The ECB highlights that NTPs which follow its TS6 guidance on performance standards are suitable for high level, senior play. NTPs are also frequently used for junior matches across the country, and there are some instances of this in East Hertfordshire.

From a school perspective, NTPs provide a reliable cricket offer, without the need for specific cricket preparation to be taken on natural turf playing field. In many instances, schools do not have the resource or expertise to prepare natural turf wickets so NTPs provide a resource to ensure cricket can remain a key element of curricular sport.

The map below shows the location of all cricket squares currently servicing East Hertfordshire. For a key to the map, see Table 6.4.

Figure 6.1: Location of grass cricket squares within East Hertfordshire

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Disused provision

Playing fields which have previously accommodated formal pitch provision are categorised as disused. A disused site is a playing field which is not being used at all by any users and is not available for community hire either. In East Hertfordshire there are both disused sites that are in an overgrown condition and unused cricket sites/provision that still actively accommodate alternative sporting provision (i.e., football is still played on the site).

Table 6.3: Summary of disused cricket provision within East Hertfordshire

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Analysis area	Disused/ unused site/ pitch	Comments
1	Albury Football Ground	SG11 2JG	Bishop's Stortford	Disused pitch	Site previously accommodated a grass cricket square now just has football pitches.
15	Birchwood High School	CM23 5BD	Bishop's Stortford	Disused NTP	Site previously accommodated an NTP.
31	Cottered Playing Field	SG9 9QW	Buntingford	Unused pitch	Site previously accommodated a grass cricket square now just services football demand.
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	SG12 9NZ	Hertford, Ware	Disused NTP	Site previously accommodated an NTP now just services rugby demand.
106	The Meads (Lower Field)	SG9 0DY	Buntingford	Unused pitch	Site previously accommodated a grass cricket square although is now just a recreation space.
138	County Hall	SG13 8DQ	Hertford, Ware	Unused pitch	Site previously accommodated a grass cricket square and an accompanying NTP. However, since the pavilion burned down 9th August 2023 the site does not provide any sports provision.
165	Little Hadham CC	SG11 2ED	Bishop's Stortford	Unused pitch	Site previously accommodated a grass cricket square.

Potential future supply changes

Bengeo CC has approached the District Council to potentially start using the disused County Hall site as a second ground due to its rapidly growing expansion. The Council has shown interest in the Club taking on the ground, however, given that that there is no pavilion servicing the site (due to fire damage) it would mean the Club having no access to onsite ancillary facilities.

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Sawbridgeworth CC is loosely planning to partner with Sawbridgeworth Town FC to build a new purpose-built facility for both clubs to use. Both are seeking a new site to further growth ambitions. Sawbridgeworth CC states that it has experienced operational issues when accessing Leventhorpe School. The Club has an agreement to access the site until 2027 but states its preference is using its club site for home games.

The new, proposed Gilston development will include a central cricket hub containing multiple squares and service cricket demand for both new and existing residents in the area. The development will see 10,000 new homes built.

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Table 6.4: Key to map of grass cricket squares

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	No. of squares	No. of wickets	No. of NTPs
6	Aston Cricket Club (Herts)	Buntingford	Yes	1	6	-
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Hertford, Ware	Yes	1	8	-
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	8	10	-
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	8	7	-
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	8	5	-
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	8	2	-
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	8	4	-
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	8	1	-
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	8	1	-
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	8	1	-
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	1	6	-
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	1	8	-
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Buntingford	Yes	2	14	-
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Buntingford	Yes	2	11	-
40	Freman College	Buntingford	Yes	1	8	-
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	Hertford, Ware	No	4	13	-
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	Hertford, Ware	No	4	10	-
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	Hertford, Ware	No	4	8	-
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	Hertford, Ware	No	4	6	-
46	Heath Mount School	Watton-at-Stone	No	1	3	1
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	2	15	-
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	2	8	1
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Hertford, Ware	Yes	1	9	-
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	1	9	1
63	Little Berkhamsted Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	1	8	-
64	Little Munden Cricket Club	Buntingford	Yes	1	4	-
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Buntingford	Yes	1	8	-
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Buntingford	No	1	8	-
97	St Margaretsbury Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	2	18	-

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	No. of squares	No. of wickets	No. of NTPs
97	St Margaretsbury Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	2	8	-
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	1	10	-
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields	Sawbridgeworth	No	2	9	-
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields	Sawbridgeworth	No	2	4	1
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	3	13	-
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	3	12	1
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	3	6	-
109	Thorley Cricket Club	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	1	15	-
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	Buntingford	Yes	1	8	-
112	Town Fields	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	1	14	-
115	Ware CC	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	1	14	-
126	Allenburys Sport & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	1	11	-
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Buntingford	Yes	1	6	-
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	1	8	-
129	Aspenden Standon & Puckeridge Cricket Club	Buntingford	Yes	1	4	-
130	Bayford & Hertford CC	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	1	10	-
136	Stocking Pelham CC	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	1	4	-

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Security of tenure

Table 6.5 outlines the tenure agreement of cricket clubs across East Hertfordshire. Where provision is owned by the District Council or town/parish councils and either rented or leased to clubs, unless otherwise known, it is considered that this provision is secure and will be provided over the lifespan of the PPOSS.

The broad position is that most clubs have secure tenure and will therefore be able to service cricket for the foreseeable future (and as a minimum over the lifespan of the PPOSS). This is detailed club-by-club in the following table.

Table 6.5: Summary of club tenure arrangements (where known)

Club	Site	Tenure	Security of tenure	Management
Ardeley Walkern Cricket Club	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Rented from Walkern Parish Council.	Unknown	The Club maintain the playing provision.
Aston CC	Aston CC	Rented from Aston Centre Field Trust.	Unknown	Aston CC
Aspenden, Standon and Puckeridge Cricket Club	Aspenden, Standon & Puckeridge CC	Leased from Aspenden Parish Council.	Unknown	Aspenden Parish Council manage the site, but the Club maintain the pitch.
Allenburys & County Hall Cricket Club	Allenburys & County Hall Cricket Club	Long term lease with GSK, which is in the process of being renewed.	Secure	Allenburys Sport & Social Club
Bayford & Hertford Nondescripts Cricket Club	Bayford & Hertford Nondescripts Cricket Club	Leased from Bayford Parish Council (25 years).	Secure	Bayford & Hertford Nondescripts CC
Bengeo Cricket Club	Bengeo Sports Ground	Freehold ownership by the Sports Association.	Secure	The Sports Association
Bishop's Stortford Cricket Club	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Tenure is a mix of freehold and on a lease depending on which part of the site.	Secure	Bishop's Stortford Cricket CC
Braughing Cricket Club	Braughing Playing Fields	Long term lease with community centre.	Secure	Braughing CC
Buntingford Cricket Club	Norfolk Road Playing Fields (Buntingford MUGA)	Rented from Buntingford Town Council.	Secure	Buntingford CC
Datchworth Cricket Club	Datchworth Sports Club	Leased from Datchworth Parish Council and Wallace Farms.	Secure	Datchworth CC
Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford Cricket Club	Long term lease with Hertfordshire County Council.	Unsecure	Hertford CC
Hertingfordbury Cricket Club	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Ground is in trust under a lease agreement (>40 years), paid annually.	Secure	The Club maintains field and the Trust maintains the building.

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Club	Site	Tenure	Security of tenure	Management
Little Munden Cricket Club	Little Munden Cricket Club	Leased from a private landowner.	Secure	Little Munden CC
Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club	Town Fields	Freehold ownership by sports trust, for cricket tennis and bowls all on site.	Secure	Sawbridgeworth CC
St Margaretsbury Cricket Club	St Margaretsbury Sports & Social Club	Peppercorn long-term lease.	Secure	A Trust manage and maintain the site.
Tewin Cricket Club	Tewin Recreation Ground	Rented from Tewin Parish Council.	Unknown	The Council
Thorley Cricket Club	Thorley Cricket Club	Leased from Thorley Parish Council.	Unknown	Thorley CC
Ware Cricket Club	Ware Cricket Club	Rented from private landowner.	Unsecure	Private landowner
Watton-At-Stone Cricket Club	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Leased from Watton-at-Stone Parish Council.	Unknown	Watton-At-Stone CC

The position of the four unresponsive clubs is unknown.

As noted in the table above, Hertford CC has a lease agreement with Hertfordshire County Council. The Club is frustrated that it is being asked to maintain the trees and surrounding grass of the site rather than only maintaining the playing provision.

Pitch quality

The quality of cricket pitches has been assessed via a combination of site visits undertaken in August 2024 (using non-technical assessments as determined by the ECB) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

‣ Good.
‣ Standard.
‣ Poor.

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows; Good (>80%), Standard (50-79%), Poor (<49%).

Maintaining high pitch quality is the most important aspect of cricket; if the wicket is poor, it can affect the quality of the game and can, in some instances, become dangerous. As an example, if a square is poor quality, a ball can bounce erratically on a wicket and become a danger to players.

The quality of a cricket square is assessed by considering factors such as evidence of the wicket being rolled, the wicket being correctly cut, evidence of cover usage, evidence of maintenance and the presence of line markings. Comparatively, an outfield is assessed on the provisions grass length, quantity of weeds, evenness of the surface, level of undulations, damage to the surface and evidence of dog fouling.

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With regards to maintenance of provision, most clubs consulted with confirm they have maintenance responsibility for their pitches. With the remaining clubs either having other arrangements or unknown.

Of the community available grass wicket cricket squares in East Hertfordshire (38 squares), 14 are assessed as good quality (37%), 20 standard quality (53%) and four poor quality (10%). The four poor quality squares are located at Bramfield Playing Field, Datchworth Sports Club, Leventhorpe School and Allenburys Sport and Social Club.

Table 6.6: Quality ratings for community available grass wicket squares

Site ID	Site name	Club accessing site	No. of pitches	Pitch quality
6	Aston Cricket Club (Herts)	Aston CC	1	Standard
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Bengeo CC	1	Standard
16	Bishop's Stortford College	-	8	Good
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Bramfield CC	1	Poor
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Braughing CC	1	Standard
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth CC	1	Poor
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth CC	1	Standard
40	Freman College	Reed CC	1	Standard
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford CC	1	Good
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford CC	1	Standard
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Hertingfordbury CC	1	Standard
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth CC	1	Poor
63	Little Berkhamsted Recreation Ground	Little Berkhamsted Sahibs CC	1	Standard
64	Little Munden Cricket Club	Little Munden CC	1	Standard
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Buntingford CC Hare Street & Hormeads CC	1	Standard
97	St. Margaretsbury Sport & Social Club	St Margaretsbury CC	2	Good
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Tewin CC	1	Standard
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford CC	2	Good
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford CC	1	Standard
109	Thorley Cricket Club	Thorley CC	1	Good
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	-	1	Standard
112	Town Fields	Sawbridgeworth CC	1	Standard
115	Ware CC	Ware CC	1	Standard
126	Allenburys Sport & Social Club	Allenburys & County Hall CC	1	Poor
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Ardeley Walkern CC	1	Standard
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-At-Stone CC	1	Standard
129	Aspenden Standon & Puckeridge Cricket Club	Aspenden, Standon & Puckeridge CC	1	Standard
130	Bayford & Hertford CC	Bayford & Hertford CC	1	Standard
136	Stocking Pelham CC	Albury CC	1	Standard

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Leventhorpe School provides a poorly rated cricket square, which is currently let out to Sawbridgeworth CC. The Club states there are no covers on the square and in recent years has taken it upon themselves to improve the square. Despite this the outfield is full of rabbit holes and has goalposts up. Further to this the school cuts the outfield grass to an incorrect length for cricket.

Allenburys Sport & Social Club highlights that the quality of its pitch has become much poorer due to a change in groundskeeper. It records the square as poor quality while the outfield is standard.

Bramfield Playing Field is an open space beside the village hall and as such is always open to the public. Consequently, the outfield suffers damage due to dog walkers and local children playing on it. Additionally, the outfield is used as a football pitch.

Datchworth CC's first and main square is currently rated as poor quality with the square having a low bounce. The outfield also has a paved walking track through it and is undulating on one side.

Table 6.7: Pitch quality club consultations findings

Site ID	Site name	Club	Consultation feedback
6	Aston Cricket Club (Herts)	Aston Cricket Club (Herts)	The Club suggests that the pitch has improved in recent years due to good groundskeeping. In spite of this the ground does not have covers.
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Bengeo CC	The Club expresses the fact that the space is open to public and tends to attract dog walkers and local residents who both may be not the most considerate to the space.
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Braughing CC	The Club does not have any covers and use sheets instead which it would like to replace.
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth CC	There are two squares at this site, one rated poor and one rated standard. The Club reports a low bounce, and that the outfield of its main square is relatively good although undulates a lot on one side as well as having a public walking track going through the edge of the outfield.
40	Freman College	Reed CC (North Herts Club)	Reed CC reports that whilst the outfield is a good quality it does have a lot of weeds; despite the fact they were last weed picked in June. As this is the Club's second ground it struggles to keep up with the costs of doing the weeds on a more consistent basis.
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford CC	The first square is of good quality while the second square is of standard quality. The second square currently has no covers, and the Club has recently debated when an optimal time would be to relay it. It also expresses interest in acquiring a new roller as its current one is over 50 years old.
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Hertingfordbury CC	The pitch at this site is standard, however, the Club describes the outfield having weeds and suffering due to the wrong tractor being used. The site is also open to public and suffers from it.
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth CC	Through consultation, Sawbridgeworth has voiced its frustrations with the pitch at Leventhorpe. Specifically, the lack of sight screens and covers at the site.

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Site ID	Site name	Club	Consultation feedback
			The Club goes into detail about a poor outfield, full of rabbit holes and goal posts being left there. It also reports that the school cut the outfield to the wrong length.
64	Little Munden Cricket Club	Little Munden CC	The Club has an approved small grant coming in 2024 and plan to relay two of the wickets on the square.
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Buntingford CC Hare Street and the Hormeads CC	Buntingford CC points out that it is carrying out more maintenance work on the square. However, it is important to note that the square is also used by Hare Street & Hormeads CC.
97	St. Margaretsbury Sport & Social Club	St Margaretsbury CC	St Margaretsbury CC explains issues with being a recreation ground meaning it is open for public use as well as Club use. Potentially having adverse consequences for the square and outfield.
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Tewin CC	Tewin CC reports its pitch to be of standard quality with the main problem it faces is "local youths".
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford CC	The first and second square are both of good quality while the third square is standard. The third square was installed in 2022 making it relatively new and accommodates junior play only. The Third square has football pitches marked in the outfield and the Club is currently working to improve the third square.
109	Thorley Cricket Club	Thorley CC	Thorley CC confirm that it has improved its groundwork and thus improved its ground quality.
112	Town Fields	Sawbridgeworth CC	Sawbridgeworth know that it's square is overused but would rather this and playing elsewhere. The Club bought a new roller and square mower just over a year ago although has no covers and uses a sheet. Despite this the site is on a slight hill and so water finds its way under the sheet.
115	Ware CC	Ware CC	The Club reports that the groundskeeper is working hard to improve the pitch and that the pitch has already become slightly better. It should be noted that there are no covers for this site.
126	Allenburys Sport & Social Club	Allenburys & County Hall CC	The Club describes how its ground has declined in quality significantly over the last few years due to changing groundskeeper. It describes the square as poor but the outfield as standard.
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Ardeley Walkern CC	The cricket Club concur that the pitch is of a standard quality. It maintains the square whilst the sports Club cuts the outfield.
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-At-Stone CC	The Club reports that this year has seen more weeds, however, do not think quality has declined as such.
129	Aspenden Standon & Puckeridge Cricket Club	Aspenden, Standon & Puckeridge CC	The Club describes no difference in pitch quality the last few years, however, did detail a poor outfield.
130	Bayford & Hertford CC	Bayford & Hertford CC	The Club states that most aspects of its ground are good, including the square and outfield. However, it also highlights a lack of portable covers for the square.

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In relation to the remaining squares across the District, quality is either standard or good. Of the NTPs all provision at club sites is in an adequate and useable condition.

Ancillary facilities

Ancillary provision refers to the accompanying building to a site that is accessed as changing facilities and a social space, if applicable. All sites were assessed during non-technical site assessments and further evidenced was gained via consultation. Quality ratings were determined by assessing matters such as the condition of the building, the quantity and quality of changing rooms and the social space offering.

Table 6.8: Quality ratings for community available ancillary facilities

Site ID	Site name	Club accessing site	Analysis area	Ancillary quality
6	Aston Cricket Club (Herts)	Aston Cricket Club (Herts)	Buntingford	Poor
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Bengeo CC	Hertford, Ware	Standard
16	Bishop's Stortford College	-	Bishop's Stortford	Good
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Bramfield CC	Watton-at-Stone	Good
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Braughing CC	Bishop's Stortford	Standard
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth CC	Buntingford	Poor
40	Freman College	Reed CC	Buntingford	Standard
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford CC	Hertford, Ware	Good
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Hertingfordbury CC	Hertford, Ware	Standard
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth CC	Sawbridgeworth	Standard
63	Little Berkhamsted Recreation Ground	Little Berkhamsted Sahibs CC	Watton-at-Stone	Poor
64	Little Munden Cricket Club	Little Munden CC	Buntingford	Poor
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Buntingford CC Hare Street & Hormeads	Buntingford	Good
97	St. Margaretsbury Sport & Social Club	St Margaretsbury CC	Hertford, Ware	Standard
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Tewin CC	Watton-at-Stone	Standard
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford CC	Bishop's Stortford	Good
109	Thorley Cricket Club	Thorley CC	Bishop's Stortford	Poor
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	-	Buntingford	Poor
112	Town Fields	Sawbridgeworth CC	Sawbridgeworth	Good
115	Ware CC	Ware CC	Sawbridgeworth	Standard
126	Allenburys Sport & Social Club	Allenburys & County Hall CC	Hertford, Ware	Standard
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Ardeley Walkern CC	Buntingford	Standard
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-At-Stone CC	Watton-at-Stone	Good
129	Aspenden Standon & Puckeridge Cricket Club	Aspenden, Standon & Puckeridge CC	Buntingford	Poor
130	Bayford & Hertford CC	Bayford & Hertford CC	Watton-at-Stone	Standard
136	Stocking Pelham CC	Albury CC	Bishop's Stortford	Standard

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All clubs in East Hertfordshire have access to ancillary provision, of which, there is a varying level of quality. Most provision is either good or standard quality; however, this is not the case at all sites. For example, Little Munden CC has a poor quality small wooden building that does not have electricity and as such is not fully utilised. Thorley CC states that the overall condition of its clubhouse is poor as well as its changing rooms and social area and needs replacement. Aston CC's provision is rated poor due to only offering a small building where both teams share the same shower area. Datchworth CC has had planning permission approved for extending and refurbishing its shared clubhouse, however, the Club is still fundraising to enable this project.

Table 6.9: Ancillary provision quality club consultation findings

Site ID	Site name	Club	Consultation feedback
6	Aston Cricket Club (Herts)	Aston Cricket Club (Herts)	Aston is a small club which only play friendlies and has no need for anything more than basic ancillary facilities. These facilities are poor quality.
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Bengeo CC	Bengeo CC access standard quality ancillary provision in the form of a medium sized brick building which also services the football team that also use the ground. The building provides standard, toilets, changing facilities and a social room.
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Braughing CC	Braughing playing fields offers standard quality ancillary provision with a large brick building and ample parking on site. The building has a kitchen, changing rooms and showers. However, the Club highlights it would like to have a clubhouse with a bar.
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth CC	The Club accesses poor quality provision at its home site, Datchworth Sports Club. It contains five changing rooms and an official's room, with a communal shower room to service all. Consultation with the Club confirms that the building is very dated and needs refurbishing and it has had planning permission accepted to do this. The Club is currently still fundraising to enable this project to go ahead.
40	Freman College	Reed CC (North Herts Club)	Reed CC has access to the common room which includes kitchen facilities and a sitting area as well as changing rooms and showers.
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford CC	During site assessment, work was being carried out on the pavilion, including painting and recladding. The facilities are of good quality and include plenty of parking, bar facilities with an outdoor patio and four changing rooms. Two of the changing rooms were only added 10 years ago.
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Hertingfordbury CC	Hertingfordbury CC has standard facilities including a clubhouse with two changing rooms with very small showers, male and female toilets, a kitchen area, and a social room. The Club has no licence for a bar on the premises.

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Site ID	Site name	Club	Consultation feedback
			It aspires to either build changing rooms at the back or develop the exiting garage into a larger changing area and acquire a container for storage.
64	Little Munden Cricket Club	Little Munden CC	During consultation with the Club, it was highlighted that the only ancillary access that is uses is a small wooden structure with no electricity. This building is used for everything in terms of changing facilities as well as a social area.
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Buntingford CC Hare Street and the Hormeads CC	Located at Norfolk Road Playing Fields is a good quality large brick building. The Club concurs that the facilities are good and confirmed it had, changing rooms, toilets, showers all in good condition. The building also has a social area as well as separate changing facilities for women and girls and umpires.
97	St. Margaretsbury Sport & Social Club	St Margaretsbury CC	St Margaretsbury CC confirms that out of its three sets of changing rooms changing rooms two are in poor condition due to being very old and the other is standard. The ladies' toilets and main changing room showers have recently been refurbished; however, the Club expresses that this is just papering over the cracks. The changing rooms are shared between the football and cricket so will get extra usage. The facilities also include a bar and social area.
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Tewin CC	Tewin CC accesses standard ancillary facilities. Including, toilets, changing rooms, a clubroom and separate female changing rooms. Despite this there are not separate showers per team, communal only. There are also no officials changing rooms available.
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford CC	Bishop's Stortford CC accesses good quality ancillary provision at the Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust site which is well maintained. The site has two pavilions, one for each adult square, both of which have basic home and away changing rooms. Additionally, there is also a large brick building, encompassing a large bar, clubroom, outdoor patio, and squash courts.
109	Thorley Cricket Club	Thorley CC	Thorley CC currently has poor ancillary provision. The Club highlights poor changing and toilet facilities as well as the general condition of the pavilion. There are separate changing rooms for each team although communal showers only. There are no changing facilities for umpires or women and girls. It reaffirms the fact that its clubhouse is in major need of replacement.

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Site ID	Site name	Club	Consultation feedback
112	Town Fields	Sawbridgeworth CC	The Club confirms it has two buildings, which includes two changing rooms, a club room, and showers. It aspires to replace the changing rooms with more inclusive spaces to include provision for umpires and women and girls. This plan would also include a new patio to allow for socialising.
115	Ware CC	Ware CC	Ware CC has standard provision accessible to it. It provides basic changing and showering facilities as well as a kitchen. However, does not have separate facilities for women and girls.
126	Allenburys Sport & Social Club	Allenburys & County Hall CC	Allenburys Sports and Social Club provides standard ancillary provision. There is a large building on site which provides changing rooms and toilets but no club room or social area.
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Ardeley Walkern CC	There is a large sports and community centre on the site that offers standard ancillary provision for Ardeley Walkern CC. It offers, toilets, changing rooms and a clubroom/social area. The building also has kitchen facilities and has a large car park.
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-At-Stone CC	Standard ancillary facilities are provided via the community hall and contains changing rooms for both male and female players as well as officials. The Club states the above are all standard condition.
129	Aspenden Standon & Puckeridge Cricket Club	Aspenden, Standon & Puckeridge CC	The Club confirms that it provides poor ancillary facilities. There are no separate facilities for officials or for women and girls.
130	Bayford & Hertford CC	Bayford & Hertford CC	Although the Club describes the good condition of its facilities, it does not provide separate facilities for women and girls.

Currently only five clubs confirm they can accommodate separate men's and women's changing facilities within the peak period. Those clubs are, Tewin CC, Bengeo CC, Buntingford CC, Allenburys & County Hall CC and Watton at Stone CC. Although Bishop's Stortford CC does not have separate facilities for women and girls'; it does have separate buildings for each square so separation can be arranged if needed.

Of all the clubs only five report vandalism in the last year, those clubs being, Thorley CC, Bengeo CC, St Margaretsbury CC, Datchworth CC and Allenburys & County Hall CC. Across the five sites the most regular occurrence is attempted break ins and damage to buildings. Additionally, mobile nets and score huts were also damaged.

Ball strike issues

During consultation only Sawbridgeworth CC and Braughing CC highlight ball striking issues at their respective sites. Braughing CC is seeking a grant to rectify this and erect a net should one become available. Sawbridgeworth CC also describes that neighbouring properties are at risk from stray cricket balls.

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Training facilities

Most clubs in the District have their own fixed practice lanes at their respective sites ranging from two to four lanes. Details can be found in Table 6.10 below.

There are six clubs which state there is also demand for additional training facilities at their home sites, those being Allenburys & County Hall CC, Tewin CC, Thorley CC, Sawbridgeworth CC, St Margaretsbury CC and Ware CC.

Table 6.10: Current Club training facilities and future needs (consultation findings).

Site ID	Site name	Club	Consultation findings
6	Aston CC	Aston CC	Aston CC reports having a net with a concrete base and a runner mat on it.
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Bengeo CC	There are two practice lanes at this site.
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Braughing CC	Braughing CC has two fixed practice lanes and despite being quite old they are still used.
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth CC	There are three high quality practice lanes currently on site.
48	Hertford CC	Hertford CC	The Club has four practice lanes that were installed in 2015 that are playing okay but would still like to re level the surface. The nets were re done in 2024.
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Hertingfordbury CC	The Club had a two-lane training net installed circa 12-15 years ago and recognise the batting area needs replaced. The Club also bought a second-hand roll-on net last summer.
64	Little Munden CC	Little Munden CC	The Club is in the process of renovating its single lane training net as it has issues with badgers biting the nets. It also has a roll on net.
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Buntingford CC	Buntingford CC has two fixed practice lanes.
97	St. Margaretsbury Sport & Social Club	St Margaretsbury CC	The Club currently has two lanes and reports the need for an additional permanent practice net.
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Tewin CC	Tewin CC states it requires permanent fixed lane practice nets.
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford CC	The Club currently has a four-lane practice net
109	Thorley Cricket Club	Thorley CC	The Club expresses the need for a permanent practice net at its site. It only has two mobile roll on net currently.
112	Town Fields	Sawbridgeworth CC	Sawbridgeworth CC currently has two lanes and a mobile net although highlights the need for extra pitches and is hoping to partner with Sawbridgeworth Town FC to obtain a site of its own.
115	Ware CC	Ware CC	Ware CC details needing a second net at its site and does not currently use any indoor facilities.
126	Allenburys Sport & Social Club	Allenburys & County Hall CC	Allenburys & County Hall CC has a mobile net and two-lane indoor nets at its facility. The Club desires to have a bowling machine on site.

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Site ID	Site name	Club	Consultation findings
6	Aston CC	Aston CC	Aston CC reports having a net with a concrete base and a runner mat on it.
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone Cricket Club	There are two practice lanes at this facility.

Indoor facilities

Whilst the PPOSS only considers outdoor playing pitches, a cricket training programme includes accessing indoor net facilities over winter months in preparation for the start of the season. As such indoor training facilities are discussed below.

In total, 11 clubs report accessing indoor provision for winter net pre-season training sessions, with sites such as Hertfordshire University, Nobel School, Chancellors school, Freman College, Herts and Essex Cricket Centre (HECC), Haileybury, Leventhorpe school and Hatfield Sports Village being accessed.

St Margaretsbury Cricket Club is the only club to state that it believes there to be a lack of indoor facilities with the other clubs seemingly happy with access options.

6.3: Demand

There are 23 clubs in East Hertfordshire which collectively provide 108 teams. When broken down this equates to 50 senior men's, four senior women's, 48 junior boys and six junior girls' team. Of the 22 clubs, eight include both senior and junior sections, whilst the remaining 15 clubs' range in size but have between one and three senior teams.

Table 6.11: Summary of teams by club

Club	Analysis area	No. of senior men's teams	No. of senior women's teams	No. of junior boys' teams	No. of junior girls' teams	Total
Albury CC	Bishop's Stortford	1	-	-	-	**1**
Allenburys and County Hall CC	Hertford, Ware	2	-	-	-	**2**
Ardeley Walkern CC	Buntingford	1	-	-	-	**1**
Aston CC	Buntingford	1	-	-	-	**1**
Aspenden, Standon and Puckeridge CC	Buntingford	1	-	-	-	**1**
Bayford and Hertford CC	Watton-at-Stone	2	-	-	-	**2**
Bengeo CC	Hertford, Ware	3	-	2	-	**5**
Bishop's Stortford CC	Bishop's Stortford	4	2	15	4	**25**
Bramfield CC	Watton-at-Stone	1	-	-	-	**1**
Braughing CC	Watton-at-Stone	1	-	2	-	**3**
Buntingford CC	Buntingford	2	-	1	-	**3**
Datchworth CC	Buntingford	5	-	6	-	**11**
Hare Street and Hormeads CC	Buntingford	1	-	-	-	**1**
Hertford CC	Hertford, Ware	4	1	9	-	

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Club	Analysis area	No. of senior men's teams	No. of senior women's teams	No. of junior boys' teams	No. of junior girls' teams	Total
Hertingfordbury CC	Hertford, Ware	1	-	-	-	**1**
Little Berkhamsted CC	Watton-at-Stone	2	-	-	-	**2**
Little Munden CC	Buntingford	1	-	-	-	**1**
Sawbridgeworth CC	Sawbridgeworth	3	-	7	1	**11**
St. Margaretsbury CC	Hertford, Ware	4	1	6	1	**12**
Tewin CC	Watton-at-Stone	3	-	-	-	**3**
Thorley CC	Bishop's Stortford	3	-	-	-	**3**
Ware CC	Sawbridgeworth	2	-	-	-	**2**
Watton-at-Stone CC	Watton-at-Stone	2	-	-	-	**2**
Total		**50**	**4**	**48**	**6**	**108**

As seen in the table below, the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area accommodates the most cricket demand with 34 teams (31%) identified. The areas with the least amount of cricket demand are the Sawbridgeworth and Watton-at-Stone with 13 teams (12%) each.

Table 6.12: Summary of number of competitive teams by analysis area

Analysis area	Senior men	Senior women	Junior boys	Junior girls	Total
Bishop's Stortford	8	2	15	4	**29**
Buntingford	12	-	7	-	**19**
Hertford, Ware	14	2	17	1	**34**
Sawbridgeworth	5	-	7	1	**13**
Watton-at-Stone	11	-	2	-	**13**
East Hertfordshire	**50**	**4**	**48**	**6**	**108**

Participation trends

Throughout the District there are only two clubs that report some sort of increase in demand over the previous three years, Bengeo CC, and Sawbridgeworth CC. Bengeo CC has gained a second men's team two years ago and is taking on a new U9s team from its Dynamos and All-Stars sessions. It also details that it had its first all-girls colts' team despite only playing one game.

Sawbridgeworth CC has set up a separate girls' section which will require additional facilities for practical and safeguarding reasons. Its senior section is expanding to four teams (from three) on a Saturday in 2025 and due to the number of juniors coming through, expects that to further increase to five the following season. The Club is also looking to establish a women's team in the future to play league cricket. It explains how it is already struggling to accommodate all its training sessions at the Town Fields site.

At the other end of the scale Little Munden CC details how it nearly folded a few years ago but is managing to keep going with some new younger committee members helping. The Club did not express any future demand ambitions but confirm it has existed for over 100 years and does not want to fold.

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Thorley CC, Tewin CC and Hertingfordbury CC have all experienced a decrease in membership with Thorley CC detailing a struggle particularly after COVID-19 to get junior players to return and gain new adult players. Hertingfordbury CC lost its seconds men's team two years ago due to low numbers and has not been able to renew the team since. Tewin CC experienced a decrease in its junior section although does not plan to try and increase membership.

Imported/exported demand

Exported demand refers to teams that are currently accessing pitches for home fixtures outside of the study area, despite being registered in East Hertfordshire. Likewise, imported demand is demand from neighbouring authorities accessing pitches in East Hertfordshire to play competitive matches.

Regarding imported demand, Reed CC is accessing the pitch at Freman College every other Saturday from April through to September for its 3rd team. Reed CC is a North Hertfordshire team and has an agreement with the school where it can use the pitch and some ancillary facilities (when the school is not) in return for maintenance of the field.

Welwyn Garden City CC is also using the facilities at Aston CC on some Saturdays; however, the Club did not go into specifics about how often. It is based in Welwyn Hatfield.

There are several clubs from Uttlesford that currently travel into East Hertfordshire to access indoor cricket nets for training. Chrishall CC and Little Hallingbury CC access Leventhorpe School whilst Easton CC, Hatfield Broak Oak CC, Hockerill CC, Safron Walden CC and Standsted Hall & Elsenham CC access Herts & Essex Sports Centre and Farnham CC access Bishop's Stortford College.

It is important to note that while not in East Hertfordshire, Hockerill CC services some cricket demand from Bishop's Stortford. The Club lies on the border between Bishop's Stortford and Uttlesford and just falls into the latter's jurisdiction. The Club's site, which is in Uttlesford, has two cricket squares with 10 and seven wickets respectively and has seven teams playing currently, four men's and three boy's teams.

Additional activity

The ECB run several initiatives across the Country which results in additional cricket demand and use of cricket facilities. Whilst these do not generally utilise grass wickets, they can impact upon availability when sessions are being held due to use of cricket outfields, making squares unusable during these periods. The most relevant initiatives currently being delivered are detailed below.

All Stars cricket

In partnership with the ECB and Chance to Shine, cricket clubs can register to become an ECB All Stars Cricket Centre. Once registered, a club delivers programmes which introduce cricket to children aged from five to eight. Subsequently, this may lead to increased interest and demand for junior cricket at clubs. The programme seeks to achieve the following aims:

‹ Increase cricket activity for five- to eight-year-olds in the school and club environment.
‹ Develop consistency of message in both settings to aid transition.
‹ Improve generic movement skills for children, using cricket as the vehicle.
‹ Make it easier for new volunteers to support and deliver in the club environment.
‹ Use fun small-sided games to enthuse new children and volunteers to follow and play the game.

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Dynamo's cricket

A key development area for the ECB in delivering on the outcomes of 'Inspiring Generations' will be the Dynamos programme for eight–11-year-olds. It plans on building on the significant growth of the All-Stars programme and will develop the pathway to retain juniors which progress.

Where All Stars seeks to engage children in cricket activity and learning the skills, Dynamo's seeks to engage children in learning how to play, introducing a modified softball format as competitive progression with a view to eventual transition through to hardball cricket.

The programme will be strongly linked to The Hundred, a short format competition which also launched in 2022. The table below details the 2023 participation figures.

Table 6.13: Summary of All Stars and Dynamos participation

Club	All Stars participation figures (2023)	Dynamos participation figures (2023)
Datchworth CC	50 participants	-
Bengeo CC	65 participants	35 participants
Ware CC	25 participants	25 participants
St Margaretsbury CC	40 participants	-
Buntingford CC	25 participants	25 participants
Sawbridgeworth CC	80 participants	-
Bishop's Stortford CC	50 participants	-
Hertford CC	70 participants	50 participants
Total	**405 participants**	**135 participants**

There are eight clubs currently delivering All Stars and four delivering Dynamos sessions. The highest level of All Stars and Dynamos participation can be seen at Hertford CC with a total of 70 All Stars participants and 50 Dynamos participants.

Braughing CC reports having delivered All Stars last year but has not continued this year.

Softball cricket

Softball is an ECB initiative aimed at women and girls to increase female participation in cricket.

The aim of softball cricket sections is enjoyment and participation, without pads, a hardball, a heavy bat and limited rules. Sessions are generally played on the outfield of a square and follow a festival format with each session running for a maximum of two and half hours, shorter than traditional formats.

During consultation none of the responding clubs discussed running any women's softball sessions, as detailed above.

Chance to Shine

Chance to Shine is a national charity that aims to give all children the opportunity to play, learn and develop through cricket. It believes that cricket can help to develop the personal, social and physical skills of the 500,000 children that are worked with every year.

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It works in schools to provide children with their first experience of cricket, whilst it has also developed Chance to Shine Street. This is a format of the sport played with a tapeball, targeting children and young adults in inner-city areas and with matches lasting just 20-minutes. The following seven schools have received a whole school chance to shine programme:

◄ Hertingfordbury Cowper Primary School.
◄ Hertford St Andrew CofE Primary School.
◄ Morgans Primary School & Nursery.
◄ Abel Smith School.
◄ Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School.
◄ St Mary's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Junior School.
◄ Wareside Church of England Primary School.

Other usage

Little Hadham CC is currently only playing friendly games in East Hertfordshire. The Club used to have its own site but now uses Thorley CC as a main base.

Sawbridgeworth CC states that it hosts finals day and the occasional county game at its site. Whilst Datchworth CC host North Hertfordshire regional cup games on two Sunday afternoons and Herts over 60s spread over two or three Tuesday afternoons throughout the season.

St Margaretsbury CC rent a square to Comilla Warriors CC every Sunday. Whilst Bayford & Hertford Nondescripts CC host Hertfordshire Youth on Sundays, Hertfordshire over 60s midweek and Bayford veterans also midweek. The Club did not divulge specifics into how often each team used the facilities.

Disability cricket

Cricket is an inclusive sport by its nature; a sport that many people play, follow, and have a passion for, for life. Across England and Wales, the ECB wish to support cricket clubs to open their gates and deliver cricket opportunities for those with disabilities. The Disability Cricket Champion Club Programme will support cricket clubs through guidance, resource, and equipment, enabling them to welcome individuals with additional needs and varying abilities to support them to play, follow, officiate, and volunteer. Creating a truly equitable club game and providing fantastic new opportunities for cricketers and for the Champion Clubs.

There are currently no disability champion clubs within East Hertfordshire, however, it should be noted that Bishop's Stortford CC used to be. Currently the nearest disability club champion is Hatfield Hyde which is in Welwyn Garden City.

Future demand

Future demand can be defined in two ways, through club ambitions and using population forecasts.

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Population growth

Based on population projections to 2043 (the period to which this assessment projects population based future demand), Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator (PPC) can estimate the likely additional demand for grass cricket pitches that will arise from any growth.

Using the current and future populations in each of the relevant age groups together with the current team numbers, team generation rates (TGRs) have been established to understand how much growth is required to establish one new team.

For reference total current population in 2024 of 150,158 will increase to 162,871 by 2043. The table below shows the number of new teams generated by the new population and the requisite match equivalent sessions.

Table 6.14: Summary of population growth

Age group	Current population per sport age group	Team generation rate	No. of new teams generated by the new population	No. of new teams generated by the new population	Peak time	Average games for age group	MES per season[23]
Men (18-55yrs)	34,386	1:648	3.92	3	Saturday	12	36
Women (18-55yrs)	36,081	1:9,020	0.30	0	Sunday	12	0
Boys (7-18yrs)	12,301	1:251	3.63	3	Midweek	6	18
Girls (7-18yrs)	11,431	1:3,810	0.22	0	Midweek	6	0

The total amount of future growth is anticipated to equate to three senior men's and three junior boys' teams. Once the figures are broken down into analysis areas this potential growth in demand decreases to one junior boys' team in the Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area and one senior men's and one junior boys' team in the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area.

The population projection only accounts for ONS based projections of growth, it does not account for the significant additional growth associated with planned new developments such as Gilston.

Participation growth

Through consultation, five clubs in East Hertfordshire have plans to increase the number of teams they currently provide, by a total of eight teams. To caveat this one of the clubs did not detail how many new teams it wishes to acquire. Details of a breakdown of this potential growth is listed in the table below.

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[23] 2 teams require 1 pitch to account for playing on a home and away basis; therefore, 1 team accounts to 0.5 match equivalent sessions on their relevant pitch type.

Table 6.15: Future demand expressed by clubs (in teams)

Club	Analysis area	Senior men's	Senior women's	Junior boys	Junior girls
Bishop's Stortford CC	Bishop's Stortford	-	-	-	-
Braughing CC	Bishop's Stortford	-	-	1	-
Datchworth CC	Buntingford	1	-	-	-
Hertford CC	Hertford, Ware	-	-	-	2
Sawbridgeworth CC	Sawbridgeworth	1	-	3	-
	Total	**2**	**-**	**4**	**2**

St Margaretsbury CC reports aspiring to add another Sunday team but has not yet put anything in motion to see this happen.

Future demand summary

In summary, future demand is calculated at this stage using ONS population forecasts and equates to one senior men's and two junior boys' teams. A scenario exploring how future demand through club ambitions will impact the supply and demand analysis will be included in the forthcoming Strategy.

Peak time demand

An analysis of match play identifies that peak time demand for senior cricket in East Hertfordshire is Saturday, although several teams also play on a Sunday including senior women's teams. As such, both are considered within the supply and demand analysis later in the section. For junior cricket, peak time is midweek.

6.4: Capacity analysis

Capacity analysis for cricket is measured on a seasonal rather than a weekly basis. This is due to playability (as only one match is generally played per square per day at weekends or weekday evening) and because wickets are rotated throughout the season to reduce wear and tear and to allow for repair.

The capacity of a square to accommodate matches is driven by the number and quality of wickets. This section of the report therefore presents the current pitch stock available for cricket and illustrates the number of competitive match equivalent sessions per season per square that is available and that currently takes place.

For good quality squares, capacity is five matches per grass wicket per season, whilst for a standard quality square, capacity is four matches per wicket per season. For poor quality squares, no capacity is considered to exist as such provision is not deemed safe for play.

The number of matches played by each team has been derived from consultation with the clubs. Where consultation was not possible, or where the level of play was not made clear, an assumption has been made that all senior teams play between 10 and 12 home matches per year and all junior teams play between four and eight matches per year depending on their age and level of competition.

The above is used to allocate capacity ratings as follows:

Potential capacity	Play is below the level the site could sustain
At capacity	Play matches the level the site can sustain
Overused	Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

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The capacity analysis assumes that all clubs rotate their wickets evenly. However, this may not be the case at all sites, with central wickets potentially used more commonly than outer wickets that are closer to a boundary, especially for senior matches. The idea of this is to showcase what the capacity is or could be if best practice is followed for the whole square, rather than doing it on a wicket-by-wicket basis.

Please note that NTPs have been discounted from the analysis by means of not distorting the findings. This is because no NTPs are currently being used more than their recommended capacity, which is 60 match equivalent sessions per season (0 match equivalent sessions when poor quality). With no NTPs being overused, this translates to overall actual spare capacity for junior play.

However, this is not considered to be actual spare capacity for senior weekend cricket due to league requirements generally not allowing usage.

Regarding midweek capacity, a maximum capacity rating of 36 match equivalent has been set for one square. This is calculated on the understanding that a square is to be rested at least two days during the week in order to enable necessary maintenance and reduce overplay. Therefore, on a home and away basis of three nights a week, a square has been set the capacity of six sessions per week for midweek play, multiplied by six (the average number of matches a junior team plays). Any square showing potential spare capacity for midweek demand shall be allocated six match equivalent sessions of actual spare capacity, due to the fewer number of fixtures within a junior calendar.

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Table 6.16: Capacity analysis of community available grass cricket squares

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Club users	No. of squares	Square quality	No. of grass wickets	Capacity (MES per season)	Actual play (MES per season)	Capacity rating (MES per season)	Potential spare capacity for senior cricket? (Saturday)	Potential spare capacity for senior cricket? (Sunday)	Potential spare capacity for junior cricket? (Midweek)
6	Aston Cricket Club (Herts)	Buntingford	Aston Cricket Club Tewin Cricket Club	1	Standard	6	24	15	9	No	No	Yes
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Hertford, Ware	Bengeo Cricket Club	1	Standard	8	32	31	1	No	No	No
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Watton-at-Stone	Bramfield Cricket Club	1	Poor	6	0	6	6	No	No	No
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Bishop Stortford	Braughing Cricket Club	1	Standard	8	32	17	15	Yes	Yes	Yes
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Buntingford	Datchworth Cricket Club	2	Poor	14	0	46	46	No	No	No
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Buntingford	Datchworth Cricket Club	2	Standard	11	44	34	10	No	No	No
40	Freman College	Buntingford	Reed Cricket Club	1	Standard	8	32	7	25	Yes	Yes	Yes
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford, Ware	Hertford Cricket Club	2	Good	15	75	62	13	No	Yes	Yes
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford, Ware	Hertford Cricket Club	2	Standard	8	32	38	6	No	No	No
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Hertford, Ware	Hertingfordbury Cricket Club	1	Standard	9	36	8	28	Yes	Yes	Yes
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth	Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club	1	Poor	9	0	28	28	No	No	No
63	Little Berkhamsted Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	Little Berkhamsted Cricket Club	1	Standard	8	32	21	11	No	Yes	Yes
64	Little Munden Cricket Club	Buntingford	Little Munden Cricket Club	1	Standard	4	16	9	7	No	No	Yes
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields (Buntingford MUGA)	Buntingford	Buntingford Cricket Club Hare Street & Hormead Cricket Club	1	Standard	8	32	21	11	No	No	No
97	St. Margaretsbury Sport & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	St. Margaretsbury Cricket Club Comilla Warriors	2	Good	18	90	58	32	No	No	Yes
97	St. Margaretsbury Sport & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	St. Margaretsbury Cricket Club	2	Good	8	40	34	6	No	No	Yes
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	Tewin Cricket Club	1	Standard	10	40	17	23	No	Yes	Yes
103	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop Stortford	Bishop's Stortford CC	3	Standard	6	24	30	6	No	No	No
103	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop Stortford	Bishop's Stortford CC	3	Good	13	65	70	5	No	No	No
103	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop Stortford	Bishop's Stortford CC	3	Good	12	60	57	3	No	No	No
109	Thorley Cricket Club	Bishop Stortford	Thorley Cricket Club Little Hadham Cricket Club	1	Good	15	75	24	51	No	Yes	Yes
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	Buntingford	Formerly Thundridge CC	1	Standard	8	32	0	32	Yes	Yes	Yes
112	Town Fields	Sawbridgeworth	Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club	1	Standard	14	56	54	2	No	No	No
115	Ware CC	Sawbridgeworth	Ware Cricket Club	1	Standard	14	56	17	39	No	Yes	Yes
126	Allenburys Sport & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	Allenburys and County Hall Cricket Club	1	Poor	11	0	16	16	No	No	No
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Buntingford	Ardeley Walkern Cricket Club	1	Standard	6	24	8	16	Yes	Yes	Yes
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	Watton-at-Stone Cricket Club	1	Standard	8	32	15	17	Yes	Yes	Yes
129	Aspenden Standon & Puckeridge Cricket Club	Buntingford	Aspenden, Standon and Puckeridge Cricket Club	1	Standard	4	16	6	10	No	No	Yes

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Club users	No. of squares	Square quality	No. of grass wickets	Capacity (MES per season)	Actual play (MES per season)	Capacity rating (MES per season)	Potential spare capacity for senior cricket? (Saturday)	Potential spare capacity for senior cricket? (Sunday)	Potential spare capacity for junior cricket? (Midweek)
130	Bayford & Hertford CC	Watton-at-Stone	Bayford and Hertford Cricket Club	1	Standard	10	40	15	25	No	Yes	Yes
136	Stocking Pelham CC	Bishop Stortford	Albury Cricket Club	1	Standard	4	16	7	9	No	No	Yes

Actual spare capacity

Although a large amount of spare capacity is identified, it is not as simple as to aggregate this into a general oversupply of cricket squares. Despite 22 squares displaying some form of spare capacity, only seven are available for further senior cricket activity on a Saturday, whilst 12 sites are available for further Sunday play, as shown below.

Table 6.17: Site by site breakdown of spare capacity (Saturday and Sunday demand)

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Spare capacity (MES)	No. of teams that could be accommodated on Saturday	No. of teams that could be accommodated on Sunday
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Bishop Stortford	15	1	1
40	Freman College	Buntingford	25	1	1
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford, Ware	13	-	1
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Hertford, Ware	28	1	2
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	23	-	1
109	Thorley Cricket Club	Bishop Stortford	51	-	1
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	Buntingford	32	2	2
115	Ware CC	Sawbridgeworth	39	-	2
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Buntingford	16	1	1
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	17	1	1
130	Bayford & Hertford CC	Watton-at-Stone	25	-	2
		Total	284	7 teams	15 teams

For both Saturday and Sunday demand, total spare capacity equates to 284 matches equivalent sessions per season. When applying this to Saturday peak time cricket, actual spare capacity totals 84 match equivalent sessions per season. This is calculated by using the average number of matches played per season by senior teams (12) multiplied by the number of additional teams that can be fielded at peak time (two teams per square that is available). The entirety of the spare capacity at each site is not used as this number of matches may not be able to be accommodated at peak time.

Actual spare capacity is identified across four of the five analysis areas, with the Buntingford Analysis Area accommodating most actual spare capacity each totalling 48 match equivalent sessions per season.

Table 6.18: Actual spare capacity for senior cricket (Saturday) by analysis area

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (MES per season)
Bishop's Stortford	12
Buntingford	48
Hertford, Ware	12
Sawbridgeworth	-
Watton-at-Stone	12
East Hertfordshire	**84**

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All remaining squares are used to capacity on Saturdays, either because two teams are already assigned to them as a home venue or because the level of spare capacity is insufficient to accommodate an additional team without overplay being created or exacerbated (at least 12 match equivalent sessions per season of spare capacity is required).

For Sunday cricket, actual spare capacity is provided on 11 squares, as can be seen by Table 6.17, totalling 180 match equivalent sessions per season, with all five analysis areas showing some level of actual spare capacity. This is highest in the Buntingford Analysis Area as shown below.

Table 6.19: Actual spare capacity for senior cricket (Sunday) by analysis area

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (MES per season)
Bishop's Stortford	24
Buntingford	60
Hertford, Ware	36
Sawbridgeworth	24
Watton-at-Stone	36
East Hertfordshire	**180**

Sunday capacity provides capacity for additional senior men's demand to be accommodated outside of the peak period but still within a competitive format. Moreover, it provides peak time availability for senior women's cricket (both hardball and softball) and for some junior demand, particularly older age groups.

For junior midweek cricket, 18 squares have actual spare capacity. Working on the basis that a square can accommodate six midweek teams, and where actual spare capacity is present, six match equivalent sessions per season is accounted for, using this methodology, it can be calculated that 368 match equivalent sessions if actual spare capacity is present which can accommodate the growth of a further 48 junior teams.

Table 6.20: Site by site breakdown of spare capacity (midweek demand)

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Spare capacity (MES)	No. of teams that could be accommodated midweek
6	Aston Cricket Club (Herts)	Buntingford	9	1 team
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Bishop Stortford	15	2 teams
40	Freman College	Buntingford	25	4 teams
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford, Ware	13	2 teams
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Hertford, Ware	28	4 teams
63	Little Berkhamsted Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	11	1 team
64	Little Munden Cricket Club	Buntingford	7	1 team
97	St. Margaretsbury Sport & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	32	5 teams
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	23	3 teams
109	Thorley Cricket Club	Bishop Stortford	51	6 teams
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	Buntingford	32	5 teams
115	Ware CC	Sawbridgeworth	39	6 teams
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Buntingford	16	2 teams

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Spare capacity (MES)	No. of teams that could be accommodated midweek
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	17	2 teams
129	Aspenden Standon & Puckeridge Cricket Club	Buntingford	10	1 team
130	Bayford & Hertford CC	Watton-at-Stone	25	2 teams
136	Stocking Pelham CC	Bishop Stortford	9	1 team
		Total	**368**	**48 teams**

Table 6.21: Actual spare capacity for junior cricket (midweek) by analysis area

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (MES per season)
Bishop's Stortford	54
Buntingford	84
Hertford, Ware	66
Sawbridgeworth	36
Watton-at-Stone	48
East Hertfordshire	**288**

The reason for midweek capacity being higher than the capacity for weekend cricket is because fixtures can be split across numerous days. Actual spare capacity for midweek demand is calculated by using the average number of matches played per season by juniors' teams (six) multiplied by the number of additional teams that can be fielded at peak time (two teams per day for three days of play per square that is available).

The entirety of the spare capacity at each site is not used as this number of matches may not actually be able to be accommodated at peak time. Clubs with a significant junior membership base tend to struggle for capacity, such as Bishop's Stortford CC.

Overplay

Overplay translates to a site accommodating more demand than it can sustain. While it is possible to sustain certain minimal levels of overplay providing that a regular, sufficient maintenance regime is in place, a resolution is recommended to ensure that there is no detrimental effect on quality over time.

There are seven squares across six sites identified as being overplayed in East Hertfordshire as detailed in the table overleaf.

Overplay totals 113 match equivalent sessions per season. The highest amount of overplay is in the Buntingford Analysis Area with 46 match equivalent sessions per season and is all located at Datchworth Sports Club.

The identified overplay at Bramfield Playing Field, Datchworth Sports Club, Leventhorpe School and Allenburys Sport & Social Club is due to the sites having poor quality squares, meaning any demand taking place is immediately contributing towards overplay. The remaining sites are overplayed due to the quantity of demand being accommodated on the squares, with clubs such as Bishop's Stortford CC and Hertford CC having high demand.

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Table 6.22: Summary of overplay

Site ID	Site name	Club	Analysis area	Overplay (MES per season)
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Bramfield Cricket Club	Watton-at-Stone	6
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth Cricket Club	Buntingford	46
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford, Ware	6
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club	Sawbridgeworth	28
103	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford CC	Bishop Stortford	5
103	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford CC	Bishop Stortford	6
126	Allenburys Sport & Social Club	Allenburys and County Hall Cricket Club	Hertford, Ware	16
-	-	-	**Total**	**113**

Table 6.23: Summary of overplay by analysis area

Analysis area	Overplay (MES per season)
Bishop's Stortford	11
Buntingford	46
Hertford, Ware	22
Sawbridgeworth	28
Watton-at-Stone	6
East Hertfordshire	**113**

Although it is possible to sustain certain, minimal levels of overplay providing that a regular, sufficient maintenance regime is in place, a reduction in play is recommended on overplayed squares to ensure there is no detrimental effect on quality over time.

6.5: Supply and demand analysis

Consideration must be given to the extent to which current provision can accommodate current and future demand for both senior and junior cricket. This section therefore looks at actual spare capacity on grass wicket squares considered against overplay and identified future demand. Match equivalent sessions for future demand are calculated using the average number of matches played per season (12 matches for senior teams and six matches for junior teams).

As previously presented, future demand is calculated using population forecasts and team generation rates (using Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator). On this basis, it has been forecast that East Hertfordshire will see growth of one senior men's and two junior boys' teams between now and 2043.

When applied in match equivalent sessions, this equates to 12 per season for Saturday demand and 12 per season for midweek demand. As detailed earlier, total future demand has been equated to the entirety of East Hertfordshire.

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Senior cricket supply and demand analysis (Saturday)

The table below looks at the supply and demand balance during the peak period for senior men's cricket (Saturday). For actual spare capacity, please note that this is converted from the number of match equivalent sessions identified above to the number of match equivalent sessions that could feasibly be utilised by a growth in demand (shown in Table 6.18). This is calculated by using the average number of matches played per season by senior teams (12) multiplied by the number of additional teams that can be fielded at peak time (two teams per square that is available).

Table 6.24: Supply and demand analysis of cricket squares for senior cricket (Saturday) in match play equivalent sessions per season

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Bishop's Stortford	12	11	1	-	1
Buntingford	48	46	2	-	2
Hertford, Ware	12	22	10	12	22
Sawbridgeworth	-	28	28	-	28
Watton-at-Stone	12	6	6	-	6
East Hertfordshire	**84**	**113**	**29**	**12**	**41**

As seen in the table above, there is current overplay equating to 29 match equivalent sessions per season. When considering future demand of one additional senior team by 2043, total actual spare capacity is exacerbated to 41 match equivalent sessions per season.

Senior cricket supply and demand analysis (Sunday)

The table below looks at the supply and demand balance for Sunday cricket, which is peak time for senior women's demand but also relevant to some senior men's and junior teams.

Table 6.25: Supply and demand analysis of cricket squares for senior cricket (Sunday) in match play equivalent sessions per season

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Bishop's Stortford	24	11	13	-	13
Buntingford	60	46	14	-	14
Hertford, Ware	36	22	14	-	14
Sawbridgeworth	24	28	4	-	4
Watton-at-Stone	36	6	30	-	30
East Hertfordshire	**180**	**113**	**67**	**-**	**67**

There is overall current spare capacity amounting to 67 match equivalent sessions per season, with only the Sawbridgeworth Analysis Area showing a shortfall. No future demand is identified through population growth, meaning no change takes place to the future capacity analysis.

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Junior cricket supply and demand analysis (midweek)

For the junior supply and demand analysis, actual spare capacity equates to the total number of additional junior teams that could be fielded on each available square (on the assumption that one square can accommodate six midweek teams), multiplied by six (the average number of matches a junior team plays). This is because junior demand at peak time is not limited to one day, although some capacity should be reserved for activity such as All Stars and Dynamos cricket.

Table 6.26: Supply and demand analysis of cricket squares for junior cricket in match play equivalent sessions per season

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Bishop's Stortford	54	11	43	6	37
Buntingford	84	46	38	-	38
Hertford, Ware	66	22	44	6	38
Sawbridgeworth	36	28	8	-	8
Watton-at-Stone	48	6	42	-	42
East Hertfordshire	**288**	**113**	**175**	**12**	**163**

There is currently overall spare capacity for midweek cricket amounting to 175 match equivalent sessions per season, with most of the actual spare capacity being present in the Buntingford Analysis Area. When accommodating for future demand, the growth of two junior teams by 2043 reduces actual spare capacity to 163 match equivalent sessions per season.

6.6: Conclusion

In summary, the broad position in East Hertfordshire is there is insufficient capacity for current demand across Saturday peak time cricket. This is a consequence of the 29 match equivalent sessions per week of overplay identified across seven sites. Overplay is caused by a combination of poor quality provision at sites such as Bramfield CC, and sheer quantity of demand at clubs such as Bishop's Stortford CC.

There is, however, enough provision to accommodate all current Sunday and midweek demand, notwithstanding the isolated shortfalls in the Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area on a Sunday.

There is currently no future demand identified for Sunday cricket and future demand does not affect the capacity at East Hertfordshire sites midweek either.

The Strategy will consider the role in which disused provision could potentially play in accommodating demand and alleviating current/future shortfalls.

A scenario exploring how future demand, through club aspirations of two senior men's, four junior boys' and two junior girls' team will affect the future capacity analysis will be included in the proceeding Strategy document.

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Cricket – supply and demand summary

◂ The broad position in East Hertfordshire is there is an insufficient stock of supply for peak time senior men's cricket, with all remaining formats able to be accommodated.

◂ Overplay of 29 match equivalent sessions per season is present on a Saturday. This is exacerbated to 41 match equivalent sessions of actual spare capacity per season when considering future demand from population growth.

◂ There is currently spare capacity for both midweek and Sunday cricket and there will continue to be should future midweek demand be realised.

◂ Seven squares across six sites are overplayed: Bramfield Playing Field, Datchworth Sports Club, Hertford Cricket Club, Leventhorpe School, The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust (two squares) and Allenburys Sport & Social Club. Total overplay equates to 113 match equivalent sessions per season.

Cricket – supply summary

◂ In total, there are 46 grass wicket squares in East Hertfordshire all of which are open to community use other than the squares at Heath Mount School, Haileybury Sports Complex, Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields and St Edmunds College & Prep School.

◂ There are 46 grass wicket squares across 30 sites of which, 38 are available for community use across 26 sites.

◂ There are NTPs accompanying grass wicket squares at six sites, all available for community use other than Heath Mount School. Additionally, there are eight standalone NTP's identified, all of which are at school sites, unavailable for community use other than Presdales Recreation Ground which is available for community use and not a school site.

◂ Three clubs in East Hertfordshire have freehold ownership of its sites, 11 have lease agreements in place and five rent sites. The tenure position of the four unresponsive clubs is unknown.

◂ The audit of the 38-community available grass wicket cricket squares found 14 to be good quality, 20 to be standard quality and four to be poor quality, located at Bramfield Playing Field, Datchworth Sports Club, Leventhorpe School and Allenburys Sport & Social Club.

◂ Aston CC, Little Berkhamsted Sahibs CC, Little Munden CC, Thorley CC, Thundridge Sports Ground and Aspenden Standon & Puckeridge CC access poor quality ancillary facilities.

◂ Datchworth CC have recently had planning permission granted to extend and refurbish its Clubhouse.

◂ Six clubs identify need for additional training facilities at respective home sites.

◂ There are five disused squares (former grass pitch) within East Hertfordshire, those being County Hall, The Meads, Cottered Playing Fields, Little Hadham CC and Albury Sports Ground.

Cricket – demand summary

◂ There are 23 clubs in East Hertfordshire which collectively provide 50 senior men's, four senior women's, 48 junior boys' and six junior girls' team.

◂ Eight clubs within East Hertfordshire currently offer the All-Stars program, whilst four clubs deliver Dynamos sessions.

◂ None of the consulted Clubs discussed running any women's and girls' softball sessions.

◂ Through population growth, future demand equating to the growth of one senior men's and two junior boys' teams is identified by 2043.

◂ Club aspirations equate to the potential growth of two senior men's, four junior boys' and two junior girls' team.

◂ There is currently no exported demand into neighbouring authorities. However, Reed CC, a Club from North Hertfordshire is currently accessing the pitch at Freman College forming imported demand.

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PART 7: TENNIS COURTS

7.1: Introduction

The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is the organisation responsible for the governance of tennis. It has recently restructured its strategic approach to target several national focus areas, with a priority on developing the sport at park sites and removing key barriers to participation in park and club sites.

In East Hertfordshire, the LTA is working with East Hertfordshire District Council to improve access to provision in parks. More detailed information on the LTA's ClubSpark, Rally and Gate Access are set out later in the report.

Consultation

In total, there are 13 tennis clubs in East Hertfordshire. Of these, 12 responded to consultation requests, resulting in a response rate of 92%. The table below outlines club responses.

Table 7.1: Consultation responses

Club name	Club response?
Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Yes
Aston Lawn Tennis Club	Yes
Bishop's Stortford Lawn Tennis Club	Yes
Braughing Tennis Club	Yes
Datchworth Tennis Club	Yes
Hertford Lawn Tennis Club	Yes
Legends Tennis Centre	Yes
Much Hadham Tennis Club	Yes
Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Yes
St Margaretsbury Tennis Club	No
Standon & Puckeridge Lawn Tennis Club	Yes
Tewin Tennis Club	Yes
Watton at Stone Tennis Club	Yes

7.2: Supply

There are 135 tennis courts identified in East Hertfordshire across 31 sites. Of these, 116 courts are categorised as being available for community use, located at 28 sites and 19 courts are identified as unavailable for community use, located at three sites.

Note that courts are classified as being available for community use if they are deemed to be easily accessible to the general population, either via pay and play or through a membership at a club (or a combination of both). All remaining courts identified as being unavailable are located at school sites, Heath Mount School, Richard Hale School, or St Edmunds College & Prep School.

The Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area contains the highest number of courts available to the community (49). All courts located in Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth Analysis Areas are available for community use. A full breakdown can be seen in Table 7.2.

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Table 7.2: Summary of the number of courts by analysis area

Analysis area	No. of courts available for community use	No. of courts unavailable for community use
Bishop's Stortford	49	0
Buntingford	13	6
Hertford, Ware	30	7
Sawbridgeworth	18	0
Watton-at-Stone	6	6
East Hertfordshire	**116**	**19**

Figure 7.1 below shows the location of the courts servicing East Hertfordshire, regardless of community use. For a key to the map, see Table 7.3.

Figure 7.1: Overview of tennis court locations
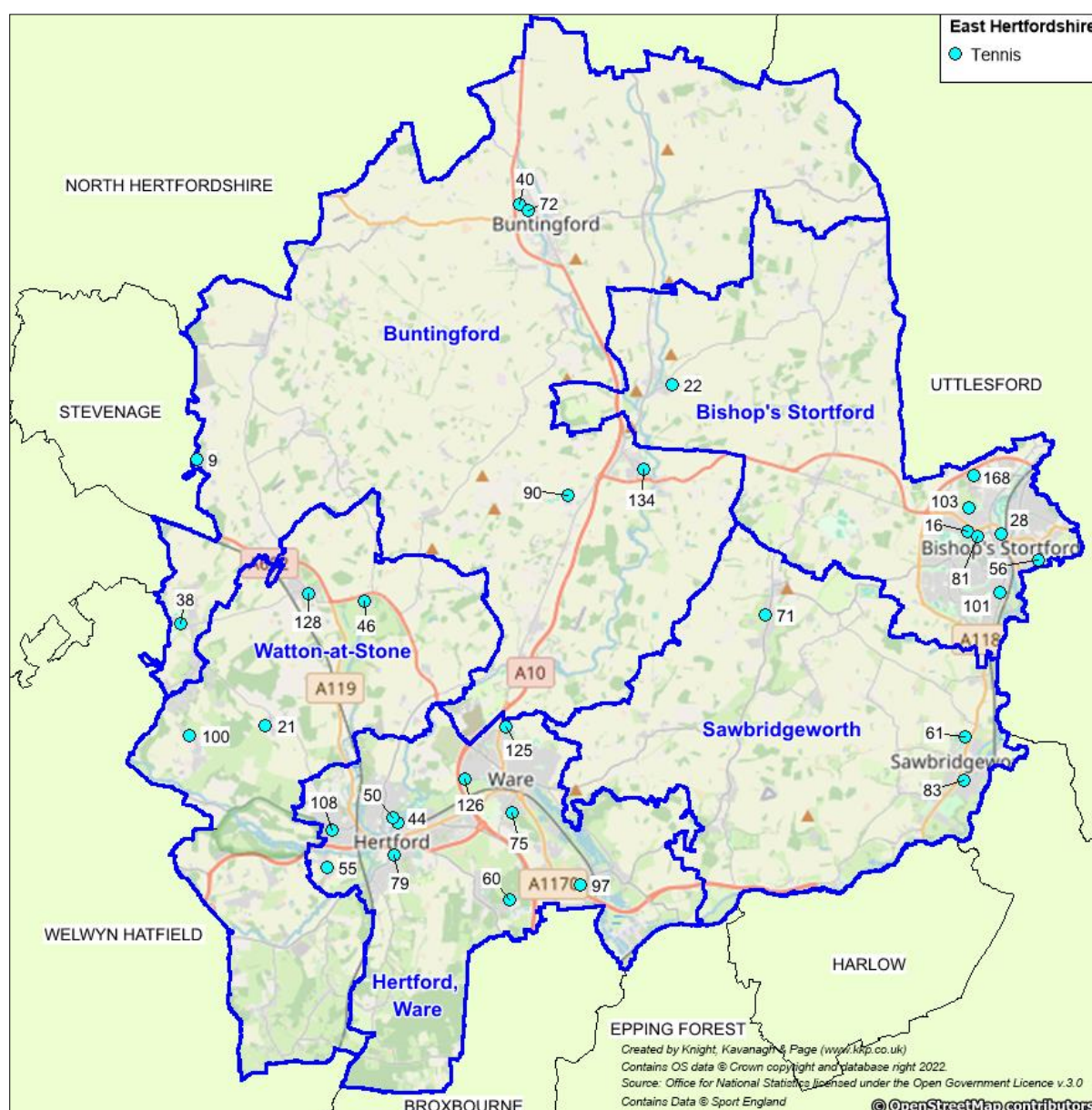
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Disused provision

There is one site within the District accommodating three disused tennis courts, located at Marriot Leisure Centre (Hanbury Manor).

At the time of the site assessment at County Hall, the site was closed and was an active building site. Consequently, the courts have been discounted from total supply figures.

Potential future changes to supply

Legends Tennis Centre has previously explored the idea of replacing one of its existing tennis courts with a padel court. It also states its plans to change current court surfaces to macadam to improve drainage.

Hartham Leisure Centre confirms that it plans to change its tennis court to a padel court in partnership with the operator of the site, Everyone Active. Additionally, the small sided football pitches are not well used, and one could also be converted to padel. However, no planning permission has been sought for this.

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Table 7.3: Summary of tennis courts in East Hertfordshire

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Management	Community use?	No. of courts	Sports lighting?	Court type	Court quality
9	Aston Tennis Courts	Buntingford	Sports Club	Yes	2	No	Macadam	Good
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Education	Yes	8	Yes (4)	Macadam	Good
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Watton-at-Stone	Parish Council	Yes	1	No	Shale	Poor
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Sports Club	Yes	2	Yes	Macadam	Good
28	Castle Park Tennis Courts	Bishop's Stortford	Sports Club	Yes	3	No	Macadam	Good
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Buntingford	Sports Club	Yes	2	No	Macadam	Good
40	Freman College	Buntingford	Education	Yes	3	No	Shale	Poor
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	Hertford, Ware	Other	Yes	1	Yes	Macadam	Poor
46	Heath Mount School	Watton-at-Stone	Education	No	6	Yes	Artificial turf	Standard
50	Hertford Lawn Tennis Club	Hertford, Ware	Sports Club	Yes	3	Yes	Artificial turf	Good
50	Hertford Lawn Tennis Club	Hertford, Ware	Sports Club	Yes	3	Yes	Polymeric	Good
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Hertford, Ware	Council	Yes	1	No	Macadam	Standard
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Education	Yes	6	Yes	Shale	Standard
60	Legends Tennis Centre	Hertford, Ware	Education	Yes	8	No	Polymeric	Good
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth	Education	Yes	5	Yes	Polymeric	Good
71	Much Hadham Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth	Sports Club	Yes	3	Yes	Macadam	Good
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Buntingford	Town Council	Yes	3	Yes	Artificial Turf	Good
75	Presdales School	Hertford, Ware	Education	Yes	4	Yes	Macadam	Good
79	Richard Hale School	Hertford, Ware	Education	No	7	No	Shale	Poor
81	St Mary's Catholic School	Bishop's Stortford	Education	Yes	6	No	Shale	Poor
83	Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth	Sports Club	Yes	3	Yes	Artificial turf	Standard
83	Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth	Sports Club	Yes	2	Yes	Clay	Good
83	Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth	Sports Club	Yes	1	No	Clay	Good
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Buntingford	Education	No	6	No	Macadam	Standard
97	St. Margaretsbury Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	Sports Club	Yes	3	Yes	Artificial turf	Good

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Management	Community use?	No. of courts	Sports lighting?	Court type	Court quality
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	Sports Club	Yes	2	No	Artificial turf	Good
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Bishop's Stortford	Education	Yes	4	Yes	Shale	Good
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford	Sports Club	Yes	2	Yes	Clay	Good
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford	Sports Club	Yes	5	Yes	Artificial turf	Good
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford	Sports Club	Yes	3	Yes	Macadam	Good
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford	Sports Club	Yes	6	No	Grass	Standard
108	The Sele School	Hertford, Ware	Education	Yes	3	Yes	Shale	Standard
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Hertford, Ware	Sports Club	Yes	4	Yes	Macadam	Good
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	Sports Club	Yes	4	Yes	Macadam	Standard
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	Parish Council	Yes	2	Yes	Macadam	Good
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	Parish Council	Yes	1	Yes	Macadam	Standard
134	Standon & Puckeridge Lawn Tennis Club	Buntingford	Sports Club	Yes	3	Yes	Artificial turf	Good
168	Avanti Grange Secondary School	Bishop's Stortford	Education	Yes	4	Yes	Shale	Standard

Management

The table below highlights the management of tennis courts within East Hertfordshire.

Table 7.4: Tennis courts by management type (all courts)

Community use?	No. of club	No. of town/parish council courts	No. of education courts	No. of other
Available	56	8	51	1
Unavailable	-	-	19	-
Total	**56**	**8**	**70**	**1**

Most community available tennis courts in East Hertfordshire are operated by sports clubs with 56 (41%) the rest are split between parish/town council sites with eight (6%), education sites, 51 (38%) or 'other' with one (1%). There are also 19 (14%) courts unavailable to use at education sites.

Security of tenure

The table below outlines the current tenure position for the 13 tennis clubs across East Hertfordshire. This helps understand the long-term security of clubs and informs its ability to access various grants.

Table 7.5: Summary of club tenure arrangements

Site ID	Site name	Club	Management	Tenure
9	Aston Tennis Courts	Aston Lawn Tennis Club	Sports Club	25-year lease agreement from the Diocese of St Albans.
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Braughing Tennis Club	Sports Club	The site is rented from the Village Trust.
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth Tennis Club	Sports Club	Site owned by Datchworth Parish Council.
50	Hertford Lawn Tennis Club	Hertford Lawn Tennis Club	Sports Club	Long term lease from East Hertfordshire District Council.
60	Legends Tennis Centre	Legends Tennis Centre	Sports Club	65-year lease with 55-years remaining. Leased from Haileybury College as an independent community benefit society.
71	Much Hadham Tennis Club	Much Hadham Tennis Club	Sports Club	The Club belongs to a lager sports association trust which owns the site.
83	Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Sports Club	Freehold owned.
97	St. Margaretsbury Tennis Club	St. Margaretsbury Tennis Club	Sports Club	Club pays a long-term peppercorn lease for the land to the Trust as do the cricket and football teams at the site.
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Tewin Tennis Club	Sports Club	The site is owned by Tewin Parish Council and provided for the Club, with no cost to the club but they are required to provide money for upkeep of the pavilion close by.

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Site ID	Site name	Club	Management	Tenure
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford Lawn Tennis Club	Sports Club	Grass courts are freehold but must be made public. The Sports Trust covers cricket, tennis and square. Tennis bought the clay and hard courts outright from the sports trust. Clubhouse is on a minimal lease with Bishop's Stortford Town Council. Secure tenure for whole site
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Sports Club	Lease agreement with a private landowner.
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton at Stone Lawn Tennis Club	Sports Club	The site is owned by the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council.
134	Standon & Puckeridge Lawn Tennis Club	Standon & Puckeridge Lawn Tennis Club	Sports Club	Site owned by the Parish Council.

Court type

The most common outdoor tennis court surface in East Hertfordshire is macadam, with 42 courts (31%) identified across 13 sites. Artificial turf surfaces are the next most prominent surface with 31 courts (23%) across seven sites, followed by, shale surfaces, 34 (25%), polymeric, 20 (15%), grass, six (4%) and clay with two courts (1%) across 11 sites.

The estimated lifespan of a macadam court is 10 years, depending on the levels of use and maintenance regimes. To ensure courts can continue to be used beyond this time frame, it is recommended that a sinking fund is put into place for eventual refurbishment. This is also the case for artificial turf courts.

There are two air dome sites in East Hertfordshire located at Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust and Legends Tennis Centre. Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust cover its three polymeric courts in winter but take it down in summer. While Legends Tennis Centre has four polymeric courts under an air dome all year round. It is important to note that Legends Tennis Centre plan to convert its outdoor courts to macadam to improve drainage.

Sports lighting

Courts with sports lighting enable use throughout the year and are identified by the LTA as being a key priority for growing participation nationally. The LTA reports that sports lighting allows for a 35% increase in available court time on an annual basis.

In East Hertfordshire, 79 of the 135 tennis courts are serviced by sports lighting, representing 59% of the provision. Of the 116 courts available for community use, 73 are sports lit (63%). The courts with sports lighting are located at:

‣ Allenburys Sports & Social Club.
‣ Avanti Grange Secondary School.
‣ Bishop's Stortford College.
‣ Braughing Playing Fields.
‣ Buntingford MUGA.
‣ Heath Mount School.

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◄ Hertford Lawn Tennis Club.
◄ Herts & Essex Sports Centre.
◄ Leventhorpe School.
◄ Much Hadham Tennis Club.
◄ Presdales School.
◄ Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club.
◄ St. Margaretsbury Tennis Club.
◄ Standon & Puckeridge Lawn Tennis Club.
◄ The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust.
◄ The Bishop's Stortford High School.
◄ The Sele School.
◄ Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground.
◄ Wodson Park Sports Centre.

Access to sports lighting enables clubs to accommodate more members and can therefore be beneficial. In East Hertfordshire nine of the 14 clubs have access to sports lit courts at each of the respective sites.

Legends Tennis Centre has LED lighting on its four courts in the air dome but no lights for the outdoor courts. The Club states it would like to have sports lighting for its outdoor courts.

At Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club there is sports lighting on five out of its six courts. However, it reports that the lighting is old, and it is the Club's priority to replace with LED lights.

Bishop's Stortford LTC has 10 out of its 16 courts sport lit, with the grass courts being the only ones not floodlit. There is also sports lighting on its two padel courts.

Two of the clubs without sports lighting, Datchworth Tennis Club and Aston Lawn Tennis Club, have expressed a demand for courts with sports lighting.

Tewin Tennis Club does not have permanent sports lighting although it states that it can erect temporary lighting should it need to. This is typically used for Datchworth games or coaching sessions.

Overmarking

Tennis courts, particularly within schools, are often over marked by netball, basketball and/or football markings. Courts which are over marked tend to receive higher levels of use which can be detrimental to quality over time, as well as creating capacity issues if there is community demand from more than one sport.

Overmarking of tennis courts is identified at 17 sites, as seen below. When broken down there are 10 education sites showing overmarking. All overmarked courts are lined with netball markings, other than Legends Tennis Centre which is overmarked with pickleball on two of its courts and Bramfield Playing Field which is overmarked with basketball.

◄ Allenburys Sports & Social Club.
◄ Avanti Grange Secondary School.
◄ Bishop's Stortford College.
◄ Bramfield Playing Field.
◄ Buntingford MUGA.
◄ Freman College.
◄ Heath Mount School.
◄ Herts & Essex Sports Centre.
◄ Legends Tennis Centre.
◄ Leventhorpe School.

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- Presdales School.
- Richard Hale School.
- Saint Mary's Catholic School.
- St Edmunds College & Prep School.
- The Bishop's Stortford High School.
- The Sele School.
- Wodson Park Sports Centre.

Quality

The quality of tennis courts has been informed through non-technical site assessments conducted in August 2024 and consultation with providers to assign each court a rating of good, standard or poor. Key aspects informing the findings include surface quality, grip underfoot, line marking quality, evenness, and evidence of any inappropriate use (e.g., vandalism and/or littering).

The table below outlines the quality of all tennis courts in East Hertfordshire, regardless of availability.

Table 7.6: Summary of quality of tennis courts

Community use?	No. of good courts	No. of standard courts	No. poor of courts
Available	77	28	11
Unavailable	-	12	7
Total	**77**	**40**	**18**

In total, 77 courts are assessed as good quality (57% of all provision), 36 as standard quality (30%) and 18 as poor quality (13%).

As a further breakdown, quality at sites available for community use is presented on a site-by-site basis in the table overleaf.

Table 7.7: Summary of quality at sites available for community use

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of courts	Court type	Court quality
9	Aston Tennis Courts	Buntingford	2	Macadam	Good
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	8	Macadam	Good
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Watton-at-Stone	1	Shale	Poor
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	2	Macadam	Good
28	Castle Park Tennis Courts	Bishop's Stortford	3	Macadam	Good
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Buntingford	2	Macadam	Good
40	Freman College	Buntingford	3	Shale	Poor
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	Hertford, Ware	1	Macadam	Poor
50	Hertford Lawn Tennis Club	Hertford, Ware	3	Artificial turf	Good
50	Hertford Lawn Tennis Club	Hertford, Ware	3	Polymeric	Good
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Hertford, Ware	1	Macadam	Standard
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	Bishop's Stortford	6	Shale	Standard
60	Legends Tennis Centre	Hertford, Ware	8	Polymeric	Good
65	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth	5	Polymeric	Good

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of courts	Court type	Court quality
71	Much Hadham Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth	3	Macadam	Good
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Buntingford	3	Artificial Turf	Good
75	Presdales School	Hertford, Ware	4	Macadam	Good
81	St Mary's Catholic School	Bishop's Stortford	6	Shale	Poor
83	Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth	3	Artificial turf	Standard
83	Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth	3	Clay	Good
97	St. Margaretsbury Tennis Club	Hertford, Ware	3	Artificial turf	Good
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	2	Artificial turf	Good
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Bishop's Stortford	4	Shale	Good
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford	2	Clay	Good
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford	5	Artificial turf	Good
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford	3	Macadam	Good
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford	6	Grass	Standard
108	The Sele School	Hertford, Ware	3	Shale	Standard
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Sawbridgeworth	4	Macadam	Good
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	4	Macadam	Standard
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	2	Macadam	Good
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton-at-Stone	1	Macadam	Standard
134	Standon & Puckeridge Lawn Tennis Club	Buntingford	3	Artificial turf	Good
168	Avanti Grange Secondary School	Bishop's Stortford	4	Shale	Standard

Of all community accessible courts, Bramfield Playing Field, St Mary's Catholic School, and Freman College provide poor quality provision. Issues recorded during site assessments include poor grip underfoot, the presence of moss, worn line markings, damaged nets, and loose gravel.

Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground, Herts & Essex Sports Centre, The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust (grass courts), The Sele School and Allenburys Sport & Social Club all provide standard tennis provision.

Despite being brand new, the courts at Avanti Grange Secondary School have been rated as standard. During consultation, the School highlights how unhappy it is with the new courts, stating how uneven the surface is, the lines being too thin and that the surface has already started to break up and crack.

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Bramfield Playing Field, St Marys Catholic School and Freman College are assessed as poor quality. They all have shale courts and at the time of site assessment, Freman College and Bramfield Playing Field had faded lines as well as poor grip underfoot. Both these courts were overmarked with other sports meaning they would have more use, explaining the poorer conditions.

The court at Hartham Leisure Centre has also been rated poor. Consultation with the Leisure Centre confirms that the court is not currently being used as it is not in good condition. Specifically, underfoot grip was not great as the surface is worn down with faded lines.

Most of the sites provide good quality tennis provision across their courts. Ten of the courts at Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust are good quality largely due to having recently had its courts resurfaced in the last five years. The artificial grass was replaced in 2019, the polymeric was replaced in 2020 and the clay was replaced in 2023. Hertford LTC similarly have had its courts resurfaced in recent years and are consequently of good quality.

Datchworth Tennis Club and Watton at Stone Tennis Club both express plans to resurface its courts in its development plans to ensure that the good quality courts are maintained.

Improving park court sites is a current national priority for the LTA, with a focus on suitable sites that cater for high levels of recreational demand or that have the potential to do so. This is especially the case if the provision is serviced (or could be serviced) by changing facilities and sports lighting, whereby a sustainable tennis programme could be supported. Improving the quality, offer and experience of tennis in parks is a strategic priority for the LTA to open up tennis. It reports that the biggest barriers to participate in tennis are:

- Not knowing where the closest courts are.
- Not knowing how to book or play on the courts.
- Poor quality playing surfaces.

Park tennis courts can be opened in a variety of ways to ensure greater use by residents. This can range from booking courts to offering coaching programmes. The LTA has three products for local authorities to use to remove the barriers and open tennis up to all the residents in their area; ClubSpark, Rally and Gate Access (further explained in the demand section).

Renovation fund[24]

The LTA has secured a £22 million investment fund to be put into public tennis courts across Britain, together with an £8.5 million investment from the LTA. This will see thousands of public park tennis courts that are in poor or unplayable condition improved for the benefit of local communities.

The LTA's ambition is to drive participation across park tennis sites, as well as ensuring the future sustainability of these facilities. As well as paying for the refurbishment of public park courts, the new investment will also pay for the implementation of sustainable operating models for the facilities, with specialist programmes and support to ensure courts are both affordable and utilised.

[24] Link to investment plans

Ancillary provision

Ancillary provision refers to the accompanying building to a site that is accessed as changing facilities and a social space if applicable. All sites were assessed for its ancillary provision quality during non-technical site assessments and further evidenced by consultation responses. Quality ratings were determined by assessing matters such as the condition of the building, the quantity and quality of changing rooms and the social space offering.

Table 7.8: Ancillary quality breakdown

Club	Analysis area	Facility as a whole	Changing facilities	Car parking
Aston Lawn Tennis Club	Buntingford	Standard	Standard	Standard
Braughing Tennis Club	Bishop's Stortford	Good	Poor	Poor
Datchworth Tennis Club	Buntingford	Standard	Standard	Standard
Hertford Lawn Tennis Club	Hertford, Ware	Good	Good	Good
Legends Tennis Centre	Hertford, Ware	Good	Standard	Standard
Much Hadham Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth	Good	Standard	Good
Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth	Standard	Poor	Standard
St Margaretsbury Tennis Club	Hertford, Ware	Good	Standard	Good
Tewin Tennis Club	Watton-at-Stone	Standard	N/A	Standard
Bishop's Stortford Lawn Tennis Club	Bishop's Stortford	Good	Good	Good
Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	Standard	Standard	Standard
Watton at Stone Tennis Club	Watton-at-Stone	Standard	Standard	Poor
Standon & Puckeridge Lawn Tennis Club	Buntingford	Good	N/A	Good

Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club currently has a standard facility consisting of a small building containing changing rooms and toilets. The Club highlights that it plans to insulate the clubhouse better and generally upgrade it as the toilet and changing facilities are poor.

Bishop's Stortford Tennis Club share a clubhouse with the cricket and squash sections which is good a quality pavilion with a bar, changing rooms and a social room. However, there is no changing near the artificial turf courts. The Club also has its own clubhouse with a kitchen and social room for tennis members only. It says it would prefer to have its own clubhouse at the top of the site despite the fact it has good ancillary facilities servicing all sports in place currently.

Datchworth Tennis Club share a clubhouse with the other sports at Datchworth Sports Club and there are plans to rebuild the shared clubhouse.

Hertford LTC has recently had its small wooden clubhouse refurbished, with newly added bifold doors, a new kitchen, toilets, and flooring. It also has a small social area for members to use.

Watton-at-Stone Tennis Club describes how it would like to build a clubhouse on site, though has not yet secured funding.

Braughing Tennis Club describe its changing facilities as poor, largely due to separate teams having to share changing rooms and showering facilitates.

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For non-club courts, ancillary provision is generally considered to be problematic. Whilst most of the other sites do provide changing facilities and/or toilets, they are not specific for tennis and are generally too far away from the courts to be used. Often, the facilities predominately service football/cricket pitch users and therefore are not readily available or suited to tennis court users. In some instances, quality is also poor.

Insight from the LTA indicates good quality ancillary facilities such as toilets, changing rooms and cafes encourage players to visit community available provision and stay for extended periods of time. Therefore, a potential way to increase usage of such provision would be to invest in suitable ancillary amenities nearby tennis courts.

7.3: Demand

Competitive tennis

There are 13 tennis clubs in East Hertfordshire, with membership numbers only known for 12 of the clubs. Total known membership figures equate to 2,252, consisting of 1,432 senior and 820 junior members.

In terms of size, Bishop's Stortford LTC is the largest club, with 640 members, whilst Allenburys Sports & Social Club has the smallest membership figures with 15 members. This is summarised in the table below.

Table 7.9: Summary of tennis club demand

Club	Analysis area	Senior	Junior
Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	15	0
Aston Lawn Tennis Club	Buntingford	78	45
Bishops Stortford Lawn Tennis Club	Bishops Stortford	390	250
Braughing Tennis Club	Bishops Stortford	61	37
Datchworth Tennis Club	Buntingford	25	21
Hertford Lawn Tennis Club	Hertford, Ware	210	90
Legends Tennis Centre	Hertford, Ware	100	150
Much Hadham Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth	126	66
Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth	120	50
St Margaretsbury Tennis Club	Hertford, Ware	-	-
Standon & Puckeridge Lawn Tennis Club	Buntingford	88	67
Tewin Tennis Club	Watton-at-Stone	164	23
Watton at Stone Tennis Club	Watton-at-Stone	55	21
	Totals	1,432	820

No membership numbers could be gained for St Margaretsbury CC due to the Club not responding to consultation requests.

Latent demand

Latent demand for tennis nationally is reported to be high by the LTA, which has an insight tool that suggests that 18% of the five million players that pick up a racket each year would play more often if key barriers such as poor promotion of opportunities to get on court, unclear booking journeys (especially those that are 'offline') and low-quality facilities were addressed.

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On this basis, there is a potential opportunity in East Hertfordshire for the District Council and other providers to understand if such barriers exist locally and if so, address such barriers, whilst also bettering understanding of court usage.

Sport England's Segmentation Tool[25] enables analysis of the percentage of adults that would like to participate in tennis but 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies latent demand of 2,848 people within East Hertfordshire resembling 1.1% of the District's population. As a comparison, the national average for people wanting to play tennis but are not currently doing so is 1.76%, putting East Hertfordshire directly in line with the national figures.

The highest latent demand is 'settling down males' which equates to 505 people wanting to play tennis that currently are not.

Future demand

Four clubs report future growth aspirations, with total future demand amounting to 155 potential additional members (70 senior and 85 junior). All clubs hoping to increase in membership are outlined in future growth figures as seen in Table 7.10.

Table 7.10: Summary of future tennis club demand (in members)

Club	Analysis area	No. of senior members	No. of junior members
Datchworth Tennis Club	Buntingford	10	20
Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth	30	50
Braughing Tennis Club	Bishop's Stortford	10	15
Legends Tennis Centre	Hertford, Ware	20	-
-	**East Hertfordshire**	**70**	**85**

The tennis section at Allenburys Sports & Social Club states it would like to increase membership but does not have specific numbers like the above clubs.

The Sport England Sports Facility Calculator (SFC) is an interactive tool which allows its user to help quantify the additional demand for key community sports facilities created by a new population. The SFC has been used to quantify how many new tennis courts would be needed to account for ONS based population projection rather than the growth associated with new housing developments in the district and therefore will not fully account for housing growth. The calculation results show that there is a need for an extra 1.65 tennis courts in East Hertfordshire at a cost of £192,333.

Informal tennis

It is considered that all local authority courts available for community use in East Hertfordshire have spare capacity for a growth in demand, although this is difficult to quantify as use is not always recorded due to the open access nature of many sites. Most of the current use is assumed to take place throughout the summer months although it is also accepted that many courts are accessed unofficially for activities unrelated to tennis.

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[25] Sport England Segmentation Information

The LTA has developed a package of support for local authorities to grow the use of tennis courts by removing key barriers to participation. The three initiatives are ClubSpark, Rally and Gate Access, which are further detailed below. In East Hertfordshire, Standon & Puckeridge LTC use Big Tennis Weekend, Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club use Big Tennis Weekend and ClubSpark and Bishop's Stortford LTC, Aston Tennis Club, Datchworth Tennis Club and Watton at Stone Tennis Club are also on ClubSpark. Legends Tennis Centre are not currently using any LTA initiatives but plan to be on ClubSpark soon.

In relation to education providers, none report any regular demand from the community for tennis. It is believed by many that a lack of demand is a direct result of quality issues and/or a lack of sports lighting, as well as other courts being available for free. This results in the community being less likely to pay a hire charge for its provision.
ClubSpark – Improving the booking process

ClubSpark is a flexible and simple venue management platform with multiple products and applications to help venues, local authorities and coaches manage their sport. ClubSpark is a tool that is offered for free as part of LTA venue registration and allows administrators to manage all functions at their venue(s), including:

- Managed website - create and manage a mobile friendly website tailored to LA/club requirements to promote events and activities.
- Managed coaching – set up coaching lessons and courses online.
- Membership management - improve membership engagement by making it easier for the venue and for members to pay, renew and keep in touch (includes online payments, direct debits and the monitoring of revenue streams; membership modules can also be used to take season ticket payments for venues operating a non-traditional annual facility fee).
- Organise payments - set the way payments are taken, whether it's immediate pay and play, or bookable as part of a membership package.
- Court bookings – reduced administration for managing bookings; give staff, coaches, members and the general public access to book and pay for courts, classes or other resources online.
- Scheduling - set unique booking and price rules to suit the venue and enable lights to switch on/off automatically when linked to the LTA Premium Gate Access system.
- Book and pay remotely - customers can make bookings and payments for a venue anytime, anywhere via the real-time booking app.
- Reporting - ClubSpark allows administrators to view reports highlighting income, court usage, revenue and number of members and season ticket holders; this allows for identification of trends and patterns and evidence to demonstrate participation levels and impact.

RALLY

Rally is an aggregator that collects all booking and coaching information via ClubSpark pages and displays it for participants in one easy to view page. It allows players to search for venues close to them and provides booking options, removing the barriers of not knowing where courts are or how to book.

Rally provides a helpful customer journey, with a personal profile to review and manage bookings, and helpful reminders. Courts can be set to book for free of charge or at a fee agreed by the provider. The LTA confirm that it has improved its Rally and ClubSpark book a court features, with it now being accessible on the LTA website thus being easier for users to book a court and tennis class.

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Gate Access

The LTA has developed two gate access systems that work in association with ClubSpark to secure courts and to allow access to booked customers only. Members of the public can book a court online (making payment if required) and receive a 4-digit access code via email to enter using a courtside keypad. The gate access system then allows entry for the time booked if a correct code is entered.

There are two gate options available: SmartAccess Premium and SmartAccess Lite. The demands and needs of users plus the setup of the venue determines the most appropriate system for each site.

Nationally, the LTA report that in the last three years, sites with a gate access system installed have attracted 64,841 unique players, leading to 609,671 courts being booked. This has generated income of over £1 million.

In East Hertfordshire, Braughing Tennis club, Much Hadham Tennis Club and Allenburys Sports & Social Club report currently having Gate Access technology.

LTA Big Tennis Weekend

The LTA Big Tennis Weekend is an LTA initiative which all registered venues can access. Clubs and venues can sign up to host open days, which are free of charge, and create a relaxed and welcoming environment for those new to tennis to participate. This in turn can potentially lead to the clubs attracting new members.

The LTA hosts three dedicated weekends a year (in May, July and September) that are the UK's biggest public tennis events. Furthermore, venues can run additional events outside these dates and will benefit from their events being promoted on the national LTA campaign website. All clubs running an open day are asked to promote a follow-on offer to all attendees, such as a reduced rate introductory membership or several free coaching sessions, to encourage people to continue playing after the event.

Currently both Sawbridgeworth TC and Standon & Puckeridge LTC state they run LTA big tennis weekends.

LTA Youth

LTA Youth has superseded the former initiative of Mini Tennis as the new LTA flagship delivery programme. The initiative is tailored towards delivering a fresh, fun approach to coaching tennis for kids aged 4-18.

The programme is made up of an LTA Youth Start introductory course, followed by five stages that give young players the chance to practice and develop at an appropriate level. The five stages can be seen below:

◀ Blue Stage: Children improve balance, agility and co-ordination through fun games. This stage teaches the fundamental basics of tennis.
◀ Red Stage: Children practice overarm serves, volleys and learn how to serve. Play takes place using soft ball and on small courts.
◀ Orange Stage: Children are taught tactics, problem solving and guides to sportsmanship and leadership.
◀ Green Stage: Children play on a full-sized court. Sessions are spent fine tuning and developing techniques.
◀ Yellow Stage: Children play on a full-sized court using regular tennis balls. Players are encouraged to explore different play styles allowing them to choose their own approach.

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Mini tennis courts can be found at Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club (it has four) which has 143 senior and 48 junior members.

Padel tennis

Padel is a form of tennis that is easy to play, fun and sociable. It is usually played in a doubles format on an enclosed court about a third of the size of a tennis court and can be played in groups of mixed ages and abilities as it is not power dominant. The rules are broadly the same as tennis, although players serve underhand and the walls are used as part of the game, with the ball allowed to bounce off them.

One of the fastest growing sports across continental Europe, it has gained increasing popularity over recent years. As of 2021, there are around 6,000 active padel tennis players across Great Britain, with 107 courts provided at 52 clubs. This is predicted to grow substantially in future years. LTA mapping identifies a need for 12 courts within East Hertfordshire, which is relative to the current population. With two courts already available this would mean the creation of 10 new courts which potentially could increase padel play across the District, provided the courts are well located and advertised.

There are currently two padel courts in East Hertfordshire located at Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust and used by Bishop's Stortford LTC. The Club reports that it has 120 members currently using the courts and that they will cap capacity at 150.

During consultation with Hartham Leisure Centre the conversion of a tennis court and small sided 3G football pitches to padel courts was highlighted. However, there are no current plans identified to progress this.

7.4: Supply and demand analysis

Club tennis

The LTA suggests that a non- sport lit hard court can accommodate 40 members whereas a hard court with sports lighting can accommodate 60 members.

Using the above figures, the table below analyses whether courts currently in use by clubs are sufficient to meet current and future demand. However, it must be noted that this should only be used as a guide as capacity can vary from site to site depending on how the demand operates and the programmes of use in place. Some clubs can comfortably operate over capacity guidance, whilst others may have pressures without theoretically being over capacity.

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Table 7.11: Capacity analysis (club courts)

Site ID	Site	Club users	Current demand (members)	Future demand (members)	No. of courts	Sports lighting?	Capacity (members)	Current capacity balance	Future capacity balance
9	Aston Tennis Courts	Aston Lawn Tennis Club	123	-	2	No	80	43	43
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Braughing Tennis Club	98	25	2	Yes	120	22	3
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth Tennis Club	46	30	2	No	80	34	4
50	Hertford Lawn Tennis Club	Hertford Lawn Tennis Club	300	-	6	Yes	360	60	60
60	Legends Tennis Centre	Legends Tennis Centre	250	20	8	Yes (4)	560	310	290
71	Much Hadham Tennis Club	Much Hadham Tennis Club	192	-	3	Yes	180	12	12
83	Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	170	80	6	Yes (5)	340	170	90
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Tewin Tennis Club	187	-	2	No	80	107	107
103	The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford Lawn Tennis Club	640	-	16	Yes (10)	840	200	200
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	15	-	4	Yes (3)	220	205	205
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Watton at Stone Tennis Club	76	-	3	Yes	180	104	104
134	Standon & Puckeridge Lawn Tennis Club	Standon & Puckeridge Lawn Tennis Club	155	-	3	Yes	180	25	25

*St Margaretsbury did not supply membership numbers, so a capacity analysis could not be conducted for the site.

As identified in the above table, currently Aston Tennis Club, Much Hadham Tennis Club and Tewin Tennis Club have capacity issues with existing membership figures. Aston Tennis Club find itself over capacity by 43 members while Tewin Tennis Club is over capacity by 107 and Much Hadham Tennis Club is over by 12 members. The remaining clubs are all comfortably within the recommended LTA guidelines.

Allenburys Sports & Social Club, Tewin Tennis Club and Hertford LTC all state that intentions to grow club membership but were not willing to say by how much.

Braughing Tennis Club is currently operating within the guidelines and want to grow its membership by 25 members. Should the Club realise this potential, it would find itself operating over capacity by three members.

One caveat is that Legends Tennis Centre and Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust both have courts in an air dome which have a higher playing capacity (100) than outdoor courts as they can be used more often. This will also increase capacity at these sites.

Sawbridgeworth has six tennis courts although only five currently have sports lighting. The Club has plans to add sports lighting on the last court which would see its capacity increase by 20 members, in line with the LTA guidelines.

7.5: Conclusion

Three clubs are currently operating over LTA capacity guidelines, Tewin Tennis Club, Much Hadham Tennis Club and Aston Tennis Club. Tewin Tennis Club states it has temporary lights it can put up if it has a Datchworth League match or for coaching which helps manage demand. Much Hadham Tennis Club has no interest in increasing its membership but does state it requires an additional floodlit court to help service demand. Aston LTC also states a desire to acquire sports lighting for both its courts. Should these clubs acquire sports lighting it would help alleviate capacity issues, allowing the clubs to operate during the evenings and increase court capacity from 40 to 60.

However, there are several sites that are comfortably operating within the LTA recommended guidelines and would continue to do so should they see future demand ambitions realised. Three clubs have space for over 200 new members should they be successful in recruiting. The clubs at these sites are, Legends Tennis Club, Bishop's Stortford LTC and Allenburys Sports & Social Club.

The quality of tennis courts across East Hertfordshire is generally good with only four sites being ranked as poor, equating to 17 courts. Three of these sites are education sites and unavailable for community use, however, Bramfield Playing Field is used by Braughing Tennis Club and as such should be a priority for investment.

Bishop's Stortford LTC is the only site in East Hertfordshire offering padel, with two courts and is currently close to capacity, with space for 30 more members. LTA PPS guidance for Padel provision suggests that East Hertfordshire has the need for 12 courts, meaning there is a need to develop additional Padel courts to meet this unmet demand.

Taking into consideration both club and non-club demand at the current cohort of community available tennis courts across the District it would be a fair assessment that East Hertfordshire is serviced by sufficient provision to accommodate both the current and future demand.

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Tennis – supply and demand summary

◄ There are three tennis clubs within East Hertfordshire currently operating with potential capacity issues, those being Tewin Tennis Club, Much Hadham Tennis Club and Aston Tennis Club. Tewin Tennis Club are currently 107 members over the LTA recommended guidelines whilst Aston Tennis Club are 43 over and Much Hadham Tennis Club are 12 over.

◄ If future growth ambitions are achieved, Braughing Tennis Club will be three members over capacity.

◄ When pairing the findings from the supply and demand analysis for club courts with the large number of community park courts available, it can be considered that East Hertfordshire is serviced by sufficient provision to accommodate both the current and future demand. However, club-based capacity pressures are still present at some of the smaller yet heavily accessed sites such as Tewin Tennis Club, Much Hadham Tennis Club and Aston LTC.

◄ The LTA facility calculator estimates there is a need for 12 padel courts within East Hertfordshire. As there are currently two courts located at Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust there is the need to develop additional courts to address this shortfall.

Tennis – supply summary

◄ There is a total of 135 tennis courts identified in East Hertfordshire across 31 sites, with 116 courts categorised as being available for community use at 28 sites.

◄ Most community available tennis courts in East Hertfordshire are operated by sports clubs with 56 (41%) the rest are split between parish/town council sites with eight (6%), education sites, 51 (38%) or 'other' with one (1%). There are also 19 (14%) courts unavailable to use at education sites.

◄ The most common outdoor tennis court surface in East Hertfordshire is macadam, with 42 courts (31%) identified across 13 sites. Artificial turf surfaces are the next most prominent surface with 31 courts (23%) across seven sites, followed by, shale surfaces, 34 (25%), polymeric, 20 (15%), grass, six (4%) and clay with two courts (1%) across 11 sites.

◄ In East Hertfordshire, 83 of the 135 tennis courts are serviced by sports lighting, representing 61% of the provision.

◄ Of the 116 community available courts, 77 are assessed as good quality (66%), 28 as standard quality (24%) and 11 as poor quality (9%).

◄ There are two sites situated in East Hertfordshire that currently have air domed courts, Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust and Legends Tennis Centre. The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust site also has two padel courts, built in 2024 and used by Bishop's Stortford LTC.

◄ Six clubs currently provide good quality ancillary provision, seven provide standard and none provide poor provision.

◄ Datchworth Tennis Club express plans to rebuild the shared clubhouse and resurface its courts in the next five years. Whilst Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club want to upgrade its Clubhouse and replace floodlights.

◄ There is a planning application in place for the development of eight padel courts at RDA Stadium, home of Bishop's Stortford FC.

Tennis – demand summary

◄ There are 13 tennis clubs in East Hertfordshire which collectively cater for 2,252 members, consisting of 1,432 senior and 820 junior members.

◄ Four clubs report future growth aspirations, with total future demand amounting to 155 potential additional members (70 senior and 85 junior).

◄ Away from clubs, it is considered that all local authority courts available for community use in East Hertfordshire have spare capacity for a growth in demand, although this is difficult to quantify as use is not always recorded due to the open access nature of many sites.

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PART 8: NETBALL COURTS

8.1: Introduction

England Netball is the governing body for the sport across England. Levels of participation are quickly increasing, with over 100,000 affiliated members and at least 1 million women and girls playing during a typical week. Its aim is to provide its members and partners with the best possible service and experience in sport.

Consultation

There are two leagues currently offering competitive netball demand within East Hertfordshire, the Bishop's Stortford District Netball League and the Hertford and District Netball League catering for 30 teams collectively. However, neither league has responded to consultation requests. Consultation has taken place with England Netball alongside desk-based research to inform this section of the report.

8.2: Supply

In total, there are 81 outdoor netball courts located across 32 sites in East Hertfordshire. Of these, 55 courts across 17 sites are open to community access, representing 68% of all outdoor courts. Tables 8.2 and 8.3 below, outline the total supply of provision within East Hertfordshire with these mapped in Figure 8.1.

The Bishop's Stortford analysis area provides the most community available courts in the region whilst Watton-at-stone provides the least with only one community accessible court.

Table 8.1: Summary of the number of courts by analysis area

Analysis area	No. of courts available for community use	No. of courts unavailable for community use
Bishop's Stortford	28	9
Buntingford	5	8
Hertford, Ware	18	5
Sawbridgeworth	3	1
Watton-at-stone	1	3
East Hertfordshire	**55**	**26**

Table 8.2: Summary of supply

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	Management	No. of courts	Floodlit?	Court type
2	All Saints CE Primary School	Bishop's Stortford	No	Education	1	No	Tarmac
8	Aston St Mary's VA School	Buntingford	No	Education	1	No	Tarmac
10	Avanti Meadows Primary School	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	1	No	Tarmac
15	Birchwood High School	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	6	No	Tarmac

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	Management	No. of courts	Floodlit?	Court type
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	9	Yes (4)	Tarmac (1) Macadam (8)
29	Christ Church C Of E (VA) Primary School and Nursery	Hertford, Ware	No	Education	2	No	Tarmac
36	Datchworth All Saints Primary School	Buntingford	No	Education	1	No	Tarmac
39	Edwinstree C Of E Middle School	Buntingford	No	Education	3	No	Tarmac
40	Freman College	Buntingford	Yes	Education	3	No	Tarmac
46	Heath Mount School	Watton-at-Stone	No	Education	2	No	Tarmac
53	Hertfordshire And Essex High School	Bishop's Stortford	No	Education	3	No	Tarmac
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	6	Yes	Tarmac
57	High Wych Ce Primary School	Sawbridgeworth	No	Education	1	No	Tarmac
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	Education	3	Yes	Polymeric
73	Northgate Primary School	Bishop's Stortford	No	Education	2	No	Tarmac
75	Presdales School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	4	Yes	Macadam
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Buntingford	Yes	Education	2	No	Tarmac
80	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	Hertford, Ware	No	Education	1	No	Tarmac
89	Simon Balle School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	2	No	Tarmac
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Buntingford	No	Education	3	Yes	Macadam
91	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	Bishop's Stortford	No	Education	2	No	Tarmac
93	St Joseph's In The Park	Hertford, Ware	No	Education	2	No	Tarmac

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**EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT REPORT**

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	Management	No. of courts	Floodlit?	Court type
95	St Marys Junior School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	2	No	Tarmac
99	Tewin Cowper Primary School	Watton-at-Stone	Yes	Education	1	No	Tarmac
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	3	Yes	Tarmac
105	The Chauncy School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	2	No	Macadam
108	The Sele School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Education	3	No	Tarmac
120	Watton-At-Stone Primary School	Watton-at-Stone	No	Education	1	No	Tarmac
124	Windhill 21 Primary School	Bishop's Stortford	No	Education	1	No	Tarmac
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Other	4	Yes	Macadam
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	Sports Club	1	Yes	Macadam
168	Avanti Grange Secondary School	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	Education	3	Yes	Tarmac

Disused provision

During this study no disused netball courts have been identified within East Hertfordshire.

Future supply

A new primary school has been built in Bishop's Stortford and has community use agreements for sports provision. Avanti Brook Primary School's will have netball courts available for community use for the 25/26 season.

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Figure 8.1: Netball court locations

Overmarking

Whilst it does help with usage levels and sustainability, an issue for netball nationally is that many of its courts are dual use tennis courts. This limits accessibility (especially during the summer when tennis nets are often permanently in place) and can impact on quality due to higher levels of wear and tear. However, in East Hertfordshire only 10 site have courts that are overmarked with tennis markings and multi-use facilities. However, the courts provided at the following sites are overmarked:

◄ Allenburys Sports & Social Club.
◄ Avanti Grange Secondary School.
◄ Bishop's Stortford College.
◄ Freman College.
◄ Heath Mount School.
◄ Herts & Essex Sports Centre.
◄ Leventhorpe School.
◄ Presdales School.

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◄ St Edmunds College & Prep School.
◄ The Bishop's Stortford High School.
◄ The Sele School.
◄ Wodson Park Sports Centre.

Surface type

Across East Hertfordshire, 56 netball courts (69%) have a tarmac surface, 22 courts (27%) have a macadam surface and three courts (4%) have a polymeric surface.

The estimated lifespan of a macadam court and a polymeric court is 10 years, depending on levels of use and maintenance levels.

Management

The table below highlights the management of netball courts within East Hertfordshire.

Table 8.3: Netball courts by management type (all courts)

Community use?	No. of club courts	No. of EHDC, town/parish council courts	No. of education courts	No. of 'other' courts
Available	1	-	50	4
Unavailable	-	-	26	-
Total	**1**	**0**	**76**	**4**

Most netball courts in the District are operated by education sites, with 76 (94%) although only 50 (62%) are available for community use. There are four courts (5%) operated privately and one court (1%) operated by a sports club all of which are available for community use.

Security of tenure

Tenure is currently unclear as consultation requests are still pending a response. However, it is known that leagues based at education or local authority sites, generally do not operate with any security of tenure and block book fixtures on an annual basis.

Quality

The quality of netball courts across East Hertfordshire has been assessed via a combination of site visits in August and September 2024 (using non-technical assessments) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

◄ Good.
◄ Standard.
◄ Poor.

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments are as follows: Good (>80%), Standard (70-80%), Poor (<70%).

Maintaining high court quality is an important aspect of netball and therefore the non-technical assessment (and consultation agreements) assesses several factors which evidence court quality. The criteria for the non-technical assessment consists of; court surface grip underfoot, damage to a court surface, line markings, evidence of moss/lichen, slope of courts, disability access, fencing and courts being of an appropriate size.

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As can be seen in the table below, most netball provision in East Hertfordshire is poor quality. However, of the 49 accessible courts, 23 are good quality (42%), 23 are standard quality (42%) and nine are poor quality (16%). The poor-quality courts provided are deemed so due to issues such as poor grip underfoot, damaged surfaces and a general need for surface replacements.

Table 8.4: Quality summary

Site ID	Site name	No. of courts	Community use?	Sports lighting?	Quality
2	All Saints CE Primary School	1	No	No	Poor
8	Aston St Mary's VA School	1	No	No	Poor
10	Avanti Meadows Primary School	1	Yes	No	Poor
15	Birchwood High School	6	Yes	No	Standard
16	Bishop's Stortford College	9	Yes	Yes (4)	Good
29	Christ Church C Of E (VA) Primary School and Nursery	2	No	No	Poor
36	Datchworth All Saints C Of Primary School	1	No	No	Poor
39	Edwinstree C Of E Middle School	3	No	No	Poor
40	Freman College	3	Yes	No	Poor
46	Heath Mount School	2	No	No	Standard
53	Hertfordshire And Essex High School	3	No	No	Poor
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	6	Yes	Yes	Standard
57	High Wych Ce Primary School	1	No	No	Poor
62	Leventhorpe School	3	Yes	Yes	Good
73	Northgate Primary School	2	No	No	Poor
75	Presdales School	4	Yes	Yes	Good
76	Ralph Sadleir School	2	Yes	No	Standard
80	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	1	No	No	Poor
89	Simon Balle School	2	Yes	No	Poor
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	3	No	Yes	Standard
91	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	2	No	No	Poor
93	St Joseph's In The Park	2	No	No	Poor
95	St Marys Junior School	2	Yes	No	Poor
99	Tewin Cowper Primary School	1	Yes	No	Poor
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	3	Yes	Yes	Good
105	The Chauncy School	2	Yes	No	Standard
108	The Sele School	3	Yes	No	Standard
120	Watton-At-Stone Primary School	1	No	No	Poor
124	Windhill 21 Primary School	1	No	No	Poor
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	4	Yes	Yes	Good
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	1	Yes	Yes	Standard
168	Avanti Grange Secondary School	3	Yes	Yes	Standard

The courts at Wodson Park have recently been resurfaced offering better underfoot grip for its users. The courts are also serviced by sports lighting enabling use in the evening as well as the day.

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Many of the poorly rated sites are in schools, mostly primary, where the courts are mainly used as a playground meaning more wear and tear and faded lines. Usually, in these instances maintenance of the court is not a priority for a school and a maintenance scheme would not be as rigorous as at a club site.

Despite the courts being brand new, Avanti Grange Secondary School highlights that it has several issues with its courts. Consultation with the School confirms the surface is very uneven, line markings are too thin and the surface has started to crack and break up.

8.3: Demand

There are currently 30 netball clubs identified as competing within East Hertfordshire leagues, highlighted in tables 8.5 and 8.6. The teams compete across two outdoor netball leagues, the Bishop's Stortford District Netball League and the Hertford and District League.

Leagues

The Bishop's Stortford District Netball League runs on a Sunday morning from 09.30 until 12.30 and is based at the Herts and Essex Sports Centre. The centre offers six outdoor netball courts with ample parking and use of the indoor facilities for the league. The courts were built in 2019 and are currently rated as standard. The league has four separate divisions ranging from six to eight teams per league with 29 teams overall.

The Hertford and District League currently takes place Presdales School using all four outdoor courts. The are three leagues falling under this umbrella, a summer league on a Wednesday and two winter leagues taking place on a Wednesday and Saturday. The leagues have eight to 12 teams involved. The courts are of good quality and have recently had floodlights put in. The school also has one indoor netball court.

To clarify, details regarding indoor netball will be included in the Indoor Built Facility Report for East Hertfordshire.

Club demand

Tables 8.5 and 8.6 below outline the Bishop's Stortford District Netball League and Hertford and District Netball League Structure for each division.

Table 8.5: Bishop's Stortford District Netball League Structure

Division 1	Division 2	Division 3	Division 4
◄ Swan 2 Black ◄ Sparks 2 ◄ Saffron Walden 2 Lions ◄ Swan 3 Pink ◄ Richmond ◄ Saffron Walden 1 Jaguars	◄ Infinity Reds ◄ Swan 4 Purple ◄ Crosskeys 5 ◄ Sparks 3 ◄ Pinks 1 ◄ Bishop's Stortford 2 ◄ Swan 5 White	◄ Mystix ◄ Bishop's Stortford 3 ◄ Royston 2 ◄ Swan 6 Spirit 1 ◄ Saffron Walden 3 Leopards ◄ Crosskeys 6 ◄ Wodson Ladies 5 ◄ Corkers Allstars	◄ Pinks 2 ◄ Crosskeys 7 ◄ Tegate ◄ Wodson ladies 6 ◄ Crosskeys 8 ◄ Swan 8 spirit 2 ◄ Swan 7 Orange ◄ Saffron Walden 4 Panthers

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Table 8.6: Hertford and District Netball League Structure

Wednesday Winter League Division 1	Wednesday Winter League Division 2	Saturday Winter League
◄ Swan	◄ Issi	◄ Wodson Park Ladies 3
◄ Hertford Heath Rangers	◄ Panthers	◄ Ice
◄ Wodson Park Ladies	◄ Hertford Heath Rangers 2	◄ Bury
◄ Bury	◄ Oasis	◄ Pace
◄ Ice	◄ Hornets 2	◄ Oasis
◄ Crystal Phoenix	◄ Wodson Park Ladies 5	◄ Wodson Park Ladies 0
◄ Hornets 1	◄ Neons	◄ Hertford Heath Rangers
◄ Turnford	◄ Omega	◄ Hertford Hornets Topaz
◄ Bluebelles	◄ Bengeo Tornadoes	◄ Cheshunt
		◄ Crosskeys
		◄ Allenburys
		◄ Royston

Several of the above clubs are not based in East Hertfordshire, however, access East Hertfordshire netball leagues. The bigger clubs typically field many teams across the divisions and can often have multiple teams in the same division. Across both leagues there are 30 clubs competing and fielding 60 teams.

Play Netball

Play Netball is Britain's largest social netball league provider and arranges fixtures, league tables, umpires, netballs, and bibs so players can focus on playing. People can join as individuals to find a team, a group to join the same team or produce their own team of seven or 10 people.

In East Hertfordshire, Play Netball fixtures take place at Leventhorpe school on the outdoor courts on Wednesdays 7pm – 9pm forming part of the Harlow Wednesday league. The league currently has six teams competing meaning it only takes one of the four courts available at the venue and can have all six teams play on the same night. The league accommodates senior demand and will last 10 weeks (six teams play each other twice).

Back to Netball and walking netball

Back to Netball sessions are running across England and provide women of all ages a welcoming re-introduction to the sport. Sessions cover the basics of the game including passing, footwork and shooting and finish with a friendly game. Since its creation in 2010, over 60,000 women have taken part.

Back to Netball sessions in East Hertfordshire are currently delivered at the Sele School in Hertford on Monday evenings from 7pm -8pm. The programme services adult demand and runs weekly priced from £2.

Walking netball has evolved from a growing demand of walking sports such as walking football. It is a slower version of the game and has been designed so that anyone can play regardless of age and fitness level and therefore offers opportunities for older adults to participate and enjoy. There are currently no walking netball sessions running in East Hertfordshire. Although there are sessions in North Hertfordshire located at North Herts Leisure Centre on Thursday afternoons from 1pm-2pm and at Royston Leisure Centre on Tuesday afternoons from 1pm-2pm.

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Unmet/latent demand

Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to courts. It is usually expressed, for example, when a team is already training but is unable to access a match court, or when a league has a waiting list due to a lack of court provision, which in turn is hindering the growth of the league.

Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables analysis of 'the percentage of adults that would like to participate in netball but 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies significant latent demand amounting to 437 people (0.29%) within East Hertfordshire. As a comparison, the national average shows 0.28% of the population would like to participate in netball but is not currently doing so, making East Hertfordshire just above the national average.

England Netball identify that there is a high demand for netball within Hertfordshire which is congruent with the District being above the national average. Outside of the Sport England segmentation tool, there is no other applicable way to quantify perceived latent demand by clubs or England Netball.

Imported/exported demand

Imported demand is teams entering East Hertfordshire to access facilities for netball, whilst exported demand is clubs choosing to access provision outside the area. Locally, there are no known examples of imported demand for netball.

England Netball confirm that there is little exported demand from residents within East Hertfordshire accessing established leagues outside of the District but accepts it may still happen.

Future demand

England Netball states that there is not much future demand for netball in the area. However, since consultations with leagues are yet to be successful, this cannot be completely confirmed.

8.4: Supply and demand analysis

Table 8.7: Summary of existing sports lit community use supply

Site ID	Site name	No. of courts	Community use?	Sports lighting?	Quality
16	Bishop's Stortford College	9	Yes	Yes (4)	Good
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	6	Yes	Yes	Standard
62	Leventhorpe School	3	Yes	Yes	Good
75	Presdales School	4	Yes	Yes	Good
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	3	Yes	Yes	Good
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	4	Yes	Yes	Good
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	1	Yes	Yes	Standard
168	Avanti Grange Secondary School	3	Yes	Yes	Standard

As can be seen in Table 8.7 there are 33 sports lit, community available netball courts within East Hertfordshire accounting for 40% of the total supply stock. Of these, there are 23 good quality courts and 10 are standard quality. This is a good level of supply for the District and seems to service the demand well.

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8.5: Conclusion

England Netball identify a high demand for netball across Hertfordshire. East Hertfordshire currently has 33 sports lit, community available outdoor netball courts, 23 of which are rated good quality. It can therefore be determined that 40% of netball courts within East Hertfordshire are open to community use and sports lit.

The majority of netball courts are commonly found at schools and East Hertfordshire is no different with 94% of courts located at education sites. The remaining courts are located at Wodson Park Sports Centre and Allenburys Sports & Social Club and are both sports lit and available for community use.

Netball – supply and demand summary
- ◂ Given the demand for netball and that there are 33 sport lit community accessible courts it is determined that there is an adequate supply of netball provision in East Hertfordshire.

Netball – Supply summary:
- ◂ In total, there are 81 outdoor netball courts located across 32 sites in East Hertfordshire. Of this total provision, 55 courts across 17 sites are community accessible.
- ◂ Of the 55 community accessible courts, 23 are good quality, 23 are standard and nine are poor quality.
- ◂ Good quality provision located at Leventhorpe school is accessed by the Play Netball League.

Netball – Demand summary:
- ◂ Two leagues have been identified as offering competitive netball in East Hertfordshire, those being Bishop's Stortford District Netball League and the Hertford and District League.
- ◂ England Netball, and Sport England's Segmentation Tool outlines that there are somewhat low levels of unmet demand for East Hertfordshire with only 0.29% of the District identified as wanting to participate but not currently doing so.

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PART 9: ATHLETICS

9.1: Introduction

As a Governing Body, UK Athletics is responsible for developing and implementing the rules and regulations of athletics, including everything from anti-doping, health and safety, facilities, and welfare, to training and education for coaches and officials as well as permitting and licensing.

England Athletics (EA) is the not-for-profit membership and development body responsible for grassroots athletics and running in England. EA supports 1,750 affiliated clubs and organisations (covering track and field, road running, fell, hill, trail and cross-country clubs), 147,000 registered athletes, 18,700 licensed coaches and leaders, 3,800 officials and 6.2m regular running participants. EA's Athletics purpose is to inspire more athletes and runners of all abilities and backgrounds to fulfil their potential and to have a lifelong love for the sport. Their vision is for athletics and running to become an inclusive sport where everyone belongs and can flourish.

Consultation

There are three affiliated athletics clubs within East Hertfordshire, Herts Phoenix AC, Hawcs AC and Ware Joggers. Both Herts Phoenix and Hawcs AC have been consulted with, resulting in a 67% response rate.

9.2: Supply

There is one formal athletics track provided in East Hertfordshire; the Stuart Storey athletics track located at Wodson Park Sports Centre. It is a community accessible eight lane 400-metre track. The track is provided with sports lighting to support activities on both the track and infield as well as all accompanying field event facilities including a throws cage (hammer, discus & club), javelin, high jump, long/triple jump, and shot-put area. Wodson Park replaced its hammer cage in late 2022, early 2023 which was reportedly much needed as it previously was not safe for use.

There is also a four lane 40 metre compact track at Hockerill Anglo-European College with associated long/triple jump runways/pit, High Jump fan and throws circle. This is located at a school and services curricular demand. The track is not floodlit and is not currently open for community use.

Both The Hawcs and Herts Phoenix AC train out of Wodson park sports centre. However, Herts Phoenix AC also train out of Gosling Sports Park, which is based in Welwyn Garden City, outside of East Hertfordshire.

Table 9.2: Summary of athletics tracks in East Hertfordshire

Site ID	Site	Surface	Analysis area	Length	Sports lighting?	Community use?
58	Hockerill Anglo-European College	Synthetic	Bishop's Stortford	40 metres	No	No
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Synthetic	Hertford, Ware	400 metres	Yes	Yes

Please see figure 9.1 for a map highlighting the location of the provision within East Hertfordshire.

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Figure 9.1: Location of athletics tracks in East Hertfordshire

Management

The athletics provision located at Wodson Park Sports Centre is managed by the Wodson Park Trust which is, a registered charity.

Quality

Key factors impacting upon the quality ratings include the condition and age of the track surface, the prominence of the line markings and any signs of wear and tear or unofficial use.

The non-technical assessment identified the Stuart Storey track at Wodson Park Sports Centre as standard quality, and it should be noted that the track at Wodson Park was built in 2003 and last resurfaced in 2005. Consultation confirms the track is maintained by Wodson Park and Hawcs AC deem the track to be of good quality. However, it was observed during the site audits that the track looked old and was patched up in places. The sports lighting is also not LED and requires reinspection, it is, track circuit (class 2=club standard), while infield throws is class 3 = recreation.

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT REPORT

The ANOG report completed by England Athletics in January 2025 details how the track would benefit from professional cleaning and minor repairs in the short term, before reaccreditation. Field events such as jumps and throws passed inspection. The venue is TrackMark accredited until the end of March 2026 and will likely need respraying in 2026.

The track at Hockerill Anglo-European College was identified during site audit standard. It is relatively new and has good line markings, although it was noted that the track had looked like it hadn't been maintained. The school confirms that the track is solely used for circular use.

TrackMark

TrackMark is UK Athletics' quality assurance scheme for outdoor track and field athletics facilities. A venue that achieves TrackMark is recognised by UK Athletics as having well managed, compliant facilities that are accessible to participants of all abilities. From 2021, venues that actively choose not to purse accreditation are not eligible to apply host UKA licenced competitions at any level.

The Stuart Storey track at Wodson Park Sport Centre is TrackMark accredited, having passed an assessment of the track, field, ancillary, operations, sports lighting, and competition grading criteria.

Ancillary facilities

Wodson Park Sports Centre provides good level ancillary facilities for its users, including, changing rooms, toilets, and showers. The site also has a large car park and offers spectators covered seating beside the track. As well as athletics the site also has a 3G and grass football pitches, a gym, tennis and netball courts and badminton provision as part of two large multi-purpose sports halls.

Future provision

England Athletics strategic position is that in most areas of the country there is a sufficient supply of traditional synthetic outdoor 400m tracks to meet club and competition needs and that there should focus on protecting and maintaining this provision. In addition to traditional facilities, EA is keen to support the development of a new generation of innovative athletics & running facilities (NewGen), as well as a country-wide network of indoor athletics facilities developed as part of future indoor multisport projects.

Priority for both NewGen and indoor developments will be given to those areas that sit outside EAs recommended drivetime catchment of existing facilities or where there is additional, demonstrable demand.

NewGen facility concepts

Track and Field (run/jump/throw)
- **Play Track:** The simple animation of dated playground surfaces using colourful painted lines and markings to (KS1 & KS2) – encouraging participation in run/jump/throw activities by creating challenging and inspiring environments.
- **Compact Track:** A sports-lit, multiple lane, synthetic sprint straight with optional jumps and throws provision.
- **MiniTrack:** A sports-lit synthetic "mini" running oval, with sprint straight, multi-sport "infield" and optional jumps and throws provision.

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Recreational running/endurance running/multi-sport:
- ◄ **Active Track:** A free to access, macadam running / cycling circuit designed to be sympathetic to the local environment and support the recreational needs of local communities.
- ◄ Ideally lit by low level lighting / solar columns, ActiveTracks can be introduced to existing parks, open spaces and playing fields or integrated into the master planning of new housing developments.
- ◄ Sport England Case Study: ActiveTrack: [Sowerby Sports Village](#)

There is currently one compact track in East Hertfordshire located at Hockerill Anglo-European College.

9.3: Demand

For the purposes of this study, athletics demand is considered to come in various forms, rather than just traditional track and field activity. As such, running clubs are also considered, as are organised running events and various running initiatives, some of which are governed by England Athletics. It is also acknowledged that recreational running forms a large part of demand, although this is difficult to measure.

Hawcs Athletics Club

Hawcs AC train out of Wodson Park Sports Centre, using the Stuart Storey athletics track. The Club caters for all athletic disciplines offering throwing and jumping as well as sprints, hurdles and middle distance. It competes in local and regional leagues. The Club currently has 86 junior members and one senior female member and confirms that its senior membership has decreased due to a falling out between coaches.

Herts Phoenix Athletics Club

The Club offers track and field from spring through summer and then switches its focus to road running through autumn and winter cross country and indoor competitions. It trains out of two sites, Wodson Park Sports Centre and Gosling Park, the latter being in neighbouring Welwyn Garden City. The main training takes place on Tuesdays and Thursdays at both venues each week. The Club also runs various other sessions throughout the week for the different sections, disciplines, and age groups. Across all sections it has 270 members, 221 juniors, 21 female and 28 male. The Club is currently operating a waiting list with 25 people on it and wants to continue to increase its membership.

Other running clubs

Ware Joggers

The Club is based out of the Stuart Storey Track at Wodson Park Sports Centre, and its current membership stands around 88 people. It runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7pm with the session lasting approximately two hours. There is also occasional Sunday morning runs if arrangements are made in good time.

Allenburys Running Club

The Club does a variety of sessions throughout the week including a long runs, interval and circuit training. It caters for runners of all ability and can adjust runs accordingly to suit the group.

Bishop's Stortford Running Club

Founded in 1983, the Club now has over 300 members and has includes triathlon, junior run and junior tri sub-sections. It runs every Wednesday evening starting at Bedlams Lane and can vary from three to 10 miles. There are also interval sessions on Tuesday and Saturday with ad hoc sessions being held on Friday evenings. The Club has access to ancillary facilities at Hockerill sports & social club including showers and changing rooms as well as a bar with food offerings. It also offers swimming and biking sessions to continue improving its triathlon section.

Parkrun

Parkrun is a series of 5k runs held on Saturday mornings in areas of open space around the UK, with 1,300 events now operating across the Country. They are open to all, free, and are safe and easy to take part in. Runners must first register online to access a printed barcode which gives them access to all Parkrun events.

In East Hertfordshire, six Parkrun events are held each week. The events are known as Castle Park and Westmill Parkrun. Details of which are outlined in the table below.

Table 9.3: Summary of Parkrun and junior Parkrun in East Hertfordshire

Location	Post code	Event	Number of events	Average attendance
Castle Park Parkrun	CM23 2DL	Parkrun	298	37
Panshanger Parkrun	SG14 2NJ	Parkrun	472	31
Westmill Parkrun	SG12 0ES	Parkrun	318	24
Grange Paddocks Junior Parkrun	CM23 3HH	Junior Parkrun	243	7
Hertford Junior Parkrun	SG14 1QR	Junior Parkrun	285	9
Norfolk Road Playing Fields Parkrun	SG9 9TA	Junior Parkrun	37	5

Castle Park Parkrun is the most popular, averaging 37 runners per event.

Run Together[26]

Run Together is an official England Athletics recreational running project which aims to get the whole nation running. Its aim is to provide fun, friendly, supportive, and inclusive running opportunities for everyone, regardless of ability and availability. It believes that running is more fun and easier to become part of a lifestyle when shared with others.

In East Hertfordshire, there are three clubs forming part of the initiative, Herts Girls Can, Active East Herts and Hertford Running Club.

A key focus for England Athletics is increasing demand for participation in initiatives such as Run Together, meaning this could be further targeted moving forward, especially given the number of other clubs that could be involved.

[26] https://runtogether.co.uk/

Other running events

The Bishop's Stortford Mitre 10k, 5k & 1K are a series of road racing events open to all, organised by Bishop's Stortford High school and beginning in Jobbers Wood. The races aim to fundraise for the Mitre Fund which in turn raises money for the school's sports facilities.

Many of the annual and bigger races within Hertfordshire take place in neighbouring districts and boroughs such as East Hertfordshire or North Hertfordshire.

Couch to 5k

Couch to 5k is a national health initiative promoted by the National Health Service (NHS) to encourage absolute beginners get into running as part of establishing and maintaining and active and healthy lifestyle including regular exercise.

The plan consists of three runs per week and a day of rest in between, with a different schedule for each of the nine weeks to completion. It starts with a mix of running and walking, to gradually build up fitness and stamina, in order to create realistic expectations and a sense of achievability to encourage participants to stick with it. The end goal of the plan is for the participant to be able to run 5k.

Through the Couch to 5k plan the NHS particularly promotes the health benefits of running and regular exercise which underpin the initiative, such as improved heart and lung health, weight loss and possible increases in bone density which can help protect against bone diseases such as osteoporosis. This also includes mental benefits of running through goal setting and challenge setting, which can help boost confidence and self-belief. Furthermore, running regularly has been linked to combating depression.

It is believed that an increase in people running through the Couch to 5k plan may increase interest and possibly have a knock-on effect of leading to increased demand at running groups and clubs as people may wish to continue develop their running further.

Latent demand

Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables analysis of 'the percentage of adults that would like to participate in athletics but 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies significant latent demand amounting to 3,211 people (1.26%) within East Hertfordshire. As a comparison, the national average shows 3.04% of the population would like to participate in athletics but is not currently doing so, making East Hertfordshire below the national average.

Hawcs AC is not currently operating a waiting list and has no latent demand for athletics. The Club details how it has recently lost membership, therefore, is not at capacity.

Future demand

Hawcs AC has plans to grow its membership, however, the Club did not specify by how many members.

9.4: Supply and demand analysis

With one dedicated athletics facility in East Hertfordshire, that being the standard quality track at Wodson Park Sports Centre, supply is seemingly sufficient as to meet the identified demand in the District. Quality improvements such as respraying and cleaning the surface will be required in the future to ensure the quality of the Wodson Park track is sustained as long as possible.

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However, when taking into consideration that clubs want to expand membership, coupled with other running clubs like Ware Joggers training on the track. Supply might become an issue in the future.

It is important to note that some clubs, such as Herts Phoenix AC, are using provision outside of the District, mainly Gosling in Welwyn Garden City.

9.5: Conclusion

The track and field athletics facilities at Wodson Park Sports Centre requires protection and enhancement to ensure that the venue can continue to service the demand of its users and promote further usage. Furthermore, it is imperative that the track retains its UKA TrackMark accreditation thus should be monitored closely.

The compact track at Hockerill Anglo-European College should also be protected to allow for continued use of the track in addition to the track at Wodson Park to further offer athletics provision to the local community.

With one full-size athletics track and a compact track within East Hertfordshire, it can be determined that the area is adequately catered for to accommodate the existing levels of demand. However, it is likely that within the lifespan of this PPOSS the track at Wodson Park Sports Centre will decline in quality and will require maintenance, as it is already showing signs of wear and tear.

Away from the formal athletics track at Wodson Park, priority should also be placed on supporting activity being accommodated by the various running clubs in East Hertfordshire and the events that are being held. For instance, Bishop's Stortford Running Club accommodates significant demand within the District with over 300 members.

Athletics – supply and demand summary
- ◄ The supply of dedicated athletics facilities is sufficient to meet demand.
- ◄ A key priority is the resurfacing of the track at Wodson Park as it is now over 20 years old and reaching end of life.
- ◄ Priority should also be placed on supporting activity being accommodated by the various running clubs in East Hertfordshire and the events that are being held.

Athletics – supply summary
- ◄ There is one purpose-built athletics track in East Hertfordshire, provided at Wodson Park sports centre.
- ◄ Wodson Park provides a 400m track with eight lanes; it has a synthetic surface, is serviced by floodlighting and is open to community use.
- ◄ The track is of a standard quality but is reaching end of life having last been resurfaced in 2005.
- ◄ Wodson Park is serviced by good quality ancillary facilities.
- ◄ There is also a four lane 40 metre compact track at Hockerill Anglo-European College with associated long/triple jump runways/pit, High Jump fan and throws circle. The facility has no sports lighting.

Athletics – demand summary
- ◄ Five clubs have been identified that have a current focus on athletics and/or running activity, with only Hawcs AC, Herts Phoenix AC and Ware Joggers having a requirement for a purpose-built facility.
- ◄ None of the clubs consulted with have a waiting list in place and all clubs are open to gaining new members.
- ◄ There are six Parkrun events held each week at as many venues across East Hertfordshire.

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PART 10: LAWN BOWLS

10.1: Introduction

Outdoor bowls in East Hertfordshire is played almost entirely on flat greens, with a typical season running in the Summer from May until September. Bowls England is the NGB with overall responsibility for ensuring effective governance of the sport.

Crown green bowling is another version of bowls played in England, governed separately by The British Crown Green Bowling Association (BCGBA). This format of the sport is played predominately in the North of England and there is a no presence of this locally.

Consultation

There are 14 bowls clubs identified as currently using outdoor bowling greens in East Hertfordshire. Of these, 11 responded to consultation requests, equating to a response rate of 79%. Unresponsive clubs have been contacted via email and telephone on several occasions.

Table 10.1: Summary of consultation

Club name	Club response?
Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Yes
Aston Bowls Club	No
Bengeo Bowls Club	Yes
Buntingford Bowls Club	Yes
Datchworth Bowls Club	Yes
Havers Park Bowls Club	Yes
Hertford Bowls Club	Yes
Hertford Castle Bowls Club	Yes
Much Hadham Bowls Club	Yes
Sawbridgeworth Bowling Club	No
Sele Farm Bowls Club	Yes
Shire Park Bowls Club	Yes
Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Yes
Ware Lawn Bowling Club	No

Bishop's Stortford BC has been omitted from this report as its ground is in the Uttlesford District and as such is included in the Uttlesford PPOSS.

10.2: Supply

There are a total of 13 bowling greens identified in East Hertfordshire across 13 sites. Most provision is in the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area with five greens provided (38% of all provision) whilst both Bishop's Stortford and Watton-at-Stone analysis areas have the least provision with one green each (8% of provision, respectively totalling 16%).

Table 10.2: Summary of the number of greens by analysis area

Analysis area	No. of greens
Bishop's Stortford	1
Buntingford	4
Hertford, Ware	5
Sawbridgeworth	2
Watton-at-Stone	1
East Hertfordshire	**13**

Figure 10.1 shows the location of all bowling greens currently in East Hertfordshire. For a key to the map, see Table 10.3.

Figure 10.1: Location of bowling greens in East Hertfordshire

Table 10.3: Location of all bowling greens

Site ID	Site name	Club using site	Analysis area	No. of greens
5	Aston Bowls Club	Aston Bowls Club	Buntingford	1
11	Bengeo Bowls Club	Bengeo Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	1
26	Buntingford Bowls Club	Buntingford Bowls Club	Buntingford	1
37	Datchworth Bowls Club	Datchworth Bowls Club	Buntingford	1
45	Havers Park Bowls Club	Havers Park Bowls Club	Bishop's Stortford	1
47	Hertford Castle Bowls Club	Hertford Castle Bowls Club & Hertford Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	1
69	Much Hadham Bowls Club	Much Hadham Bowls Club	Sawbridgeworth	1
82	Sawbridgeworth Bowling Club	Sawbridgeworth Bowling Club	Sawbridgeworth	1
85	Sele Farm Bowls Club	Sele Farm Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	1
87	Shire Park Bowls Club	Shire Park Bowls Club	Watton-at-Stone	1
117	Ware Lawn Bowling Club	Ware Lawn Bowling Club	Hertford, Ware	1
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	1
135	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Buntingford	1

Disused provision

There are no disused bowling greens in East Hertfordshire.

Security of tenure

The table below highlights the tenure position of clubs which have responded to consultation. Mainly, clubs have secure tenure, with most having either long term lease arrangements in place with East Hertfordshire District Council, town and parish councils, or private landowners.

Table 10:4: Summary of club tenure arrangements

Site ID	Site	Club	Tenure
11	Bengeo Bowls Club	Bengeo Bowls Club	The green is owned by Bengeo Club which the bowls Club are a part of.
26	Buntingford Bowls Club	Buntingford Bowls Club	Buntingford BC owns the site Freehold.
37	Datchworth Bowls Club	Datchworth Bowls Club	The Club rent the site from the Parish Council and pay annually.
45	Havers Park Bowls Club	Havers Park Bowls Club	The land is owned by Sawbridgeworth Masons and is in perpetuity until it is no longer used for bowling. Therefore, the Club do not pay anything towards the use of the land.
47	Hertford Castle Bowls Club & Hertford Bowls Club	Hertford Castle Bowls Club	Club is three to four years into a 20-year lease. Land is owned by East Hertfordshire District Council.

Site ID	Site	Club	Tenure
69	Much Hadham Bowls Club	Much Hadham Bowls Club	The Club leases the land from Much Hadham Parish Council.
85	Sele Farm Bowls Club	Sele Farm Bowls Club	The Club leases the site from East Hertfordshire District Council and pays annually.
87	Shire Park Bowls Club	Shire Park Bowls Club	The Club owns the site.
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	The green is associated with the Social Club who have an agreement with GSK, the private landowner. The Club has a long-term lease in place with the owner which is in the process of being renewed.
135	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	The Club owns the site.

The current tenure position is unknown for Aston Bowls Club, Sawbridgeworth Bowls Club, and Ware Lawn Bowling Club.

Quality

The quality of bowling greens across East Hertfordshire have been assessed via a combination of site visits conducted in August 2024 (using non-technical assessments) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

‹ Good.
‹ Standard.
‹ Poor.

For bowling greens, the non-technical assessment considers several attributes of the site including the surrounding hard surfaces to the green, disability access, evenness, grass coverage and signs off unofficial use.

Table 10.5: Summary of bowling green quality

Site ID	Site name	Club using site	No. of greens	Quality
5	Aston Bowls Club	Aston Bowls Club	1	Good
11	Bengeo Bowls Club	Bengeo Bowls Club	1	Good
26	Buntingford Bowls Club	Buntingford Bowls Club	1	Good
37	Datchworth Bowls Club	Datchworth Bowls Club	1	Standard
45	Havers Park Bowls Club	Havers Park Bowls Club	1	Standard
47	Hertford Castle Bowls Club	Hertford Castle Bowls Club & Hertford Bowls Club	1	Standard
69	Much Hadham Bowls Club	Much Hadham Bowls Club	1	Standard
82	Sawbridgeworth Bowling Club	Sawbridgeworth Bowling Club	1	Good
85	Sele Farm Bowls Club	Sele Farm Bowls Club	1	Standard
87	Shire Park Bowls Club	Shire Park Bowls Club	1	Standard
117	Ware Lawn Bowling Club	Ware Lawn Bowling Club	1	Standard

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Site ID	Site name	Club using site	No. of greens	Quality
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	1	Good
135	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	1	Good

Of the 13 bowling greens in East Hertfordshire six are deemed good quality (46%) and seven are deemed standard quality (54%), there are no poor quality greens identified. In the case of the standard quality provision, instances of highly worn patches and slight undulations were present.

Nine clubs state their greens are maintained by members as outlined below:

◄ Allenburys Sports & Social Club.
◄ Bengeo Bowling Club.
◄ Buntingford Bowls Club.
◄ Datchworth Bowling Club.
◄ Havers Park Bowling Club.
◄ Much Hadham Bowling Club.
◄ Sele Farm Bowling Club.
◄ Shire Park Bowls Club.
◄ Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Club.

Sawbridgeworth Bowling Club, Ware Lawn Bowling Club and Aston Bowling Club have not yet responded to consultation requests and therefore it cannot be stated how the respective greens are managed.

Hertford Castle Bowling Club and Hertford Bowling Club share a green and both pay into a joint account to pay a greenkeeper to maintain the green.

Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Club report its green quality is much better due to the members paying for professional advice.

Shire Park Bowls Club describes how its green quality is declining due to poor weather early in the year, encouraging fungus paired with machinery breaking down.

Buntingford Bowls Club and Havers Park Bowls Club both express that their respective greens have slightly improved since the last season, largely due to hard work and investment. Havers Park specifically describes the use of top dressing working particularly well in combination with rainfall.

Ancillary provision

Most clubs which responded to consultation have access to some form of clubhouse/pavilion on site or through an adjoining public house. The quality of these facilities ranges from purpose-built brick pavilions to basic wooden huts and shelters. Nine sites are accompanied by good quality facilities, a further five sites have standard quality ancillary provision. With zero sites having poor quality ancillary provision.

The table below outlines the quality of ancillary provision for each club site.

Table 10.6: Summary of club ancillary provision

Site ID	Site name	Club using site	Analysis area	Quality
5	Aston Bowls Club	Aston Bowls Club	Buntingford	Good
11	Bengeo Bowls Club	Bengeo Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	Standard
26	Buntingford Bowls Club	Buntingford Bowls Club	Buntingford	Good
37	Datchworth Bowls Club	Datchworth Bowls Club	Buntingford	Good
45	Havers Park Bowls Club	Havers Park Bowls Club	Bishop's Stortford	Good
47	Hertford Castle Bowls Club	Hertford Castle Bowls Club & Hertford Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	Standard
69	Much Hadham Bowls Club	Much Hadham Bowls Club	Sawbridgeworth	Good
82	Sawbridgeworth Bowling Club	Sawbridgeworth Bowling Club	Sawbridgeworth	Good
85	Sele Farm Bowls Club	Sele Farm Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	Standard
87	Shire Park Bowls Club	Shire Park Bowls Club	Watton-at-Stone	Standard
117	Ware Lawn Bowling Club	Ware Lawn Bowling Club	Hertford, Ware	Good
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	Standard
135	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Buntingford	Good

Shire Park Bowls Club has a standard rating. The clubhouse is a medium size brick building which is in good condition. However, the Club reports that due to it being over 30 years old it requires some refurbishments. It currently carries out renovations whenever urgent or when funding becomes readily available.

Hertford Castle Bowls Club has access to a small wooden building, providing standard provision. The Club use it to host social events with changing rooms, a kitchen and a bar. It states that it would like a better clubhouse, and that high heating costs are a main concern presently.

Sele Farm Bowls Club confirms that its ancillary provision is of standard quality with toilets and a social space. However, as the Club is based in Hartham Common Park there is no dedicated club parking, meaning members must pay to park.

During consultation, Bengeo Bowls Club confirms it has a standard large brick building serving as a clubhouse with changing facilities and adequate parking for its members.

Sports lighting

Greens with sports lighting offer opportunities to access provision for training and matches during evenings outside of the summer months. However, they are relatively uncommon across the Country, meaning the levels identified in East Hertfordshire are comparative to the national picture of sports lighting supply and should not be of any particular concern.

Only Sawbridgeworth Bowling Club is serviced by sports lighting in East Hertfordshire.

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10.3: Demand

There are 14 bowls clubs in East Hertfordshire. Of the 11 clubs that have responded to the consultation, it was only possible to obtain membership numbers for ten clubs. The total membership equates to 560 members. This comprises 283 senior male, 153 senior female and four juniors (mixed gender) members.

The average membership across clubs is 56 members. The highest membership figures are at Buntingford Bowls Clubs with 141 members, whilst the lowest known figures are found at Standon & Puckeridge Bowls Club, and which has 23 members. Standon & Puckeridge Bowls Club does state its plans to increase membership in the future.

Pay and play

Pay and play refers to the opportunity for residents to turn up to existing facilities and access them on a casual, commitment free basis. Locally, only Bengeo Bowls Club and Datchworth Bowls Club offer pay and play to residents and Havers Park Bowls Club offer pay and play on the basis that you come with an existing member. All remaining clubs (which were responsive to consultation) do not offer pay and play with the general rationale being that there is nobody on site able to collect fees.

Play Bowls and Bowls Bash

Play Bowls[27] is a new product designed to assist clubs in attracting more casual, pay and play participants. Clubs are now able to sign up to the scheme, with booking slots for access then able to be secured and paid for via the Play Bowls website. The aim is for this to help the sport become much more accessible whilst making it easy for clubs to evolve and manage the demand from the casual audience. Bowls Bash[28] offers a shortened format normally played in teams of two, with players delivering 30 bowls each per match.

Both schemes are being delivered across the country as a means of growing participation for lawn bowls.

Table 10.7: Summary of club membership (where known)

Club name	Site name	Analysis area	Men	Women	Juniors	Total
Bengeo Bowls Club	Bengeo Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	22	21	0	43
Buntingford Bowls Club	Buntingford Bowls Club	Buntingford	79	58	4	141
Datchworth Bowls Club	Datchworth Bowls Club	Buntingford	45	25	0	70
Havers Park Bowls Club	Havers Park Bowls Club	Bishop's Stortford	23	9	0	32
Hertford Bowls Club*	Hertford Castle Bowls Club & Hertford Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	-	-	-	75
Hertford Castle Bowls Club*	Hertford Castle Bowls Club & Hertford Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	-	-	-	45
Much Hadham Bowls Club	Much Hadham Bowls Club	Sawbridgeworth	26	7	0	33

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[27] https://play-bowls.com/
[28] https://www.bowlsengland.com/bowlsbash/

Club name	Site name	Analysis area	Men	Women	Juniors	Total
Sele Farm Bowls Club	Sele Farm Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	20	14	0	34
Shire Park Bowls Club	Shire Park Bowls Club	Watton-at-Stone	52	12	0	64
Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Buntingford	16	7	0	23
Total			283	153	4	560

*Specific membership breakdown was not known at time of consultation

Latent demand

Latent demand refers to potential demand; clubs that would like to gain more members but currently do not do so. This can be for a variety of reasons including a lack of provision, appropriate facilities, and qualified coaches. Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to provision. It is usually expressed, for example, when a team is already playing for a club but is unable to access a match green, or when a league has a waiting list due to a lack of pitch provision, which in turn is hindering the growth of the league.

Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables analysis of 'the percentage of adults that would like to participate in bowling' but 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies latent demand of 146 people or 0.06% within East Hertfordshire. As a comparison the national average shows that 0.15% of the population is looking to play lawn bowls but is not currently doing so.

Hertford BC confirms that it has recently turned away new members as it is at capacity because of having to share the site with Hertford Castle BC. If both clubs are playing at the same time, then the green is at capacity meaning that neither club can afford to accept new members.

Future demand

For bowls it is more appropriate to consider population changes for persons aged 65 and over. Office of National Statistics population projections (2018-2043), identify that the number of persons aged 65 and over living in East Hertfordshire is likely to increase continuously from 26,528 in 2018 to 37,191 in 2043, representing an increase of 40.2%.

Due to this age band being the most likely to play bowls, it can be said that demand for bowling greens in East Hertfordshire is likely to increase with additional pressure placed on the existing stock of provision. In addition, consultation identifies six clubs which aspire to increase their existing memberships. Details of this are provided in the table below. Total future demand identified across six clubs equates to 54 new members.

Table 10.8: Future demand aspirations of clubs consulted with

Club name	Site name	Analysis area	Future demand aspiration (members)	Method to increase membership
Bengeo Bowls Club	Bengeo Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	Five members	Open days.
Buntingford Bowls Club	Buntingford Bowls Club	Buntingford	Did not specify	Coaching sessions for all ages in April & May each year.

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Club name	Site name	Analysis area	Future demand aspiration (members)	Method to increase membership
Datchworth Bowls Club	Datchworth Bowls Club	Buntingford	Did not specify	The Club confirms that it would like to increase its membership but is finding it difficult.
Havers Park Bowls Club	Havers Park Bowls Club	Bishop's Stortford	Seven members	Advertisement and through allowing scout and guide groups to play as well as open days.
Hertford Bowls Club	Hertford Castle Bowls Club & Hertford Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	Did not specify	The Club would like to grow its membership, however, feels its capped as it shares a site with another club.
Hertford Castle Bowls Club	Hertford Castle Bowls Club & Hertford Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	Did not specify	The Club holds recruiting days but does not attract many new players.
Much Hadham Bowls Club	Much Hadham Bowls Club	Sawbridgeworth	10 members	Through advertisement and open days.
Sele Farm Bowls Club	Sele Farm Bowls Club	Hertford, Ware	No future demand expressed	-
Shire Park Bowls Club	Shire Park Bowls Club	Watton-at-Stone	22 members	Open days and a reduced membership fee for newcomers.
Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Buntingford	10 members	The Club hopes to increase membership through word of mouth and local promotion.

10.4: Supply and demand analysis

The capacity of a bowling green is very much dependent on the leagues and the day that they operate. A green may have no spare capacity in the afternoon or evening when a popular league operates but may be underused for the rest of the week.

However, in many cases, greens are used during the afternoons by club members which bowl socially, with access a potential issue during peak times if membership is particularly high.

Bowls England has no specific guidance on bowling green capacity, stating that it can vary from site-to-site and from club-to-club. However, as a guide, it states that any green used by at least 20 members is generally considered to be sustainable, whilst any green operating with a membership of over 60 may need additional resource to ensure that it is meeting its required level of demand.

Therefore, capacity ratings for bowling greens in East Hertfordshire are classified as follows:

Within capacity range	Membership ensures green is sustainable without capacity issues
Outside capacity range	Membership is below or above the recommended capacity range

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Following this, the table below highlights the level of usage each green in East Hertfordshire receives, where the information is known. Where no membership information is known, further communication is required with clubs to fully understand their needs and any potential capacity or sustainability issues.

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Table 10.9: Bowling green supply and demand analysis (where membership figures are known)

Site ID	Site name	Club name	No. of greens	Analysis area	Total membership	Future Demand	Current capacity (members)	Future capacity (members)
11	Bengeo Bowls Club	Bengeo Bowls Club	1	Hertford, Ware	43	5	17	12
26	Buntingford Bowls Club	Buntingford Bowls Club	1	Buntingford	141	-	81	81
37	Datchworth Bowls Club	Datchworth Bowls Club	1	Buntingford	70	-	10	10
45	Havers Park Bowls Club	Havers Park Bowls Club	1	Bishops Stortford	32	7	28	21
47	Hertford Castle Bowls Club	Hertford Bowls Club Hertford Castle Bowls Club	1	Hertford, Ware	129	-	69	69
69	Much Hadham Bowls Club	Much Hadham Bowls Club	1	Sawbridgeworth	33	10	27	17
85	Sele Farm Bowls Club	Sele Farm Bowls Club	1	Hertford, Ware	34	-	26	26
87	Shire Park Bowls Club	Shire Park Bowls Club	1	Watton-at-Stone	64	22	4	26
135	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	1	Buntingford	23	10	37	27

*Two clubs share this site, so the total membership number is for both clubs combined

The table above shows that five clubs are operating within a "sustainable" capacity range. While Buntingford BC, Datchworth BC, Hertford Castle BC and Hertford BC (both share a green) and Shire Park BC is operating above Bowls England guidelines. It is important to note that during consultation Hertford Bowls Club and Hertford Castle Bowls Club both express that capacity is capped as both clubs share the site. When factoring in future demand, Datchworth BC, and Shire Park BC are forecast to go further above its capacity threshold.

Standon & Puckeridge BC have the most capacity currently with space for 37 more potential members. With this however, the Club is dangerously close to having unsustainable membership levels and would benefit from increasing membership.

10.5: Conclusion

Despite Hertford Castle Bowls Club and Hertford Bowls Club expressing capacity issues due to sharing a green, there is spare capacity across the District to accommodate more bowls use. Furthermore, with most of the clubs having good quality greens, existing demand is being fully accommodated. Therefore, supply is deemed sufficient to meet the current level of demand.

A caveat to this finding is that the current supply of bowling greens across East Hertfordshire should be protected and monitored to ensure that they retain sufficient capacity in the future should there be an increase in demand in line with population projections for the typical bowling demographic.

For clubs which are operating over Bowls England sustainability guidelines, none note a need for increased access to provision.

All sites in East Hertfordshire, are rated standard or good regarding ancillary and bowling provision so there is limited scope for improvement work. However, many sites could have improved maintenance which may help to increase the standard rating to a good.

Bowls – supply and demand summary
◄ There is a sufficient supply of bowling greens in East Hertfordshire to accommodate current demand; however, some shortfalls may appear if future demand from club ambitions are to be realised. The current level of provision requires protection.

Bowls – supply summary
◄ There are 13 bowling greens in East Hertfordshire provided across 13 sites.
◄ All clubs that have responded to consultation attempts are deemed to have security of tenure.
◄ Sawbridgeworth CC is the only club in East Hertfordshire that is serviced by sports lighting.
◄ Of the 13 bowling greens in active use, six are good quality, seven are standard quality and none are of a poor quality.
◄ Ancillary provision ratings across East Hertfordshire, confirms eight clubs' access good quality clubhouses, five access standard quality and none are poor quality.

Bowls – demand summary
◄ There are 14 clubs using bowling greens in East Hertfordshire. Where membership is known, it equates to 560 members.
◄ The average membership across all of the identified clubs is 56 members.
◄ Due to a predicted increase in persons aged 65 and over (to 2043), demand is likely to increase for greens over the coming years.
◄ Five clubs report future demand to increase membership by a combined total of 62 members, with methods of increasing numbers such as recruitment via coaching, reduced first year fees, localised advertisement, and open days in line with Bowls England.
◄ Two clubs have suggested that there is latent or unmet demand. Hertford BC and Hertford Castle BC share a site and as such have previously had to turn would be members away. Should the clubs both need to use the green at peak times it would be at capacity.

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PART 11: RUGBY LEAGUE

11.1: Introduction

The Rugby Football League (RFL) is the governing body for rugby league in England. It administers the England national rugby league team, the Challenge Cup, Super League and the championships which form the professional and semi-professional structure of the game in the UK.

Most community club rugby league is played throughout the summer season (from February to October). However, rugby league is considered as a winter season sport within schools, colleges and universities and therefore pitch provision for matches and training is also required throughout the winter months.

Consultation

Although there is no demand for rugby league within East Hertfordshire, consultation was undertaken with North Herts Crusaders, a team in the neighbouring Authority of North Hertfordshire to help inform this section of the report.

11.2: Supply

There are currently no rugby league pitches located within East Hertfordshire.

11.3: Demand

No demand has been identified for community rugby league in East Hertfordshire itself. In effect, any residual demand for the sport is unlikely to be sufficient for a club to be created, with individuals instead likely to travel to play at North Herts Crusaders which is based at Hitchin Rugby Club in North Hertfordshire or St Albans Centurions RLFC based in neighbouring St Albans.

North Herts Crusaders fields both senior and junior teams and currently has two senior men's, one senior women's and three junior boy's teams. The Club is based and plays in North Hertfordshire and reports that many of its players travel over five miles to access the sport.

With two established clubs in nearby local authorities, it can be determined that any residual demand is exported to play at either North Herts Crusaders or St Albans Centurions rugby league clubs.

11.4: Supply and demand analysis

As no formal demand is identified within East Hertfordshire, there is no need to suggest a rugby league pitch is required. However, there is clearly exported demand to neighbouring authorities so this should be observed closely as to ascertain whether the need for a pitch could become a possibility in the future.

11.5: Conclusion

With no demand for rugby league currently identified in East Hertfordshire, it can be concluded that there is no requirement for rugby league pitches to be provided. However, should any demand exist, if not already, should be signposted to North Herts Crusaders or St Albans Centurions in neighbouring authorities.

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Rugby league – supply and demand summary

◄ Demand for rugby league is met outside of East Hertfordshire, with opportunities in North Hertfordshire and St Albans.

Rugby league – supply summary

◄ There are no rugby league pitches in East Hertfordshire.

Rugby league – demand summary

◄ No demand has been identified for rugby league in East Hertfordshire.

◄ Individuals from East Hertfordshire likely travel to form part of North Herts Crusaders who are based at Hitchin rugby club in North Hertfordshire or St Albans Centurions based in neighbouring city of St Albans.

◄ Any residual need is unlikely to be sufficient for a club to be created, with individuals instead likely to travel to form part of the clubs outside of the District.

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PART 12: GOLF

12.1: Introduction

Golf is the fifth largest participation sport in England, with around 730,000 members belonging to one of 1,800 affiliated clubs and a further two million people playing independently outside of club membership. There are an estimated 3,000 golf courses across the Country, with approximately 90 designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest because apart from the intensively managed trees and greens they have other habitats with high wildlife value. Many other courses also exist within designated Heritage Coast sites, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or listed Historic Parklands.

Nationally, the sport is governed by England Golf. Its role includes providing competitions for players of all ages and abilities, identifying and developing the most talented golfers, maintaining a uniform system of handicapping, administering and applying the rules, and introducing new golfers via its initiatives such as 'Get into Golf'.

Consultation

The section was informed via consultation with England Golf, which has provided information relating to all facilities and clubs within East Hertfordshire.

12.2: Supply

There are three different types of golf facilities recognised by Sport England and governed by England Golf, as defined in the table below. Facilities such as pitch and putt courses and miniature/crazy golf courses are not included as these are not considered to be traditional formats of the game and are not comparable offerings.

Table 12.1: Definitions of golf facilities

Facility type	Description
Standard	A standard par course, with a minimum of 9 holes but normally associated with 18-hole courses; many 9-hole courses have different tee boxes which allow the provision to be played as an 18-hole course. Some courses provide 27 holes, with any two loops of 9-holes played to make up an 18-hole round.
Par 3	Shorter length of holes than a standard course, with no hole longer than Par 3. Most likely to be a 9-hole course although 18-hole offerings do exist. Does not include pitch and putt courses, which are even shorter offerings and are not considered to be a traditional version of the sport.
Driving Range	Includes covered and uncovered driving range bays but not practice areas within golf courses; ranges are based on the hiring of balls, with users not required to retrieve, whereas practice areas are generally for members to use with their own balls (although a growing number have dispensers). Does not include 'entertainment' ranges or virtual offerings, although some driving ranges have expanded to also provide these features.

Within East Hertfordshire, there are nine golf venues that provide facilities conforming with the above definitions, as identified in Table 11.1 and Table 11.2 below.

Table 12.2: Golf facilities within East Hertfordshire

Site ID	Sitename	Postcode	Analysis area
171	Manor Of Groves Golf Club	CM21 0JY	Sawbridgeworth
172	Brickendon Grange Golf Club	SG13 8PD	Hertford, Ware
173	Bishop's Stortford Golf Club	CM23 5HP	Bishop's Stortford
174	East Herts Golf Club	SG9 9NB	Buntingford
175	Whitehill Golf Club	SG12 0JS	Hertford, Ware
176	Ash Valley Golf Club	SG10 6HD	Sawbridgeworth
177	Great Hadham Golf & Country Club	SG10 6JE	Sawbridgeworth
178	Hanbury Manor Golf Club	SG12 0SD	Hertford, Ware
179	Chadwell Springs Golf Centre	SG12 9LE	Hertford, Ware

Within East Hertfordshire there are eight affiliated clubs operating from as many affiliated facilities, listed in Table 12.3. Each facility offers a standard 18-hole course with some further offering short courses and driving range provision also.

Figure 12.1 below highlights the location of all golf provision in East Hertfordshire.

Figure 12.1: Location of golf provision in East Hertfordshire

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Table 12.3: Summary of standard hole provision in East Hertfordshire

Site ID	Sitename	Holes	Par	Yardage[29]			Slope rating
171	Manor Of Groves Golf Club	18	71	6,126	5,797	5,139	116-135
172	Brickendon Grange Golf Club	18	71&73	6,483	6,053	5,735	128-134
173	Bishop's Stortford Golf Club	18	71	6,404	6,161	5,757	113-136
174	East Herts Golf Club	18	71	6,428	6,186	5,520	116-131
175	Whitehill Golf Club	18	72	6,802	6,271	5,482	127-133
176	Ash Valley Golf Club	18	71	6,661	6,469	5,797	119-126
177	Great Hadham Golf & Country Club	18	72	6,854	6,465	5,887	120-129
178	Hanbury Manor Golf Club	18	72	7,052	6,678	6,124	128-139

There are eight standard length golf courses within East Hertfordshire, all of which consist of 18 holes and are in excess of 6,000 yards. The longest course is provided by Hanbury Manor Golf Club spanning 7,052 yards. The smallest course is Manor of Groves Golf club which is 6,126 yards in total.

Slope ratings are new to golf across the World. The intention is for them to allow the handicap system to reflect course difficulty and the difference in difficulty for all players compared to scratch golfers. In effect, this enables each player to have a handicap that will vary from course-to-course, depending on difficulty, as well as a general handicap.

The maximum slope rating is 155, whereas the minimum is 55. The standard difficulty is considered to be 113.

Most commonly, Par 3 provision is used by beginner and casual players, although they are also frequented by more traditional golfers wanting to practice their short game. They offer a course for all ages to enjoy which is ideal for families whilst offering a great entry point for driving range users to transition to standard course use.

Ash Valley Golf Club and Chadwell Springs Golf Centre both provide a 9-hole, Par 3 short course. The courses are in Sawbridgeworth and Hertford, Ware analysis areas respectively, meaning residents outside these areas have limited access to these types of facilities.

Within East Hertfordshire there are five driving ranges with a total of 63 bays, which are listed in table 11.4 below.

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[29] White denotes Championship tees, yellow denotes men's tees and red denotes ladies' tees.

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The use of driving ranges was higher in 2021 than in any of the previous 10 years, no doubt impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic but also due to the rise in popularity of the gamification options available through the use of ball tracking technology. Driving Ranges provide the ideal location for those looking to start out in the sport and with the option of now accessing technology which helps to make the experience more fun, they are appealing to a new audience of future golfers. Nationally, many driving range providers are updating their facilities with such provision in a bid to increase demand. Others also seek the installation of automatic tees or entertainment systems such as TopTracer and FlightScope. These allow for users to simulate playing on courses across the world and provides ball tracking and statistical feedback. Such technology is offered at Bishop's Stortford Golf Club. Great Hadham Golf & Country Club offers the largest number of bays across the district with 18 as well as offering pay and play which can be more enticing for newcomers.

Table 12.4: Summary of driving range bays

Site ID	Sitename	No. of bays provided	Covered?	Sports lighting?	Ball Tracking technology?	Access
173	Bishop's Stortford Golf Club	10	Yes	No	Yes	Members only
175	Whitehill Golf Club	12	Yes	Yes	No	Members only
177	Great Hadham Golf & Country Club	18	Yes	Yes	No	Pay & play
178	Hanbury Manor Golf Club	6	No	No	No	Pay & play
179	Chadwell Springs Golf Centre	17	Yes	Yes	Yes	Pay & play
-	**Total**	**63**	-	-	-	-

There are three main types of ownership and management models of golf facilities in England: members clubs, proprietary clubs, and municipal facilities. Each of these is summarised in the table below.

Table 12.5: Types of ownership and management of golf facilities

Management type	Description
Members	Traditionally owned by members and run by committees. They are likely to hire caterers and green staff. Most members' clubs offer some level of pay and play and encourage golf societies but are mostly focused on membership numbers.
Proprietary	Owned or managed by businesses or individuals, these can include country club type facilities at the high end of the golfing market alongside more localised facilities. Many have clubs operating within them but can also take a much more relaxed attitude to dress and traditions of golf. Pay and play opportunities tend to be a key feature of the business plan.
Municipal	These are generally owned by a local authority, although in a growing number of instances, management has been contracted and externalised to private companies. Due to a lack of financial viability, many have closed across the Country in recent years and many that remain are under threat.

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It is recognised that members clubs and visitors to such clubs are normally expected to dress appropriately, have a registered handicap certificate (a certificate issued by the Council of National Golf Unions (CONGU) and be familiar with the rules and etiquette of the game. This is not uncommon at some proprietary clubs, but municipal courses tend to be more relaxed with regard to dress codes and do not require people to have handicaps, making golf much more accessible.

Consequently, municipal courses are, in many instances, seen as entry level facilities, with players using them before having the confidence to move on to a members' or high-end proprietary club (although many people can and do stay attached to a particular course). They also tend to offer a more affordable golfing experience.

The business model for members clubs tends to rely heavily on income through membership subscriptions and use of ancillary facilities, rather than from pay and play usage, although attention has somewhat switched at many sites in recent years due to demand falling. The same can be said for some proprietary clubs, although, in general, more emphasis is placed on supplementing regular activity with green fee sales.

Conversely, municipal sites have always been heavily reliant on visitors even though membership packages are normally available (often in the shape of season tickets). On occasion, these can be linked to access to other local authority operated sports facilities, such as leisure centres and swimming pools.

Despite the above generalisations, each golf facility, regardless of management type, will have its own processes in terms of how much focus is placed on membership and pay and play usage, or whether it equally encourages both. There is no correct way to run a site. A club that focuses on members has guaranteed income, but this can often deter more casual players or nomadic golfers through, for example, a lack of peak time availability.

In contrast, a site that depends on visitors can struggle to be viable if there are spells of inclement weather during summer months and can discourage people that want to be part of a club environment. On the other hand, more income can be brought in through regular users compared to what would be the case had they been part of a membership scheme.

In East Hertfordshire there are six proprietary clubs and three members clubs with no municipal clubs, which table 11.6 explores further.

Table 12.6: Summary of ownership/management in East Hertfordshire

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Management type
171	Manor Of Groves Golf Club	Sawbridgeworth	Proprietary
172	Brickendon Grange Golf Club	Hertford, Ware	Members
173	Bishop's Stortford Golf Club	Bishop's Stortford	Members
174	East Herts Golf Club	Buntingford	Members
175	Whitehill Golf Club	Hertford, Ware	Proprietary
176	Ash Valley Golf Club	Sawbridgeworth	Proprietary
177	Great Hadham Golf & Country Club	Sawbridgeworth	Proprietary
178	Hanbury Manor Golf Club	Hertford, Ware	Proprietary
179	Chadwell Springs Golf Centre	Hertford, Ware	Proprietary

A key issue for the wider golf population is whether golf courses are available to the general population at a price point which is accessible to the majority of residents. Better quality courses tend to cost more to use, whilst 18-hole provision is generally more expensive to access than 9-hole provision.

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Nationally, over the past few years, many facilities have altered their pricing structures to allow for discounts following a previous decline in golf membership. England Golf has positively encouraged this as its view is that clubs are more likely to experience growth when flexible packages are available. For instance, some now offer five and/or six-day memberships (whereby members can access the course on specific days but not on one or both weekend days), whilst others provide discounts that are no longer limited solely to junior players (e.g. discounts for those aged 18-21 and 21-30 or for those aged 65 and over). In the past, it was common for clubs to have membership waiting lists, but this has become rarer. That being said, a rise in demand following the Covid-19 pandemic has tested this and resulted in capacity pressures, with a third of clubs now thought to have waiting times before new members can join.

England Golf reports that the average cost of a full adult membership across the Country is currently £1,071. None of the clubs in East Hertfordshire operate below this figure, with the cheapest being at Ash Valley Golf Club at £975. The average membership price for 18-hole courts is £1,656 which is 55% higher than the national average. Green fees are available at most Golf Club. Pricing for weekday access ranges from £20-£65, and weekend prices range from £30-£75.

Table 12.7: Pricing structures at golf facilities within East Hertfordshire

Site ID	Sitename	Joining fee	Full membership (per year)	Green fee (per round)[30]	
				Weekday	Weekend
171	Manor Of Groves Golf Club	Yes	£1,315	£33.50	£37.50
172	Brickendon Grange Golf Club	Yes	£1,980	£65	Unknown
173	Bishop's Stortford Golf Club	Yes	£1,650	£65	£70
174	East Herts Golf Club	Yes	£1,895	£65	£75
175	Whitehill Golf Club	No	£1,542	£44	£48
176	Ash Valley Golf Club	No	£975	£20	£30
177	Great Hadham Golf & Country Club	No	£1,210	£33	£44
178	Hanbury Manor Golf Club	Yes	£2,680	Unknown	Unknown

There are no official national or county golf facility rankings. Generally, the better course quality and supporting infrastructure is, the higher the joining/membership and green fees are likely to be. Some sites gain status through hosting county, national and international golf events and some tend to feature in ranking articles put together by golf magazines.

In terms of golf course quality within East Hertfordshire, it is relatively good across the district, with no significant issues identified.

The ancillary facilities across clubs in East Hertfordshire are also generally good. Each of the aforementioned venues offer members a clubhouse offering a lounge that serves food and drinks, alongside a function room which is available for event hire, other than Ash Valley Golf Club that does not hire out space for functions/meetings. Alongside this, Manor of Groves, Great Hadham and Hanbury Manor provide additional leisure facilities.

Golf clubs often need such revenue sources to operate effectively and the provision of a good quality, well equipped clubhouse is a key opportunity to provide a secondary income stream. This emanates from a variety of sources including bar and catering income from

[30] Where more than one course is provided, the price displayed is for the larger course.

members and visitors as well as venue hire for special occasions including weddings, christenings and funerals.

From a golfing perspective, given the current emphasis on increasing levels of female and junior golf membership across the Country, it is also imperative that ancillary provision can adequately cater for all types of members e.g. by providing gender specific changing facilities.

12.3: Demand

Around 2004, participation in golf began declining; however, recent signs show that the reduction has not only levelled off, but that demand has started to increase, especially following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, both in 2020 and 2021. As one of the first sports to be allowed on both occasions, people have been able to play whilst maintaining social distancing and England Golf has provided very clear guidance as to how this should manifest itself (e.g. by not allowing the flag to be taken out or rakes to be used). Some courses have reported a near doubling of usual demand compared to pre-pandemic levels, highlighting that a significant opportunity now exists to retain increased participation in the long-term. An opportunity now exists for this to represent a long-term increase in demand, although to what level is unclear as retention may in some instances be challenging as more and more users return to normal working/living conditions.

Membership

The average member number of clubs in England for 2022 was 407 so this can be used as a benchmark to compare this data against. Given the nature of the affiliation fee collection process, this report cannot provide 2023 average membership numbers nationally, however, it is known from research performed by Club & County Support Officers that over 70% of clubs in the country had either grown or sustained their membership levels from 2022 levels, despite an on average 9% increase in subscription fees. To ensure consistency, all the membership number data used has also been considered factoring in the 18-hole equivalent value to help establish the averages. So, for 9-holes courses this has been doubled and 36-hole the number has been halved.

Table 12.8: Average Membership Numbers in eight affiliated facilities within East Hertfordshire

Authority	2015	2016	2017	2018	2022	2023	2024*[31]
East Hertfordshire	362	359	389	376	496	502	529

Within the East Hertfordshire, membership numbers at affiliated clubs are significantly higher than the national average. The current average number of members is 30% above the national average.

It is also worth referencing that this also includes relatively low number from Ash Valley Golf Club. Membership numbers have also grown during the documented period above. Between 2015 and 2024 there has been an increase of 46% in the local authority.

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[31] As of July 2024

Pay and play

Whilst pay and play usage has generally increased across England in recent years, usage figures at the sites within East Hertfordshire are not known as it is not something that is tracked by England Golf. However, all clubs provide green fee rates.

Nationally, England Golf utilises a figure of 3.5 million people that are considered to be regular golfers, with this defined as those that have played on a standard-length course at least twice within the last 12 months. Using this, it is able indicate how much demand exists per facility within a catchment area before then comparing this to a national benchmark.

Within the formula, it calculates the participation number in an area by establishing what proportion of the population is likely to be golfers, which can then be used to determine the number of participants per facility. This can then be compared to the national rate, with an index created for comparison purposes. Using 100 as the average, anything below this suggests that an area has either low demand or a high facility count, whereas anything above provides evidence that an area has high demand and/or a low level of provision.

The calculations for the catchment area for the East Hertfordshire area can be seen via the image below, as provided by England Golf.

Figure 12.2: Regular golfer demand index calculations for East Hertfordshire

As shown, the index rating for the catchment area (70) is below the national benchmark (100). Therefore, indicating East Hertfordshire provides enough facilities to meet the demand of those in the authority who play golf regularly.

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Unmet demand

Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to golf facilities. This could be reflected via a waiting list at a club, although it is likely that people on a waiting list are still playing golf elsewhere, either via membership of another club or through pay and play access. Bishop's Stortford Golf Club is the only club that is currently operating a waiting list in East Hertfordshire.

Latent demand

Latent demand is demand for golf that is not currently being realised. This could be for numerous reasons, such as time constraints, financial reasons and a lack of suitable, available provision.

Whilst the reasoning for the latent demand is unknown and is likely to be varied, the data does show relatively high demand which would significantly increase membership and/or pay and play usage across facilities if realised. England Golf is supportive of clubs that proactively target new audiences in an attempt to tap into such demand i.e. through developing a variety of golfing offers, coaching programmes and a range of membership options.

In addition, England Golf has a mapping tool that enables an assessment of potential demand within a 20-minute drive time of each golf facility, with the population broken down into nine golfing segments. These segments are defined to help provide an indication as to what type of golfing offer each would be most likely to access. They are:

◄ Relaxed members.
◄ Older traditionalists.
◄ Younger traditionalists.
◄ Younger fanatics.
◄ Younger actives.
◄ Late enthusiasts.
◄ Occasional time pressed.
◄ Social couples.
◄ Casual fun.

In East Hertfordshire, demand from each of the segments is relatively evenly split across the nine segments; the highest demand is from "casual fun" (4,313 people), whilst the lowest is from "older traditionalists" (3,848 people).

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Figure 12.3: Sport England participation data
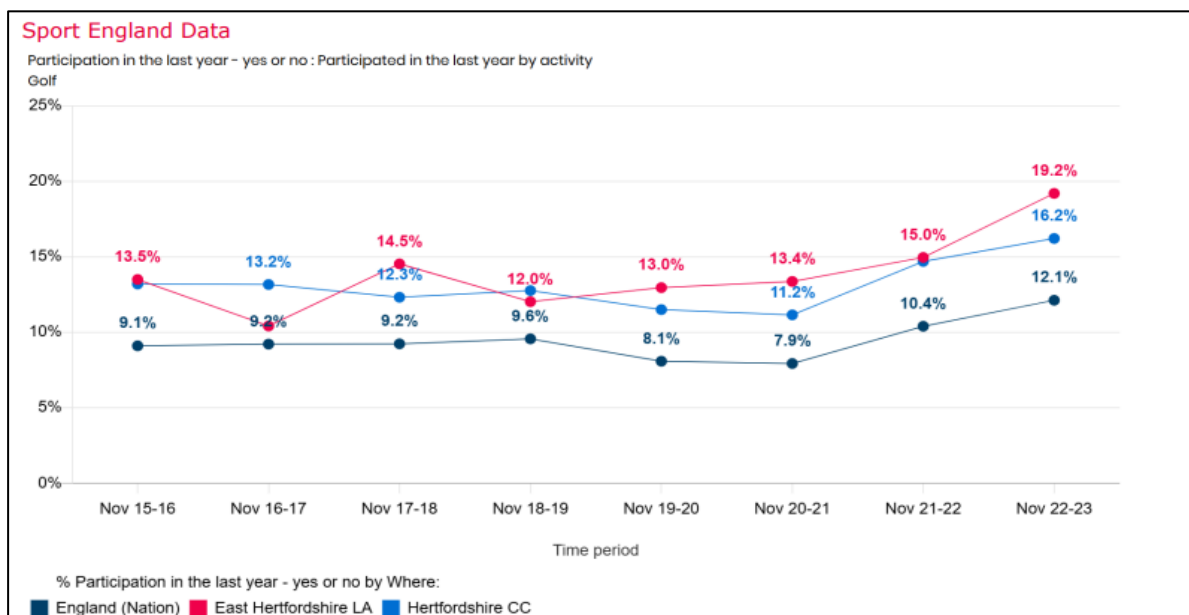
As evidenced in the above chart, Sport England data suggests that participation in golf is the highest it has been since 2015 when data started being collected. Between 2021 and 2023 there has been an increase of over 4%, with circa 4.8 million people participating in the sport during that 12-month period.

When looking specifically at East Hertfordshire, the popularity of golf currently sits above the national average by 7.1% and is in line with the regional average. 19.2% of the population participated in golf during 2023 in East Hertfordshire, a growth of nearly 6% from the previous 24-month period, and similar to the national trend, the highest participation rate for the authority since 2015.

Future demand

England Golf has an aim to increase membership of clubs nationally; however, after reaching its previous target, it no longer has a fixed goal in terms of growth. Nationally, many clubs, especially the most established ones, will be happy to retain current demand levels, whilst others will be open to growing and some considerably so. In that regard, England Golf reports that many providers are proactively targeting new audiences through coaching programmes and a wider range of membership and playing options.

12.4: Supply and demand analysis

With nine golf facilities in East Hertfordshire, there is a good level of supply to meet current and future demand with a variety of facilities on offer. With only one club operating a waiting list currently it can be suggested that the opportunity for newcomers to play golf is an option. Given the range of facilities and offerings, it can be said that all golfers are catered for with differing course lengths and driving ranges. Golf is clearly a popular sport in East Hertfordshire with an abundance of facilities and participation being 7.1% over the national average with 19.2% of the local population participating.

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12.5: Conclusion

There is a good variety of golf provision within the area, with two par 3/short courses, and eight 18-hole courses offering standard length traditional golf. In addition to course access, four of the above-mentioned facilities offers a driving range, with one stand-alone driving range and short course facility available at Chadwell Springs Golf Centre.

Membership numbers in the authority are much higher compared with the national average of 407 members but has increased by 46% since 2015. Numbers have continued to increase steadily over the last 3 years. It is also worth noting that each club will have a different financial model in terms of income generation from membership vs green fees etc.

Participation and membership in golf has seen a large renaissance recently and particularly as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, as it was considered to be a much safer and more accessible sport when the Country emerged from the various periods of restrictions. England Golf know that clubs showing growth are developing new income streams and catering for a wide range of needs, so there is clearly scope for clubs to offer additional non-traditional and flexible playing opportunities wherever appropriate.

In summary, there is a good amount of provision in the authority, with a variety of facilities. The existing facilities are clearly servicing a demand as evidenced by the high membership numbers across the listed facilities. The Regular Golfer Demand figure shows that there are enough facilities to meet current demand but doesn't take into account the lack of shorter forms of golf or driving ranges. It is the view of England Golf that all current facilities should therefore be retained and protected to ensure no gaps in golf provision are created.

To protect and support the facilities, England Golf offers assistance, primarily through a variety of tools that can be used to better understand the local market. There may also be opportunities for some clubs across the area to work more collaboratively in terms of creating pathways where appropriate to collectively cater for all types of players.

Golf – supply and demand summary

◄ East Hertfordshire has a sufficient supply of provision to accommodate the identified high levels of golf demand within the Authority.

◄ In East Hertfordshire, golf remains more popular than the national averages by 7.1%. In 2023, 19.2% of the local population participated in the sport, reflecting a 6% increase over the previous two years. While East Hertfordshire has historically seen strong participation in golf, the current rate is the highest recorded for the authority since 2015.

Golf – supply summary

◄ There are nine golf facilities within East Hertfordshire, eight of which offer standard 18-hole courses, two offering par/short courses and four offering a driving range and a dedicated standalone driving range at Chadwell Springs Golf Centre.

◄ Six of the clubs are proprietary owned while three are members owned with no municipal owned courses.

◄ Quality across East Hertfordshire is good with no issues reported and members paying higher fees than the national average.

Golf – demand summary

◄ East Hertfordshire demand for golf is high with membership growing year on year

◄ Bishop's Stortford Golf Club currently have a waiting list in place suggesting unmet demand at the Club.

◄ Pay and play usage is unknown but clubs in East Hertfordshire provide green fee rates and pay and play is also available at three of the driving ranges.

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PART 12: OUTDOOR WATER SPORTS

12.1: Introduction

East Hertfordshire is a landlocked authority providing somewhat limited space for outdoor water-based activities. Water sports in England are governed by various bodies, including:

- British Canoe Union.
- British Kite Surfing Association.
- British Rowing.
- British Sub-Aqua Club.
- British Swimming.
- British Water Ski.
- Royal Yachting Association.
- Surfing Great Britain.

12.2: Supply

Abbotts Lake is a 25-acre lake based in Stanstead Abbotts in East Hertfordshire. The lake caters for various water sports including yachting and canoeing. The Lake forms part of the Lea Valley Regional Park.

The river Stort runs for 24 miles through Essex and Hertfordshire and offers another opportunity for those wishing to partake. The river takes its name from Bishop's Stortford, located in East Hertfordshire.

East Hertfordshire is also home to Ware Priory Lido, situated in Ware Priory. The site offers a 30m main pool as well as a 'teaching pool as ancillary provision for its users which includes changing facilities as well as food and drink offerings. The Lido was built in 1934 and last renovated in 2021 to be reopened to the public in 2023 after an investment of £1m. The funding came from Ware Town Council and the Public Work Loan Board. This was after a previous investment in 2016 from GSK to complete some 'extensive renovation work.

12.3: Demand

Abbotts Lake is home to Hertford County Yacht Club who use the lake for casual sailing, open and handicap racing and B Fleet which is aimed at novice racers who would like to compete. The Club describes itself as a grassroots Club with the main aim of getting people into or back into sailing. It is Royal Yachting Association (RYA) an accredited training centre and offers memberships for all ages. For juniors, the Club offers a more informal introduction to sailing based on the RYA onboard scheme.

Whoosh Explore Canoe Club (WECC) and Bishop's Stortford Canoe Club (BSCC) both use the River Stort for canoeing. BSCC, affiliated to Paddle UK, were founded in 1972 and owns its own land beside Southmill Lock enabling it to build ancillary provision. The Club's focus is flatwater sprints and marathon racing in kayaks and canoes. WECC is an amateur club offering paddling sessions for its users, with canoes, kayaks, and paddle boards able to hire or under a structured session. The Club also runs several club trips to the UKs best paddling venues.

Ware Priory Lido is open to local residents for community use all year round for heated swimming from May – September and cold-water swimming from October – April. The Pool is also available for private hire for different types of groups and is sometimes used by Ware Swimming Club although the Club is mainly based out of Fanshawe Pool which is an indoor pool.

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12.4: Conclusion

Outdoor water sports – supply and demand summary
- East Hertfordshire is well provided for regarding outdoor water sport facilities given its location, enabling the District to cater for a range of activities.
- The clubs are adequately meeting demand levels, with no capacity issues evidenced.

Outdoor water sports – supply summary
- The River Stort runs through Hertfordshire and Essex providing the opportunity for various water sports.
- Abbotts Lake offers 25 acres of open water, providing space for yachting and canoeing, forming part of the Lea Valley Regional Park.
- Ware Priority Lido has been servicing local residents since 1934 and is open all year round for both warm and cold-water swimming, depending on the season.
- Activities offered in the District include canoeing, kayaking, yachting, sailing and paddle boarding.

Outdoor water sports – demand summary
- There are currently four clubs in East Hertfordshire providing outdoor water sport activity.
- No clubs report any unmet or latent demand, although it could exist for activities that are not collectively offered by the clubs.

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APPENDIX 1: SPORTING CONTEXT

The following section outlines a series of national, regional and local policies pertaining to the study and which will have an important influence on the Strategy.

National context

The provision of high quality and accessible community outdoor sports facilities at a local level is a key requirement for achieving the targets set out by the Government and Sport England. It is vital that this strategy is cognisant of and works towards these targets in addition to local priorities and plans.

Department of Media Culture and Sport Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation (2015)

The Government published its strategy for sport in December 2015. This strategy confirms the recognition and understanding that sport makes a positive difference through broader means and that it will help the sector to deliver five simple but fundamental outcomes: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development. In order to measure its success in producing outputs which accord with these aims it has also adopted a series of 23 performance indicators under nine key headings, as follows:

- More people taking part in sport and physical activity.
- More people volunteering in sport.
- More people experiencing live sport.
- Maximising international sporting success.
- Maximising domestic sporting success.
- A more productive sport sector.
- A more financially and organisationally sustainable sport sector.
- A more responsible sport sector.

Department of Culture Media and Sport Get Active: A Strategy for the Future of Sport and Physical Activity (2023)
The Government published its new strategy for sport in August 2023. The 2015 government sport strategy, Sporting Future: A New Strategy for a More Active Nation, was a fundamental re-framing of sport and physical activity in the UK. It set out five outcomes delivered by sport and physical activity:

- Physical wellbeing
- Mental wellbeing
- Individual development
- Social and community development
- Sustainable economic development

This new strategy builds on the foundations of Sporting Future and retains these five outcomes at its core. In order to measure its success in producing outputs which accord with these aims it has also adopted a series of three core priorities, with seven indicators to achieve these priorities as follows:

- **Being unapologetically ambitious in making the nation more active**
  - Ensuring everyone is focused on increasing physical activity, meaning fewer inactive children, and narrowing the gap on inactivity where groups are not being reached, with visible progress across the country by 2030
  - Focusing on evidence, data and metrics

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◁   Setting the future direction for facilities and spaces where people can be active

◁   **Making sport and physical activity more inclusive and welcoming for all that everyone can have confidence that there is a place for them in sport**
  - ◁   Helping the sector to be welcoming to all
  - ◁   Improving how issues and concerns are dealt within the sector

◁   **Moving towards a more sustainable sector that is more financially resilient and robust**
  - ◁   Supporting the sector to access additional, alternative forms of investment
  - ◁   Working towards a more environmentally sustainable sector

Delivering against these priorities will help create a more active nation and a more sustainable sport sector. These aims are complementary; greater participation, stronger governance and confidence in the sector will help to drive investment, which in turn helps to attract new audiences. The vision is to make sport and physical activity accessible, resilient, fun and fair, for now and the years to come – for the benefit of individuals and the country.

Sport England Uniting the Movement: Our 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport (2021-2031)

Sport and physical activity makes people happier and healthier, and movement is the lens through which we can make that happen. It does the same thing for our communities, with life-changing, sustainable benefits that have huge economic and social value. That's why Sport England wants sport and physical activity to be recognised as essential to help overcome these national challenges.

The Strategy recognises the need to invest in sport and physical activity through NGBs, other sports bodies and local sports clubs, organisations and community groups to increase engagement for different groups as part of our core purpose. It states that there is now a need to go further in promoting movement in general as the means to unlock sport and activity for some people.

Tackling inequalities
There are deep-rooted inequalities in sport and physical activity, which means that there are people who feel excluded from being active because the right options and opportunities aren't there. These inequalities are at the very core of the Uniting the Movement.

Sport England plans on having a laser focus on tackling inequalities in all that it does, because providing opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind, and helping to remove the barriers to activity is vitally important.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out planning policies for England. It details how these changes are expected to be applied to the planning system. It also provides a framework for local people and their councils to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities.

The NPPF states the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It identifies that the planning system needs to focus on three themes of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is a key aspect for any plan-making and decision-taking processes. In relation to plan-making the NPPF sets out that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs.

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PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORTS ASSESSMENT REPORT

The 'promoting healthy communities' theme identifies that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficiencies or surpluses in local areas should also be identified. This information should be used to inform what provision is required in an area.

As a prerequisite the NPPF states existing open space, sports and recreation buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- An assessment has been undertaken, which has clearly shown that the open space, buildings or land is surplus to requirements.
- The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.
- The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

In order for planning policies to be 'sound' local authorities are required to carry out a robust assessment of need for open space, sport and recreation facilities.

The FA National Football Facilities Strategy (2018-28)

The Football Association's (FA) National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS) provides a strategic framework that sets out key priorities and targets for the national game (i.e., football) over a ten-year period.

The Strategy sets out shared aims and objectives it aims to deliver on in conjunction with The Premier League, Sport England and the Government, to be delivered with support of the Football Foundation.

These stakeholders have clearly identified the aspirations for football to contribute directly to nationally important social and health priorities. Alongside this, the strategy is clear that traditional, affiliated football remains an important priority and a core component of the game, whilst recognising and supporting the more informal environments used for the community and recreational game.

Its vision is: "Within 10 years we aim to deliver great football facilities, wherever they are needed"

£1.3 billion has been spent by football and Government since 2000 to enhance existing football facilities and build new ones. However, more is needed if football and Government's shared objectives for participation, individual well-being and community cohesion are to be achieved. Nationally, direct investment will be increased – initially to £69 million per annum from football and Government (a 15% increase on recent years).

The NFFS investment priorities can be broadly grouped into six areas, recognising the need to grow the game, support existing players and better understand the different football environments:

- **Improve 20,000 Natural Turf pitches,** with a focus on addressing drop off due to a poor playing experience;
- **Deliver 1,000 3G AGP 'equivalents'** (mix of full size and small sided provision, including MUGAs - small sided facilities are likely to have a key role in smaller / rural communities and encouraging multi-sport offers), enhancing the quality of playing experience and supporting a sustainable approach to grass roots provision;

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‹ **Deliver 1,000 changing pavilions/clubhouses,** linked to multi-pitch or hub sites, supporting growth (particularly in women and girls football), sustainability and providing a facility infrastructure to underpin investment in coaching, officials and football development;
Support access to flexible indoor spaces, including equipment and court markings, to support growth in futsal, walking football and to support the education and skills outcomes, exploiting opportunities for football to positively impact on personal and social outcomes for young people in particular;

‹ **Refurbish existing stock to maintain current provision,** recognising the need to address historic under-investment and issues with refurbishment of existing facilities;

‹ **Support testing of technology and innovation,** building on customer insight to deliver hubs for innovation, testing and development of the game.

Local Football Facility Plans

To support in delivery of both the current and superseding FA National Game Strategy (NGS), the FA commissioned a nationwide consultancy project. A Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) has now been produced for every local authority across England. Each plan is unique to its area as well as being diverse in its representation.

The LFFP is strategically aligned to the National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS); a 10-year plan to change the landscape of football facilities in England. The NFFS represents a major funding commitment from the national funding partners (The FA, Premier League, DCMS, Football Foundation) to inform and direct an estimated one billion pounds of investment into football facilities over the next ten years.

Each LFFP will build upon PPS findings (where present and current) regarding the formal and affiliated game, to also include strategic priorities for investment across small sided football (recreational and informal including indoors). The LFFP will also incorporate consultation with groups outside of formal football, as well as underrepresented communities. This could include those which may be key partners with regards to football for behavioural change and groups which may be key drivers of FA NGS priorities around participation in the likes of women and girls' football, disability football and futsal.

LFFPs will identify key projects to be delivered and act as an investment portfolio for projects that require funding. As such, around 90% of all national football investment through the funding partners will be identified via LFFPs.

It is important to recognise that a LFFP is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential investment - it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. Consequently, it cannot be used in place of a PPS and is not an accepted evidence base for site change of use or disposal. A LFFP will, however, build on available/existing local evidence and strategic plans and may adopt relevant actions from a PPS and/or complement these with additional investment priorities.

The FA launched its new Strategy which aims to 'take English football forward, with clear focus on the biggest opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed'.

To achieve this, eight key strategic priorities are identified which include four 'Game Changer' objectives and four 'Drivers' objectives as detailed below. The strategy also outlines how The FA's plans to achieve these objectives.

Game Changers:
‹ Win tournaments
  ‹ Develop pathways

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- Support elite players
- Enhance environments
- Collaborate and influence
- A game free from discrimination
  - Boost representation
  - Drive more inclusion
  - Tackle discrimination
- Equal opportunities for women & girls
  - Increase school participation
  - Increase club participation
  - Enhance women's competitions
  - Support female coaches and referees
- Transform the pitch landscape
  - Sustain and grow high-quality grass pitches
  - Deliver new 3G pitches
  - Support inclusivity accessibility and environmental sustainability of facilities

Drivers:
- Thriving community clubs
  - Develop club opportunities
  - Support the current and future generation of club leaders
  - Equip clubs to add long-term value to local communities
- World-class FA cups
  - Broaden commercial appeal
  - Evolve the Adobe Women's FA Cup format
- Participant led
  - Place participants at the centre of decision making
  - Create flexible models to meet participants needs
  - Provide digital tools to improve experiences
- Progressive governance
  - Support integration of women's and girls' football
  - Support governance of the NLS
  - Support our County Football Associations (CFAs)

The FA's 2020-2024 strategy, 'Inspiring Positive Change', coincided with record growth across the sport, with more women and girls playing, coaching, officiating and supporting the flourishing professional game than ever before.
This strategy aims to build on the success achieved to date and strives to continue working to unlock the full potential of the women's and girls' game. The strategy outlines four strategic priorities as seen below.

1. **Build and Protect the Uniqueness of the Women's Game**: Continue to honour the history of women's football and recognise those who have contributed towards making it so unique, whilst ensuring the distinct qualities and unique culture of the women's game are valued and protected.
2. **Win a Major Tournament**: Continue to be world-leaders both on and off the pitch, developing players and building an inclusive talent pathway system to make football more equal and accessible at every level of the game, ensuring the England pathway and teams represent society.
3. **Build Robust, High-Quality Competition**: Create compelling competition structures and support clubs to develop to the appropriate level within the game, while enabling people to grow and develop within The FA's competition structures.
4. **Deliver Equal Opportunities for Women and Girls to Play**: Sustain growth in schools whilst tackling inequalities. Continue to grow the number of female teams and deliver vibrant league offers whilst extending and enhancing the sessional

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football offer. The ambition is for 90% of schools to deliver equal access for girls to play football in key stages two and three.

There are five golden threads which weave through each of the four strategic priorities and across all levels of the women's and girls' game, which will be instrumental for delivering the next phase of growth by 2028:

1. **Female Health and Wellbeing:** Develop the game to support women and girls with their health and wellbeing needs, providing them with environments in which they can thrive.
2. **Safeguarding:** Support the evolution of an ever-safer culture across the women's and girls' game.
3. **Refereeing:** Grow and nurture a new generation of referees who are representative of our society.
4. **Coaching:** Support and develop brilliant coaches capable of unleashing every player's potential in a safe and inclusive game.
5. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Ensure the game is more reflective of our society.

Inspiring Generations – Cricket's Game-wide Strategy (2025 – 28)[1]

In October 2024 the ECB released its new strategy Inspiring Generations – Cricket's Game-wide Strategy (2025 – 28). Cricket in England and Wales has seen transformative growth since the publication of its previous strategy Inspiring Generation (2020-24). Its new strategy represents an evolution of its plans, however, many of its previous themes are still relevant. Its main purpose is to say 'Cricket is a game for me' through its vision:

- To become the most inclusive team sport
- To grow and unite the game
- Lead the game through global transformation

It aims to obtain this vision through six key objectives

- Make cricket diverse, inclusive and accessible
- Transform Women's and Girl's cricket
- Connect communities through play
- Inspire through winning England teams
- Support a thriving and sustainable men's and women's professional game
- Win the battle for attention

Underpinning these six ambitions are a series of enablers that cut-across multiple areas of the game, alongside Cricket's Core Values.

The Rugby Football Union Strategic Plan 2021 onwards

The RFU has released its new strategic vision for rugby in England. The strategy is based on four main elements which are; Protect, Engage, Grow and Win. It covers all elements of rugby union ranging from elite rugby to grassroots, although the general relevancy to the PPS is centred around growing the game.

The RFU exists to promote and develop rugby union in England and ensure the long-term sustainability of clubs by growing player numbers and retaining them across all age groups. Responding to wider marker influences, work will continue on developing new ways to take

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[1]https://resources.ecb.co.uk/ecb/document/2024/10/22/19a925d7-3c92-4a36-8e7b-f49cb470377f/ECB-Inspiring-Generations-2025-2028.pdf

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part in all forms of the game, without comprising the sports traditions. This will ensure a lasting legacy from elite success by attracting new players and encouraging current male and female adult players to play.

England Hockey Strategy (2023 – 2028)

England Hockey's Facilities Strategy can be found here.

Aiming to make hockey more noticeable, relevant, and accessible to all, England Hockey have launched their new strategy 'Creating a Future for Our Game Together' on 3rd October. The new strategy is a continued effort to re-engage with the current hockey community and to reach out to potential newcomers to introduce them to hockey.

Underpinning the strategy and of importance to the hockey community are four values, "collaborate inclusively, care for people and places, play with spirit win with grace and resilient in everything we do".

The strategy is the culmination of two years consultation with various stakeholders across the sport and larger sporting sector. Hockey will be guided by five key objectives over the next five years.

1. Lead Positive Change: to create and champion positive change within the community by broadening and widening the engagement of the sport and making it more ethnically and culturally diverse.
2. Meaningful Growth: to make sure that our sport thrives and grows into the future, we want to nurture a love of hockey within a more diverse group of young players and communities to reflect society.
3. Drive Visible Impact: to produce and release high-quality, engaging content that shares the love of the game, captures the passion, builds a deep connection and amplifies the voices of the hockey community with new and existing participants.
4. Responsible Leadership: to provide forward thinking, compassionate and inclusive leadership. Leadership that fosters trust within physically and psychologically safe environments and which puts players, the community and sustainability at heart of every decision.
5. Inspirational International Success: inspirational club and national teams delivering podium success in Europe and on the world stage, underpinned by a thriving talent system and domestic game.

The strategy aligns with Sport England's 'Uniting the movement' strategy and UK Sport's Powering Success, Inspiring Impact' strategic plan.

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Rugby Football League – National Community Facilities Strategy (2024 – 2030)

The RFL has developed a new National Facilities Strategy which will guide investment into the game from 2024 through to 2030. The proposed investment package aligned to the Strategy will not only transform facilities, but also bolster the sport's social impact, reinforcing its position as a vital part of the nation's sporting and social fabric. The four focus areas of the Strategy are:

◄ **Security of Tenure** – allowing clubs to plan for the long-term
◄ **Accessible and Inclusive Facilities** – providing suitable facilities for all and creating safe spaces for the wider community
◄ **Adequate and Appropriate Pitch Provision**– investment both in playing surfaces, and in upskilling a volunteer workforce to maintain them
◄ **Sustainability**– both environmental and financial

The Strategy will deliver on the four focus areas by delivering against a set of five recommendations which are set within the Strategy and are detailed below. These recommendations reflect the wider strategic aspirations across the sport and are for the RFL to work to deliver.

◄ **Focus community clubs**
  ◄ Ensure the RFL has sufficient capacity and resource to deliver the recommendations identified within this Strategy to support its community clubs.
  ◄ Ensure all community clubs have the knowledge and resource to provide good quality grass pitches.
  ◄ Supporting clubs to have good quality changing and social facilities which can support the scale of need at each club. These must be inclusive for all participants and benefit target user groups such as women and girls' participants.
  ◄ Ensure clubs can accommodate a sustainable operational programme for clubhouses to ensure the longevity of provision.
  ◄ Work with clubs and key partners to increase the number of clubs with secured tenure of their club facilities.
  ◄ Develop a dedicated funding programme which is specifically aimed at supporting clubs to gain security of tenure at their respective site.
  ◄ Highlight success stories and best practices from community clubs to inspire others and showcase the positive impact of these efforts.
◄ **Deliver positive social and environmental impact**
  ◄ Support clubs through training and advice on how to promote facilities for non-rugby league purposes.
  ◄ Work with Active Partnerships across England to enable higher usage and activation of rugby league assets for non-rugby league activity.
  ◄ Prioritise clubs for wellbeing hubs which may offer the widest social benefit (relative to local need) – particularly those in high deprivation areas.
  ◄ Use the activation of club facilities as a prerequisite to capital funding for club house improvements / new development.
  ◄ Collaborative working with sports partners and key agencies
◄ **Collaborative working with sports partners and key agencies**
  ◄ Ensure continued working with Sport England and National Governing Bodies of other sports to capitalise on shared investment opportunities.
  ◄ Work with the Football Foundation to maximise Multi-Sport funding opportunities – utilising the framework provided in this Strategy as the baseline of shared investment.
  ◄ Work closely with Active Partnerships in areas with high club densities to establish opportunities for pitch access via the Open School Facilities programme.

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◀ **Technological solutions**
   ◀ Ensure the RFL gathers greater levels of information from clubs via affiliation. To include (e.g.) security of tenure information and an integrated self-assessment audit of community facilities.
   ◀ Continue expanding the use and application of PitchPower so all clubs can self-assess provision and support clubs to make positive contributions to improving the quality of grass pitches.
   ◀ Promote technological solutions which progress clubs into being more sustainable, energy efficient and ensure their long-term viability as community assets.
   ◀ Create a platform or resource hub where clubs can access information on funding opportunities, facility management, and sustainable operational practices.
◀ **Working with Charitable Community Organisations and Wheelchair Rugby League**
   ◀ Develop an investment package to support the operational delivery of professional club foundation led wheelchair activity focusing on storage and logistical solutions.
   ◀ Prioritise capital investment into community club sites which also accommodate professional club foundations as tenants for community Rugby League activity.
   ◀ Begin work on the feasibility of developing a national wheelchair centre which includes exploring partnership opportunities with other sports to maximise multisport value and return on investment.
   ◀ Consult with professional club foundations, where possible, to understand the need for 3G access and work to ascertain sufficient access hours during peak times of need.

England Netball

In November 2021 England Netball launched a 10-year 'Adventure Strategy' for the game with a new brand identity for the organisation.

England Netball's 'Adventure Strategy' shares a purpose-led ambition for the game, to build on the momentum the sport has seen in recent years and take it to new heights for the decade ahead.

The 'Adventure Strategy' outlines the intention to:-
◀ accelerate the development and growth of the game at every level, from grassroots to the elite,
◀ elevate the visibility of the sport, and
◀ lead a movement to impact lives on and beyond the court.

At the heart of its purpose, England Netball, with its proud and unique female foundations, will remain dedicated to increasing opportunities for women and girls to play the game as a priority, working tirelessly to address the gender participation gap in sport that has widened since the global pandemic.

Underpinned by years of engaging with and delivering netball for female communities, the organisation pledges to understand, support and nurture women and girls more deeply at every life stage, at every age.

The organisation is also committed to opening the sport to new audiences in every community, so netball better represents the rich diversity of the country it proudly represents, and ensures the sport continues to evolve and adapt to thrive in the future, helping to create a truly inclusive sport for all where everyone can belong, flourish and soar. A recent partnership announcement with England Men's and Mixed Netball Association (EMMNA) to help develop and grow male participation in the game, supports this commitment as England Netball pledges to promote difference and embrace the opportunity to make the sport a possibility within everyone's reach.

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Transforming netball for children and young people is a strategic priority to protect the future of the sport. Working with schools and policy makers to extend physical literacy within, and after the school day with a focus on netball specific provision will pave the way for greater community participation. The organisation will accelerate the expansion of its Bee Netball programme for young children, whilst supporting teens and young women to stay in the game to keep them physically active and in the game for life.

Facility Development

The facility development aspirations stated within the Strategy are to:-

◄ Take a fresh look at the spaces required to support the sport, creating accessible places in every community to allow netball to be incorporated into how and where women and girls live their lives;
◄ Protect, enhance, and extend the network of homes that house the sport at a local and regional level;
◄ Develop an elite domestic professional competition that supports full time athletes underpinned by a world class infrastructure and environments.
◄ For England Netball to achieve its ambitions to make the game accessible to wider audiences and in every community, it encourages Local Authorities to adopt policies within Playing Pitch Strategies and Built Facilities Strategies that:-
◄ Facilitates informal netball activity within neighbourhood multi use games areas for example by installing combined outdoor basketball and netball goals and art courts in Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs).
◄ Incorporates the cultural and health needs of women and girls within any designs for improved or new facilities.
◄ Protects and enhances netball facilities within all Primary and Secondary School environments so they offer a positive first experience of the sport for students and the wider community during out of school hours.
◄ Supports the installation of floodlights on outdoor courts to increase all year-round use.
◄ Facilitates the development of netball growth programmes, club training and competition within public leisure centres.
◄ Where appropriate, supports the development of netball homes and performance environments that enable local women and girls to pursue a career in netball as an elite athlete, official, coach or administrator.

Tennis in Britain - LTA Strategy

The LTA's vision for 2019 – 2023, Tennis Opened Up includes seven strategies relating to three objectives which are built around its mission 'to grow tennis by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable'.

Objectives
◄ Increase the number of fans on our database from [623,602] to [1,000,000] by 2023.
◄ More people playing more often;
  ○ Increase the number of adults playing tennis each year from [7.7% (4,018,600)] of the population to [8.5% (4,420,460)], and the frequency of adults playing tennis twice a month 2.5% 1,311,800 to 1.9% 1,500,000 by 2023.
  ○ The number of children playing tennis once a week from 550,000 to 700,000 (7.9% to 10% of the population) by 2023.
◄ Enable 5 new players to break into the top 100 by 2023 and inspire the tennis audience.

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Strategies

1. Visibility -Broaden relevance and increase visibility of tennis all year round to build engagement and participation with fans and players.
2. Innovation - Innovate in the delivery of tennis to widen its appeal.
3. Investment - Support community facilities and schools to increase the opportunities to play
4. Accessibility - Make the customer journey to playing tennis easier and more accessible for anyone
5. Engagement - Engage and collaborate with everyone involved in delivering tennis in Britain, particularly coaches and volunteers to attract and maintain more people in the game.
6. Performance - Create a pathway for British champions that nurtures a diverse team of players, people and leaders.
7. Leadership - Lead tennis in Britain to the highest standard so it is a safe, welcoming, well-run sport.

British Crown Green Bowling Association

Please note there is no current facility guidance provided by British Crown Green Bowling Association responsible for crown green bowls in England.
https://www.bcgba.org.uk/

Bowls England: Fit for the Future (2021-2026)

Bowls England's Strategy; 'Fit For The Future' frames an exciting course for the sport. The five-year plan has been designed with the ultimate goal of getting more people playing & enjoying bowls. It sets out its vision for the sport, how it plans to achieve its objectives and what success looks like in 2026.The priorities that will get it a the target of 1 million bowls experiences per year by 2026 are:

◂ Building the brand of bowls by increasing focus on international & top domestic bowls, and utilizing opportunities such as Birmingham 2022 to achieve larger media coverage;
◂ Ensuring the sport is truly accessible to all by offering different formats of the game which suit all time constraints, as well as driving more people to clubs in new ways;
◂ Creating positive playing experiences for everyone who steps on the green, both for casual and competitive players, as well as growing our events calendar and introducing a Performance Pathway
◂ Putting volunteers first, as the lifeblood of our sport, by increasing our support for clubs in order to empower them to thrive;
◂ Leading the sport with purpose by developing our Governance structures, diversifying our revenue streams, and work collaboratively with all the sport's key stakeholders.

England Athletics Strategic Plan – Athletics & Running: for everyone, forever – 2017 and beyond

This plan sets out England Athletics' mission, vision and strategic priorities that will direct how they work as an organisation during the coming years: what they do and how they will do it.
Vision: Make athletics and running the most inclusive and popular sport in England, led by a network of progressive clubs and organisations and supported by a sustainable, respected and trusted governing body.

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For England Athletics to achieve this vision, they will focus on three values:

- Pride – taking pride in their work and demonstrating to athletes that they recognise the importance of their role in bettering athletics.
- Integrity – demonstrate integrity to earn respect and to build effective partnerships.
- Inclusivity – promote inclusivity in all their actions.

Mission: To grow opportunities for everyone to experience athletics and running, to enable them to reach their full potential.

In order to achieve their mission, England Athletics will have three strategic priorities.

1. To expand the capacity of the sport by supporting and developing its volunteers and other workforce. The target is to achieve a 6% increase every year of licensed leaders, coaches and officials.
2. To sustain and increase participation and performance levels in our sport. To achieve this, England Athletics'' current targets are to increase the number of club registered athletes from (149,000 to 172,000), engage 135,000 people through the RunTogether programme and to increase athlete performance levels across all events and disciplines by 1% every year.
3. To influence participation in the wider athletics market. Their target here is to increase the number of regular athletes or runners by at least one million.

England Athletics Facility Strategy (2018 – 2025)

The purpose of this document is to set out our long term vision for athletics facilities in England. Facilities form a vital component of the overall England Athletics strategy.

The development, protection and enhancement of facilities will support our strategic plan and help England Athletics contribute to the delivery of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Sporting Futures: A New Strategy for Sport and Sport England's strategy Towards an Active Nation. Appropriate facilities help to attract and inspire new participants and provide the foundation and focus for a significant proportion of the England Athletics family.

The England Athletics Strategic Plan notes that the sport increasingly needs to become financially sustainable and that a business-like and innovative approach is a vital component of its future success. Facilities are fundamental, but they are also expensive to create and to maintain. The sport therefore faces a significant challenge to develop, improve and maintain facilities, most of which are currently operated and funded by third parties.

This strategy sets out a challenge to all those involved with the delivery of the sport to be innovative and business like in the operation and development of facilities at a time of financial challenge, as it aims "To create an innovative and inspiring network of sustainable athletic facilities, with the capacity to meet both current and future demand across England".

England Golf has always had a mission to lead, support, inspire and deliver for its community of golfers, golf clubs and counties. To help enable this, its Course Planner forms the core of its strategy, with 18 guiding principles established that are designed to best position growth in the game:

- Strengthen governance in all aspects of the sport
- Deliver safeguarding throughout the golfing community
- Utilise data and technology to enhance decision making
- Drive equality and equity in everything it does

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- Support golf clubs with member recruitment and retention
- Connect and engage with all golfers
- Inspire and educate golf's network of volunteers
- Increase golf's influence
- Advocate and inform on all elements of sustainability
- Drive diversity at all levels of golf
- Create more opportunities for junior and young adults
- Promote the health and wellbeing of golf
- Inspire more women and girls to play golf
- Develop greater access for disabled people
- Enthuse all golfers through relatable role models
- Communicate a positive perception change for golf
- Deliver an excellent talent development pathway
- Host best-in-class competitions for all golfers

https://www.englandgolf.org/englandgolfstrategy/

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KNIGHT, KAVANAGH & PAGE

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

AUGUST 2025

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd
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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

3G	Third Generation (artificial turf)
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
ANOG	Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance
AP	Active Partnership
BC	Bowls Club
BCGBA	British Crown Green Bowling Association
CC	Cricket Club
CFA	County Football Association
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EH	England Hockey
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FE	Further Education
FF	Football Foundation
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GMA	Grounds Management Association
HE	Higher Education
HC	Hockey Club
HCCC	Hertfordshire County Cricket Club
IRB	International Rugby Board
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page
LFFP	Local Football Facility Plan
LMS	Last Man Stands
LTA	Lawn Tennis Association
LP	Local Plan
NGB	National Governing Body
NTP	Non-Turf Pitch
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
PPOSS	Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sports Strategy
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RFL	Rugby Football League
RUFC	Rugby Union Football Club
S106	Section 106 agreement
EHDC	East Hertfordshire District Council
TC	Tennis Club
TGR	Team Generation Rate
U	Under
WR	World Rugby

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) has been jointly commissioned by Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC) and North Hertfordshire Council (NHC) to develop a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) for each individual local authority area. Covering all formal playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities across the authority to assist it to strategically plan for the future.

Building upon the preceding Assessment Report, this Strategy and Action Plan for East Hertfordshire provides a clear, strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing playing pitch and accompanying ancillary facilities up to 2043 (in line with the Local Plan review). It has been developed to provide:

◀ A vision for the future improvement and prioritisation of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities.
◀ A number of aims to help deliver the recommendations and actions.
◀ A series of strategic recommendations which provide a strategic framework for the improvement, maintenance, development and, as appropriate, rationalisation of the playing pitch and outdoor sport facility stock.
◀ A series of sport-by-sport recommendations which provide a strategic framework for sport led improvements to provision.
◀ A prioritised area-by-area Action Plan to address key issues on a site-by-site basis.

The Strategy is delivered in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) Guidance (for playing pitch sports) and Sport England's Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide (for "non-pitch" sports). Sport England's PPS Guidance details a stepped approach, separated into five distinct sections:

◀ Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach.
◀ Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision.
◀ Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views.
◀ Stage D: Develop the Strategy.
◀ Stage E: Deliver the Strategy and keep it robust and up-to-date.

This report represents Stage D of the process, with stages A-C covered in the preceding Assessment Report and Stage E ongoing once the study is complete. The lifespan of a PPOSS is considered to be three years, although this can be increased if it updated.

A PPOSS delivers the evidence required to ensure that sufficient land is available to meet existing and projected future outdoor sport requirements. Its robust evidence base should inform and be implemented into planning policy and other relevant corporate strategies to enable local policies, planning and sport development criteria to work efficiently and effectively. It is capable of:

◀ Providing a clear framework for all playing pitch and outdoor sport providers, including the public, private and third sectors.
◀ Clearly addressing the needs of all identified sports within the area, highlighting particular local demand issues.
◀ Addressing issues of population growth and major growth/regeneration areas.
◀ Addressing issues of cross boundary facility provision.
◀ Addressing issues of accessibility, quality and management with regard to facility provision.
◀ Standing up to scrutiny at a public inquiry as a robust study.
◀ Supporting funding applications.
◀ Providing realistic aspirations which are implementable within the local authority's budgetary position and procurement regime.

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The Strategy and Action Plan (Part 6) recommends a number of priority projects relating to sports provision which should be realised over the Local Plan period. It provides a framework for improvement and, although resources may not currently be in place to implement it, potential partners and possible sources of external funding.

Partner organisations in East Hertfordshire have a vested interest in ensuring that existing playing pitches, outdoor sports facilities and ancillary provision are protected and enhanced. As such, many of the objectives and actions within this document need to be delivered and implemented by a wide range of bodies such as national governing bodies of sport (NGBs), sports organisations, education establishments and parish/town councils. In many instances, East Hertfordshire District Council will not be the organisation which delivers these actions or recommendations as the PPOSS is not solely just for the Council to act upon. It applies to/for all the stakeholders and partners involved.

Most sports facilities within East Hertfordshire are owned by town/parish councils or sports clubs/organisations. Therefore, EHDC's role in the delivery of new/improved sports facilities is to provide a robust evidence and policy to support the securing of new on-site facilities or S106 contributions from housing development.

Scope

The PPOSS includes all outdoor sports facilities owned and operated by public, private and third sector organisations are within the scope:

‹ Football.
‹ Rugby union.
‹ Rugby league.
‹ Cricket.
‹ Bowls.
‹ Hockey.
‹ Netball.
‹ Tennis.
‹ Athletics.
‹ Golf.
‹ Water sports.
‹ Lacrosse.

Study area

The study area comprises the whole of EHDC's administrative area which has been broken into smaller subsections known as analysis areas. Current population figures are based on ONS 2021 mid-year estimates as follows:

‹ Bishop's Stortford (total population 45,076).
‹ Buntingford (total population 23,695).
‹ Hertford, Ware (total population 58,423).
‹ Sawbridgeworth (total population 15,412).
‹ Watton-at-Stone (total population 7,530).

Cross boundary issues have also been explored to determine the level of imported and exported demand, recognising, for example, that people travel to and make use of strategic facilities irrespective of administrative boundaries.

The analysis areas and population density are shown in Figure 1.1.

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Figure 1.1: Analysis areas

Local context

The East Hertfordshire District Plan was adopted in 2018 and outlines the plan for housing, jobs, community facilities and infrastructure to 2033. The plan seeks to provide a minimum of 18,458 new homes up to 2033, alongside new jobs, community facilities and infrastructure. The Plan sets out the importance of implementing this growth sustainability, to protect the natural and historical environment and the quality of life of people who live, work and visit the district.

The District Plan directs development across the district including urban extensions to the main towns and strategic development to the east of Stevenage, east of Welwyn Garden City and in the Gilston Area. These developments are at various stages of implementation, with a number of the larger sites coming forward in phases. The Council's latest Annual Report (2023-24) outlines that 9518 dwellings have been completed in the plan period to date.

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The Gilston Area is a key component of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT), a large-scale development initiative designated as a Garden Town. Located north of Harlow and across the River Stort in East Hertfordshire, the Gilston area of the Garden Town will feature 10,000 homes and associated infrastructure for seven new villages. Gilston will also be connected to Harlow town centre by a new public travel route known as a Sustainable Transport Corridor, prioritising walking, cycling and high-quality public transport routes.

The District Plan has outlined the following objectives for the Authority to achieve:

◀ Reduce carbon dioxide emissions and greener energy options.
◀ Support mixed communities which provide the needs for old, young and vulnerable people.
◀ Provide a balanced housing market.
◀ Protect the district's landscape from inappropriate developments.
◀ Encourage entrepreneurialism and maximising existing employment opportunities.
◀ Improve the travel network to ease road congestion and reduce carbon footprint.
◀ Provide good quality facilities for arts, culture, community, leisure, entertainment, recreation, faith and health.
◀ Reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of all residents.

To support the improvement of the health and well-being of the whole community, District Plan policies require the provision of open space, sport and recreation and new community facilities in conjunction with new development. Policy CFLR1- Open Space, Sport and Recreation expects provision on-site, or if appropriate, financial contributions towards new or enhanced off-site provision. Facilities should be provided in accordance with the Council's latest evidence and in consultation with Sport England and the Council's Leisure and Environment team. Policy CFLR7 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation requires that provision of adequate and appropriately located community facilities will be sought in conjunction with new development.

New District Plan

In October 2023 East Herts Council agreed to update the adopted District Plan (2018). The Council will commence formal work on the District Plan Review in early 2026 once the Government has published secondary legislation to implement the plan-making reforms.

Currently, the Council is updating the evidence base and undertaking other preparatory work needed to support the District Plan Review. The PPOSS is a key part of this evidence base and will ensure that existing facilities are the most appropriate in terms of quantity, quality and location and consider how best to meet the additional needs generated by the planned housing and economic growth.

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document

The Council adopted an Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in 2020, following the publication of an open space and sports assessment in 2017. The SPD supplements policies in the District Plan, providing guidance on the type and scale of open space, sport and recreation required in, and funded by, new development.

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North East Central (NEC) Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan (JSP)

The ten Hertfordshire local authorities, together with Hertfordshire County Council, established the Hertfordshire Growth Board in 2019. The purpose behind the Growth Board is to collaborate on place-based working across Hertfordshire to address sustainable growth. This joint approach is the development of two Joint Strategic Plans (JSPs), for South West and NEC Hertfordshire.

The purpose of the JSPs is to provide a long-term growth strategy where future collaboration is needed to deliver strategic-scale growth. The polycentric geography of Hertfordshire, with no dominant town or city, together with a number of tightly constrained new towns lends itself to a strategic approach that considers growth needs across administrative boundaries. The plans will identify a joint vision, long-term development needs, strategic development locations and strategic transport infrastructure, green infrastructure and climate change issues and policy responses.

The authorities undertook a comprehensive scoping exercise to understand better some of the challenges and issues associated with the preparation of a JSP, including the issues where support was needed. These include the relationship of a JSP to local plans, the type of strategic plan that would best meet the area's needs and how its preparation would be resourced, as well as how long it would take.

The local authorities of Broxbourne, East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire, Stevenage and Welwyn Hatfield, together with Hertfordshire County Council make up the group for North East Central (NEC) Hertfordshire. Part one of a growth study was completed in October 2022 to understand the strategic elements affecting these authorities. Following this, visioning work was undertaken throughout late 2023 and 2024 and after public consultation it is expected to finalised in 2025.

National context

One of the core planning principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

Section eight of the NPPF deals specifically with the topic of healthy communities, with Paragraph 103 stating that "planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision.
Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate."

Paragraph 104 sets three criterion that ensures existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless:

a)   An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
b)   The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
c)   The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

Paragraphs 105, 106, and 107 set the parameters for the designation of Local Green Space. Such spaces may include playing fields and outdoor sport facilities.

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An up-to-date PPS will form a key element of Local Authority's evidence base to support its emerging health and well-being policies and the Local Plan as a whole.

Headline findings

Table 1.1 below highlights the quantitative headline findings identified for all pitch and outdoor sports included within the scope of the preceding Assessment Report. MES stands for match equivalent sessions and has been used as the comparable unit for natural grass pitches. Converting both the amount of play a site can accommodate (its carrying capacity) and how much play takes place there (its current use) into the same unit of demand enables a comparison to be undertaken.

The position on future demand is established through ONS projections (2043) and information provided by the relevant national governing bodies of sport. Full details of this can be found in the preceding Assessment Report.

Pitches have a limit of how much play they can accommodate over a certain period of time before their quality, and in turn their use, is adversely affected. As the main usage of pitches is for matches, it is appropriate for the comparable unit to be match equivalent sessions.

Based on how they tend to be played, this unit for football and rugby union pitches relates to a typical week within the season for each sport. For cricket pitches it is appropriate to look at the number of match equivalent sessions over the course of a season. How much play a cricket pitch can accommodate is primarily determined by the number and quality of wickets on a pitch. Only one match is generally played per pitch per day. However, play is rotated across the wickets to reduce wear and allow for repair. Each wicket is able to accommodate a certain amount of play per season as opposed to a week.

The Sport England PPS guidance does not advocate the conversion of MES to pitches as there is not always a case for providing pitches to meet the demand/shortfalls expressed. As an oversimplified example, developing one community accessible, standard quality adult football pitch in the Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area would create one MES of actual spare capacity for adult pitches within Bishop's Stortford. This should be caveated that considerations must be made into the accessibility and quality of any provision provided.

For example, improving the quality of pitches can also increase the capacity of existing pitches to accommodate such demand. For qualitative findings and site-specific findings, please see Part 4: Sport Specific Recommendations and Scenarios, and Part 6: Action Plan.

For artificial surfaces (AGPs/3G pitches), how much play can be accommodated is primarily determined by availability, rather than how much play it can accommodate before its quality is adversely affected as with natural grass pitches. Therefore, whole pitches are used as the comparable unit. Similarly, for the other non-pitch sports (i.e., tennis, netball bowls etc) where it is not as easy to determine carrying capacity, whole facilities are used as the comparable unit.

Future demand in the Assessment report has been determined by using Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator which looks at population change over a predetermined period. For East Hertfordshire this has been set to forecasted population rates in 2043. Future demand has been broken down by analysis areas throughout. In the case of Rugby Union future demand is accounted for through club ambitions as ONS projections resulted in less growth than Club ambitions and less growth than would be anticipated.

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Table 1.1: Quantitative headline findings (pitch sports)

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (MES[1])	Future supply/ demand balance (MES)
Football (grass)	Bishop's Stortford	Adult	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 1
Football (grass)	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 2.5	Shortfall of 3
Football (grass)	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 5
Football (grass)	Bishop's Stortford	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall of 2.5
Football (grass)	Bishop's Stortford	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	Buntingford	Adult	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 2
Football (grass)	Buntingford	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 0.5
Football (grass)	Buntingford	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall of 2
Football (grass)	Buntingford	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 2.5	Spare capacity of 2
Football (grass)	Buntingford	Mini 5v5	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1.5
Football (grass)	Hertford, Ware	Adult	Spare capacity of 1	Shortfall of 1
Football (grass)	Hertford, Ware	Youth 11v11	Spare capacity of 1	Shortfall of 1
Football (grass)	Hertford, Ware	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 6	Shortfall of 7.5
Football (grass)	Hertford, Ware	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 2.5
Football (grass)	Hertford, Ware	Mini 5v5	At capacity	Shortfall of 1.5
Football (grass)	Sawbridgeworth	Adult	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	Sawbridgeworth	Youth 11v11	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	Sawbridgeworth	Youth 9v9	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Football (grass)	Sawbridgeworth	Mini 7v7	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	Sawbridgeworth	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	Watton-at-Stone	Adult	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	Watton-at-Stone	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 0.5
Football (grass)	Watton-at-Stone	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 0.5
Football (grass)	Watton-at-Stone	Mini 7v7	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	Watton-at-Stone	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Football (grass)	**East Hertfordshire**	Adult	Spare capacity of 2.5	At capacity
Football (grass)	**East Hertfordshire**	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 5
Football (grass)	**East Hertfordshire**	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 11	Shortfall of 14
Football (grass)	**East Hertfordshire**	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 0.5	Shortfall of 3
Football (grass)	**East Hertfordshire**	Mini 5v5	At capacity	Shortfall of 2
Football (3G)[2]	Bishop's Stortford	11v11[3]	Shortfall of 0.25	Shortfall of 0.25
Football (3G)	Buntingford	11v11	Shortfall of 1.25	Shortfall of 1.5
Football (3G)	Hertford, Ware	11v11	Shortfall of 2.5	Shortfall of 3
Football (3G)	Sawbridgeworth	11v11	Oversupply of 0.5	Oversupply of 0.5
Football (3G)	Watton-at-Stone	11v11	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 0.5
Football (3G)	**East Hertfordshire**	11v11	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 4.75

[1] Per week for rugby and football, per season for cricket
[2] Based on accommodating 38 teams on one full size pitch.
[3] Sport England view minimum dimensions for a full size pitch to be 100 x 64m, however, for the purposes of this report, full size pitches refer to 91 x 55m due to meeting minimum dimensions for adult football.

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/demand balance (MES[1])	Future supply/demand balance (MES)
Cricket[4]	Bishop's Stortford	Saturday	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Cricket	Bishop's Stortford	Sunday	Spare capacity of 13	Spare capacity of 13
Cricket	Bishop's Stortford	Midweek	Spare capacity of 43	Spare capacity of 37
Cricket	Buntingford	Saturday	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 2
Cricket	Buntingford	Sunday	Spare capacity of 14	Spare capacity of 14
Cricket	Buntingford	Midweek	Spare capacity of 38	Spare capacity of 38
Cricket	Hertford, Ware	Saturday	**Overplay of 10 MES**	**Overplay of 22 MES**
Cricket	Hertford, Ware	Sunday	Spare capacity of 14	Spare capacity of 14
Cricket	Hertford, Ware	Midweek	Spare capacity of 44	Spare capacity of 44
Cricket	Sawbridgeworth	Saturday	**Overplay of 28 MES**	**Overplay of 28 MES**
Cricket	Sawbridgeworth	Sunday	**Overplay of 4 MES**	**Overplay of 4 MES**
Cricket	Sawbridgeworth	Midweek	Spare capacity of 8	Spare capacity of 8
Cricket	Watton-at-Stone	Saturday	Spare capacity of 6	Spare capacity of 6
Cricket	Watton-at-Stone	Sunday	Spare capacity of 30	Spare capacity of 30
Cricket	Watton-at-Stone	Midweek	Spare capacity of 42	Spare capacity of 42
Cricket	**East Hertfordshire**	Saturday	**Overplay of 29**	**Overplay of 41**
Cricket	**East Hertfordshire**	Sunday	Spare capacity of 67	Spare capacity of 67
Cricket	**East Hertfordshire**	Midweek	Spare capacity of 175	Spare capacity of 163
Rugby union	Bishop's Stortford	Senior	**Shortfall of 11.25**	**Shortfall of 11.75**
Rugby union	Buntingford	Senior	**Shortfall of 8.5**	**Shortfall of 8.5**
Rugby union	Hertford, Ware	Senior	**Shortfall of 1**	**Shortfall of 1.5**
Rugby union	Sawbridgeworth	Senior	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby union	Watton-at-Stone	Senior	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby union	**East Hertfordshire**	Senior	**Shortfall of 20.75**	**Shortfall of 21.75**
Rugby league	**East Hertfordshire**	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	**East Hertfordshire**	Full size	Current supply is at capacity. There is a need to develop a new full sized hockey pitch to service the strategic need from East Hertfordshire, Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.	There is a need to develop a new full sized hockey pitch to service the strategic need from East Hertfordshire, Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.

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[4]Future demand for cricket has been applied on a district wide level and is not allocated to specific analysis areas.. It anticipates a growth of seven senior men's cricket teams putting additional pressure on the Saturday peak time period.

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Table 1.2: Quantitative headline findings (non-pitch sports)

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	Overall, current demand is being met other than the shortfalls identified at Aston Tennis Club, Much Hadham Tennis Club and Tewin Tennis Club. There is also a need to improve the recreational tennis offer at recreational sites such as Bramfield Playing Field.	Aston Tennis Club, Much Hadham Tennis Club, Braughing Tennis Club and Tewin Tennis Club shall be operating above LTA recommended guidelines if future demand ambitions are realised. There is a planning application to at Hartham Leisure Centre to convert a small sided 3G pitch into Padel courts.
Netball	Demand for netball is high in the Authority as both the Bishop's Stortford District Netball League and Hertford and District League are successfully delivered leagues. Demand within the Authority is met with the existing provision at Herts and Essex Sports Centre and Presdales School.	There will be a future need to resurface the courts at Herts and Essex Sports Centre to support the Hertford and District League.
Lawn Bowls	Overall demand is being met with no clubs operating below the Bowls England capacity guidelines. There are, however, four bowling greens potentially operating above Bowls England capacity guidelines, located at Buntingford Bowls Club, Datchworth Bowls Club, Hertford Castle Bowls Club and Shire Park Bowls Club.	If future demand through club ambitions is achieved Shire Park Bowls will continue to be operating above Bowls England capacity guidelines. ONS projections identify that the number of persons aged 65 and over living in East Hertfordshire is forecasted to increase by 40%.
Athletics	Demand in the district is adequately met by the 400m track at Wodson Park Sports Centre and the 40m straight track at Hockerill Anglo-European College.	Demand met by the existing track. The Wodson Park Sports Centre track is estimated to require a respray in 2026 following an ANOG report completed in January 2025.
Golf	Demand for golf in the district is adequately met by the eight 18-hole golf courses and two par 3 courses provided. Membership levels are much higher than the national average meaning there is the need to protect provision to ensure demand is catered for.	Demand for golf in the district is adequately met by the eight 18-hole golf courses and two par 3 courses provided. Membership levels should be monitored to ensure clubs can continue to accommodate demand.
Water sports	Outdoor water sports are well catered for within East Hertfordshire for a landlocked Authority. There are four clubs in East Hertfordshire that undertakes outdoor water sports, none of which reference any unmet or latent demand.	The outdoor water sports facilities should be protected for the continued use during and beyond the lifespan of the PPOSS.
Padel	There is a shortfall of padel provision within East Hertfordshire. The LTA Padel Provision Calculator indicates there is demand for 12 courts and there are currently two courts in the Authority located The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust.	Look to support the development of padel courts at sites such as Hartham Leisure Centre and Bishop's Stortford FC.

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Conclusions

The existing position for most sports is that there is a mixture of shortfalls, spare capacity and sufficient capacity. The future position shows the exacerbation of current shortfalls and the creation of shortfalls for some sports and in some areas where demand is currently being met.

3G pitch shortfalls are present in four of the five analysis areas, with shortfalls most apparent in the Buntingford and Hertford, Ware analysis areas. The need for 3G pitches is only met in the Sawbridgeworth Analysis Area. As such efforts should be made to increase the number of 3G pitches as to better support football demand.

Rugby union has shortfalls apparent at Bishop's Stortford RFC, Hertford RFC and Datchworth RFC. Bishop's Stortford RFC is in the process of developing new changing rooms to facilitate its growth in women's and girls' demand. Both Hertford RFC and Datchworth RFC have been granted planning permission to extend the respective ancillary provisions at each site.

Hockey demand within East Hertfordshire is currently at capacity as all accessible pitches are operating either at or above England Hockey capacity guidelines. Demand for hockey in North Hertfordshire and Stevenage is also operating at capacity. There is therefore the need to develop an additional pitch in either East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire or Stevenage to service the need across all three authorities.

Where demand is being met, this does not equate to a surplus of provision, with any spare capacity instead considered a potential solution to overcoming shortfalls. As such, there is a clear need to protect all existing provision until all demand is met, or there is a requirement to replace provision to an equal or better quantity and quality before it is lost, in line with NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. In addition, there remain some area and site specific issues that need resolving despite no overall capacity issues, such as those relating to quality and security of tenure.

Where shortfalls are present, for the most part, they can be met by better utilising current provision, such as through improving quality, installing additional sports lighting, improving ancillary facilities, and enabling access to existing unused provision, such as at unavailable school sites. However, there is an overall shortfall of 11v11 size 3G pitches and padel courts identified across East Hertfordshire, and these shortfalls cannot be addressed unless this type of pitch or court is approved and constructed. Localised rugby union shortfalls at club sites are also too great to be removed through quality improvements. Therefore, either additional senior pitches, improved access to nearby provision, or agreeing access to existing WR22 3G provision for East Hertfordshire based clubs should be considered to address rugby union shortfalls.

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PART 2: VISION

Vision

A vision has been set out to provide a clear focus with desired outcomes for the PPOSS.

> *"To work with key local partners to ensure the East Herts is serviced by high quality sports facilities to meet the needs of its residents and improve their health and wellbeing."*

The strategy is expected to address and respond to the following key objectives:

- ◄ Provide a clear strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities.
- ◄ Ensure that all valuable facilities are protected for the long-term benefit of sport.
- ◄ Providing evidence of need for capital funding. As well as proving the need for developer contributions towards pitch and facilities.
- ◄ To gather an up-to-date understanding for the need for investment into outdoor sport through a thorough consultation process as to better enable the capturing Section 106 funding.
- ◄ Ensure that all clubs have access to facilities of appropriate quality to meet current needs and longer-term aspirations.
- ◄ Identify any cross-boundary issues specific to each local authority and its neighbouring local authorities.
- ◄ Undertake analysis using the findings of the study to present a picture of the current and future use of provision based on need, demand and quantity of pitches.

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PART 3: AIMS

The following overarching aims are based on the three Sport England planning objectives. It is recommended that they are adopted by the Council and partners to enable delivery of the overall PPOSS vision and Sport England planning objectives.

> **AIM 1**
>
> To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sport facilities where it is needed to meet current and future needs.
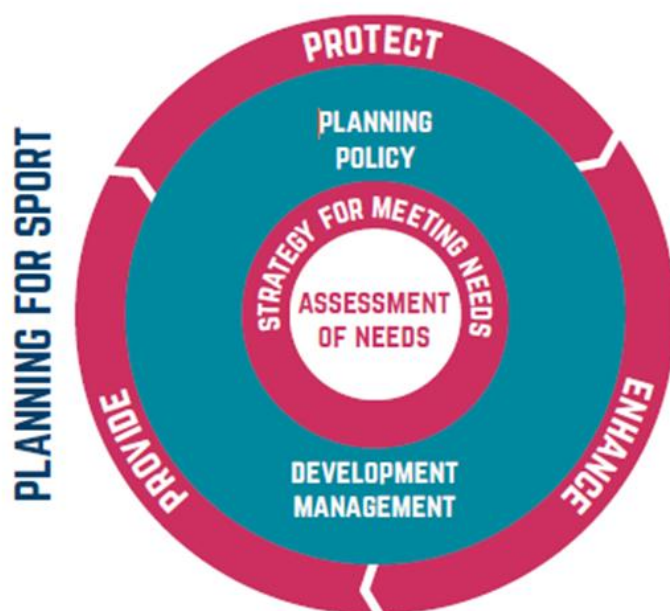
> **AIM 2**
>
> To **enhance** outdoor sport facilities and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

> **AIM 3**
>
> To **provide** new outdoor sport facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.

Figure 3.1: Sport England planning objectives

Source: Sport England, Planning for Sport Guidance (April 2024)

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PART 4: SPORT SPECIFIC ISSUES SCENARIOS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, in order to help develop recommendations and actions for each sport, and to understand their potential impact, a number of relevant scenario questions are tested against the key issues identified in the preceding Assessment Report for each sport. This then informs sport specific recommendations.

4.1: Football – grass pitches

Assessment Report summary

Football – grass pitch summary

◄ The current supply of football provision is broadly sufficient in accommodating football demand on adult, 7v7 and 5v5 pitches.

◄ Comparatively, youth 11v11 and 9v9 pitches are showing a combined shortfall of 13 match equivalent sessions.

◄ Future demand through population increases creates a further 14 match equivalent sessions of demand which exacerbates existing shortfalls on youth 11v11 and 9v9 pitches whilst making mini 7v7, 5v5 overplayed and adult pitches played at capacity. This could be impacted further should growth scenarios in the forthcoming strategy demonstrate that higher future demand may be experienced.

◄ The audit identifies a total of 184 grass football pitches across 70 sites. Of these, 178 are available, at some level, for community use across 66 sites. All unavailable pitches are located at education sites other than Albury Football Ground where community access was removed by the parish council due to noise complaints.

◄ Of the 96 pitches which offer community use, 28 pitches are assessed as good quality, 94 as standard quality and 56 as poor quality. The unavailable pitches are all of standard quality.

◄ Through the audit and assessment, 511 teams from 58 clubs are identified as playing in East Hertfordshire. This consists of 75 adult men's, nine adult women's, 194 youth boys', 35 youth girls' and 198 mini mixed teams.

◄ Since the previous PPS was developed in 2017 the number of football teams in East Hertfordshire have increase by 104 teams. Alongside this, women's and girls' demand has increased by 21 teams.

◄ Future demand equates to the growth of six adult teams, 12 youth boys, two youth girls and 14 mini teams based on team generation rates. Club growth ambitions of 25 teams have been discounted.

◄ The PPOSS has not taken into account future demand generated through housing growth as the scale and location of new development is not yet know. As the new District Plan emerges, the Council can use Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator to explore the pitch requirements of housing growth scenarios.

◄ Of the 28 ancillary facilities, four are rated good (14%), 19 are rated standard (68%) and five are rated poor (18%) quality.

◄ Currently, there are only four sites (14%) which have dedicated female changing rooms to support women's and girls' participation in football, which are, Grange Paddocks, Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC, The Bury and Ware FC.

◄ There is a sufficient supply of provision in East Hertfordshire to accommodate demand on adult, mini 7v7 and mini 5v5 pitch types.

◄ There are existing shortfalls on youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches.

◄ Future demand exacerbates shortfalls on youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 and makes adult pitches played to capacity and mini 7v7 and 5v5 pitches overplayed, to give an overall picture of 24 match session per week of overplay in the District.

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Scenarios

Alleviating overplay/improving pitch quality

In total there are 22 pitches overplayed in East Hertfordshire across 13 sites, equating to 26 match equivalent sessions per week. Improving quality of these pitches (i.e., through increased maintenance or improved drainage) will increase capacity at the sites and consequently reduce both current and future shortfalls.

To illustrate the above, Table 4.1 highlights the current levels of overplay that would be alleviated if quality improved to good at each site. As a reminder, the capacity rating for each type and quality rating as detailed in the table below:

Adult pitch quality	Adult matches per week	Youth pitch quality	Youth matches per week	Mini pitch quality	Mini matches per week
Good	3	Good	4	Good	6
Standard	2	Standard	2	Standard	4
Poor	1	Poor	1	Poor	2

Table 4.1: Overplay if all pitches were good quality (match equivalent sessions per week)

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Current quality	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Current capacity rating (MES)	Good quality rating (MES)
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Adult	1	1.5	0.5
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Adult	1	0.5	1.5
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Youth 11v11	1	1.5	1.5
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Youth 9v9	1	0.5	2.5
35	Crouchfields	Watton-at-Stone	Standard	Youth 11v11	1	0.5	1.5
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Mini 7v7	1	2.5	1.5
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Youth 11v11	1	1.5	1.5
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Youth 9v9	1	2.5	0.5
65	London Road Playing Fields	Buntingford	Poor	Youth 9v9	1	1	2
75	Presdales School	Hertford, Ware	Standard	Youth 9v9	1	4	2
118	Ware Lions FC	Buntingford	Poor	Mini 5v5	1	1	3

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Current quality	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Current capacity rating (MES)	Good quality rating (MES)
118	Ware Lions FC	Buntingford	Standard	Youth 9v9	1	0.5	1.5
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Mini 7v7	1	1	3
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Mini 7v7	1	0.5	3.5
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Standard	Youth 9v9	1	1	1
120	Watton-At-Stone Primary School	Watton-at-Stone	Poor	Youth 9v9	1	0.5	2.5
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Buntingford	Poor	Adult	1	0.5	1.5
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Youth 11v11	1	1	2
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Youth 9v9	1	1	2
132	Hertfordshire & Essex High School Sports Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Youth 11v11	1	0.5	2.5
139	Pearce House Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Youth 9v9	1	1	2
139	Pearce House Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Youth 9v9	1	1	2

The impact of improving overplayed pitches to good quality is shown in the table above. Overplay would be alleviated at all but one site, Presdales School which would still have a two match equivalent sessions per week of overplay remaining across its overplayed pitch. This is because the pitch receives high demand of six match equivalent sessions. The Authority wide impact results in overplay reducing from 26 match equivalent sessions per week to two.

It should be noted that sites such as Crouchfields, Friedberg Playing Fields, Ware Lions FC, Hartham Common & Kingshead and Pearce House Playing Fields are all accessible open space, meaning the potential to improve the pitches to good quality is much more difficult than sites such as Bishop's Stortford College with secured access due to the added recreational use and risk of damage to the pitches.

Table 4.2: Impact of improving pitch quality on overall supply and demand

Pitch type	Current actual spare capacity	Current overplay	Current total	Potential overplay	Potential total if improvements are undertaken
Adult	5	2.5	2.5	-	5
Youth 11v11	3	5	2	-	3
Youth 9v9	2	13	11	2	-
Mini 7v7	4.5	4	0.5	-	4.5
Mini 5v5	1	1	-	-	1

The overplay at Presdales School would remain, but spare capacity at other sites across the district would balance out the overall position. Table 4.2, highlights that most pitch formats would be showing actual spare capacity if the overplayed pitches were improved to good quality. Only 9v9 youth pitches would be played to capacity after overplayed pitches were improved to good quality. This would significantly change the outlook on football demand in East Hertfordshire.

Table 4.3 below analyses how the future demand capacity balance would be impacted if all overplayed pitches were to be improved to good quality.

Future demand form population projections equate to 17 match equivalent sessions per week across all pitch types. If all overplayed pitches were improved to good quality, only youth 9v9 and mini 5v5 pitches would be overplayed. Adult, and mini 7v7 pitches would have spare capacity whilst youth 11v11 pitches would be played to capacity.

Table 4.3: Impact of improving pitch quality on overall future supply and demand

Pitch type	Current capacity balance	Future demand	Future demand capacity balance	Potential overplay	Potential total if improvements are undertaken
Adult	2.5	2.5	-	-	2.5
Youth 11v11	2	3	5	-	-
Youth 9v9	11	3	14	2	3
Mini 7v7	0.5	3.5	3	-	1
Mini 5v5	-	2	2	-	1

Future demand

This scenario explores the impact that future demand from club ambitions, identified via consultation, would have. Please note that the Assessment Report only considered future demand derived from population projection growth.

Table 4.4: Summary of participation growth by analysis area

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Totals
Bishop's Stortford	1	2	5	3	5	**16**
Buntingford	-	-	1	1	-	**2**
Hertford, Ware	-	1	-	3	3	**7**
Sawbridgeworth	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Watton-at-Stone	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Total	**1**	**3**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**25**

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Future demand from club ambitions totals 25 teams from eight clubs and the table below shows the potential impact on the supply/demand balance by analysis area.

Table 4.5: Impact of future demand from club ambitions

Pitch type	Current supply/demand balance	Potential future demand (club aspirations)	Potential future supply/demand balance
Adult	2.5	1	1.5
Youth 11v11	2	3	5
Youth 9v9	11	6	17
Mini 7v7	0.5	7	6.5
Mini 5v5	-	8	8

The impact of growth, via club aspiration, equates to exacerbated shortfalls on youth 11v11 and 9v9 pitches whilst the spare capacity for mini 7v7 and the at capacity mini 5v5 pitches become overplayed. Spare capacity of one match equivalent session remains on adult pitches.

Participation trends
This scenario examines the effect of future demand based on forecasted growth from historical FA affiliation data. Please note that the Assessment Report only considered future demand from ONS population growth.

Using the previous East Hertfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy, the below graph plots the forecasted growth for affiliated football demand in 2030.

- 2016/17 – 407 teams affiliated to East Hertfordshire.
- 2024/25 - 511 teams affiliated to East Hertfordshire.

Figure 4.1: Forecasted annual growth in football teams across East Hertfordshire (2015-2030)
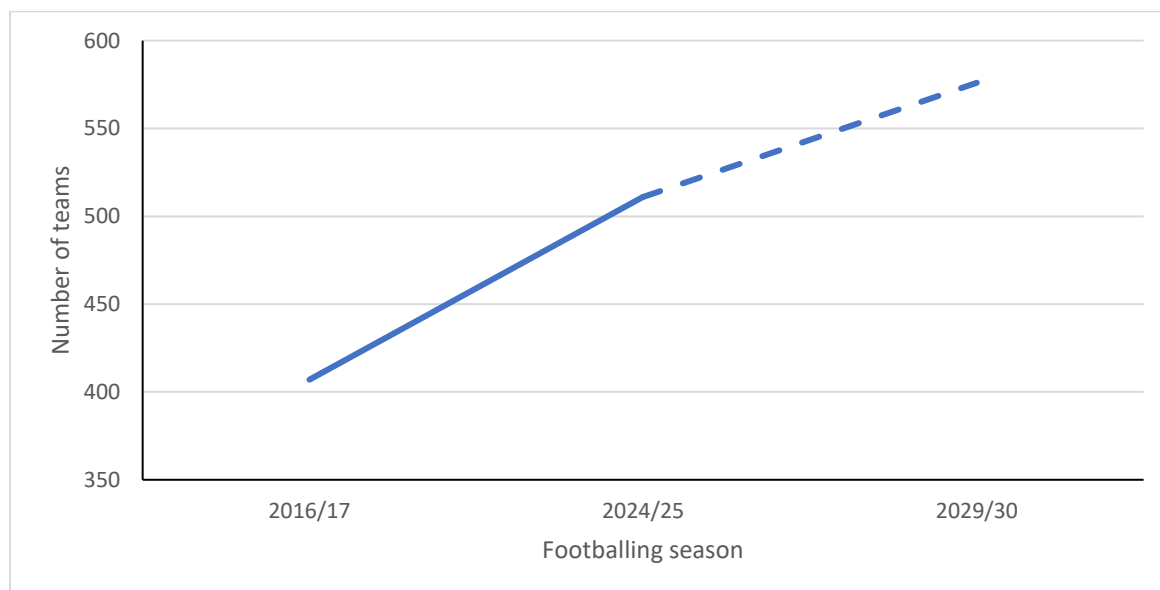
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With an increase in 104 teams demonstrated from 2017 to 2025 across the Authority at a growth rate of 13 teams per season. Trend forecasting therefore predicts the growth of 65 teams by the year 2030. Table 4.6 below outlines the projected analysis area breakdown in 2030 if demand increases at the same rate that it is currently distributed across the Authority. This would give a total of 576 teams affiliated to East Hertfordshire, equating to a further 32.5 match equivalent sessions per week across the Authority.

Given the current shortfalls identified for grass football pitches this further evidences the need to improve pitch quality at priority sites and develop more pitches (which could include 3G pitches) to better support this anticipated growth in demand.

Table 4.6: Forecasted annual growth to 2030 by analysis area

Analysis area	Current demand	Percentage increase	2030 projected demand
Bishop's Stortford	107	13%	121
Buntingford	90	13%	104
Hertford, Ware	277	13%	311
Sawbridgeworth	22	13%	23
Watton-at-Stone	15	13%	17
Total	**511**	**13%**	**576**

The table below outlines the potential breakdown by pitch scale using the same forecasted growth applied in tables 4.5 and 4.6. This has applied the assumption that the future demand figure will have the same distribution by the five age brackets as is currently taking place.

Table 4.7: Forecasted annual growth to 2030 by pitch scale

Total	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Current demand	84	128	101	108	90	511
2030 projected demand	92	144	115	121	104	576

If the forecasted growth were to take place the supply and demand balance below shows that all five pitch types will be overplayed, with youth 9v9 pitches showing the greatest amount of overplay.

Table 4.8: Supply and demand analysis of forecasted annual growth to 2030

Pitch format	Actual spare capacity[5]	Overplay	Current total	2030 projected new demand	Potential future supply/demand balance
Adult	5	2.5	2.5	4	1.5
Youth 11v11	3	5	2	8	10
Youth 9v9	2	13	11	7	18
Mini 7v7	4.5	4	0.5	6.5	6
Mini 5v5	1	1	-	7	7

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[5] In match equivalent sessions

Priority pitch improvement sites

As improving the quality of all overplayed sites may not be feasible from an investment point of view, an alternative approach is to focus on improving specific strategic sites. Consequently, the report identifies five sites for grass pitch improvements that need investment and that are key to the development of football across East Hertfordshire. This improvement is led by the County FA and FF with local clubs playing a role in the activation of projects. As the Friedberg Playing Fields, Ware Lions FC and Hartham Common & Kingshead pitches are all accessible open space it will be difficult to improve these pitches to good quality.

The impact of improving these pitches is shown in the below table.

Table 4.9: Impact of quality improvements

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Current quality	Pitch type	Current pitch capacity	Capacity rating (MES)	New pitch capacity (MES)	Good quality rating (MES)
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Adult	1	1.5	3	1.5
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Youth 11v11	1	1.5	4	1.5
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Youth 9v9	1	0.5	4	2.5
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Youth 9v9	1	-	4	3
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Mini 7v7	2	-	6	4
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Mini 7v7	2	-	6	4
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Mini 7v7	2	-	6	4
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Mini 5v5	2	-	6	4
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Mini 7v7	2	2.5	6	1.5
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Youth 11v11	1	1.5	4	1.5
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	Bishop's Stortford	Poor	Youth 9v9	1	2.5	4	0.5
118	Ware Lions FC	Buntingford	Poor	Mini 5v5	2	1	6	3
118	Ware Lions FC	Buntingford	Poor	Mini 7v7	4	1.5	6	3.5

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Current quality	Pitch type	Current pitch capacity	Capacity rating (MES)	New pitch capacity (MES)	Good quality rating (MES)
118	Ware Lions FC	Buntingford	Poor	Youth 11v11	2	-	4	2
118	Ware Lions FC	Buntingford	Standard	Youth 9v9	2	0.5	4	1.5
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Mini 7v7	2	1	6	3
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Mini 7v7	2	0.5	6	3.5
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Standard	Youth 9v9	2	1	4	1
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Standard	Youth 9v9	2	-	4	2
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Adult	1	-	3	2
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Adult	1	-	3	2
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Mini 5v5	2	-	6	4
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Hertford, Ware	Good	Mini 5v5	6	-	6	-
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Adult	1	1	3	3
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Adult	1	0.5	3	2.5
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Youth 11v11	1	1	4	2
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	Hertford, Ware	Poor	Youth 9v9	1	1	4	2

The impact the improvements would have on the overall supply and demand balance is shown in the Table 4.7. Note the table below is presented on a peak time model, and therefore, improving sites in the table above, may not generate capacity within the peak periods, albeit it will create an improved match day experience for users.

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Based on improvements, shortfalls for youth 11v11 would be removed and create spare capacity whilst, youth 9v9 shortfalls would be decreased. Adult and 7v7 pitches spare capacity would be increased and 5v5 pitches would gain spare capacity.

Table 4.10: Impact on current supply and demand if quality improved at priority sites (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch type	Current capacity	Potential capacity with improvements
Adult	2.5	4.5
Youth 11v11	2	2
Youth 9v9	11	5.5
Mini 7v7	0.5	4.5
Mini 5v5	-	1

The impact is similar when factoring in future demand as can be seen in the table below.

Table 4.11 below analyses how the future demand capacity balance would be impacted if all overplayed pitches were to be improved to good quality.

Future demand from population projections equates to 14 match equivalent sessions per week across all pitch types. Taking this into consideration, If all overplayed pitches were improved to good quality, only adult pitches would still have spare capacity. Youth 11v11 pitches would be played to capacity whilst youth 9v9, mini 7v7 and 5v5 pitches would be overplayed. Youth 9v9 pitches having the most overplay with 10.5 MES.

Table 4.11: Impact on future supply and demand if quality improved at priority sites (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch type	Current capacity balance	Potential capacity with improvements	Future demand	Future demand capacity balance	Potential overplay	Potential total if improvements are undertaken
Adult	2.5	4.5	2.5	2	-	2.5
Youth 11v11	2	2	3	1	-	-
Youth 9v9	11	5.5	3	8.5	2	10.5
Mini 7v7	0.5	4.5	3.5	1	-	1
Mini 5v5	-	1	2	1	-	1

Loss of tenure at education sites

Table 4.12 outlines the 19 education sites in East Hertfordshire accessed by community clubs.

Table 4.12: Demand taking place on grass pitches at education sites

Site ID	Site	Clubs accessing site	Teams	Tenure position
8	Aston St Mary's VA School	Watton YFC	Two teams	The Club pays a donation toward the school to use the football pitches and has a good relationship.
15	Birchwood High School	BSC FC	Eight teams	The Club part funded the 3G pitch and is a partner club. It has an annual agreement in place for this and the two 9v9 pitches it accesses.

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Site ID	Site	Clubs accessing site	Teams	Tenure position
16	Bishop's Stortford College	BSC FC Thorley Manor	25 teams	BSC FC pays an annual fee toward the school for use of its pitches.
36	Datchworth All Saints C Of Primary School	Watton YFC	Four teams	The Club pays a monthly fee to the school for use of the pitches. There is no official agreement in place.
40	Freman College	Buntingford Cougars	Three teams	The Club pays an annual fee toward the school for use of its pitches.
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth Town	Three teams	Sawbridgeworth Town FC is the partner Club for the site and has historically maintained the grass pitches.
66	Manor Fields Primary School	Thorley Manor	Five teams	The Club rents the pitch from the school with no long-term agreement in place.
68	Morgans Field	Bury Rangers	24 teams	Position unknown.
75	Presdales School	Hertford Town Bury Rangers	31 teams	Bury Rangers FC is the partner Club for the site.
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Standon & Puckeridge Hares FC	Eight teams	Position unknown.
78	Reedings Junior School	Sawbridgeworth Town	One team	Position unknown.
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Bully's Crusaders Watton YFC	Four teams	Watton YFC pays a monthly fee to the school for use of the pitches. There is no official agreement in place. Bully's Crusaders position is unknown.
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC BSC FC	Six teams	BSC FC pays an annual fee toward the school for use of its pitches.
105	The Chauncy School	Deaconsfield Vets Hartham United FC	Two teams	Positions unknown.
108	The Sele School	Bengeo Tigers	26 teams	The Club has a rolling two-year agreement with the school and have been there for over 25 years.
113	Walkern School	AFC Walkern	One team	Position unknown.
120	Watton-At-Stone Primary School	Watton YFC	Three teams	The Club pays a monthly fee to the school for use of the pitches. There is no official agreement in place.
132	Hertfordshire & Essex High School Sports Centre	Thorley Manor	Three teams	The Club rents the pitch from the school with no long-term agreement in place.
166	Layston C of E First School	Buntingford Cougars	Four teams	The Club pays an annual fee toward the school for use of its pitches.

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In instances where clubs do not have formal tenure agreements in place, clubs could theoretically be asked to vacate at any time which would result in each requiring alternate provision to service existing levels of demand.

There are 163 teams from nine clubs accessing 14 education sites. The impact on removal of these sites for community access is highlighted in the table below. Please note the total does not include the three teams accessing 3G pitches at education sites.

As can be seen, if all access to education sites was to be lost, shortfalls would be created on all pitch formats and significant in most cases. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure the grass pitches at education sites continue to stay open to community use, given the reliance upon school sites across East Hertfordshire. Clubs should also be encouraged and supported to formalise longer term lease agreements with providers to further secure long-term access.

Table 4.13: Impact of loss of access to sites without secure tenure on supply and demand balance (in match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch format	Actual spare capacity[6]	Overplay	Current total	New overplay	Current total if education sites become unavailable
Adult	5	2.5	2.5	6	1
Youth 11v11	3	5	2	21	20
Youth 9v9	2	13	11	32.5	30.5
Mini 7v7	4.5	4	0.5	24	19.5
Mini 5v5	1	1	-	21.5	20.5

Improving ancillary provisions

The accompanying assessment report presents the quality ratings and potential ancillary provision development plans of clubs in the Authority.

The ancillary provision provided at Richard Hale School has been identified as in need of improvement. Consultation with Bury Rangers FC confirms the Club has plans to develop a classroom and kitchen at the site to deliver educational lessons to its players to support their development.

Watton-at-Stone YFC also has ambitions to develop a new ancillary provision as part of its plans to develop a new site to the South East of the town. If developed this will give the Club a new home to operate from and support its plans to increase in teams. It is therefore a recommendation to support the development of new build ancillary provision projects at Richard Hale School and the potential new site within Watton-at-Stone to support Bury Rangers FC and Watton-at-Stone YFC.

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[6] In match equivalent sessions

Re-introducing disused sites

There are seven unused/disused former football sites in East Hertfordshire located at the following sites:

◂ Albury Football Ground (formerly provided one adult and one mini 7v7 pitch).
◂ County Hall (formerly provided two youth 9v9 and two mini 7v7 pitches).
◂ Horseman's Meadow (formerly provided one adult pitch).
◂ Much Hadham Recreation Ground (formerly provided one adult pitch).
◂ Norfolk Road Playing Fields (formerly provided one adult pitch).
◂ The Meads (formerly provided one adult, one youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, two mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch).
◂ Widford Playing Field (formerly provided one adult pitch).

Horseman's Meadow has no ancillary provision however the space could still be re-instated as playing provision. The remaining five sites have a form of ancillary provision servicing the pitches.

Albury Football Ground has a standard quality ancillary provision, Much Hadham Recreation Ground has a useable building and also accessed by Much Hadham Bowls Club and Much Tennis Club. Norfolk Road Playing Fields has a good quality ancillary provision and accommodates cricket demand.

The Meads has a basic metal container building which formerly serviced teams using the site. Widford Playing Field has no ancillary provision but directly borders Ware Cricket Club which has a standard quality ancillary provision.

if the seven sites were to be brought back into use this would create six adult, one youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, three mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch into use. If all pitches were re-instated to a standard quality, it would have the following impact upon the supply and demand balance:

Table 4.14: Impact of re-instating disused and un-used provision(in match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch format	Actual spare capacity[7]	Overplay	Current total	New capacity created	New capacity position
Adult	5	2.5	2.5	12	14.5
Youth 11v11	3	5	2	2	-
Youth 9v9	2	13	11	6	5
Mini 7v7	4.5	4	0.5	20	20.5
Mini 5v5	1	1	-	4	4

As can be seen the overplay for youth 11v11 pitches would be removed and youth 9v9 overplay would be reduced. Actual spare capacity would be created for mini 5v5 pitches and increased for adult and mini 7v7 pitches.

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[7] In match equivalent sessions

Recommendations

◄ Protect the existing quantity of pitches (unless replacement provision meets NPPF and Sport England Playing Field Policy requirements and is agreed upon and provided).

◄ Where pitches are overplayed and assessed as poor or standard quality, prioritise investment and review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to sustain use and improve quality.

◄ Utilise the Football Foundation's PitchPower app to assist in the improvement and ongoing maintenance of provision.

◄ Work to accommodate future demand at sites which are not operating at capacity.

◄ Seek to regain access to Albury Football Ground where access was removed from BSC FC, mid-season.

◄ Improve ancillary facilities where there is a demand to do so and where it can benefit the wider footballing offer, such as Hertford Heath Playing Fields (Hertford Heath FC) where the Club is looking to use its pitch for non-league football; Richard Hale School to support Bury Rangers FC and Watton-at-Stone FC with developing a new site.

◄ Where appropriate, help to facilitate partnerships and/or lease arrangements with large, sustainable, development-minded clubs to manage its own sites.

◄ Work to obtain more formal community use agreements at education sites listed in table 4.12 so clubs can have longer security of tenure.

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4.2: Third Generation turf (3G) pitches

Assessment Report summary

3G summary

Supply:

◄ There are eight 11v11 3G pitches within East Hertfordshire, located at as many sites. All eight pitches are serviced by floodlights and open to community use.

◄ There are also two small sided 3G pitches, both of which are open to community use.

◄ All eight 11v11 3G pitches in the Authority are on the FA Register and the Leventhorpe School, Richard Hale School, Ware Football Club and Presdales School pitches are on the FIFA register.

◄ The pitches at Richard Hale School, Hertingfordbury Park, Ware Football Club and Wodson Park Sports and Leisure Centre have been tested in June 2025 and have retained their FA or FIFA accreditations.

◄ Two new 11v11 3G pitches at Freman College and Bishop's Stortford High School are outlined to be operational for the 2025/26 season.

◄ The Bishop's Stortford High School 11v11 3G pitch will have a World Rugby compliant shock pad once delivered. This will be the only WR22 3G pitches in East Hertfordshire.

Quality:

◄ There are four full-size pitches located within East Hertfordshire that are of a good quality, three standard quality and one poor quality pitch. Of the small sided provision, both pitches are of a poor quality.

Supply vs demand analysis:

◄ With 511 football teams currently affiliated to East Hertfordshire, there is a need for 13.5 11v11 pitch equivalents to service current levels of demand. Future demand from ONS projections increases this requirement to 14.25 pitches.

◄ With the equivalent of 9.5 11v11 pitches within East Hertfordshire, there is the need for a further 4 of such pitch equivalents to be built. This shortfall does not include the small sided provision within the district as they are too small in scale to play a meaningful role in meeting the 3G training need. It does include the two pitches in the process of being developed at Freman College and Bishop's Stortford High School.

◄ When studying demand by analysis area, shortfalls are apparent in four of the five PPS analysis areas, with the Sawbridgeworth Analysis Area adequately catered for. The Hertford, Ware has a shortfall of 2.5 pitches, Buntingford has a shortfall of 1.25 pitches, Watton-at-Stone has a shortfall of 0.5 of a pitch and Bishop's Stortford has a shortfall of 0.25 of a pitch.

◄ Once future demand from ONS projections is considered, shortfalls in the Buntingford and Hertford, Ware analysis areas increase.

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Scenarios

Accommodating football training demand

In order to satisfy current football training demand (based on the FA's scenario of one 11v11 3G pitch equivalent being able to cater for 38 community football teams) there is a need for 13.5 full size equivalent 3G pitches to accommodate all training demand in East Hertfordshire as seen below.

Table 4.15: Current demand for 11v11 3G pitches by analysis area

Analysis area	Current number of teams	11v11 3G requirement	Current number of 3G pitches	Theoretical shortfall
Bishop's Stortford	107	3	2.75	0.25
Buntingford	90	2.25	1	1.25
Hertford, Ware	277	7.25	4.75	2.5
Sawbridgeworth	22	0.5	1	0.5
Watton-at-Stone	15	0.5	0	0.5
Total	**511**	**13.5**	**9.5**	**4**

With 511 teams currently accessing pitches in East Hertfordshire there is a need for 13.5 11v11 3G pitches. With 9.5 pitches currently provided this leaves a shortfall of 4 3G pitches. The highest need for 3G provision is in the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area where there is a shortfall of 2.5 11v11 3G pitches. Important to note that both pitches at Freman College and Bishop's Stortford High School which are currently being built have been added to Table 4.15.

When considering future demand of 28 additional teams (defined by population projections to 2043) the shortfall increases by 0.75 to give a total shortfall of 4.75 11v11 pitches. As population growth has been used, need cannot be broken down by analysis areas.

The East Hertfordshire Local Football Facility Plan (2025) identifies projects to provide four 11v11 3G pitches and one smaller sided 3G pitch as follows:

◄   The Bury (Buntingford) - One 11v11 3G pitch.
◄   The Sele School (Hertford, Ware) – One 11v11 3G pitch.
◄   Watton YFC New site (Watton-at-Stone) – One small sided (73m x 46m) 3G pitch.
◄   Ware YFC (Hertford, Ware) – One 11v11 3G pitch.
◄   The Chauncy School (Hertford, Ware) – One 11v11 3G pitch.

As the LFFP is a live document to be informed by an up-to-date PPS, the priority project list should be revisited following this study and updated/amended based on the findings. As such, the aforementioned project list has been matched against the table below to see how it services against existing shortfalls.

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Table 4.16: Impact of delivering current LFFP 3G projects on PPS shortfalls

Analysis area	Potential 3G requirement	Current number of 3G pitches	Potential shortfall	No. of proposed pitches	Remaining shortfall
Bishop's Stortford	3	2.75	0.25	-	0.25
Buntingford	2.25	1	1.25	1	0.25
Hertford, Ware	7.25	4.75	2.5	3	0.5
Sawbridgeworth	0.5	1	0.5	-	0.5
Watton-at-Stone	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	-
Total	**13.5**	**9.5**	**4**	**4.5**	**0.5**

Based on the existing portfolio of projects identified in the LFFP, if all projects were to be delivered there would be a theoretical oversupply of 0.5 of a pitch remaining. There would still be a shortfall of 0.25 of a pitch in the Bishop's Stortford and Buntingford analysis areas.

The amount of time it would take to deliver the number of pitches outlined in the LFFP it is anticipated that demand will have increased, meaning the Authority wide oversupply would likely be removed.

New site options

The table below identifies potential sites which could, in theory, may be suitable for future development to meet known shortfalls for 3G pitches. Each of these sites will require a full feasibility to be undertaken to determine if they are suitable in meeting known need. Such a full feasibility would include a range of matters including site characteristics, sports, financial, planning and other issues. This should be done in consultation with Hertfordshire FA, RFU and the Football Foundation as well as Sport England and other relevant NGBs. It is crucial to recognise that this list is a starting point for discussion and should be updated as part of the Stage – E process.

For the development of any 3G pitch at the sites below (and any other suggested sites in the future) there is a need to ensure that Sport England's Playing Field Policy is adhered to.

Table 4.17: Additional site options for new 3G pitches

Analysis area	Current shortfall	Site ID	Site name	Included in LFFP?
Bishop's Stortford	0.25	-	BSCFC (site bordering new Avanti Grange Secondary School pitches).	No
Bishop's Stortford	0.25	-	Hoggates Park (a new stadia site accessed by Bishop's Stortford Swifts which aspire to convert the new grass pitch to 3G).	No
Buntingford	1.25	72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields (small sided)	No
Hertford, Ware	2.5	94	St Margaretsbury FC	No
Hertford, Ware	2.5	108	The Sele School	Yes
Sawbridgeworth	0.5	84	Sawbridgeworth Town FC	No
Watton-at-Stone	0.5	-	New site, Watton at Stone YFC	Yes

The recommended dimensions for an 11v11 3G artificial grass pitch for football are 100 x 64 metres. This extends to an area of 106 x 70 metres with the recommended minimum three metre run off area included. These dimensions allow for all age group match play to take place including adults, youth under 17/18 and younger age groups via overmarked pitches, e.g., the marking out of two 9v9 pitches for under 11/12s.

If a new pitch is proposed to measure below the recommended dimensions, then justification must be provided for this in relation to the identified needs it will provide for and/or site constraints. In doing so, the impacts of a reduced pitch size in meeting current and future needs must be considered, e.g., a pitch not providing the recommended dimensions for adult match play and/or only being able to accommodate one rather than two overmarked 9v9 pitches. This justification needs to be included in the planning application details submitted to the relevant Local Planning Authority for the new pitch.

Unless otherwise stated and justified for an individual pitch, proposals in this PPS for any new 3G artificial grass pitches are based on providing them to the recommended dimensions.

Moving football mini match play demand to 3G pitches (based on minimum dimension of 91 x 55m)

To further the use of 3G pitches for matches, the FA is particularly keen to work with local authorities and providers within local authorities to understand the potential demand for 11v11 floodlit 3G pitches to cater for different formats of match play.

The FA has an ambition to transfer 50% of mini play on to 3G pitches nationally. Thus, a programme of play has been created for East Hertfordshire to determine how many 3G pitches would be required to accommodate this, given that peak time for both mini 7v7 and mini 5v5 football is Sunday mornings.

Table 4.18: Moving all mini matches to 3G pitches

Time	AGP	Total games/teams
9.30am – 10.30am	4 x 5v5	4/8
10.30am – 11.30am	2 x 7v7	2/4
11.30am – 12.30pm	2 x 7v7	2/4
12.30pm – 1.30pm	2 x 7v7	2/4

Based on the above programming and separate start times for mini 5v5 and mini 7v7 matches, the overall need is for seven 11v11 3G pitches to accommodate all current mini match play demand. This is calculated based on 72 teams playing 5v5 football and 78 teams playing 7v7 football at peak time.

Therefore, with ten 11v11 pitches in East Hertfordshire, this scenario can be achieved if programming to enable this can be agreed.

Below tests a similar scenario for youth 9v9 football.

Table 4.19: Moving all 9v9 matches to 3G pitches

Time	AGP	Total games/teams
10am – Noon	1 x 9v9	1/2
Noon – 2pm	1 x 9v9	1/2
2pm – 4pm	1 x 9v9	1/2

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This demand could be accommodated on five 11v11 pitches based on 62 teams currently playing this format within East Hertfordshire at peak time.

Based on the local landscape of football and its more traditional home vs away format, it is unlikely the above approach is viable and the development of 3G pitches provide more so to aid the need for recreational play and training requirements.

Future demand through club ambitions

The Assessment Report explores the impact of future demand through team generation rates upon the future need for 3G pitches. Population projections create a further 28 teams which increases the shortfall from 4 11v11 3G pitches to 5.

Future demand ambitions expressed by eight clubs equates to the growth of 25 teams. Combining both population and club growth gives a total potential future demand of 53 teams. If both were to be achieved there would be a total of 564 teams within East Hertfordshire. This would lead to a theoretical shortfall of 5.75 11v11 3G pitches.

Table 4.20: Future demand for 3G pitches in East Hertfordshire (based on 38 teams per pitch)

East Hertfordshire	Future number of teams[8]	11v11 3G requirement[9]	Current number of 3G pitches	Theoretical shortfall
Total	564	15	9.5	5.5

Future demand from participation trends

The grass pitch section explored future demand based on forecasted growth from historical FA affiliation data. Trend forecasting therefore predicts the growth of 65 teams by the year 2030. This would give a total of 576 teams affiliated to East Hertfordshire and the need for 1.75 additional 3G pitches.

4.21: Future 3G need using forecasted annual growth to 2030

Analysis area	2030 projected demand	11v11 3G requirement	Current number of 3G pitches	Theoretical shortfall
Bishop's Stortford	121	3.25	2.75	0.5
Buntingford	104	2.75	1	1.75
Hertford, Ware	311	8.25	4.75	3.5
Sawbridgeworth	23	0.5	1	0.5
Watton-at-Stone	17	0.5	0	0.5
Total	**576**	**15.25**	**9.5**	**5.75**

If the forecasted growth were to take place the shortfalls for 3G pitches in the Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford and Hertford, Ware analysis areas would increase. The position in the Sawbridgeworth and Watton-at-Stone analysis areas would be unchanged. This scenario assumes that the growth in demand will remain consistent with the current analysis area breakdown.

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[8] Future demand based on participation increases and TGRs as per the football section of the report.
[9] Figure rounded up to the nearest whole number.

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World Rugby (WR) compliant 3G pitches

WR produced the 'performance specification for artificial grass pitches for rugby', more commonly known as 'Regulation 22' that provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for rugby union.

The RFU generally support the development of 3G pitches which support rugby union where grass rugby pitches are over capacity and where a pitch would support the growth of the game at the host site and for the local rugby partnership, including local clubs and education establishments.

Locally, shortfalls are identified for rugby union pitches. These are, however, localised at heavily accessed club sites due to concentrated training demand.

In East Hertfordshire The Bishop's Stortford High School provides a WR Compliant 3G pitch, however that will be available for the 25/26 season.

Bishop's Stortford RFC is the most heavily overplayed of the rugby clubs, with two of its pitches showing current overplay of 11 match equivalent sessions per week whilst the other two are at capacity. The Club has three sports lit pitches at its site which it accesses for midweek training. It also accesses one senior pitch at Bishop's Stortford College for mini training. Given that the new WR complaint pitch will be based close to the Club it makes sense to partner with the school to reduce it overplay by transferring its training demand to the new 3G pitch.

Recommendations

- Protect current stock of 3G pitches.
- Work with relevant partners to deliver additional 3G pitches in the district to cater for football training demand and reduce shortfalls.
- Work with partners such as the FA, FF, the RFU, Sport England and other NGBs as applicable to identify the most suitable locations to build new 3G pitches to alleviate known shortfalls.
- Ensure that any new 3G pitches have community use agreements in place.
- Ensure that all other 11v11 and larger smaller sized pitches remain on the FA register and are re-tested every three years to sustain certification.
- Ensure all current and future providers have in place a sinking fund to ensure long-term sustainability.
- Ensure that all new 3G pitches are constructed to meet FA recommended dimensions and quality performance standards.
- Monitor supply and demand via Stage E meetings, to better understand the impact on the future 3G need enabling partners to clarify whether the shortfall position is being addressed or increasing.
- Look to increase the number of 3G pitches within East Hertfordshire at relevant sites by using the findings from the PPOSS and the 2025 LFFP, with priority sites such as Watton YFC new site, The Bury and The Sele School.
- Look to transfer mini demand from grass pitches to 3G in line with the FA ambition for 50% of all mini match play to take place on 3G pitches.

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4.3: Cricket pitches

Assessment Report summary

Cricket – supply and demand summary
- The broad position in East Hertfordshire is there is an insufficient stock of supply for peak time senior men's cricket, with all remaining formats able to be accommodated.
- Overplay of 29 match equivalent sessions per season is present on a Saturday. This is exacerbated to 41 match equivalent sessions of actual spare capacity per season when considering future demand from population growth.
- There is currently spare capacity for both midweek and Sunday cricket and there will continue to be should future midweek demand be realised.
- Seven squares across six sites are overplayed: Bramfield Playing Field, Datchworth Sports Club, Hertford Cricket Club, Leventhorpe School, The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust (two squares) and Allenburys Sport & Social Club. Total overplay equates to 113 match equivalent sessions per season.

Cricket – supply summary
- In total, there are 46 grass wicket squares in East Hertfordshire all of which are open to community use other than the squares at Heath Mount School, Haileybury Sports Complex, Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields and St Edmunds College & Prep School.
- There are 46 grass wicket squares across 30 sites of which, 38 are available for community use across 26 sites.
- There are NTPs accompanying grass wicket squares at six sites, all available for community use other than Heath Mount School. Additionally, there are eight standalone NTP's identified, all of which are at school sites, unavailable for community use other than Presdales Recreation Ground which is available for community use and not a school site.
- Three clubs in East Hertfordshire have freehold ownership of its sites, 11 have lease agreements in place and five rent sites. The tenure position of the four unresponsive clubs is unknown.
- The audit of the 38-community available grass wicket cricket squares found 14 to be good quality, 20 to be standard quality and four to be poor quality, located at Bramfield Playing Field, Datchworth Sports Club, Leventhorpe School and Allenburys Sport & Social Club.
- Aston CC, Little Berkhamsted Sahibs CC, Little Munden CC, Thorley CC, Thundridge Sports Ground and Aspenden Standon & Puckeridge CC access poor quality ancillary facilities.
- Datchworth CC have recently had planning permission granted to extend and refurbish its Clubhouse.
- Six clubs identify need for additional training facilities at respective home sites.
- There are five disused squares (former grass pitch) within East Hertfordshire, those being County Hall, The Meads, Cottered Playing Fields, Little Hadham CC and Albury Sports Ground.

Cricket – demand summary
- There are 23 clubs in East Hertfordshire which collectively provide 50 senior men's, four senior women's, 48 junior boys' and six junior girls' team.
- Eight clubs within East Hertfordshire currently offer the All-Stars program, whilst four clubs deliver Dynamos sessions.
- None of the consulted Clubs discussed running any women's and girls' softball sessions.
- Through population growth, future demand equating to the growth of one senior men's and two junior boys' teams is identified by 2043.
- Club aspirations equate to the potential growth of two senior men's, four junior boys' and two junior girls' team.
- There is currently no exported demand into neighbouring authorities. However, Reed CC, a Club from North Hertfordshire is currently accessing the pitch at Freman College forming imported demand.

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Scenarios

Addressing overplay

Although a regular, sufficient maintenance regime can sustain sites with minimal levels of overplay a reduction in play is recommended to ensure there is no detrimental effect on quality of cricket squares over time.

In East Hertfordshire, overplay is identified at seven squares across six sites. The scenario below looks at the impacts of quality improvements as a solution to reducing or alleviating overplay. As a reminder, for good quality squares, capacity is five matches per grass wicket per season, whilst for a standard quality square, capacity is four matches per wicket per season. For poor quality squares, no capacity is considered to exist as such provision is not deemed safe for play.

Of the overplayed squares, four are poor quality. The impact of improving quality at all these sites, to good, where each wicket has a theoretical capacity of five match equivalent session per season is considered in the table below.

Table 4.22: Impact on overplay if all overplayed squares were improved to good quality

Site ID	Site name	Club	No. of squares	Square quality	No. of wickets	Current overplay (matches per season)	Potential position (matches per season)
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Bramfield CC	1	Poor	6	6	24
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth CC	1	Poor	14	46	24
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Hertford, Ware	1 (2nd square)	Standard	8	6	2
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth CC	1	Poor	9	28	17
103	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford CC	1	Standard	6	6	-
103	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	Bishop's Stortford CC	1	Good	13	5	5
126	Allenburys Sport & Social Club	Allenbury's and County Hall CC	1	Poor	11	16	39

As outlined in Table 4.22 if all squares were improved to good quality, overplay across the district disappears other than one square at The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust, due to it already being good quality. Poor quality squares across East Hertfordshire account for 96 match equivalent sessions of overplay per season which would be removed if quality was improved. Even if the squares were to be improved to a standard quality, overplay would be reduced. However, Hertford CC and The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust would still be overplayed. It is worth noting that improving a pitch to standard rather than good would be more realistic for Bramfield Playing Field, Datchworth Sports Club, Leventhorpe School and Allenburys Sport & Social club. This is largely due to the associated cost, time and expertise taken to improve and maintain a good quality pitch.

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Hybrid wickets

Although not readily available within grassroots cricket, there may be potential in the future to address overplay through the installation of hybrid wicket/s on competitive senior squares. The ECB has been working with SIS Pitches on the installation of hybrid cricket wickets at county cricket clubs (2019) and more recently recreational squares in Hertfordshire such as Radlett Cricket Club and Broxbourne Cricket Club. Due to already good standing provision at The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust there is scope to potentially explore the opportunity to install hybrid wickets in the future.

A hybrid wicket combines natural turf grass with less the 5% of uniquely engineered, soft polyethylene yarn, which has already been used to improve golf tees, tennis courts and pitch surrounds. These wickets are to offer a greater capacity in addition to reducing time on repair works with a faster recovery time. Reports found that hybrid wickets improve surface stability, reduced wear, reduced bowler foot holes and significantly extended hours of playing time.

Ideally, once these become more readily available for community cricket clubs and have gone through the required testing, they could act as a way to increase levels of playing capacity on overplayed squares. This would be particularly beneficial for those sites which are limited on space and cannot create additional wickets due to restrictions things such as boundary length or ball strike.

Although it is difficult at this stage to understand what impact hybrid wickets could have on each site's capacity, it is suggested that it could potentially alleviate all the overplay at Bishop's Stortford CC in East Hertfordshire. This assumes that more senior demand can take place on the hybrid wickets allowing for the outer senior wickets to be used/converted for junior demand. It should also be noted that this approach is currently a rather expensive means of reducing overplay.

Accommodating future demand

Population growth over the Local Plan period to 2043 is expected to see the population of the district rise from 150,136 to 162,871. This will lead to the creation of one senior men's teams and two junior boys' teams.

This future demand cannot be attributed to any one analysis area or club but is important to understand how this can be accommodated across East Hertfordshire.

The preceding Assessment Report shows that for men's Sunday cricket, senior women's and all formats of junior cricket there is sufficient capacity (notwithstanding specific club overplay issues).

For senior men's cricket on Saturdays, however, there is a current shortfall of 29 match equivalent sessions per week across seven sites. This will be exacerbated to a shortfall of 41 match equivalent sessions per season if all future demand is realised. However, dependent on where demand aligns itself to (i.e. club specific and analysis area specific) they may well be instances of pressure at certain clubs which have high levels of existing demand (i.e. Bishop's Stortford CC).

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Where increases in demand are causing capacity issues for Saturday cricket, the PPOSS Assessment Report identifies that the sites listed below can accommodate for an increase in demand within the peak period and if ground sharing agreements can be fostered then demand could be accommodated for at these sites on Saturday afternoons (based on 2024 season data):

◂ Braughing Playing Fields.
◂ Freman College.
◂ Hertingfordbury CC.
◂ Thundridge Sports Ground.
◂ Walkern Sports & Community Centre.
◂ Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground.

That being said, it is not always realistic for clubs to access other club sites as secondary venues due to either increases in demand, changing the availability of provision, clubs wishing to protect the quality of provision for their existing teams or not wanting to permit access altogether. On this basis, it is important to note the role disused provision can play in accommodating demand for cricket in the future.

Unused/disused sites

There are seven unused/disused cricket squares in East Hertfordshire located at the following sites:

◂ Albury Football Ground, disused (Bishop's Stortford).
◂ Birchwood High School, disused (Bishop's Stortford).
◂ Cottered Playing Field, unused (Buntingford).
◂ County Hall, unused (Hertford, Ware).
◂ Hertford Rugby Football Club, disused (Hertford, Ware).
◂ Little Hadham CC, unused (Bishop's Stortford).
◂ The Meads (Lower Field), unused (Buntingford).

Albury Football Ground has not accommodated cricket for some time, however, does still have two football pitches marked out. It is also important to note that community access was removed by the football club due to noise complaints from neighbours. Meaning the site as a whole is currently unused for any sport.

County Hall no longer accommodates any sport but used to host football and cricket with a grass square and accompanying NTP.

Bengeo CC has approached the County Council to potentially start using the site as a second ground due to its rapidly growing expansion. The Council has shown interest in the Club taking on the ground, however, given that that there is no pavilion servicing the site (due to fire damage) it's not ideal. This would, however, be an option to reinstate a cricket square to help reduce the overplay in Hertford, Ware Analysis Area depending on the requirement for onsite changing provision.

Birchwood High School previously accommodated a standalone NTP which has since been removed from the school fields. These fields are not currently open for community use and have four senior rugby pitches on for curricular use. Hertford Rugby Football Club is similar in that it previously had a standalone NTP which is now disused.

Cottered Playing Field previously accommodated a grass cricket square, however, now only services football demand in the form of two pitches.

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The Meads is an open space that used to have both cricket and football pitches available for community use that now has no sports provision and is used solely as a public open space.

Little Hadham CC, just off Hoecroft Lane previously accommodated a grass cricket square. The Club now accesses Thorley CC for its games.

As there are current isolated shortfalls identified at The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust due to servicing such high demand. If an unused/disused site could once again become available that is in the Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area, it could serve as a second site and allow the Club to continue to grow.

As an example, The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust is an overplayed site located 4.8 miles from the unused pitch at The Albury Football Ground. Re-introducing this square and granting access to the Club could provide a possible solution to resolving its capacity issues.

The table below outlines the potential capacity created if the seven above listed sites were to be brought back into use with a standard quality five wicket square.

4.23: Potential Saturday capacity if disused and un-used provision is reinstated

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Capacity created	Total
Bishop's Stortford	12	11	1	60	59
Buntingford	48	46	2	40	42
Hertford, Ware	12	22	10	40	30
Sawbridgeworth	-	28	28	0	28
Watton-at-Stone	12	6	6	0	6
East Hertfordshire	**84**	**113**	**29**	**140**	**111**

As can be seen if the six above sites were to be reinstated with standard quality five wicket squares there would be 111 sessions of actual spare capacity for Saturday demand. Overplay would only be present in the Sawbridgeworth Analysis Area.

Improving ancillary provision

Club consultations raised several ancillary provision development plans as seen in Table 4.24. The most notable development is at Datchworth CC. The Club accesses poor quality provision containing five changing rooms and an official's room, with a communal shower room to service all. It has had planning permission granted and is fundraising for this project.

Table 4.24: Ancillary provision development plans

Site ID	Site name	Club	Consultation feedback
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Braughing CC	Braughing playing fields offers good quality ancillary provision with a large brick building and ample parking on site. The building has a kitchen, changing rooms and showers. However, the Club highlights it would like to have a clubhouse with a bar.
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Datchworth CC	The Club accesses poor quality provision at its home site, Datchworth Sports Club. It contains five changing rooms and an official's room, with a communal shower room to service all.

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Site ID	Site name	Club	Consultation feedback
			Consultation with the Club confirms that the building is very dated and needs refurbishing and it has had planning permission accepted to do this. The Club is currently still fundraising to enable this project to go ahead.
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Hertingfordbury CC	Hertingfordbury CC has standard facilities including a clubhouse with two changing rooms with very small showers, male and female toilets, a kitchen area, and a social room. The Club has no licence for a bar on the premises. It aspires to either build changing rooms at the back or develop the exiting garage into a larger changing area and acquire a container for storage.
97	St. Margaretsbury Sport & Social Club	St Margaretsbury CC	St Margaretsbury CC confirms that out of its three sets of changing rooms changing rooms two are in poor condition due to being very old and the other is standard. The ladies' toilets and main changing room showers have recently been refurbished; however, the Club expresses that this is just papering over the cracks. The changing rooms are shared between the football and cricket so will get extra usage. The facilities also include a bar and social area.
109	Thorley Cricket Club	Thorley CC	Thorley CC has a poor-quality ancillary provision. The Club highlights poor changing and toilet facilities as well as the general condition of the pavilion. There are separate changing rooms for each team although communal showers only. There are no changing facilities for umpires or women and girls. HCCC has since confirmed that work has begun building a new clubhouse to service the site.
112	Town Fields	Sawbridgeworth CC	The Club confirms it has two buildings, which includes two changing rooms, a club room, and showers. It aspires to replace the changing rooms with more inclusive spaces to include provision for umpires and women and girls. This plan would also include a new patio to allow for socialising.
129	Aspenden Standon & Puckeridge Cricket Club	Aspenden, Standon & Puckeridge CC	The Club confirms that it provides poor ancillary facilities. There are no separate facilities for officials or for women and girls.

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Accommodating girls' demand

The Assessment Report has accounted for future demand by using team generation rates applying population projections to 2043. It identifies that there shall be the growth of one senior men's and two junior boys' teams. As demand figures are not currently as high for women's and girls, the team generation rate method of measuring future demand does not capture the anticipated growth that is expected to take place over the next five years.

The ECB confirms that there are 93 girls teams within Hertfordshire. If East Hertfordshire is to increase in demand in line with its neighbouring authorities, there will be the growth of four junior girls teams during the lifespan of the PPOSS.

Another means of predicting the potential growth is that the five larger clubs with several senior mens and junior boys teams in the Authority will all field one senior women's and one junior girls team by 2027. The five largest clubs in East Hertfordshire are Bishop's Stortford CC, Datchworth CC, Hertford CC, Sawbridgeworth CC and St Margaretsbury CC. For all five clubs to field at least one senior women's and one junior girls team there will be the growth of two senior women's and two junior girls teams.

This will place further pressure on the shortfalls, particularly for Sunday cricket and a shortfall for midweek could be established, as this is when girl's demand commonly takes place. Therefore, without improvements to existing provision or via the establishment of new provision this level of demand cannot currently be accommodated.

Recommendations

- Protect existing quantity of cricket squares.
- Retain a supply of disused sites to serve as a strategic reserve for future demand.
- Improve quality at sites assessed as poor and standard quality and ensure quality is sustained at sites assessed as good through partnership working with HCCC.
- Address overplay via quality improvements and consideration of hybrid wickets in the future.
- Pursue improved security of tenure for clubs without ownership or a long-term lease arrangement in place, particularly those engaging in lease renewals.
- Improve the changing and ancillary facilities where there is a need to do so, with priorities placed Thorley CC, St Margaretsbury CC, and Town Fields (Sawbridgeworth CC).
- Consider options to increase and improve stock of suitable practice facilities, as six clubs raise the need for additional training facilities at its home sites.
- Continue to support ECB initiatives such as All Stars and Dynamos and ensure unaffiliated demand and recreational cricket is provided for.
- Undertake PitchPower assessments at sites to support clubs in accessing ECB Grass Pitch Improvement Fund.
- Look to reinstate disused and un-used provision as a means of increasing the total number of squares in the Authority.

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4.4: Rugby union - grass pitches

Assessment Report summary

Rugby union summary

‹ There is insufficient level of senior rugby union provision in East Hertfordshire to accommodate current and future demand with a current overplay of 20.75 match equivalent sessions on senior rugby pitches open to community use.

Pitch supply:

‹ There is a total of 53 rugby union pitches in East Hertfordshire across 17 sites. This consists of 35 senior pitches and 18 junior pitches. Of these, 25 senior pitches and 17 junior pitches are open to community use.

‹ There are no WR compliant 3G pitches located within East Hertfordshire. However, there will be one in Bishop's Stortford at the Bishop's Stortford High School for the 25/26 season.

Pitch quality:

‹ In terms of quality of senior pitches available for community use, five are good quality, 12 are standard and eight are poor quality pitches. Of the 17-community available junior pitches, 14 are poor quality and three are standard quality.

‹ From a community club perspective, poor quality pitch provision is an issue for Datchworth RFC with on one of its pitches.

Ancillary provision quality:

‹ Of the three clubs in the district with sites, Bishop's Stortford RFC and Hertford RFC access standard quality ancillary provision, whilst Datchworth RFC access poor ancillary provision. All Clubs are in the process of upgrading current ancillary offerings to bring the facilities in line with RFU specifications, to encourage inclusivity and promote the women's and girls' game.

‹ Datchworth RFC has plans to rebuild and enhance its ancillary offering and has been granted planning permission to do. The Club is currently fundraising to enable this project.

‹ Hertford RFC has had planning permission to extend and rebuild its changing rooms whilst Bishop's Stortford have built foundations for its new changing rooms.

Demand:

‹ There are four rugby union clubs in East Hertfordshire which in total generate demand equating to 63 teams. As a breakdown, this consists of 12 senior men's, two senior women's, four boy's colts, 17 junior boys, nine junior girls and 19 mixed age grade teams.

‹ Future demand from club ambitions equates to two senior ladies' teams.

Supply and demand analysis:

‹ There is an overall insufficient supply of provision to cater for both current and future demand.

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Scenarios

Improving pitch maintenance and drainage

Maintenance and drainage solutions are an integral method in improving pitch quality at rugby union sites, ensuring that pitches can accommodate demand throughout the season. Locally, there are two sites which are identified as being overplayed and the following scenario explores what impact improving both the level of maintenance and installation of drainage solutions would have on the capacity of provision.

The table below illustrates the RFU pitch quality scoring methodology which ascertains the capacity of pitches based on the scoring criteria.

Table 4.25: Pitch capacity (matches per week) based on quality assessments

Drainage	Maintenance Poor (M0)	Maintenance Adequate (M1)	Maintenance Good (M2)
Natural Inadequate (D0)	0.5	1.5	2
Natural Adequate or Pipe Drained (D1)	1.5	2	3
Pipe Drained (D2)	1.75	2.5	3.25
Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	2	3	3.5

The table below looks at what capacity benefits would be ascertained through improvement of both maintenance and drainage solutions in one increment on the above technical criteria. It further looks at the benefit of maximum improvements to both drainage and maintenance to explore maximum benefits.

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Table 4.26: Improving maintenance on all sites/senior pitches by one increment (based on RFU technical criteria)

Site ID	Site name	Number of senior pitches	Current technical score	Quality*	Match equivalent sessions (per week)	Current pitch capacity (sessions per week)	Capacity rating	Improved technical score	Improved quality score	Improved capacity	Improved capacity rating
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	1	M1/D1	Standard	7	2	5	M2/D1	Good	3	4
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	1	M1/D1	Standard	8	2	6	M2/D1	Good	3	5
38	Datchworth Sports Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	3.5	2	1.5	M2/D1	Good	3	0.5
38	Datchworth Sports Club	1	M1/D0	Poor	3	1.5	1.5	M2/D0	Standard	2	1
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	3	2	1	M2/D1	Good	3	-
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	2.5	2	0.5	M2/D1	Good	3	0.5
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	2	2	-	M2/D1	Good	3	1
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	2	2	-	M2/D1	Good	3	1
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	1.5	2	0.5	M2/D1	Good	3	1.5
170	Datchworth Village Hall	1	M1/D1	Standard	7.5	2	5.5	M2/D1	Good	3	4.5

Improving the maintenance of senior pitches at all sites accessed by community clubs would have a theoretical capacity benefit for Hertford RFC as it would give the club spare capacity instead of being overplayed across four of its pitches and reduce its last pitch to being at capacity. For East Hertfordshire, the improvement of the maintenance by one increment would reduce total overplay from 21 match equivalent sessions per week to 15. It would also remove overplay at Hertford RFC altogether and leave it with spare capacity.

It is important to note that two pitches at Bishop's Stortford RFC and one at Datchworth RFC have been omitted from the table as the pitches are already good quality and maintenance scores cannot improve further.

Table 4.27: Improving drainage on all sites/senior pitches by 1 increment (based on RFU technical criteria)

Site ID	Site name	Number of senior pitches	Current technical score	Quality*	Match equivalent sessions (per week)	Current Pitch Capacity (sessions per week)	Capacity rating	Improved technical score	Improved quality score	Improved capacity	Improved capacity rating
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	1	M2/D1	Good	3	3	-	M2/D2	Good	3.25	0.25
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	1	M2/D1	Good	3	3	-	M2/D2	Good	3.25	0.25
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	1	M1/D1	Standard	7	2	5	M1/D2	Standard	2.5	4.5
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	1	M1/D1	Standard	8	2	6	M1/D2	Standard	2.5	5.5
38	Datchworth Sports Club	1	M2/D1	Good	2	3	1	M2/D2	Good	3.25	1.25
38	Datchworth Sports Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	3.5	2	1.5	M1/D2	Standard	2.5	1
38	Datchworth Sports Club	1	M1/D0	Poor	3	1.5	1.5	M1/D1	Standard	2	1
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	3	2	1	M1/D2	Standard	2.5	0.5
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	2.5	2	0.5	M1/D2	Standard	2.5	-
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	2	2	-	M1/D2	Standard	2.5	0.5
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	2	2	-	M1/D2	Standard	2.5	0.5
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	1.5	2	0.5	M1/D2	Standard	2.5	1
170	Datchworth Village Hall	1	M1/D1	Standard	7.5	2	5.5	M1/D2	Standard	2.5	5

A similar approach to improving maintenance has been undertaken in the table above for drainage installation (through improvement to pitches by one increment on the RFU technical criteria). Installing pipe drainage to senior pitches at all sites accessed by community clubs would have a theoretical capacity benefit by reducing total overplay from 21 to 17.5 match equivalent sessions per week. However, other than one pitch at Hertford RFC which becomes played at capacity, the overplayed pitches still remain overplayed, just slightly reduced. The pitches would remain more overplayed than when compared to improving the maintenance of pitches.

Table 4.28: Improving both maintenance and drainage to M2/D3 at all sites/senior pitches (based on RFU technical criteria)

Site ID	Site name	Number of senior pitches	Current technical score	Quality*	Match equivalent sessions (per week)	Current Pitch Capacity (sessions per week)	Capacity rating	Improved technical score	Improved quality score	Improved capacity	Improved capacity rating
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	1	M2/D1	Good	3	3	-	M2/D3	Good	3.5	0.5
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	1	M2/D1	Good	3	3	-	M2/D3	Good	3.5	0.5
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	1	M1/D1	Standard	7	2	5	M2/D3	Good	3.5	3.5
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	1	M1/D1	Standard	8	2	6	M2/D3	Good	3.5	4.5
38	Datchworth Sports Club	1	M2/D1	Good	2	3	1	M2/D3	Good	3.5	1.5
38	Datchworth Sports Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	3.5	2	1.5	M2/D3	Good	3.5	-
38	Datchworth Sports Club	1	M1/D0	Poor	3	1.5	1.5	M2/D3	Good	3.5	0.5
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	3	2	1	M2/D3	Good	3.5	0.5
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	2.5	2	0.5	M2/D3	Good	3.5	1
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	2	2	-	M2/D3	Good	3.5	1.5
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	2	2	-	M2/D3	Good	3.5	1.5
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	1	M1/D1	Standard	1.5	2	0.5	M2/D3	Good	3.5	2
170	Datchworth Village Hall	1	M1/D1	Standard	7.5	2	5.5	M2/D3	Good	3.5	4

This table above illustrates the position if all senior pitches in East Hertfordshire, which are accessed by community clubs, were improved to an M2/D3 quality. This is the highest threshold a pitch can score based on the RFU technical criteria. As can be seen, overplay would be noticeably reduced but would remain at Bishop's Stortford RFC and Datchworth Village Hall in varying amounts due to high demand.

The table below illustrates how such improvements would impact the current supply analysis of the pitches. Overplay would be significantly reduced but still present in both the Bishop's Stortford and Buntingford analysis area's if improvements took place. The Hertford, Ware Analysis Area would show actual spare capacity of 6.5 match equivalent sessions per week, which is a massive shift from being overplayed by one match equivalent session. Overall, East Hertfordshire would remain overplayed; however, shortfalls would be reduced to 2.75 match equivalent sessions per week. It is worth stressing that an M2/D3 quality rating is very difficult for a community club to achieve and rarely seen nationally. Therefore, there is the justification for an alternative approach to reduce overplay at the site.

Table 4.29: Impact of rugby union pitch improvements on overall supply and demand balance (senior pitches) in match equivalent sessions per week

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Current overplay	Current capacity balance	Overplay after maximum maintenance and drainage improvements	Capacity balance after pitch improvements
Bishop's Stortford	-	11.25	11.25	8.25	7.25
Buntingford	-	8.5	8.5	4	2
Hertford, Ware	0.5	1.5	1	-	6.5
Sawbridgeworth	-	-	-	-	-
Watton-at-Stone	-	-	-	-	-
East Hertfordshire	**0.5**	**21.25**	**20.75**	**12.25**	**2.75**

Providing additional sports lighting

An alternative method of addressing capacity issues is through increasing the number of sports lit pitches. Hertford RFC has an ambition to install sports lights to more of its pitches to enable training to be spread better. It currently has two sports lit pitches that are overplayed by 1.5 match equivalent sessions per week and three non-sports lit pitches, two of which that are played to capacity and one that has 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week of actual spare capacity. If the Club was able to increase the number of sports lit pitches it can more evenly distribute training demand across its site. It does have a dedicated training area that it uses portable sports lights on to accommodate junior and mini training.

World Rugby (WR) 3G pitches in East Hertfordshire

There is one WR 3G pitch in East Hertfordshire provided at Bishop's Stortford High School which will only become operational for the 2025/26 season. None of the four clubs use a WR22 3G pitch for its regular midweek training due to having a preference towards utilising their respective home pitches for training sessions due to the associated financial and social benefits in doing so (and associated travel distances between sites).

As the Bishop's Stortford High School 3G pitch will be available to use for the 25/26 season, it could be accessed by Bishop's Stortford RFC for its midweek training. This would remove all overplay in the Analysis Area and reduce the districts overplay by 11.25 match equivalent sessions per week. The new 3G pitch is only 3.1 miles away from the club's home site and this would reduce the Authority wide overplay to 10 match equivalent sessions per week. Consultation with the Football Foundation and the RFU confirms the programme of use has outlined Harlow RFC and Saracens RFC to use the pitch rather than Bishop's Stortford RFC. Given its location, considerations should be made in the future for the pitch to be used by Bishop's Stortford RFC to service demand in the Authority and reduce the overplay identified.

Use of provision at education sites

The PPOSS Assessment Report identifies Bishop's Stortford College as providing community accessible senior rugby provision. As shortfalls are apparent in the Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area the site may provide a possible solution to reducing the identified shortfalls for rugby. Bishop's Stortford RFC currently access it for its mini teams training; however, the site could further provide provision for its senior teams to help reduce overplay at its own site. As both Hertford RFC and Datchworth RFC are over 15 miles from the Bishop's Stortford College access to the site for either club to use it for mini and junior demand would not be recommended.

St Edmunds College & Prep School offers two good senior rugby pitches and is placed just over eight miles from both Hertford and Datchworth RFC. If the clubs were willing, this could serve as a good second venue if a suitable arrangement was sought with the School. This would further help to reduce the overplay in both the Buntingford and Hertford, Ware analysis areas. If a community use agreement was reached it could provide four match equivalent sessions per week.

Ancillary provision improvements

The ancillary provision across the three clubs with clubhouses range from poor to standard. Bishop's Stortford RFC, Datchworth RFC and Hertford RFC are all planning to refurbish respective clubhouses in varying ways. The main driver for this Bishop's Stortford RFC is to obtain self-contained showers and toilets in the new changing rooms. The new facility will also cater for officials changing rooms. Whilst Datchworth RFC has had planning permission accepted to refurbish its clubhouse which is very dated. Hertford RFC has also had planning permission granted to extend and rebuild its changing rooms.

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If the three clubs all implemented RFU specification changing rooms and improved the social space options at the respective clubs, it would greatly encourage the growth of the women's and girl's game.

The steering group should seek alternative options to support the clubs in the efforts to enhance ancillary provision.

Recommendations

◄ Protect the existing quantity of rugby union pitches including those used for curricular and extra-curricular demand.
◄ Support clubs in taking part in the GMA pitch advisory service to explore technical requirements to improve pitch quality to address overplay.
◄ Work with clubs to improve its ancillary offering.
◄ Look to increase the number of sports lit pitches with priority placed on a further sports lit senior pitch at Hertford RFC.
◄ Ensure that any residential development considers potential increases in demand for the sport and that new provision or contributions are properly sought through utilisation of the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator.
◄ Support Bishop's Stortford RFC, Hertford RFC and Datchworth RFC in improving the ancillary provisions provided.
◄ Ensure once the WR compliant 3G pitch is open for use, that community use is utilised to its full potential, with Bishop's Stortford RFC making the most sense to be a partner club.
◄ Explore options at education sites such as St Edmunds College & Prep School and the Bishop's Stortford College to utilise senior rugby pitches to reduce overall shortfalls across the district.

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4.5: Hockey pitches (sand/water-based AGPs)

Assessment Report summary

> **Hockey summary**
> ◂ There is no spare capacity at any of the pitches available for weekend match play and there are currently teams exporting to play home games.
> ◂ Regarding future demand, both Hertford HC and Bishop's Stortford HC realise that growth cannot happen without more pitch space. Despite this, Hertford HC is looking to add a fifth women's senior team.
> ◂ With the AGPs provided at the Simon Balle School and Bishop's Stortford College having surpassed end of life, there is the need to provide a pitch replacement at each site in order to accommodate existing and future hockey demand.
>
> **Pitch supply:**
> ◂ There are eight full size hockey suitable AGPs in East Hertfordshire located across six sites. Seven of these pitches are open to community use on, with only three available to hire at peak time on weekends.
>
> **Pitch quality:**
> ◂ The full-size pitch at Herts & Essex Sports Centre resembles the only good quality playing provision within the district, with the AGP being built in 2019.
> ◂ Provision found at Bishop's Stortford School and Simon Balle School is poor quality with both having surpassed the suggested lifespan of an AGP. The condition of the pitches is now at a point where a replacement surface shall be required during the lifespan of the PPS.
> ◂ Finally, the pitch at Hockerill Anglo-European College is standard, however, the accompanying ancillary facilities are poor and need enhancing to continue to host external bookings.
>
> **Affiliated demand:**
> ◂ There are two hockey clubs within East Hertfordshire, those being Hertford HC and Bishop's Stortford HC.
> ◂ Bishop's Stortford Hockey Club has seven adult men's teams, 10 adult women's teams, three junior girl's teams, three junior boy's teams, six mixed junior teams and one mini under eight team. Additionally, there are over 35s and over 45's men's and women's teams.
> ◂ Hertford Hockey Club currently has seven men's teams, four ladies' teams, seven junior boys' teams and 10 junior girls' teams. Alongside both a men's over 35 and over 45 team and women's over 35 team.
> ◂ Hertford HC would like to add a fifth women's team however both it and Bishop's Stortford HC raise that there is a lack of peak time pitch space and would struggle to add teams.
>
> **Supply and demand analysis conclusions:**
> ◂ Based on high levels of demand there is an insufficient supply of provision to accommodate existing demand and should pitch replacements not be undertaken, both clubs will struggle to field current number of teams.
> ◂ Future demand cannot be accommodated with existing provision and would require an additional pitch.

Scenarios

Meeting demand for hockey suitable AGPs

The PPOSS Guidance suggests that a pitch with sports lighting can accommodate four match equivalent sessions on a Saturday. With teams playing on a home and away format, this equates to one AGP being able to cater for eight 'home' teams (one team requires 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week on its 'home' AGP).

Table 4.30 below outlines the position for usage across hockey sites in East Hertfordshire.

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The three pitches used for peak hockey demand on Saturdays are at capacity with both Hockerill Anglo-European College and Simon Balle School accommodating four MES and Herts & Essex Centre hosting five MES. Both Hertford HC and Bishop's Stortford HC aspire to grow and want to add more Saturday teams, however, realise currently there is not enough pitch space in East Hertfordshire. Hertford HC is already exporting teams outside of the district to play its fixtures.

With the AGPs provided at the Simon Balle School and Bishop's Stortford College having surpassed end of life, there is the need to provide a pitch replacement at each site to accommodate existing and future hockey demand.

Table 4.30: Hockey usage and spare capacity

Site ID	Site name	Site user	Current use in peak period (MES)	Spare capacity?
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	Bishop's Stortford HC	5 MES	No
58	Hockerill Anglo-European College	Bishop's Stortford HC	4 MES	No
89	Simon Balle School	Hertford HC	4 MES	No

Table 4.31: Quality of existing hockey suitable artificial grass pitches

Site ID	Site name	Surface type	Saturday use	Quality rating	Built/ resurfaced
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Sand dressed	-	Standard	2016
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Sand dressed	-	Poor	2012
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	Sand dressed	Bishop Stortford Hockey Club	Good	2019
58	Hockerill Anglo-European College	Sand filled	Bishop Stortford Hockey Club	Standard	1993 / 2017
89	Simon Balle School	Sand filled	Hertford Hockey Club	Poor	1965 / 2012
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Sand filled	-	Standard	2001
163	Haileybury College	Sand filled	-	Standard	1989 / 2013
163	Haileybury College	Sand filled	-	Standard	2014

Based on the above, it can be determined that the quantity of provision for East Hertfordshire is no longer sufficient to accommodate the existing demand. There is the need to replace the existing surfaces at Simon Balle School and Bishop's Stortford College to ensure the long term survival of hockey in East Hertfordshire.

Access being granted to the St Edmunds College & Prep School would give the Authority another useable pitch on a Saturday. As the site is located 9.7 miles from Simon Balle School and 10.1 miles from Herts & Essex Sports Centre it could be used by both Bishop's Stortford HC and Hertford HC as a means of accommodating future demand.

A scenario below discusses the need for additional provision within Hertfordshire to manage current demand and prepare for future demand.

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Converting sand-based AGPs to 3G pitches

Since the introduction of 3G pitches and given their popularity for football, providers have seen this as a way of replacing their tired sand-based carpet and generating money from hiring out a 3G pitch to football clubs and commercial football providers. This has come at the expense of hockey, with players now travelling further distances to gain access to a suitable pitch and many teams being displaced from their preferred geographical area.

Due to its impact on hockey, it is appropriate to ensure that sufficient sand-based AGPs are retained for the playing development of the sport. Therefore, a change of surface should require a planning application and, as part of that, the applicants should have to show that there is sufficient provision available for hockey in the locality. Opportunities to incorporate this into planning policy should therefore be explored, and advice from Sport England and EH should also be sought prior to any planning application being submitted. It should also be noted that, if a surface is changed, it could require the existing floodlighting to be changed and, in some instances, noise attenuation measures may need to be put in place.

Buntingford Town Council is considering the conversion of its small sided AGP at Norfolk Road Playing Fields to 3G. The site is small sided, is not currently used for hockey and has passed its lifespan to be replaced. To caveat this, Freman College, which neighbours the site is already in the process of building 11v11 3G pitch.

The 3G surface is limited in the range of sport that can be played or taught on it. Those proposing a conversion should take advice from the appropriate sports' governing bodies or refer to Sport England guidance 'Selecting the Right Artificial Grass Surface which can be found on Sport England's website: https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/facility-cost-guidance

Strategic need for additional hockey provision across the region

The assessments for East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Stevenage present a comparable picture, with accessible sport-lit hockey facilities also operating at or near capacity. This indicates a broader regional issue, where existing provision across the three authorities is insufficient to support future growth in hockey participation.

The East Hertfordshire PPOSS assessment identifies a shortfall of hockey suitable AGPs within the District, particularly with no full size provision provided within the Watton-at-Stone or Sawbridgeworth analysis areas next to the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area. Hertford HC, which is based within the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area, has seven men's teams, four ladies' teams, seven junior boys' teams and 10 junior girls' teams. Alongside both a men's over 35 and over 45 team and women's over 35 team. Demand has seen a slight increase for senior women's numbers and the Club would like to add an extra senior women's team, however, cannot commit to this with the current lack of hockey suitable facilities. It is currently exporting two teams home fixtures into Welwyn Hatfield accessing the AGP at Queenswood School. There is potential for the Club to continue growing should appropriate facilities become available more locally.

Given the above context, there is a clear strategic need for the development of additional hockey provision across the three authorities. It is therefore recommended that at least one new sport-lit pitch be delivered within either of the three authorities, positioned to serve the combined demand from North Hertfordshire, East Hertfordshire and Stevenage.

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The exact location of this pitch is to be determined through a future feasibility study, conducted in partnership by all three councils in collaboration with hockey partners and supported through the Active Partnership and Sport England. This will require wider appropriate stakeholder involvement which could be supported through the Active Partnership.

As the North Hertfordshire PPOSS has proposed the need for a new full sized AGP to meet the need for Royston Hockey Club, the new pitch being proposed in this scenario to service the wider need across East Hertfordshire, Stevenage and North Hertfordshire should be delivered in addition to developing a pitch for Royston HC.

Recommendations

◄ Protect the sand based AGPs at Herts & Essex Sports Centre, Simon Balle School and Hockerill Anglo-European College for continued hockey use.
◄ Work with partners to provide replacement surfaces to the AGPs at Simon Balle School and Bishop's Stortford College.
◄ Ensure all hockey suitable AGPs have a sinking fund in place for its eventual refurbishment.
◄ Consider an additional hockey suitable AGP in East Hertfordshire as the current stock is at capacity for peak time usage and is inhibiting hockey growth in the District.
◄ Explore a community use agreement at St Edmunds College & Prep School which is only 8 miles away from Simon Balle School and could provide a good option to increase affiliated hockey participation in East Hertfordshire. If the school has spare capacity at peak time on Saturday's it could be more feasible than a new pitch.
◄ The steering group will explore a feasibility study comparing options for a new sports lit hockey suitable AGP.
◄ Enhance the changing rooms at Hockerill Anglo-European College which are of a poor quality and highlighted as in need of improving. This will support both Bishop's Stortford Hockey Club and curricular use.

4.6: Rugby league – grass pitches

Assessment Report summary

> **Rugby league – supply and demand summary**
> ◄ Demand for rugby league is met outside of East Hertfordshire, with opportunities in North Hertfordshire and St Albans.
> **Rugby league – supply summary**
> ◄ There are no rugby league pitches in East Hertfordshire.
> **Rugby league – demand summary**
> ◄ No demand has been identified for rugby league in East Hertfordshire.
> ◄ Individuals from East Hertfordshire likely travel to form part of North Herts Crusaders which are based at Hitchin rugby club in North Hertfordshire or St Albans Centurions based in neighbouring city of St Albans.
> ◄ Any residual need is unlikely to be sufficient for a club to be created, with individuals instead likely to travel to form part of the clubs outside of the District.

Recommendations

◄ If any demand does exist for rugby league in East Hertfordshire, if not already, it should be signposted to North Herts Crusaders and St Albans Centurions.

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4.7: Tennis courts

Assessment Report summary

Tennis – supply and demand summary

◄ There are three tennis clubs within East Hertfordshire currently operating with potential capacity issues, those being Tewin Tennis Club, Much Hadham Tennis Club and Aston Tennis Club. Tewin Tennis Club are currently 107 members over the LTA recommended guidelines whilst Aston Tennis Club are 43 over and Much Hadham Tennis Club are 12 over.

◄ If future growth ambitions are achieved, Braughing Tennis Club will be three members over capacity.

◄ When pairing the findings from the supply and demand analysis for club courts with the large number of community park courts available, it can be considered that East Hertfordshire is serviced by sufficient provision to accommodate both the current and future demand. However, club-based capacity pressures are still present at some of the smaller yet heavily accessed sites such as Tewin Tennis Club, Much Hadham Tennis Club and Aston LTC.

◄ The LTA facility calculator estimates there is a need for 12 padel courts within East Hertfordshire. As there are currently two courts located at Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust there is the need to develop additional courts to address this shortfall.

Tennis – supply summary

◄ There is a total of 135 tennis courts identified in East Hertfordshire across 31 sites, with 116 courts categorised as being available for community use at 28 sites.

◄ Most community available tennis courts in East Hertfordshire are operated by sports clubs with 56 (41%) the rest are split between parish/town council sites with eight (6%), education sites, 51 (38%) or 'other' with one (1%). There are also 19 (14%) courts unavailable to use at education sites.

◄ The most common outdoor tennis court surface in East Hertfordshire is macadam, with 42 courts (31%) identified across 13 sites. Artificial turf surfaces are the next most prominent surface with 31 courts (23%) across seven sites, followed by, shale surfaces, 34 (25%), polymeric, 20 (15%), grass, six (4%) and clay with two courts (1%) across 11 sites.

◄ In East Hertfordshire, 83 of the 135 tennis courts are serviced by sports lighting, representing 61% of the provision.

◄ Of the 116 community available courts, 77 are assessed as good quality (66%), 28 as standard quality (24%) and 11 as poor quality (9%).

◄ There are two sites situated in East Hertfordshire that currently have air domed courts, Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust and Legends Tennis Centre. The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust site also has two padel courts, built in 2024 and used by Bishop's Stortford LTC.

◄ Six clubs currently provide good quality ancillary provision, seven provide standard and none provide poor provision.

◄ Datchworth Tennis Club express plans to rebuild the shared clubhouse and resurface its courts in the next five years. Whilst Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club want to upgrade its Clubhouse and replace floodlights.

◄ There is a planning application in place for the development of eight padel courts at RDA Stadium, home of Bishop's Stortford FC.

Tennis – demand summary

◄ There are 13 tennis clubs in East Hertfordshire which collectively cater for 2,252 members, consisting of 1,432 senior and 820 junior members.

◄ Four clubs report future growth aspirations, with total future demand amounting to 155 potential additional members (70 senior and 85 junior).

◄ Away from clubs, it is considered that all local authority courts available for community use in East Hertfordshire have spare capacity for a growth in demand, although this is difficult to quantify as use is not always recorded due to the open access nature of many sites.

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Scenarios

Meeting demand for informal tennis

The LTA has developed a package of support for LAs to grow the use of park tennis courts by removing key barriers to participation. The products are ClubSpark, LTA Play, Local Tennis Leagues and Gate Access and can be used individually or in combination. The products are used to provide a remote booking and access system.

Instead of providing free access, some local authorities are now securing their courts as per a membership scheme that allows members access through the use of a fob system following payment of a small yearly fee.

Not only does this deter unofficial use of courts but it also allows official use to be tracked, thus providing data on how well and how often courts are being accessed. In addition, it provides income generation that can go towards ongoing maintenance of the courts.

Informal tennis courts across the district are generally in a good condition, courts such as Castle Park tennis courts have had recent investment, including a new LTA funded pay and play gate.

Satisfying club demand

The LTA suggests that a non-sports lit hard court can accommodate 40 members whereas a hard court with sports lighting can accommodate 60 members A grass court has a capacity of 20 regardless of the lighting position and courts covered with an air dome can also accommodate 100 members.

In line with this, within East Hertfordshire there are currently three sites operating above the LTA capacity guidelines, Aston Tennis Courts, Much Hadham Tennis Club and Tewin Recreation Ground. When accounting for future demand Braughing Playing Fields, in addition to the aforementioned clubs, operates over the guidelines.

In the case of Aston Tennis Courts, should the Club add sports lighting to the courts it would increase its capacity to 120 and would only be three members over capacity. It should be noted that some clubs can comfortably operate over capacity guidance, whilst others may have pressures without theoretically being over capacity.

The same approach could be suggested for Tewin Recreation Ground, however, would still leave an excess of 67 members. Much Hadham Tennis Club already has sports lit provision and is 12 members over the guidelines.

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Table 4.32: Capacity analysis for tennis clubs at risk of capacity issues

Site ID	Site	Club users	Current demand (members)	Future demand (members)	No. of courts	Sports lighting?	Capacity (members)	Current capacity balance (members)	Future capacity balance (members)
9	Aston Tennis Courts	Aston Lawn Tennis Club	123	-	2	No	80	43	43
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Braughing Tennis Club	98	25	2	Yes	120	22	3
71	Much Hadham Tennis Club	Much Hadham Tennis Club	192	-	3	Yes	180	12	12
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Tewin Tennis Club	187	-	2	No	80	107	107

As Table 4.32 outlines, Tewin Recreation Ground has the highest amount of overplay at its site and with only two non sports lit courts has the smallest scope to grow. Even if the site added sports lighting it would still be over the recommended LTA capacity guidelines by 67 members.

Padel

A padel court is 20m long and 10m wide with a combination of glass and weld mesh rebound wall and fence panels supported of steel posts fixed to a concrete foundation with a synthetic turf playing surface.

As of the end of 2023, 129,000 people reportedly play padel more than once a year in England, which represents a significant increase compared to 2021 data when the number was 15,000. This exemplifies the continued growth of the sport and the need to ensure that such demand is being adequately catered for. One of the LTAs key strategies is to find new ways to grow participation and padel is an innovative format of tennis that is fun, flexible, easy to play and extremely sociable.

The LTA Padel Provision Calculator indicates demand for 12 padel courts within East Hertfordshire to meet local needs. With two courts already available this would mean the creation of 10 new courts would increase padel play across the district, provided the courts are well located and advertised. The two courts are located at The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust and are accessed by Bishop's Stortford LTC. The Club reports that it has 120 members currently using the courts and that they will cap capacity at 150.

During consultation with Hartham Leisure Centre the conversion of a tennis court and small sided 3G football pitches to padel courts was highlighted. There is currently a planning application in place to convert the 3G pitches into padel provision. A planning application is also in place at the RDA Stadium for the potential development of eight padel courts. The site is the home of Bishop's Stortford FC which competes at Step 3 in the National League System. If developed this will significantly increase the number of courts in the Authority.

Given the rapid growth of padel as a sport and the identified demand, strategic investment in padel provision should be considered to enhance local access and support East Hertfordshire residents' participation in this emerging sport.

Recommendations

- Protect existing quantity of courts.
- Improve court quality at sites assessed as poor or standard quality and sustain quality at sites assessed as good, especially at sites in use by clubs or that are (or could be) well used for recreational demand.
- Sustain park courts quality as a priority to create a year-round recreational tennis option to meet local demand.
- Explore options to further improve the recreational tennis offer via utilisation of technology provided by the LTA (e.g., ClubSpark) to support the customer journey and through investment into facilities and accompanying ancillary provision.
- Ensure sinking funds are put into place by providers for long-term sustainability.
- Explore installation of additional sports lighting at club-based venues, such as Aston Tennis Club and Datchworth Tennis Club. Tewin Tennis Club currently uses portable sports lighting and would like to upgrade. Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club would also like to upgrade its lighting to LED.
- Support the development of new Padel courts as a means of addressing the shortfall of Padel provision in the Authority.

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4.8: Lawn bowls

Assessment Report summary

> **Bowls – supply and demand summary**
> ‹ There is a sufficient supply of bowling greens in East Hertfordshire to accommodate current demand; however, some shortfalls may appear if future demand from club ambitions are to be realised. The current level of provision requires protection.
>
> **Bowls – supply summary**
> ‹ There are 13 bowling greens in East Hertfordshire provided across 13 sites.
> ‹ All clubs that have responded to consultation attempts are deemed to have security of tenure.
> ‹ Sawbridgeworth CC is the only club in East Hertfordshire that is serviced by sports lighting.
> ‹ Of the 13 bowling greens in active use, six are good quality, seven are standard quality and none are of a poor quality.
> ‹ Ancillary provision ratings across East Hertfordshire, confirms eight clubs' access good quality clubhouses, five access standard quality and none are poor quality.
>
> **Bowls – demand summary**
> ‹ There are 14 clubs using bowling greens in East Hertfordshire. Where membership is known, it equates to 560 members.
> ‹ The average membership across all of the identified clubs is 56 members.
> ‹ Due to a predicted increase in persons aged 65 and over (to 2043), demand is likely to increase for greens over the coming years.
> ‹ Five clubs report future demand to increase membership by a combined total of 62 members, with methods of increasing numbers such as recruitment via coaching, reduced first year fees, localised advertisement, and open days in line with Bowls England.
> ‹ Two clubs have suggested that there is latent or unmet demand. Hertford BC and Hertford Castle BC share a site and as such have previously had to turn would be members away. Should the clubs both need to use the green at peak times it would be at capacity.

Scenarios

Security of tenure

The broad picture in East Hertfordshire is that most clubs have secure tenure, in the form of long term leases or full ownership. The only exception to this is Datchworth BC which rent its site annually from the Parish Council. Allenburys Sport & Social Club has a long term lease in place and is currently renewing this with the landowner.

Ancillary provision improvements

Accompanying ancillary provision across the district is mostly of a good standard with no poor rated provision. Shire Park BC is rated standard however, states due to the age of the building requires some refurbishments. The Club currently carries out small renovation projects itself when urgent or when funding becomes available.

Hertford Castle Bowls Club has access to a small wooden building, providing standard provision. The Club use it to host social events with changing rooms, a kitchen and a bar. It states that it would like a better clubhouse, and that high heating costs are a main concern presently.

Sele Farm Bowls Club confirms that its ancillary provision is of standard quality with toilets and a social space. However, as the Club is based in Hartham Common Park there is no dedicated club parking, meaning members must pay to park which it states is an issue for some.

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Efforts should be made to support all three clubs, where possible, to enhance their ancillary facilities to improve the overall user experience and help sustain membership.

Future demand

For bowls it is more appropriate to consider population changes for persons aged 65 and over. Office of National Statistics population projections (2021-2043), identify that the number of persons aged 65 and over living in East Hertfordshire is likely to increase continuously from 26,528 in 2021 to 37,191 in 2043, representing an increase of 40.2%.

With three greens currently operating above BE recommended guidelines, and the forecasted growth of 40% of people aged 65 and over in East Hertfordshire, it can be anticipated that the existing shortfalls will be exacerbated.

As such, the capacity level of clubs should be monitored over the upcoming years, with Buntingford BC, Datchworth BC, Hertford Castle BC and Hertford BC (both share a green) and Shire Park BC being a priority.

Recommendations

◄ Protect existing quantity of currently used greens and, as a minimum, sustain quality.
◄ Ensure that any proposed development of currently used greens is mitigated in line with NPPF.
◄ Assist clubs, where possible, with any future ancillary provision improvements such as Shire Park BC, Hertford Castle BC and Sele Farm BC.
◄ Monitor capacity levels of highly supported clubs such as Buntingford BC and Hertford Castle BC to ensure they have sufficient capacity.
◄ Support clubs with plans to increase membership so that growth can be maximised.

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4.9: Athletics

Assessment Report summary

Athletics – supply and demand summary
◄ The supply of dedicated athletics facilities is sufficient to meet demand.
◄ A key priority is the resurfacing of the track at Wodson Park as it is now over 20 years old and reaching end of life.
◄ Priority should also be placed on supporting activity being accommodated by the various running clubs in East Hertfordshire and the events that are being held.

Athletics – supply summary
◄ There is one purpose-built athletics track in East Hertfordshire, provided at Wodson Park sports centre.
◄ Wodson Park provides a 400m track with eight lanes; it has a synthetic surface, is serviced by floodlighting and is open to community use.
◄ The track is of a standard quality but is reaching end of life having last been resurfaced in 2005.
◄ Wodson Park is serviced by good quality ancillary facilities.
◄ There is also a four lane 40 metre compact track at Hockerill Anglo-European College with associated long/triple jump runways/pit, High Jump fan and throws circle. The facility has no sports lighting.

Athletics – demand summary
◄ Five clubs have been identified that have a current focus on athletics and/or running activity, with only Hawcs AC, Herts Phoenix AC and Ware Joggers having a requirement for a purpose-built facility.
◄ Herts Phoenix AC has a waiting list of 25 members and wants to continue to increase its membership.
◄ There are six Parkrun events held each week at as many venues across East Hertfordshire.

Scenarios

Existing provision

The 400m sports lit community accessible Stuart Storey track at The Wodson Park Sport Centre provides the district with an adequate amount of formal athletic provision to cater for its current demand. The track was last resurfaced in 2005 and the non-technical assessment highlighted that the track had several areas patched up. The EA ANOG report outlines how it could use professional cleaning and minor repairs in the short term, before reaccreditation and will likely need respraying in 2026. This should be a priority to ensure that the track can continue to service East Hertfordshire athletics demand now and in the future.

England Athletics' latest approach to facility planning includes the play track, compact track, mini track and active track which present more affordable means of councils installing new athletics provision[10]. These facilities cater for a more recreational and informal offer for athletics and general health and wellbeing opportunities.

East Hertfordshire District Council could consider the installation of such provision in line with future housing developments as part of future master planning for its larger, more notable sites.

There is currently a four lane 40 metre non sports lit, compact track at Hockerill Anglo-European College with associated long/triple jump runways/pit, high jump fan and throws circle. It currently solely services curricular demand at the School.

[10] https://www.englandathletics.org/clubs-and-facilities/facilities/newgen-tracks/

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Recommendations

- Ensure the track and supporting facilities at the Wodson Park Sports Centre are retained with a priority placed on resurfacing the track to maintain UKA TrackMark accreditation.
- The compact track at Hockerill Anglo-European College is retained and remains in good condition for as long as possible.
- Support clubs, running groups, events and England Athletics initiatives such as Park Run and pursue increased participation, where possible.
- Continue to increase participation both within affiliated clubs and the wider running market, signposting potential club members from the likes of Parkrun events and other health initiatives.
- Consider the need to include 'Active Tracks' within strategic housing allocations to provide a health and wellbeing offer on site.

4.10: Netball courts

Assessment Report summary

> **Netball – supply and demand summary**
> - Given the demand for netball and that there are 33 sport lit community accessible courts it is determined that there is an adequate supply of netball provision in East Hertfordshire.
>
> **Netball – Supply summary:**
> - In total, there are 81 outdoor netball courts located across 32 sites in East Hertfordshire. Of this total provision, 55 courts across 17 sites are community accessible.
> - Of the 55 community accessible courts, 23 are good quality, 23 are standard and nine are poor quality.
> - Good quality provision located at Leventhorpe school is accessed by the Play Netball League.
>
> **Netball – Demand summary:**
> - Two leagues have been identified as offering competitive netball in East Hertfordshire, those being Bishop's Stortford District Netball League and the Hertford and District League.
> - England Netball, and Sport England's Segmentation Tool outlines that there are somewhat low levels of unmet demand for East Hertfordshire with only 0.29% of the district identified as wanting to participate but not currently doing so.

Scenarios

Increasing the number of sports lit community accessible courts

Table 4.33 below outlines the available sports lit courts broken down by analysis area. As can be seen most sports lit accessible courts are provided in the Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area (21 courts). Of the 81 outdoor netball courts, 31 are both sports lit and community accessible (41%).

Table 4.33: Sports lit community accessible netball provision

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	No. of courts	Sports lit?	Quality
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	9	Yes (4)	Good
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	6	Yes	Standard
62	Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	3	Yes	Good
75	Presdales School	Hertford, Ware	Yes	4	Yes	Good
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Buntingford	No	3	Yes	Good

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Community use?	No. of courts	Sports lit?	Quality
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	3	Yes	Good
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Sawbridgeworth	Yes	4	Yes	Good
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Hertford, Ware	Yes	1	Yes	Standard
168	Avanti Grange Secondary School	Bishop's Stortford	Yes	3	Yes	Standard

Sites such as Birchwood High School and The Sele School could be prioritised for the installation of sports lighting, given that both already let out other facilities for community use. Both sites have standard rated shale netball courts that could benefit from sports lighting. This would create more community accessible, sports lit courts in the area for England Netball to establish a recreational programme of use.

Efforts should also be made to utilise sports lit community accessible courts for England Netball initiatives such as back to netball and walking netball to further develop Netball across East Hertfordshire.

Recommendations

‹ Protect quantity of courts.
‹ Seek to improve poor quality courts quality through resurfacing or improved maintenance.
‹ Explore options to increase sports lighting across East Hertfordshire.
‹ Open discussions with sites that already allow community use of other facilities to determine whether provision could be opened for community use, such as Birchwood High School and The Sele School.
‹ Look to continue and expand the use of courts for England Netball initiatives such as Back to Netball and Walking Netball.
‹ Facilitate improved engagement between England Netball and schools.
‹ Look to install sports lights to the provision at The Birchwood High School and The Sele School as a means of increasing the total number of sports lit courts.

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4.11: Golf

Assessment Report summary

Golf – supply and demand summary

◄ East Hertfordshire has a sufficient supply of provision to accommodate the identified high levels of golf demand within the Authority.

◄ In East Hertfordshire, golf remains more popular than the national averages by 7.1%. In 2023, 19.2% of the local population participated in the sport, reflecting a 6% increase over the previous two years. While East Hertfordshire has historically seen strong participation in golf, the current rate is the highest recorded for the authority since 2015.

Golf – supply summary

◄ There are nine golf facilities within East Hertfordshire, eight of which offer standard 18-hole courses, two offering par/short courses and four offering a driving range and a dedicated standalone driving range at Chadwell Springs Golf Centre.

◄ Six of the clubs are proprietary owned while three are members owned with no municipal owned courses.

◄ Quality across East Hertfordshire is good with no issues reported and members paying higher fees than the national average.

Golf – demand summary

◄ East Hertfordshire demand for golf is high with membership growing year on year

◄ Bishop's Stortford Golf Club currently have a waiting list in place suggesting unmet demand at the Club.

◄ Pay and play usage is unknown but clubs in East Hertfordshire provide green fee rates and pay and play is also available at three of the driving ranges.

Scenarios

N/A

Recommendations

◄ Protect and retain all existing golf provision unless separate needs assessments are completed that evidence that a facility can be lost or reduced without it impacting upon demand.

◄ Sustain course and ancillary facility quality and seek improvements where necessary.

◄ Support clubs in membership retention and potential growth and encourage clubs and providers to work more collaboratively in terms of creating pathways for players.

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4.12: Water Sports

Assessment Report summary

> **Outdoor water sports – supply and demand summary**
> ◄ East Hertfordshire is well provided for regarding outdoor water sport facilities given its location, enabling the district to cater for a range of activities.
> ◄ The clubs are adequately meeting demand levels, with no capacity issues evidenced.
>
> **Outdoor water sports – supply summary**
> ◄ The River Stort runs through Hertfordshire and Essex providing the opportunity for various water sports.
> ◄ Abbotts Lake offers 25 acres of open water, providing space for yachting and canoeing, forming part of the Lea Valley Regional Park.
> ◄ Ware Priority Lido has been servicing local residents since 1934 and is open all year round for both warm and cold-water swimming, depending on the season.
> ◄ Activities offered in the district include canoeing, kayaking, yachting, sailing and paddle boarding.
>
> **Outdoor water sports – demand summary**
> ◄ There are currently four clubs in East Hertfordshire providing outdoor water sport activity.
> ◄ No clubs report any unmet or latent demand, although it could exist for activities that are not collectively offered by the clubs.

Recommendations

◄ Retain all existing provision.
◄ Support the development of emerging sports within the authority by providing access to current provision which is underutilised/not accessed.

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PART 5: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The strategic recommendations for the Strategy have been developed via the combination of information gathered during consultation, site visits and analysis which culminated in the production of an assessment report, as well as key drivers identified for the Strategy. They reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed, which apply across playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities and may not be specific to just one sport.

AIM 1

To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sport facilities and ancillary facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs.

Recommendations:

a. Ensure, through the use of the PPOSS, that outdoor sport facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.

b. Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.

c. Maximise community use of education facilities where needed.

Recommendation (a) – Ensure, through the use of the PPOSS, that outdoor sport facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.

The PPOSS shows that all existing playing field and outdoor sport sites cannot be deemed surplus to requirements because of shortfalls now and in the future. As such, all provision requires protection or replacement until all identified shortfalls have been overcome. This includes disused (including any which may not have been identified in this document) underused and poor quality sites as there is a requirement for such provision to help meet and alleviate the identified shortfalls.

When shortfalls are evident, provision can only be permanently lost when the current picture changes to the extent that the site in question is no longer needed as a result of no shortfalls existing, or unless replacement provision is provided and agreed upon by all stakeholders. NPPF paragraph 104 states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

◄ An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
◄ The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
◄ The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

The PPOSS should be used to help inform development management decisions that affect existing or new playing pitch provision and accompanying ancillary facilities. All applications are assessed by the Local Planning Authority on a case-by-case basis taking into account site specific factors. In addition, Sport England is a statutory consultee on planning applications that affect or prejudice the use of playing field used within the last five years. They will use the PPOSS to help assess the planning application against its Playing Fields Policy.

Policy Exception E1:

'A carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport'.

Where the PPOSS cannot demonstrate that the site, or part of a site, is clearly surplus to requirements then replacement of the site, or part of a site, will be required to comply with the remaining Sport England policy exceptions.

Policy Exception E2

'The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity and quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use'.

Policy Exception E3

'The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

◄ Reduce the size of any playing pitch;
◄ Result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
◄ Reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain quality;
◄ Result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site;
◄ Prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site'.

Policy Exception E4:

 'The playing field or fields to be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new playing field site or sites:

◄ of equivalent or better quality and
◄ of equivalent or greater quantity;
◄ in a suitable location and;
◄ subject to equivalent or better management arrangements.

Policy Exception E5

'The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice of use, of the area of playing field'.

Disused sites should also be protected from development or replaced in accordance with Sport England's policy exceptions as they currently provide a solution to reducing identified shortfalls. Any disused playing fields are included within this Action Plan together with a recommendation in relation to bringing the site back into use or to mitigate the loss on a replacement site to address the shortfalls identified.

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It may be appropriate to consider rationalisation of certain low value playing pitch sites (i.e. one or two pitch sites with no changing provision) to generate investment and focus resources towards creating bigger and better quality venues (hub sites). Such sites could then be re-purposed to meet other recreational needs or, if appropriate and agreed could be developed for other uses. It is vital, however, that there is no net loss of facilities, and that replacement provision is in place and available for use prior to existing provision being lost.

Recommendation (b) – Secure tenure and access to sites through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.

Much like some authorities nationally, there is reliance on the education sector to provide for most of the demand for playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities. However, where this is the case, particularly for the likes of hockey, it is imperative that future opportunities to secure tenue for clubs is explored and progressed where possible. The following schools provide community use to clubs.

Table 5.1: Known use of education sites

School	Club	Sport
Aston St Marys VA School	Watton YFC	Football
Birchwood High School	BSC FC	Football
Bishop's Stortford College	BSC FC Thorley Manor FC Bishop's Stortford RFC	Football Rugby Union
Datchworth All Saints C of E Primary School	Watton YFC	Football
Freman College	Buntingford Cougars FC	Football
Hertfordshire and Essex High School	Thorley Manor FC	Football
Herts and Essex Sports Centre	Bishop's Stortford HC	Hockey
Hockerill Anglo European College	Bishop's Stortford HC	Hockey
Layston C of E First School	Buntingford Cougars FC	Football
Leventhorpe School	Sawbridgeworth CC Sawbridgeworth Town FC The Game Group FC	Cricket Football
Manor Fields Primary School	Thorley Manor FC	Football
Presdales School	Bury Rangers FC Hertford Town FC	Football
Ralph Sadlier School	Standon & Puckeridge Hares FC	Football
Reedings Junior School	Sawbridgeworth Town FC	Football
Richard Hale School	Bury Rangers FC	Football
Simon Balle School	Hertford HC	Hockey
St Edmunds College and Prep School	Watton YFC Bullys Crusaders FC	Football
The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC BSC FC	Football
The Chauncy School	Deaconsfield Vets FC Hartham Utd FC	Football
The Sele School	Bengeo Tigers FC	Football
Walkern School	AFC Walkern	Football
Watton at Stone Primary School	Watton YFC Watton at Stone CC	Football Cricket

Not having fully formalised usage presents a risk for those clubs using these sites as community use could technically be terminated at any time.

For unsecure sites, NGBs, Sport England and other appropriate bodies such as England Hockey, Herts Sport and Physical Activity Partnership and Hertfordshire FA can often help to negotiate and engage with providers where the local authority may not have direct influence. This is particularly the case at sites that have received funding from these bodies or are going to receive funding in the future as community access can be a condition of any agreement.

In the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review which announced significant public spending cuts, it is increasingly important for the Council to work with voluntary sector organisations to enable them to take greater levels of ownership and support the wider development and maintenance of facilities. To facilitate this, where practical, the Council should support and enable clubs to generate sufficient funds, providing this is to the benefit of sport.

The Council (including parish and town councils) and private landlords (as relevant) should further explore opportunities where security of tenure could be granted via lease agreements (minimum 25 years as recommended by Sport England and NGBs) so that clubs are in a position to apply for external funding. This is particularly the case at poor quality sites, possibly with inadequate or no ancillary facilities, so that quality can be improved and sites developed.

Local sports clubs should be supported by partners including the Council (where relevant), parish and town councils and NGBs to achieve sustainability across a range of areas including management, membership, funding, facilities, volunteers and partnership work. For example, club development should be support and clubs should be encouraged to develop evidence of business and sports development plans to generate income via their facilities.

All clubs could be encouraged to look at different management models such as registering as Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC)[11]. They should also be encouraged to work with partners locally, such as volunteer support agencies or local businesses.

Each club interested in leasing a council site (including those from parish and town councils) should be required to meet service and/or strategic recommendations. An additional set of criteria should also be considered, which takes into account club quality, aligned to its long-term development objectives and sustainability, as seen in the table below.

Table 5.2: Recommended criteria for lease of sport sites to clubs/organisations

Club	Site
Clubs should have NGB accreditation award. Clubs commit to meeting demonstrable local demand and show pro-active commitment to developing school-club links. Clubs are sustainable, both in a financial sense and via their internal management structures in relation to recruitment and retention policy for both players and volunteers. Ideally, clubs should have already identified (and received an agreement in principle) any match funding required for initial capital investment identified.	Sites should be those identified as 'Local Sites' (recommendation d) for new clubs (i.e. not those with a district-wide significance) but that offer development potential. For established clubs which have proven success in terms of self-management 'Key Centres' are also appropriate. Sites should acquire capital investment to improve or be leased with the intention that investment can be sourced to contribute towards improvement of the site.

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[11] http://www.cascinfo.co.uk/cascbenefits

Club	Site
Clubs have processes in place to ensure capacity to maintain sites to the existing, or better, standards.	

The Council (and likewise, parish and town councils) could establish core outcomes to derive from clubs taking on a lease arrangement to ensure that the most appropriate are assigned sites. Outcomes may, for example, include:

◄ Increasing participation.
◄ Supporting the development of coaches and volunteers.
◄ Commitment to quality standards.
◄ Improvements (where required) to facilities, or at minimum retaining existing standards.

In addition, clubs should be made fully aware of the associated responsibilities/liabilities when considering leases of multi-use public playing fields. It is important in these instances that the site, to some degree, remains available for other purposes or for other users.

For clubs with lease arrangements already in place, these should be reviewed when fewer than 25 years remain to improve security of tenure and aid the attraction of funding; clubs with fewer than 25 years remaining on a lease agreement are unlikely to be eligible for external funding.

Recommendation (c) - Maximise community use of education facilities where needed

To maximise community use of education facilities more coherent, structured relationship with schools is recommended. The ability to access good facilities within the local community is vital to any sports organisation, yet many clubs struggle to find good quality places to play and train.

A large number of sporting facilities are located on education sites and making these available to sports clubs can offer significant benefits to both the schools and local clubs, as well helping to reduce identified shortfalls. It is, however, common for school provision not to be fully maximised for community use, even on established community use sites.

Although there are a growing number of academies over which the Council has little or no control, it is still important to understand the significance of such sites and attempt to work with the schools where there are opportunities for community use. In addition, relevant NGBs have a role to play in supporting the Council to deliver upon this recommendation and communicating with schools where necessary to address shortfalls in provision.

Where new schools are provided in major new residential developments, they should be designed to facilitate community access, with opportunities for meeting the community's outdoor sports needs explored at the outset to maximise the potential for facility provision to be made within the developments, if appropriate.

As detailed earlier, NGBs, the Active Partnership and Sport England can often help to negotiate and engage with schools where the local authority may have limited direct influence. This is particularly the case at sites that have received funding from the relevant bodies or are going to receive funding in the future as community access can be a condition of the funding agreement.

The education sites in table 5.3 have playing fields with playing provision marked out that are not open to community use.

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Table 5.3: Non community accessible playing pitches:

School	Analysis Area	Sport	Pitches provided
Birchwood High School	Bishop's Stortford	Rugby Union	Four senior rugby union pitches.
Hockerhill Anglo-European College	Bishop's Stortford	Rugby Union	Two senior rugby union pitches.
Richard Whittington Primary School	Bishop's Stortford	Football	One mini 7v7 pitch.
Saint Mary's Catholic School	Bishop's Stortford	Football	Two mini 5v5 pitches.
Freman College	Buntingford	Rugby Union	Two senior rugby union pitches.
Saint Edmunds College & Prep School	Buntingford	Cricket	One grass wicket square.
Abel Smith Primary School	Hertford, Ware	Football	One mini 7v7 pitch.
Haileybury Sports Complex	Hertford, Ware	Cricket Rugby Union	Four grass wicket squares. Two senior rugby union pitches.
The Chauncy School	Hertford, Ware	Rugby Union	One senior rugby union pitch.
The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	Sawbridgeworth	Cricket	Two cricket squares.
Heath Mount School	Watton-at-Stone	Cricket	One grass wicket square.

If the sites listed above were to grant access to its grass provision this would increase the total supply of accessible playing pitches which would create additional spaces to accommodate all demand in the Authority. Therefore, it is a recommendation for school sites to open all playing pitches where they are not currently open to community use.

Table 5.1 above outlines the known use of education sites by sports clubs across the Authority. In an instance where a community use agreement is not already in place for these sites, it is also recommended that the steering group works towards establishing community use agreements to protect the long term use of the site.

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

AIM 2

To **enhance** outdoor sports facilities and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

Recommendations:

d.   Maintain quality and seek improvements where necessary

e.   Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites.

f.   Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding

g.   Secure developer contributions

Recommendation (d) – Improve quality

There are several ways in which it is possible to increase pitch quality and these are explored below.

Ground Management Association (GMA) Pitch Advisory Service

With quality of grass pitches becoming one of the biggest influences on participation, the Pitch Advisory Service (PAS, formerly the Grounds and Natural Turf Improvement Programme) was launched in 2014 and is funded by the GMA and its partners; the Football Foundation, Sport England, FA, ECB, RFU and RFL.

Its aim is to raise the standards of sports surfaces as well as the understanding of sports turf management practices among grassroots clubs across England and Wales. The PAS provides an enhanced network of support and expertise available to those maintaining natural turf pitches, particularly at a local level.

The service can be utilised by grassroots clubs, organisations and local authorities with the simple aim of improving the quality of grass pitches. The key principles behind the service are to provide members of the programme with advice/practical solutions via a report which will also identify the key enhanced maintenance works required along with machinery requirements.

Pitch providers are encouraged to complete a self-assessment of pitches using the Football Foundation PitchPower app. In August 2022, PitchPower was re-launched, with enhanced capability to support use beyond football pitches and is now accessible for the assessment of natural turf pitches for cricket, rugby league and rugby union.

In relation to cricket specifically, maintaining high pitch quality is the most important aspect of the sport. If the wicket is poor, it can affect the quality of the game and, in some instances, become dangerous. The ECB recommends full technical assessments of wickets and pitches available through a Performance Quality Standard (PQS) assessment. The Performance Quality Standard Assessment assesses a cricket square to ascertain whether it meets the standards that are benchmarked by the Ground Management Association.

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Football Foundation PitchPower Assessment

The Premier League, The FA and the Football Foundation are increasing efforts to improve the quality of grass pitches in England with the launch of the PitchPower app. Launched in 2020 alongside the Football Foundation Pitch Preparation Fund, The app is a new digital self-assessment tool to allow reports and recommendations to be made more quickly and easily once submitted for review by GMA regional pitch advisors.

The tool across mobile app and desktop is open to access by all providers, for example clubs, schools and local authorities. Following a PitchPower Assessment Report, organisations can work towards the recommended dedicated maintenance regime identified to improve the quality of their pitches.

In addition to non-technical assessments, clubs and education sites across East Hertfordshire continue to undertake PitchPower assessments as a means of improving the quality of provision. Consequently, it should be recommended through the PPS process for the local authority to support delivering any improvement to new sites that undertake PitchPower assessments.

Football Foundation Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund (GPMF)

Eligible clubs and organisations can also utilise the report as an evidence base to acquire potential funding streams, for example, to obtain the required maintenance equipment. If a PitchPower assessment categorises pitches as 'poor' or 'basic' they are then eligible to apply for funding through the Football Foundation through the Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund[12], a fund offering six-year tapered grants to help clubs enhance or sustain the quality of their grass pitches. The fund is a key part of the Football Foundation's Grass Pitch Improvement Programme - an ambition to deliver 20,000 good quality grass pitches by 2030. Clubs with good or standard quality pitches can also apply for a lower level of funding to improve and sustain quality.

All applicants must have the required security of tenure and have received a PitchPower Pitch Assessment Report, with the fund currently open to football clubs, leagues, and charities. Local authorities are not currently eligible applicants, however, clubs, leagues and charitable organisations using local authority sites can apply provided they have security of tenure.

The Council is not presently eligible to access the GPMF as an applicant, however, can undertake technical assessment of pitches using the PitchPower app. Opportunities to access the fund to support presently Council managed sites include establishment of a service level agreement with a resident club for maintenance responsibilities, or transfer of long-term management to the club/organisation through leasehold or CAT, both enabling the club/organisation to apply to the fund.

Furthermore, the Football Foundation also launched a new Groundskeeping Community online platform in 2019 which provides a resource of expert advice for grounds staff, enabling them to connect with peers, discover new tips and tricks and share advice on best industry practice. Users can seek guidance from the GMA regional pitch advisors, who are available to answer questions and update members on changes to industry standards.

[12] https://footballfoundation.org.uk/grant/grass-pitch-maintenance-fund

Addressing overplay

In order to improve the overall quality of the outdoor facility stock; it is necessary to ensure that provision is not overplayed beyond recommended carrying capacity. This is determined by assessing quality (via a non-technical site assessment) and allocating a match limit to each (daily for hockey, weekly for football and rugby union and seasonal for cricket).

The FA, RFU, RFL, ECB and EH all recommend a number of matches that pitches should take based on quality, as seen in the table below. For other grass pitch sports, no guidelines are set by the NGBs although it can be assumed that a similar trend should be followed.

Table 5.4: Capacity of pitches

Sport	Pitch type	No. of matches (Good quality)	No. of matches (Standard quality)	No. of matches (Poor quality)
Football	Adult pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Youth pitches	4 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Mini pitches	6 per week	4 per week	2 per week
Rugby union	Natural Inadequate (D0)	2 per week	1.5 per week	0.5 per week
Rugby union	Natural Adequate (D1)	3 per week	2 per week	1.5 per week
Rugby union	Pipe Drained (D2)	3.25 per week	2.5 per week	1.75 per week
Rugby union	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	3.5 per week	3 per week	2 per week
Cricket	1 grass wicket 1 synthetic wicket	5 per season 60 per season	4 per season	0 per season
Hockey	Full size AGP	4 per day	4 per day	4 per day

It is imperative to engage with clubs to ensure that sites are not played beyond their capacity. Where overplay is identified, play should be encouraged, to transfer to alternative venues that are not operating at capacity. Alternatively quality, should be improved to increase capacity to appropriate levels. Where play is transferred, this may include transferring play to 3G pitches or to sites not currently available for community use but which may be in the future.

For cricket, an increase in the usage of NTPs (or hybrid wickets when suitable) is key to alleviating overplay as this allows for the transfer of junior demand from grass wickets. It also does not require any additional playing pitch space as NTPs can be installed adjacent to existing squares.

For rugby union, overplay can be reduced but not resolved through improvements to pitch maintenance or via capital drainage solutions. Three rugby clubs have a need for options outside of enhancing existing provision.

As mentioned earlier, there are also sites that are poor quality that are not overplayed. These should not be overlooked as often poor-quality sites have less demand than others but demand could increase if the quality were improved. It does, however, work both ways as potential improvements may make sites more attractive and therefore more popular, which in the long run can lead again to them becoming poor quality pitches if not properly maintained.

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Improving changing provision

There is a need to address changing provision at some sites in East Hertfordshire, these are generally centred at either club or parish/town council managed sites.

Sites which predominantly accommodate adult and/or older junior age group sports should be prioritised for improvements, whilst there is a trend for younger junior age groups (particularly for football) not to require use of changing provision, with suitable male and female toilet provision for players and spectators considered to be of greater importance.

The following sites are identified locally as ones where improvements are needed:

- Bishop's Stortford RFC.
- Braughing Playing Fields.
- Crouchfields.
- Datchworth Sports Club.
- Hertford Heath Playing Fields.
- Hertford RFC.
- Richard Hale School.
- Thorley Cricket Club.
- Watton-at-Stone (new site)

It is worthy of note that providing dedicated facilities for one team clubs, unless competing at a highly competitive level is not typically a worthwhile investment.

Recommendation (e) – Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites

To allow for facility developments to be programmed on a phased basis the Council should adopt a tiered approach to the management and improvement of outdoor sport sites and associated facilities. Please refer to Part 6: Action Plan for the proposed hierarchy.

Recommendation (f) – Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding

Partners should ensure that appropriate funding secured for improved sports provision is directed to areas of need, underpinned by a robust strategy for improvement in outdoor sport provision and accompanying ancillary facilities.

To address community need a coordinated approach to strategic investment is required. In delivering this recommendation, the Council should maintain a regular dialogue with local partners through the PPOSS Steering Group.

Although some investment in new provision will not be made by the Council directly, it is important that the Steering Group directs and leads a co-ordinated approach to facility development whether made at/by education sites, NGBs, sports clubs and the commercial sector. This is to ensure that the extent to which it addresses community need is optimised and duplication is avoided.

One of sport's key contributions is its positive impact on public health. It is therefore important to lever in investment from other sectors such as, for example, health and wellbeing. Sport and physical activity can have a profound effect on peoples' lives, and plays a crucial role in improving community cohesion, educational attainment and self-confidence.

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Recommendation (g) –Secure developer contributions

It is important that this strategy informs planning policies and decisions by setting out the approach to securing sport and recreational facilities through new housing development.

For playing pitches, it is recommended the Council continue to use Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator as a tool for helping to determine the additional demand for pitches and to estimate the likely developer contribution required linking to sites within the locality. This should form part of the Council working with Sport England to develop a process and guidance for obtaining developer contributions.

The calculator uses the current number of teams by sports pitch type contained within the Assessment Report and calculates the percentage within each age group that play that sport. That percentage is then applied to the population growth. The additional teams likely to be generated are then converted into match equivalent sessions and associated pitch requirements in the peak period, with the associated costs (both for providing the pitch/facility and for its life cycle) then given. The calculator splits the requirement into peak time demand for natural turf pitches, training demand for artificial grass pitches, and the number of new changing rooms required.

The PPOSS should be used to help determine the likely impact of a new development on demand and the capacity of existing sites in the area, and whether there is a need for improvements to increase capacity of existing provision or if new provision is required.

Where a development is located within access of existing high-quality provision, this does not necessarily mean that there is no need for further provision or improvement to existing provision, as additional demand arising from the development is likely to result in increased usage (which can result in overplay or quality deterioration).

Where it is determined that new provision is required to accompany a development, priority should be placed on providing facilities that contribute towards alleviating existing shortfalls within the locality. To determine what supply of provision is provided, it is imperative that the PPS findings are taken into consideration and that for particularly large developments consultation takes place with the relevant NGBs and Sport England.

This is due to the importance of ensuring that the stock of facilities provided is correct to avoid provision becoming unsustainable and unused. The preference is for multi-pitch and potentially multi-sport sites to be developed, supported by a clubhouse and adequate parking facilities which consider the potential for future AGP development. This is because single-pitch facilities are more likely to become under-used (or unused), unviable and unsustainable.

It is recognised that consultation cannot take place with NGBs for every development due to resource restrictions. Instead, it is recommended that such discussions take place within PPOSS Steering Group meetings, which should take place regularly following adoption of the study as part of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation process. It is recommended that these take place every 6-12 months and inform the annual review/update (see Part 8 for further information).

The guidance should form the basis for negotiation with developers to secure contributions to include provision and/or enhancement of appropriate provision and subsequent maintenance. S106 contributions could also be used to improve the condition and of the pitches in order to increase pitch capacity to accommodate more matches.

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The 2017 version of the playing pitch strategy and calculator has been used to inform sports provision and contributions in the strategic allocations of the adopted District Plan. Many of these allocations have commenced or been built out but several of the largest developments have sport provision commitments identified in District Plan policy and/or S106 agreements, but development has not started. As such the new facilities for these strategic allocations are not included within the action plan at this stage, but for clarity, they are identified below in table 5.5 because they will form part of the future sports provision for the district in due course.

Table 5.5: On-site sports proposals identified in District Plan (2018) site allocations that have not yet commenced development

Site allocation	Location	Current status	Playing pitches
WARE2	North and East of Ware	Planning application submitted, still to be determined.	Proposes two areas of playing pitches, includes new grass pitches and a new 3G pitch at the secondary school site (dual-use).
EWEL1	East of Welwyn Garden City	Planning application submitted, still to be determined.	Proposes new playing pitches as part of education provision at primary and secondary school sites (dual use).
Village 1 Gilston Park	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	Gilston Park: - 2No. U18 & Adult Football pitches (one to meet the Village 1 Playing Field provision of 0.8ha). – 1No. Cricket pitch and clubhouse. – Bowls club, to comprise of two six-rink bowls facilities and a club house (which may be combined with cricket facility). – 2km trim trail. – Space for informal sports e.g. frisbee, kite flying etc.
Village 1 Schools	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	Primary School to include: A MUGA, two mini 7v7 football pitches, two mini 5v5 pitches, one youth 9v9 pitch, a junior cricket pitch and a rounders pitch (which may be overlaid on the football pitches) and a grass athletics track. Secondary School to include: Artificial cricket wicket, artificial grass pitch (7,480sqm), one U18 & Adult grass football pitch, 400m grass athletics track, MUGA.
Village 2	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	Village 2 Playing Fields (0.8ha): – 1No. U18 & Adult football pitch.
Village 2 Primary School	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	Village playing field. A primary school that will feature a three court MUGA, one mini 5v5 pitch, one mini 7v7 pitch, one youth 9v9 pitch, one junior cricket pitch and rounders pitch (which may be overlaid on the football pitches) and a grass athletics track.
Village 3	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	Village 3 Playing Field (0.8ha) – 1No. U18 & Adult football pitch.
Village 3 Primary School*	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	A primary school that will feature a three court MUGA, one mini 5v5 pitch, one mini 7v7 pitch, one youth 9v9 pitch, one junior

Site allocation	Location	Current status	Playing pitches
			cricket pitch and rounders pitch (which may be overlaid on the football pitches) and a grass athletics track.
Village 3/4 Gilson Fields	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	Gilston Fields (CA4) Cricket Hub featuring: – 2No. cricket pitches*. – 2No. U15 & U16 football pitches*. – 2No. U13 & U14 football pitches*. – Cricket nets. – Clubhouse. *may be dual use football and cricket
Village 4	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	Eastwick Valley Green Corridor: – 4No. U18 & Adult football pitches. – Village 4 playing field (1No. O18 & adult football pitch). – Tennis facility, comprising of 8 senior pitches and may include a clubhouse.
Village 4 Primary School	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	A primary school featuring a three court MUGA, one mini 5v5 pitch, one mini 7v7 pitch, one youth 9v9 pitch, one junior cricket pitch and rounders pitch (which may be overlaid on the football pitches) and a grass athletics track.
Village 5	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	Village 5 Playing Fields (0.8ha located in CA14 V1-5 Corridor): – 1No. U18 & Adult football pitch Sports and Leisure Centre may be co-located with Eastwick Valley Green Corridor pitches.
Village 5 Schools	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	A primary school featuring a three court MUGA, one mini 7v7 football pitch, one mini 5v5 pitches, one youth 9v9 pitch, a junior cricket pitch and a rounders pitch (which may be overlaid on the football pitches) and a grass athletics track. Secondary School to include: Artificial cricket wicket, artificial grass pitch (7,480sqm), one U18 & Adult grass football pitch, 400m grass athletics track, MUGA. An artificial hockey pitch (6,388.2sqm) which may be located within the school or co-located adjacent to the school as part of the Sports and Leisure Centre.
Village 6	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	Village 6 Playing Fields (0.8ha) - located in CA14): – 1No. U18 & Adult football pitch.
Village 6 Primary School*	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	A primary school featuring a three court MUGA, one mini 5v5 pitch, one mini 7v7 pitch, one youth 9v9 pitch and a junior cricket pitch and a rounders pitch (which may be overlaid on the football pitches) and a grass athletics track.
Village 7 Playing Field	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	Village 7 Playing Field: – 1No. Grass Adult Pitch (either rugby or football).

Site allocation	Location	Current status	Playing pitches
			– A Sports Pavilion (approximately 245sqm gross internal floor area).
Village 7	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	Village 7 Football Hub: – A building no more than 800 sqm GEA and appropriate car parking. – 2 No. Artificial Grass Pitches. – 1 No. Adult grass pitch with a shelter/dug-out. – 1 No. Adult grass pitch with 2 No. U9/U10 pitches within. – 1 No. U15/U16 grass pitch with 2 No. U7/U8 pitches within.
Village 7 Primary School	Gilston	Outline planning permission granted (s106)	A primary school featuring a three court MUGA, one mini 7v7 football pitch, one mini 5v5 pitches, one youth 9v9 pitch, a junior cricket pitch and a rounders pitch (which may be overlaid on the football pitches) and a grass athletics track.

*May not be required subject to education monitoring

The Council will continue to work with developers and stakeholders to bring forward the identified sports provision. It should be recognised that proposed development at WARE2 and EWEL1 has not secured planning permission yet so proposals may be subject to change. The information relating to Gilston is from masterplan drafts and the s106 for the outline applications. Pitch details could be subject to change as master planning work and the Reserved Matters applications progress.

As work progresses on the New District Plan planning officers will use the Playing Pitch Calculator and guidance to inform sport provision at new site allocations.

Sport England recommends that a number of objectives should be implemented to enable sports provision to be delivered and enhanced:

‹ Planning consent should include appropriate conditions and/or be subject to specific planning obligations. Where developer contributions are applicable, a S106 agreement or equivalent must be completed that should specify, when applied, the amount that will be linked to Sport England's Building Cost Information Service from the date of the permission and timing of the contribution/s to be made.
‹ Contributions should also be secured towards the first ten years of maintenance on new pitches (lifecycle costs), the cost of which is indicated by the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator. NGBs and Sport England can provide further and up-to-date information on the associated costs.
‹ External funding should be sought/secured to achieve maximum benefit from the investment into appropriate facility enhancement, alongside other open space provision, and its subsequent maintenance.
‹ Where new provision is provided, appropriate changing rooms and associated car parking should be located on site.
‹ All new or improved outdoor sports facilities on school sites should be subject to community use agreements.

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Developer contributions - step by step guide

For any application warranting a developer contribution the following processes should be followed in order to help inform the potential needs a new housing development may require and/or should look to consider. In accordance with National Planning Policy Guidance, contributions should not be sought from developments of 10 units or less, and which have a maximum combined gross floor space of no more than 1,000 square metres (gross internal area).

Any obligations sought should be based on a tailored approach to each development, considering the population derived from the development, determining if the demand can be met by existing facilities and identifying the project/s that any required contribution will be used towards. All of this should be carried out using the robust evidence base provided as part of the PPOSS to help with clearly justifying the needs arising and how they are to be met.

Step 1	Determine the playing pitch requirement resulting from the development

The main tool for determining this is Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator, which is a Sport England tool provided on completion of the Strategy. The calculator will be pre-populated with the current population of the local authority and the current demand data from the PPOSS. Until this requires updating, to determine the playing pitch requirement resulting from a development, all that is required is the input of the new population that will derive from a proposal.

The calculator provides an estimation of the number of new pitches that would be required to meet the match equivalent sessions that will derive from the development. The associated costs for providing these new pitches are also identified (although please note that these are indicative costs only and appropriate local work should be undertaken to determine the true costs involved). The calculator can also be used by East Hertfordshire District Council to informs policies within the New District Plan.

Step 2	Determine whether new provision is required and whether this should be on or off site

For large-scale developments that generate high levels of demand, new pitch provision may be required to meet the population growth. This is particularly the case when the calculator identifies a need for multiple pitches and across multiple sports.

When on site provision is required, priority should be placed on the creation of multi-pitch and multi-sport sites with appropriate ancillary facilities such as a clubhouse and adequate car parking, as well as ensuring the provision contributes towards reducing current shortfalls. This will ensure that the provision is sustainable and attractive to potential users. Emphasis should also be on ensuring the site can accommodate an AGP given current sporting trends.

Other useful questions when deciding on new provision include:

‹ Are there any teams/clubs playing outside of the local area (displaced demand) which could utilise provision at the site?
‹ Do any local clubs identify existing plans/demand for access to new provision?
‹ Are there any overplayed sites in the local area where existing demand could be transferred to a new site?

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◄ Do any local clubs identify any latent demand (i.e. if they had access to more pitches they could they field more teams?)

To further help determine the sustainability of establishing new provision, consideration should be given to the potential management opportunities which may be available onsite:

◄ Is the local authority (or town/parish council) in a position to take on further outdoor sports facilities from a financial point of view?
◄ Is an education establishment to be provided as part of the development which offers a potential management option of outdoor sports facilities?
◄ Is there a leisure trust in place which has the capacity to take on the management of outdoor sports facilities?
◄ Is there an opportunity for a trust based model of management, for example, by formation of a Community Interest Company (CIC) or Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)?
◄ Is there an existing sports club that has the capacity to take on the management of another site?

Where the calculator does not create demand for a whole pitch, which is often the case for smaller sized developments, it is recommended to make a contribution to increasing the capacity of an existing site to meet demand generated from the development. When identifying a site for off-site contributions, the proximity and location of existing playing pitch sites should be considered and whether they could help serve the new development – this could be informed by identifying the analysis area in which the development sits and if there are any hub sites or key centres within the locality. Initially, a one-mile radius could be drawn around the site in order to help identify the nearest priority sites, which may require consultation with neighbouring authorities when the development sites to close to the boundary.

The off-site decision should be based on the potential to improve existing facilities within an appropriate catchment of a development to create additional capacity, and how realistic it is given the nature of the local area to provide new provision. For example, there may be some poor quality playing fields that could potentially be improved with additional drainage and long-term maintenance works, along with enhanced changing provision, to enable use to be increased, thereby creating additional capacity to meet the increased demand generated from the development.

Discussions should be held with relevant parties (e.g. NGBs, landowners, facility operators and user groups), and any further necessary evidence gathered (e.g. a feasibility study) to help identify the specific works that are required, and to ensure they will provide the necessary additional capacity to meet the needs. It will also be important to demonstrate that the specific works can be delivered within an appropriate timescale in relation to the occupation of the development site.

Step 3	Determine the other pitch and non-pitch requirements resulting from the development

The Sports Facility Calculator now calculates tennis demand so this can therefore be used to inform tennis requirements; however, neither this nor the Playing Pitch Calculator determine needs for any other sports. That being said, the PPOSS identifies (where relevant) current and future demand requirements and can therefore still be used to determine if contributions are required towards these sports or if new provision is required, in conjunction with NGB discussions.

Where there is no identified shortfall in provision or future demand for new provision within an area relevant to the development (e.g. an analysis area or settlement), consideration

should be given to the nearest site to the development containing that type of provision. If this could accommodate the increased demand from the development, no action is required; if it could not accommodate the demand, consider if the site could benefit from a contribution towards increasing capacity to meet likely need. For example, this could include increasing quality and/or addition of ancillary facilities such as floodlighting, changing rooms or car parking. The PPOSS Action Plan should be used as a starting point to identify site by site recommendations.

Where there is an identified shortfall that could not be overcome through contributions, new provision may be required within or nearby to the development as part a multi-sport development.

Step 4	Consider design principles for new provision

The exact nature and location of provision associated with onsite developments should be fully determined in partnership with each relevant NGB. Further to this, each pitch sport NGB provides national guidance in relation to provision of new pitches.

There is also a need to ensure that the location of outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities are appropriately located in the context of indoor sports provision (if also being provided onsite) to ensure a cohesive approach to the whole sporting offer.

Step 5	Calculate the financial contribution required

After using the PPOSS Playing Pitch Calculator and the PPOSS as a starting point, the local cost of provision should be fully determined in order to calculate the financial contributions required.

A clear and transparent methodology for calculating up to date costs for the specific works, including appropriate ancillary provision, should be presented. Where appropriate, depending on how the needs are to be met, the cost of any required land purchase should be included in the financial contribution. If an obligation will be directed to an off-site project it should be ensured the costs are limited to meet the needs of the individual development.

Along with any capital costs for the works, an obligation should ensure an appropriate level of lifecycle costs towards the new or enhanced provision. This is required to cover the day to day maintenance for an agreed long-term period and to help ensure a sinking fund exists for any major replacement work, e.g. the future resurfacing of an artificial grass pitch. Wherever possible, specific local costs should be used, especially if the works are to improve the existing quality of a site to increase capacity as there may be a number of site specifics to consider. Sport England does provide indicative costs for new provision: https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/cost-guidance/

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For all developments community use agreements between providers and users would ensure that such demand continues to be provided for in the long-term.

AIM 3

To **provide** new outdoor sport facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.

Recommendations:

h. Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock.

i. Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

The PPOSS provides an estimate of demand for pitch sport based on population forecasts and club consultation to 2043 (in line with East Hertfordshire District Plan timeline), with this future demand then translated into teams likely to be generated. Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator adds to this, updating the likely demand generated for pitch sports based on housing increases before converting the demand into match equivalent sessions and the number of pitches that may be required to meet the growth. It also gives the associated costs of supplying the increased pitch provision and splits the total pitch requirement into natural turf pitches to meet peak period demand, artificial grass pitches to meet training demand, and the additional number of changing rooms required.

Recommendation (h) - Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock

The Council and its partners should work to rectify identified inadequacies and meet identified shortfalls as outlined in the preceding Assessment Report and the sport-by-sport specific recommendations (Part 4) as well as the following Action Plan (Part 6).

It is important that the current levels of provision are protected, maintained and enhanced to secure provision both for now and in the future. Maximising use of existing provision through a combination of the following will help to reduce shortfalls and accommodate future demand:

◄ Improving quality in order to improve the capacity to accommodate more demand.
◄ Transferring demand from overplayed sites to sites with spare capacity.
◄ The re-designation of facilities e.g. converting an unused pitch (or pitch type) for one sport to instead cater for another sport (or another pitch type).
◄ Securing community use at school sites including those currently unavailable.
◄ Working with commercial and private providers to increase usage.

Unmet demand, changes in sport participation and trends, and proposed housing growth should be recognised and factored into future facility planning. Assuming an increase in participation and housing growth occurs, it will impact on the future need for certain types of sports facilities. Sports development work also approximates unmet demand which cannot currently be quantified (i.e. it is not being suppressed by a lack of facilities) but is likely to occur. The following table highlights the main development trends in each sport and their likely impact on facilities. However, it is important to note that these may be subject to change.

Furthermore, retaining some spare capacity allows some pitches to be rested to protect overall pitch quality in the long-term. Therefore, whilst in some instances it may be appropriate to redesignate a senior pitch where there is low demand identified a holistic

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approach should be taken to re-designation for the reasons cited. The site-by-site action planning will seek to provide further clarification on where re-designation is suitable.

The PPOSS identifies priority sites that should be focused upon, including those that are presently overplayed and/or poor quality, or unused sites that are particularly large. It also advises how issues can be overcome.

Recommendation (i) - Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand

The Steering Group should use and regularly update the Action Plan within this Strategy. The Action Plan lists recommendations for each site, focused upon both qualitative and quantitative improvements, which if delivered will lessen the need for new provision.

Linked to the above and as evidenced in Part 4, although there are identified shortfalls of match equivalent sessions, most current and future demand is currently being met and most shortfalls for football, cricket, hockey, tennis, netball and lawn bowls can be addressed via quality improvements and/or improved access to sites that are presently used minimally or that are currently unavailable. This does however come with challenges such as breaking a schools long-term stance of not allowing community use to its playing fields or improving a grass pitch on an open space site to good quality. Adding to the current stock, particularly in the short term, is therefore not recommended as a priority, except for 3G pitches, padel courts and rugby union where the shortfall cannot be removed without new stock.

However, for rugby union Table 4.29 shows that given the amount of demand at the overplayed club sites, if maximum level quality improvements were to take place, shortfalls at both sites would still be present. In this instance, other methods of addressing overplay should be explored such as the installation of additional provision, increased sports lighting or using dedicated sports lit training areas and accessing the newly installed WR 3G pitch at Bishop's Stortford High School to better support training demand. Table 1.2 confirms that this also applies to the need for padel as there is a shortfall of courts which can only be addressed by developing new provision.

Notwithstanding the above, large scale housing developments and the establishment of new schools may also necessitate the need for new provision. Where new schools are developed, there is an opportunity to combine the building of the school to the development of a new multi-sport site that will be of a benefit to the school as well as the wider community.

For housing developments, as outlined in Recommendation (g), Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator can be used as a guide to inform requirements. As the new District Plan emergers, the Council can use Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator to explore the pitch requirements of housing growth scenarios.

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PART 6: ACTION PLAN

The site-by-site action plan seeks to address key issues identified in the preceding Assessment Report. It provides recommendations based on current levels of usage, quality and future demand, as well as the potential of each site for enhancement. It is organised by Analysis Area and includes information pertaining to the sub sections below.

Site hierarchy

The Council should make it a high priority to work with NGBs and other partners to comprise a priority list of actions based on local priorities, NGB priorities and available funding. As stated in Recommendation (e), to allow for facility developments to be programmed within a phased approach, the Council should adopt a tiered approach to the management and improvement of playing pitch sites and associated facilities.

The identification of sites is based on their strategic importance in a regional context i.e., they accommodate the majority of demand, or the recommended action has the greatest impact on addressing shortfalls identified either on a sport-by-sport basis or across the Council area as a whole.

Table 6.1: Proposed tiered site criteria

Criteria	Hub sites	Key centres	Local sites
Site location	Strategically located in the District. Priority sites for NGBs.	Strategically located within the analysis area.	Services the local community.
Site layout	Accommodates three or more grass pitches, generally including provision of an AGP (or with the potential).	Accommodates two or more grass pitches.	Accommodates one or two pitches.
Type of sport	Multi-sport provision. Could also operate as a central venue.	Single or multi-sport provision.	Generally single sport provision but may cater for two.
Management	Management control allows for wide community use, i.e., through the local authority, a leisure operator or a school with a community use agreement.	Management control generally allows for wide community use but may include sites that are owned or leased by clubs/other organisations.	Management control can be via the local authority, schools, clubs and other providers such as town or parish councils
Maintenance regime	Maintenance regime aligns or could align with NGB guidelines.	Maintenance regime aligns or could align with NGB guidelines.	Standard maintenance regime or an in-house maintenance contract.
Ancillary facilities	Good quality ancillary facilities on site (or potential), with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches; may include wider social/function facilities.	Good quality ancillary facility on site (or potential), with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches.	Limited or no changing room access on site.

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Hub sites are of district wide importance where users are willing to travel to access the range and high quality of facilities offered and are likely to be multi-sport.
These have been identified on the basis of the impact that the site will have on addressing the issues identified in the assessment.

Key centres are more community focused, although some are still likely to service a wider analysis area (or slightly wider); however, there may be more of a focus on a specific sport i.e., a dedicated site.

It is considered that some financial investment may be necessary to improve the facilities at both hub sites and key sites. This could be to improve the provision, create additional provision (e.g., a 3G pitch) or to enhance the ancillary facilities in terms of access, flexibility (i.e., single-sex changing if necessary) and quality as well as ensuring that they meet the rules and regulations of local competitions.

Local sites refer to those sites offering minimal provision or that are of minimal value to the wider community. Primarily they are sites with one pitch/facility or a low number of pitches/facilities that service just one or two sports (e.g., bowling green sites).

For local sites, consideration should be given, on a site-by-site basis, to the feasibility of a club taking on a long-term lease (if not already present), in order that external funding can be sought. Such sites will require some level of investment, either to the outdoor sport facilities or ancillary facilities and is it anticipated that one of the conditions of offering a hire/lease is that the Club would be in a position to source external funding to improve/extend the provision.

Other sites considered in this tier may be primary school sites or secondary school sites that are not widely used by the community or that do not offer community availability.

Partners

The column indicating partners in the Action Plans below refers to the main organisations that the Council (or the relevant provider) would look to work with to support delivery of the actions.

Given the extent of potential actions, it is reasonable to assume that partners will not necessarily be able to support all the actions identified but where the action is a priority and resource is available the partner will endeavour to assist.

As all sites sit within the local authority area, the Council is considered to be a partner for each identified action (as the column indicates partners for the Council) and is therefore not included. However, it is acknowledged that it will take on more of a leading role for some specific sites and some specific actions (e.g., at council venues).

Priority

Although hub sites are mostly likely to have a **high** level actions, as they have wide importance, high priority sites have been identified on the basis of the impact that the site will have on addressing the key issues identified in the assessment. Therefore, some key centres and local sites are also identified as having a high priority level. It is these projects/sites which should generally, if possible, be addressed within the short term (1-2 years).

The majority of key centres have **medium** priority actions. These have analysis area importance and are identified on the basis of the impact that they will have on addressing the issues identified in the assessment, although not to the same extent as high priority actions.

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The **low** priority actions tend to be for single pitch or single sport sites and often club or education sites with local specific importance but that may also contribute to addressing the issues identified in the assessment for specific users. Whilst low priority, there may be opportunities to action some of the recommendations made against such sites relatively quickly e.g., through S106 funding.

Costs

The strategic actions have also been ranked as low, medium, or high based on cost. The brackets are:

- ◄ (L) - Low - less than £150k.
- ◄ (M) - Medium - £150k-£750k.
- ◄ (H) - High £750k and above.

These are based on Sport England's estimated facility costs which can be found at: [Facility cost guidance | Sport England](#)

Timescales

The Action Plan has been created to be delivered over a ten-year period and the information within the Assessment Report, Strategy and Action Plan will require updating as developments occur. The indicative timescales relate to delivery times and are not priority based:

- ◄ (S) -Short (1-2 years).
- ◄ (M) - Medium (3-5 years).
- ◄ (L) - Long (6+ years).

Aim

Each action seeks to meet at least one of the three Sport England aims of the Strategy; **Enhance, Provide, Protect.**

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HIGH PRIORITY SPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Analysis area	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
Bishop's Stortford	Avanti Grange Secondary School	Football	Education	The site has new football pitches that have recently been fitted but cannot be accessed as it requires a footbridge to be built over the A120. BSC FC is one of the largest clubs in the Authority and is wanting to access the provision once the pitches become accessible.	Progress the build of a footbridge over the A120 to enable community use.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	H	M	M	Protect Provide
Bishop's Stortford	Bishop's Stortford College	AGP	Education	Two hockey suitable sand filled AGPs, one standard and one poor open for community use. The poor-quality pitch is used by Bishop's Stortford HC on Sundays for master's and mixed training. The school confirms that there is a sink fund in place to resurface both pitches when required.	Both pitches will need resurfacing within the lifespan of the PPOSS. As the second pitch is used by Bishop's Stortford HC and is now 13 years old, the pitch should be resurfaced to improve its quality and allow the Club to continue accessing the site.	The School, EH,	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect Enhance
Bishop's Stortford	Bishops Stortford RFC	Rugby Union	Sports Club	Four senior pitches, two of which are rated good and two standard. The Club has recently built foundations for new changing rooms that will be meet RFU specification. It confirms that storage space is an issue despite having eight storage containers, parking is also an issue. It wishes to add solar panels and has applied for airport funding.	Support the Club in developing new changing rooms at the site. To help manage training demand on its pitches it could be suggested that the Club moves some training demand to the new WR compliant 3G pitch at The Bishop's Stortford High School.	Sports Club, RFU	Key Centre	H	S	L	Protect Enhance Provide
Bishop's Stortford	Friedberg Playing Fields	Football	Sport Club	One youth 11v11, one 9v9, one 7v7 and one 5v5. All pitches are currently poor quality. The site is maintained by BSC FC which has a seven-year lease for the clubhouse and a license agreement to access the pitches until 2027. It is considering grass pitch maintenance funding to improve the quality of the pitches. It confirms that the site does have three changing rooms with no showers. It is hesitant to invest any more into the site as it does not own it and feel un easy after having access removed from Albury Football Ground.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to reduce overplay. Suggest that the Club uses PitchPower and accesses GPMF to improve pitch quality. Explore refurbishing existing changing rooms to include self-contained showers to promote women's and girls' game. Support the Club is accessing new provision within the town to allow the Club to better accommodate its high demand.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	H	M	M	Protect Enhance
Bishop's Stortford	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	AGP	Education	One good hockey suitable AGP that was installed in 2019 which hosts Bishop's Stortford HC which use the pitch at capacity at weekends. The site has good ancillary provision alongside the pitch. Bishop's Stortford HC states it would like a second sand dressed AGP at the site bordering the existing pitch.	Ensure there is an adequate sinking fund in place to replace the carpet when required. Stakeholders to organise a feasibility study to discuss the logistics of a second AGP at the site.	The School, EH,	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Analysis area	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
Bishop's Stortford	Hoggates Park	Football	Bishop's Stortford Town Council	The Bishop's Stortford North development will add one new adult football pitch (Hoggates Park stadia pitch) that is designed to meet ground grading regulations for Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC.	Once the pitch is installed grant access to the site for Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC. Explore the possibility to develop a stadia 11v11 3G pitch at the site as a means of supporting the 3G training need in the Analysis Area.	Town Council, FA, FF	Local site	H	M	H	Provide
Bishop's Stortford	RDA Stadium	Football	Sport Club	One good adult pitch with good ancillary facilities accessed by Bishop's Stortford FC which currently play in the Southern League Premier Division Central which is Step 3. The Club has a planning application to develop eight padel courts at the site.	Protect for non-league football. Support the Club in developing padel provision as a means of reducing the shortfall of padel courts in the Authority.	Sports Club, HFA, FF, LTA	Hub site	H	M	H	Protect Provide
Bishop's Stortford	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	Cricket	Sport Club/Association	Three cricket squares one of which has an accompanying NTP. The first two squares are good quality and the third is a junior square which is standard. The site is used by Bishop's Stortford CC which has planning permission to rebuild the clubhouse and is fundraising for the project. The current ancillary provision is of a good quality and services cricket, tennis, football and squash.	Sustain good quality squares and improve quality of the new junior square to reduce overplay. Look to support the Club in enhancing its clubhouse to benefit Bishop's Stortford CC, Bishop's Stortford LTC, BSC FC and Chantry Squash and Racketball Club.	The Sports Club/Association, HCCC	Hub site	H	M	L	Protect Enhance
Buntingford	Aston Tennis Courts	Tennis	Sports Club	Two good non-sports lit macadam courts available for community use and accessed by Aston Tennis Club. The Club is operating 43 members over the LTA capacity guidelines. The Club has expressed ambitions for sports lighting on its courts which if fitted would position the Club only three members over capacity.	Protect for community use. The stakeholder group should install sports lighting to the courts to improve the capacity balance.	Sports Club, LTA	Local site	H	M	M	Protect Enhance
Buntingford	Datchworth Sports Club	Rugby Union	Sports Club	Three senior pitches, one of good quality, one of standard quality and one of poor quality. Datchworth RFC is currently fundraising to refurbish its clubhouse and ancillary offering as it has had planning permission granted.	Improve poor quality pitch through an enhanced maintenance regime. Work with partners to help with the development of a new ancillary provision.	Sports Club, RFU	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect Enhance
Buntingford	Datchworth Sports Club	Cricket	Sports Club	Two grass cricket squares, one rated poor and the other standard which also has an accompanying NTP. Site has no actual spare capacity. Datchworth CC is currently fundraising to refurbish its clubhouse and ancillary offering as it has had planning permission granted.	Work with partners to help with the development of a new ancillary provision.	Sports Club, HCCC	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect Enhance
Buntingford	London Road Playing Fields	Football	Sport Club	One poor quality 9v9 pitch with no accompanying ancillary facilities. Buntingford Cougars FC is concerned the land will be sold and they will lose the pitch.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime. Work with stakeholders to protect pitch. If the pitch is lost ensure appropriate mitigation is provided in a suitable location.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Local site	H	M	L	Protect

Analysis area	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
Buntingford	The Bury	Football	Sport Club	One adult pitch, one 7v7 and two 5v5 pitches all rated standard. The site is accessed by both Buntingford Town and Buntingford Cougars. Club consultation confirms good quality ancillary provision on site with self-contained showers and toilets. The site is identified in the LFFP for an 11v11 3G pitch.	Sustain pitch quality. Given the current ancillary provision it is an ideal site to promote and grow the women's and girls' game. Look to develop an 11v11 3G pitch as to reduce the shortfalls in the Buntingford Analysis Area.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect Provide
Hertford, Ware	County Hall	Football	Hertfordshire County Council	The site formerly provided four grass football pitches.	The steering group should look to reinstate the provision. If the site is lost the steering group should look to source funds for mitigation in line with NPPF.	The Council HCCC	Local site	H	M	M	Provide
Hertford, Ware	County Hall	Cricket	Hertfordshire County Council	The site formerly provided a grass cricket square and NTP.	The steering group should look to reinstate the provision. If the site is lost the steering group should look to source funds for mitigation in line with NPPF.	The Council HCCC	Local site	H	M	M	Provide
Hertford, Ware	Hartham Leisure Centre	3G	Everyone Active	Two poor small sided 3G pitches. Everyone Active are considering converting these pitches to padel courts and has a planning application in place to convert the provision.	Given the lack of usage and current state of pitches it may be beneficial for the area to explore conversion to padel with stakeholders. Given the shortfalls of 3G provision in the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area off site contributions towards an 11v11 3G pitch should be considered if the pitch is converted into padel courts.	Everyone Active, EH Council, HFA, FF	Key Centre	H	M	H	Provide
Hertford, Ware	Hartham Leisure Centre	Tennis	Everyone Active	One poor macadam court with sports lighting and community use.	Given the lack of usage and current state of pitches it may be beneficial for the area to explore conversion to padel with stakeholders.	Everyone Active, EH Council, LTA	Key Centre	H	M	H	Provide
Hertford, Ware	Hertford Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	Two squares, one rated good and one standard, the latter having an NTP accompanying it. The Club shares ancillary provision with Hertford HC which states it would like to refurbish the changing rooms. The Club is in need of a new roller as its current roller is over 50 years old. The second square is of a standard quality and is overplayed.	Improve the quality of the second square to reduce overplay. Explore funding options to refurbish changing rooms that need it. Look to provide the Club with a new roller.	Sports Club, HCCC	Local site	H	M	M	Protect Enhance
Hertford, Ware	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Rugby Union	Sports Club	Five standard senior pitches two of which are sports lit. The Club does have portable sports lighting which it uses in its training area. It is has had planning permission granted to refurbish its clubhouse.	Sustain pitch quality. Explore adding sports lighting to another pitch to help spread training demand better and reduce overplay. Support the Club in developing a new ancillary provision.	Sports Club, RFU	Key Centre	H	S	L	Protect Provide
Hertford, Ware	Richard Hale School	3G	Education	One standard 11v11 3G pitch installed in 2017. Bury Rangers FC is looking to develop a classroom and kitchen at the site to deliver lessons for its youth	Ensure an adequate pitch replacement fund is in place to replace the carpet when required.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	H	M	H	Protect Provide

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Analysis area	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
				teams and provide the school with an additional space.	Support Bury Rangers FC in developing a new classroom to give the Club a space to deliver lessons.						
Hertford, Ware	Simon Balle School	AGP	Education	One poor hockey suitable sand filled AGP accessed for match play and training by Hertford HC. The pitch was last resurfaced in 2012. The school states it has a sink fund in place for the pitch.	The pitch needs to be resurfaced to ensure the future of the hockey Club which is already exporting demand to Welwyn Hatfield.	The School, EH	Local site	H	S	H	Protect Enhance
Hertford, Ware	The Chauncy School	Football	Education	One adult, one youth 11v11 and one 9v9, all of which are standard. Site is identified in the 2025 LFFP as a potential option for an 11v11 3G pitch.	Sustain pitch quality. Explore the possibility of developing an 11v11 3G pitch at the site as to reduce the analysis area shortfalls.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	H	M	H	Protect Provide
Hertford, Ware	The Sele School	Football	Education	Three youth 11v11, one of which is good and two standard, one 9v9 which is good, one 7v7 which is standard and one 5v5 which is good. Site is identified in the 2025 LFFP as a potential option for an 11v11 3G pitch.	Sustain pitch quality. Explore the possibility of developing an 11v11 3G pitch at the site as to reduce the analysis area shortfalls.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	H	M	H	Protect Provide
Hertford, Ware	Ware Youth Football Club	Football	Sports Club	Two poor adult, two standard 9v9, two poor 7v7 and two 5v5 one is poor and one is good. Site is identified in the 2025 LFFP as a potential option for an 11v11 3G pitch.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime. Explore the possibility of developing an 11v11 3G pitch at the site as to reduce the analysis area shortfalls.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect Provide
Hertford, Ware	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Athletics	Private	One standard eight lane 400m athletics track. It is sports lit and is open for community use. The sports lighting covers both track and field events. The track could benefit from minor repairs and cleaning before reaccreditation, however, will likely need respraying in 2026.	Ensure a sinking fund is in place for the repairs and respraying of the track.	Organisation, EA	Key Centre	H	M	M	Protect Enhance
Sawbridgeworth	Bullfields	Football	Sawbridgeworth Town Council	One poor adult pitch and one poor youth 11v11. Site is accessed by Sawbridgeworth Town FC and has actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to create actual spare capacity.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local Site	H	S	L	Protect Enhance
Sawbridgeworth	Town Fields	Cricket	Sport Club	One standard square and outfield that is accessed by Sawbridgeworth CC. The Club is seeking to refurbish its clubhouse to make it more inclusive for women's and girls' as well as space for umpires. This plan would also include a patio for socialising. It also raises that ball striking is an issue at its site.	Support the Club in developing new changing rooms at the site and erecting a ball stopping fence.	Sports Club, HCCC	Key Centre	H	M	M	Protect Enhance Provide
Watton-at-Stone	Bramfield Playing Field	Cricket	Bramfield Parish Council	One poor quality square that is accessed by Bramfield CC. Site is overplayed due to the poor-quality square.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to reduce overplay.	The Council, HCCC	Local Site	H	M	L	Protect Enhance
Watton-at-Stone	Tewin Recreation Ground	Tennis	Tewin Parish Council	Two good non-sports lit artificial turf tennis courts with community use. Site is accessed by Tewin Tennis Club and is the most overcapacity tennis site in the Authority.	Sustain court quality. Install sports lights to improve the club's capacity balance.	The Council, LTA	Key Centre	H	M	M	Protect Provide

Analysis area	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
Watton-at-Stone	New site - Watton at Stone YFC	Football Padel	Sports Club	Watton at Stone YFC wants to build a new multi-sport site in the South East of the town. The main purpose is to obtain a small sided 3G pitch, however, it states a wish for a multi-sport site that could include grass pitches, padel as well as walking trails and ancillary provision. It currently has 19 teams and there is a shortfall of 3G pitches in the Watton-at-Stone Analysis Area.	The steering group should look to deliver new grass pitches, small sided 3G and ancillary provision to support Watton at Stone YFC. Considerations should also be made to install other sports or walking provision.	Sports Club, HFA, FF, LTA	Key Centre	H	H	H	Provide Enhance
-	New site	AGP	Local Authority	The East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Stevenage 2025 Playing Pitch Strategies have identified the need for a new AGP.	Work with the necessary stakeholders to develop a new AGP to support the need across East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Stevenage. If possible this should be in a location to allow it to service demand from all three Authorities, such as the Buntingford Analysis Area.	Local Authority EH, SE, NHDC, SBC	Key Centre	H	L	H	Provide

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

BISHOP'S STORTFORD ANALYSIS AREA

Summary pitch sports (Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area)

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES [1]	Future capacity total in MES (2043)[13]
Football (grass)	Bishop's Stortford	Adult	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 1
Football (grass)	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 2.5	Shortfall of 3
Football (grass)	Bishop's Stortford	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 5
Football (grass)	Bishop's Stortford	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall of 2.5
Football (grass)	Bishop's Stortford	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Adult	Spare capacity of 2.5	At capacity
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 5
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 11	Shortfall of 14
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 0.5	Shortfall of 3
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Mini 5v5	At capacity	Shortfall of 2
Football (3G)	Bishop's Stortford	11v11	Shortfall of 0.25	Shortfall of 0.25
Football (3G)	East Hertfordshire	11v11	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 4.75
Cricket	Bishop's Stortford	Saturday	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Cricket	Bishop's Stortford	Sunday	Spare capacity of 13	Spare capacity of 13
Cricket	Bishop's Stortford	Midweek	Spare capacity of 43	Spare capacity of 37
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Saturday	Shortfall of 29	Shortfall of 41
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Sunday	Spare capacity of 67	Spare capacity of 67
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Midweek	Spare capacity of 175	Spare capacity of 163
Rugby union	Bishop's Stortford	Senior	Shortfall of 11.25	Shortall of 11.75
Rugby union	East Hertfordshire	Senior	Shortfall of 20.75	Shortall of 21.75
Rugby league	East Hertfordshire	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	East Hertfordshire	Full size, floodlit	An insufficient supply to meet current demand	With the AGPs provided at the Simon Balle School and Bishop's Stortford College having surpassed end of life, there is the need to provide a pitch replacement at each site in order to accommodate existing and future hockey demand.

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[13] Future demand (2043) is determined via ONS forecasts and club aspirations identified in PPS Assessment Report (2025).

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Summary non-pitch sports

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	Braughing Tennis Club and Bishop's Stortford LTC are both currently operating within the guidelines. Bishop's Stortford LTC also has access to two padel courts at The Bishop's Stortford Sports Trust that were installed in 2024 and are already nearing capacity with space for only another 30 members. Castle Park Tennis Courts have had recent investment, coupled with other community accessible courts there is a good level of supply in the Analysis Area.	Braughing Tennis Club will be three members over the guidelines should it meet future demand ambitions. Bishop's Stortford LTC has no future demand ambitions and would still have 200 spaces for new members. New padel courts will need to be installed in the Analysis Area to keep up with the fast growing demand in the area.
Netball	There are 28 community accessible courts in the Analysis Area. Herts & Essex Sports Centre is currently the home of the Bishop's Stortford District Netball League with six sport lit courts. New provision will be available for community use at the new Avanti Grange School.	The analysis area has the most amount of community accessible courts throughout the District with ample scope for growth.
Lawn Bowls	Havers Park Bowls Club represents the only bowls club in Bishop's Stortford Analysis Area, playing at a standard rated green. It leases the green from the Sawbridgeworth Masons and is in perpetuity until it is no longer used for bowling. Therefore, the Club do not pay anything towards the use of the land. It is currently within the capacity guidelines with spare capacity for another 28 members.	If the Club realises its growth ambitions, it will still have a spare capacity for 21 new members.
Athletics	There is currently one, four lane, 40 metre compact track at Hockerill Anglo-European College with associated long/triple jump runways/pit, High Jump fan and throws circle. Bishop's Stortford Running Club has a large membership with over 300 including triathlon, junior run and junior tri sub-sections. It also offers swimming and biking sessions to continue improving its triathlon section.	The current supply of athletics facilities is sufficient to meet future demand in the analysis area.
Golf	The Bishop's Stortford Golf Club is the only golf club in the Analysis Area. It offers an 18-hole course and a 10-bay driving range as well as good ancillary facilities for its members. The club is currently operating a waiting list suggesting unmet demand for the Analysis Area meaning those without a membership at the Club will have to travel to other analysis areas in the District.	If demand continues to grow in Bishop's Stortford, it will have to be exported to clubs outside of the Analysis Area to be accommodated as Bishop's Stortford Golf Club is currently operating a waiting list.
Water sports	Whoosh Explore Canoe Club (WECC) and Bishop's Stortford Canoe Club (BSCC) both use the River Stort for canoeing	The analysis area is well provided for in terms of water sports for future growth.

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations
Football	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Reintroduce community access at Albury Football Ground. ◄ Improve pitch quality especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Bishop's Stortford College, Friedburg Playing Fields, Herts & Essex Sports Centre and Pearce House Playing Fields. ◄ Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs if appropriate. ◄ Enable use of currently unavailable sites e.g., at school sites such as Manor Fields Primary School and Hillmead primary School through the use of a community use agreement. ◄ Look to improve the ancillary provision at relevant sites such as Friedburg Playing Fields. ◄ Support Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC with the clubs plans to relocate to a new site at Hoggates Park. ◄ Support Bishop's Stortford Community YFC in operating from a new site in addition to Friedberg Playing Fields to support the large amount of demand within the Club. ◄ Ensure clubs are made aware of two new primary schools sites with community use agreements with new grass pitches.
3G pitches	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Ensure the existing pitches at Birchwood High School and Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre both have sinking funds in place. ◄ Ensure both pitches at Birchwood High School and Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre remain on the FA register to host competitive matches. ◄ Ensure all future pitches have a sinking fund in place. ◄ Ensure all future pitches look to be placed on the FA register to host competitive matches. ◄ Consider installing additional provision to ensure adequate capacity for future demand and reduce the shortfall across East Hertfordshire. ◄ Support the building of the new 3G WR complaint pitch at Bishop's Stortford High School and ensure clubs are signposted to it.
Cricket	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Utilise spare capacity at Braughing Playing Fields, Thorley CC and Stocking Pelham CC. ◄ Sustain good and standard quality pitches across the Analysis Area. ◄ Support clubs which need assistance with development plans or replacing sight screens and covers, such as Braughing Playing Fields. ◄ Support Bishop's Stortford CC in fundraising for its new clubhouse build.
Rugby union	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Improve quality of existing provision. ◄ Support Bishop's Stortford RFC in the building of its new ancillary provision. ◄ Support building of a new footbridge to access new provision at Avanti Grange Secondary School. ◄ Review the future use of Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC's current site to potentially convert the adult pitch into a senior rugby union pitch.
Rugby league	◄ No action required.
Hockey	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Ensure there is an adequate sinking fund in place to replace the pitches when required. ◄ The two pitches at Bishop's Stortford College need to be resurfaced within the lifespan of the PPOSS. ◄ Support Hockerill Anglo-European College in refurbishing its changing rooms to allow Bishop's Stortford HC to continue using the site for hockey. ◄ Explore new pitch access for Bishop's Stortford HC to allow the Club to continue growing. An initial suggestion would be to search for AGPs with no

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Sport	Priority recommendations
	current access for community use on Saturdays to open up to the clubs to create spare capacity, such as the pitch at Hockerill Anglo-European College.
Bowls	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Sustain quality of existing provision at Havers Park Bowls Club.
Tennis/padel	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Monitor the membership levels of Braughing Tennis Club and support the Club with its growth plans. ◄ Look to build new padel provision in the Analysis Area to support the rapid growth of the sport. A potentially viable site to consider is RDA Stadium given the planning application placed by Bishop's Stortford FC to develop padel courts at the site.
Netball	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Monitor levels of demand with the Bishop's Stortford District Netball League taking place at Herts & Essex Sports Centre.
Athletics	◄ Protect provision.
Golf	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Signpost would be golfers to other nearby courses.
Water sports	◄ Protect provision.

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

BISHOP'S STORTFORD ANALYSIS AREA

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
1	Albury Football Ground	Football	Albury Parish Council	One adult pitch and one 7v7 pitch, both standard quality. Was used by BSC FC, however, Albury Parish Council removed the Clubs access mid-season due to noise complaints from local residents. It had invested a lot into this site to improve pitch and ancillary quality.	Work with the local council to reinstate the football pitches to increase the total supply of provision in the Authority.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local site	M	M	M	Provide
1	Albury Football Ground	Cricket	Albury Parish Council	Site formerly provided a grass wicket square.	Explore reinstating a cricket square to the site to increase the total number of squares in the Authority as to better support demand for cricket.	The Council, HCCC, ECB	Local site	M	M	M	Provide
2	All Saints CE Primary School	Netball	Education	One poor shale court with no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
10	Avanti Meadows Primary School	Netball	Education	One poor shale court with community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
10	Avanti Meadows Primary School	Football	Education	A new primary school built which will have football pitches available for community use for the 25/26 season.	Protect for community use.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
15	Birchwood High School	Netball	Education	Six standard shale non sports lit courts available for community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
15	Birchwood High School	Rugby Union	Education	Four poor senior pitches with no community use as the School protects them for school use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, RFU	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
15	Birchwood High School	Cricket	Education	One disused standalone NTP.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, HCCC	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
15	Birchwood High School	3G	Education	One 11v11 sports lit 3G pitch of a standard quality which was last resurfaced in 2017.	Ensure there is an adequate sinking fund in place as the carpet is nearing the end of its lifespan in 2027.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	M	S	H	Protect Enhance
16	Bishop's Stortford College	AGP	Education	Two hockey suitable sand filled AGPs, one standard and one poor open for community use. The poor-quality pitch is used by Bishop's Stortford HC on Sundays for master's and mixed training. The school confirms that there is a sink fund in place to resurface both pitches when required.	Both pitches will need resurfacing within the lifespan of the PPOSS. As the second pitch is used by Bishop's Stortford HC and is now 13 years old, the pitch should be resurfaced to improve its quality and allow the Club to continue accessing the site.	The School, EH,	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect Enhance
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Cricket	Education	Eight good quality squares with good outfields with community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, HCCC	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Tennis	Education	Eight good macadam courts, four of which are sports lit which are available to community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, LTA	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Netball	Education	One shale and eight macadam courts, all rated good, four of which are sports lit. All are available for community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Football	Education	One adult pitch, one youth 11v11, two 9v9 and three 7v7 pitches all poor quality. Pitches are open to community use and used by BSC FC on a Sunday.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime. Undertake a PitchPower report assessment of the site to then consider Grass Pitch Maintenance Funding to improve the provision.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
16	Bishop's Stortford College	Rugby Union	Education	Six senior pitches and 13 junior pitches, all of which are poor.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to enable spare capacity.	The School, RFU	Key Centre	M	M	L	Protect Enhance

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
18	Bishops Stortford RFC	Rugby Union	Sports Club	Four senior pitches, two of which are rated good and two standard. The Club has recently built foundations for new changing rooms that will be meet RFU specification. It confirms that storage space is an issue despite having eight storage containers, parking is also an issue. It wishes to add solar panels and has applied for airport funding.	Support the Club in developing new changing rooms at the site. To help manage training demand on its pitches it could be suggested that the Club moves some training demand to the new WR compliant 3G pitch at The Bishop's Stortford High School.	Sports Club, RFU	Key Centre	H	S	L	Protect Enhance Provide
20	Bishops Stortford Swifts FC	Football	Sport Club	One standard adult pitch, one poor youth 11v11 and two 7v7 pitches, one good and one poor. The Club shares the site with Bishop's Stortford RFC. The Football Club is gaining a new grass stadia pitch located at a new site, Hoggates Park.	Improve poor pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime. Support Bishops Stortford Swifts FC in its relocation to Hoggates Park. Following this relocation, review the future use of this site and its role in either accommodating demand from Bishops Stortford Swifts FC or being converted to a rugby union pitch for Bishops Stortford RFC.	Sports Club, HFA, FF, RFU	Key Centre	M	M	L	Protect Provide
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Tennis	Braughing Parish Council	Two good sports lit macadam courts available for community use. The site is currently operating within the capacity guidelines, however, should future ambitions be realised they will be over.	Protect for community use. Monitor capacity levels and ensure the Club can sustain membership.	The School, LTA	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Football	Braughing Parish Council	Two poor 7v7 pitches with standard rated ancillary provision. The pitches have no actual spare capacity due to being accessed already at peak times and being poor quality.	Improve poor pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	Sports Club, the Council, HFA, FF	Local site	L	M	L	Protect
22	Braughing Playing Fields	Cricket	Braughing Parish Council	One standard quality square with a standard outfield with actual spare capacity Saturday, Sunday and midweek. The Club confirms that ballstriking is an issue and has ambitions to erect a fence. It also states using sheets as it does not have any covers however, these need replacing.	Utilise spare capacity. Club needs to explore funding options with stakeholders to erect a fence and obtain new covers.	The Council, HCCC	Local site	L	M	L	Protect Enhance
24	Brewery Field	Football	Furneux Pelham Parish Council	One poor adult pitch with community use and no accompanying ancillary provision. The pitch has no spare capacity as it is already accessed during peak times	Improve poor pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	Sports Club, the Council, HFA, FF	Local site	L	M	L	Protect
28	Castle Park Tennis Courts	Tennis	Sport Club	Three good non sports lit courts available for community use.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, LTA, EH Council	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
41	Friedberg Playing Fields	Football	Sport Club	One youth 11v11, one 9v9, one 7v7 and one 5v5. All pitches are currently poor quality. The site is maintained by BSC FC which has a seven-year lease for the clubhouse and a license agreement to access the pitches until 2027. It is considering grass pitch maintenance funding to improve the quality of the pitches. It confirms that the site does have three changing rooms with no showers. It is hesitant to invest any more into the site as it does not own it and feel un easy after having access removed from Albury Football Ground.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to reduce overplay. Suggest that the Club uses PitchPower and accesses GPMF to improve pitch quality. Explore refurbishing existing changing rooms to include self-contained showers to promote women's and girls' game. Support the Club is accessing new provision within the town to allow the Club to better accommodate its high demand.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	H	M	M	Protect Enhance

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	Football	Everyone Active	Five standard adult pitches, two poor youth 11v11 and two poor 7v7 pitches. Site is on a flood plain and is also open access so gets a lot of dog walkers and recreational use.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to enable spare capacity. Potentially think about adding better drainage to counteract the fact the site is on a floodplain.	Sports Club, EA, EH Council, HFA, FF	Hub site	M	M	M	Protect Enhance
42	Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre	3G	Everyone Active	One 11v11 sports lit 3G pitch of a good quality which was installed in 2022. It is accompanied by good quality ancillary provision. It is not used to capacity at weekends as the site has limited parking and prioritises swimming pool users.	Utilise the spare capacity at the weekend to best support football demand and maximise revenue. Ensure a sinking fund is in place for carpet replacements when required.	EA, EH Council, HFA, FF	Hub site	M	S	L	Protect
45	Havers Park Bowls Club	Bowls	Sport Club	One standard flat green available for community use currently accessed by Havers Park Bowls Club. The site is currently operating within the capacity guidelines and will continue to do so should it be successful in recruiting new members.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, BE	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
53	Hertfordshire And Essex High School	Netball	Education	Three standard shale non sports lit courts not available for community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	Tennis	Education	Six standard sports lit shale courts available for community use. Overmarked with netball.	Protect for community use.	The School, LTA	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	Netball	Education	Six standard sports lit shale courts available for community use. Overmarked with tennis. The site is currently the home of the Bishop's Stortford District Netball League.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	AGP	Education	One good hockey suitable AGP that was installed in 2019 which hosts Bishop's Stortford HC which use the pitch at capacity at weekends. The site has good ancillary provision alongside the pitch. Bishop's Stortford HC states it would like a second sand dressed AGP at the site bordering the existing pitch.	Ensure there is an adequate sinking fund in place to replace the carpet when required. Stakeholders to organise a feasibility study to discuss the logistics of a second AGP at the site.	The School, EH,	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect
56	Herts & Essex Sports Centre	Football	Education	One poor youth 11v11 pitch which is overmarked with 9v9 and 5v5 pitches. The site has good ancillary provision alongside the pitch but is overplayed as it is poor quality and has a lot of demand.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to reduce overplay.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
58	Hockerill Anglo-European College	Rugby Union	Education	Two poor junior pitches with no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, RFU	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
58	Hockerill Anglo-European College	Cricket	Education	One standard standalone NTP with no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, HCCC	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
58	Hockerill Anglo-European College	Athletics	Education	A four lane synthetic, non sports lit 40m compact running track.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EA	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
58	Hockerill Anglo-European College	AGP	Education	One standard sand filled, hockey suitable AGP accessed by Bishop's Stortford HC. The School confirms its ancillary facilities are	Protect the pitch for community use. Support the school with enhancing its ancillary offering via refurbishment.	The School, EH,	Local site	M	M	M	Protect Enhance

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
				in major need of refurbishment, with floorboards giving in. It will need to stop allowing community access to the changing rooms if this is not addressed.	Look to grant access to the pitch on Saturdays as to give the Authority another useable pitch during the peak period.						
66	Manor Fields Primary School	Football	Education	Two standard 5v5 pitches. Accessed by Thorley Manor. The site has potential spare capacity of 5.5 MES across both pitches that has been discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Explore offering community use to more teams to utilise spare capacity.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
73	Northgate Primary School	Netball	Education	Two poor shale non sports lit courts not available for community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
77	RDA Stadium	Football	Sport Club	One good adult pitch with good ancillary facilities accessed by Bishop's Stortford FC which currently play in the Southern League Premier Division Central which is Step 3. The Club has a planning application to develop eight padel courts at the site.	Protect for non-league football. Support the Club in developing padel provision as a means of reducing the shortfall of padel courts in the Authority.	Sports Club, HFA, FF, LTA	Hub site	H	M	H	Protect Provide
81	Saint Mary's Catholic School	Tennis	Education	Six poor shale non sports lit courts not available for community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, LTA	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
81	Saint Mary's Catholic School	Football	Education	Two standard 5v5 pitches with no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
91	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	Netball	Education	Two poor shale non sports lit courts not available for community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
91	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	Football	Education	One standard 7v7 pitch with community use. The school pitch has actual spare capacity of 1 MES as it has a community use agreement in place.	Suggest actual spare capacity is utilised.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	M	S	L	Protect
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Netball	Education	Three good shale courts which are not sports lit but are open for community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Tennis	Education	Four good shale courts which are not sports lit but are open for community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, LTA	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Football	Education	One adult, one youth 11v11 and one 9v9 pitch, all of which are standard. The School will be getting a new 11v11 WR 3G pitch that will be ready for the 25/26 season. The site is outlined to be accessed by Harlow RFC and Saracens RFC and will therefore contribute 0.75 of a pitch towards the 1:38 model.	Suggest actual spare capacity is utilised. Utilise the 11v11 3G pitch to support the football training need.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	H	Protect
101	The Bishop's Stortford High School	Rugby Union	Education	One standard junior pitch. The School will be getting a new WR 3G pitch that will be ready for the 25/26 season. The site is outlined to be accessed by Harlow RFC and Saracens RFC and will therefore contribute 0.75 of a pitch towards the 1:38 model.	Utilise spare capacity. Utilise the WR 3G pitch to support the rugby union training need.	The School, RFU	Key Centre	M	S	H	Protect
103	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	Tennis Padel	Sport Club/Association	Two good clay courts, five good artificial turf courts, three macadam courts and six standard grass courts. All of the courts are sports lit other than the grass courts. The site also has two good padel courts that were installed in 2024. The site is accessed by Bishop's Stortford LTC which is operating within the LTA capacity guidelines.	Protect for community use. Look to support the Club in enhancing its clubhouse to benefit Bishop's Stortford CC, Bishop's Stortford LTC and BSC FC.	Sports Club, the Association, LTA	Hub site	M	S	L	Protect Enhance

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Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
				The Club has 120 padel members and states once it reaches 150 members it will be at capacity. The Club uses both the main clubhouse servicing the cricket square and its own building with a kitchen and social space.							
103	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	Football	Sport Club/Association	One standard youth 11v11 pitch which is accessed by BSC FC used at capacity. The site offers good ancillary provision, however, is fundraising to refurbish its clubhouse.	Protect for community use. Look to support the Club in enhancing its clubhouse to benefit Bishop's Stortford CC, Bishop's Stortford LTC and BSC FC.	Sports Club, the Association, HFA, FF	Hub site	M	S	L	Protect Enhance
103	The Bishops Stortford Sports Trust	Cricket	Sport Club/Association	Three cricket squares one of which has an accompanying NTP. The first two squares are good quality and the third is a junior square which is standard. The site is used by Bishop's Stortford CC which has planning permission to rebuild the clubhouse and is fundraising for the project. The current ancillary provision is of a good quality and services cricket, tennis, football and squash.	Sustain good quality squares and improve quality of the new junior square to reduce overplay. Look to support the Club in enhancing its clubhouse to benefit Bishop's Stortford CC, Bishop's Stortford LTC, BSC FC and Chantry Squash and Racketball Club.	The Sports Club/Association, HCCC	Hub site	H	M	L	Protect Enhance
109	Thorley Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One good cricket square with actual spare capacity Sunday and midweek. The site had a poor quality ancillary provision during the 2024 season. HCCC has confirmed that work has begun building a new clubhouse to service the site.	Utilise spare capacity. Support the Club in completing the development of its new clubhouse.	The School, HCCC	Local site	M	S	H	Protect Enhance Provide
124	Windhill 21 Primary School	Netball	Education	One poor shale court with no community use or sports lighting.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
136	Stocking Pelham Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard cricket square with actual spare capacity midweek.	Utilise spare capacity.	The School, HCCC	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
139	Pearce House Playing Fields	Football	Education	Two youth 9v9 pitches both poor quality. The site belongs to Birchwood High School and is accessed by BSC FC.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
142	Hillmead Primary School	Football	Education	One standard 5v5 pitch with community use which has potential spare capacity of three MES and is not currently accessed for affiliated demand. Spare capacity has been discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Has no current demand outside of school use. Suggest using spare capacity to reduce overplay at other sites.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
143	Richard Whittington Primary School	Football	Education	One standard 7v7 pitch with no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
165	Little Hadham Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	The site formerly provided a grass wicket square. Little Hadham CC now use Thorley Cricket Club for home games.	Explore reinstating a cricket square to the site to increase the total number of squares in the Authority as to better support demand for cricket.	The Council, HCCC, ECB	Local site	M	M	M	Provide
168	Avanti Grange Secondary School	Football	Education	The site has new football pitches that have recently been fitted but cannot be accessed as it requires a footbridge to be built over the A120. BSC FC is one of the largest clubs in the Authority and is wanting to access the provision once the pitches become accessible.	Progress the build of a footbridge over the A120 to enable community use.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	H	M	M	Protect Provide
168	Avanti Grange Secondary School	Tennis	Education	Four standard sports lit shale courts that are open for community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, LTA	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
168	Avanti Grange Secondary School	Netball	Education	Three standard shale sports lit courts available for community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
168	Avanti Grange Secondary School	Rugby Union	Education	One standard junior pitch. Newly built school with no community access to the pitches currently as a bridge needs building.	Build a footbridge over the A120 to enable community use.	The School, RFU	Key Centre	M	M	H	Protect Enhance
173	Bishop's Stortford Golf Club	Golf	Sports Club	The Club offers an 18 hole course, 10 bay driving range and a range of good ancillary facilities for its members.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, England Golf	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
-	Avanti Brook Primary School	Football	Education	A new primary school built which will have football pitches available for community use for the 25/26 season.	Protect for community use.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
-	River Stort	Water Sports	Lee Valley Regional Park Authority	Whoosh Explore Canoe Club (WECC) and Bishop's Stortford Canoe Club (BSCC) both use the River Stort for canoeing	Utilise to full capacity	Sports Club, Paddle UK	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
-	Hoggates Park	Football	Bishop's Stortford Town Council	The Bishop's Stortford North development will add one new adult football pitch (Hoggates Park stadia pitch) that is designed to meet ground grading regulations for Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC.	Once the pitch is installed grant access to the site for Bishop's Stortford Swifts FC. Explore the possibility to develop a stadia 11v11 3G pitch at the site as a means of supporting the 3G training need in the Analysis Area.	Town Council, FA, FF	Local site	H	M	H	Provide

BUNTINGFORD ANALYSIS AREA

Summary pitch sports (Buntingford Analysis Area)

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES[1]	Future capacity total in MES (2043)[14]
Football (grass)	Buntingford	Adult	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 2
Football (grass)	Buntingford	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 0.5
Football (grass)	Buntingford	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall of 2
Football (grass)	Buntingford	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 2.5	Spare capacity of 2
Football (grass)	Buntingford	Mini 5v5	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1.5
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Adult	Spare capacity of 2.5	At capacity
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 5
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 11	Shortfall of 14
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 0.5	Shortfall of 3
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Mini 5v5	At capacity	Shortfall of 2
Football (3G)	Buntingford	11v11	Shortfall of 1.25	Shortfall of 1.5
Football (3G)	East Hertfordshire	11v11	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 4.75
Cricket	Buntingford	Saturday	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 2
Cricket	Buntingford	Sunday	Spare capacity of 14	Spare capacity of 14
Cricket	Buntingford	Midweek	Spare capacity of 38	Spare capacity of 38
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Saturday	Shortfall of 29	Shortfall of 41
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Sunday	Spare capacity of 67	Spare capacity of 67
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Midweek	Spare capacity of 175	Spare capacity of 163
Rugby Union	Buntingford	Senior	Shortfall of 8.5	Shortfall of 8.5
Rugby Union	East Hertfordshire	Senior	Shortfall of 20.75	Shortall of 21.75
Rugby League	East Hertfordshire	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	East Hertfordshire	Full size, floodlit	An insufficient supply to meet current demand	With the AGPs provided at the Simon Balle School and Bishop's Stortford College having surpassed end of life, there is the need to provide a pitch

[1] MES – match equivalent sessions per week (per season for cricket)
[14] Future demand (2043) is determined via ONS forecasts and club aspirations identified in PPS Assessment Report (2025).

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES[1]	Future capacity total in MES (2043)[14]
				replacement at each site in order to accommodate existing and future hockey demand.

Summary non-pitch sports

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	Datchworth Tennis Club and Standon & Puckeridge LTC is currently operating within the capacity guidelines. Aston Tennis Club are currently 43 members over the recommended guidelines as it has two non sports lit courts. Both Datchworth Tennis Club and Aston Tennis Club have expressed demand for sports lighting on its courts.	If future demand ambitions from Datchworth Tennis Club and Standon & Puckeridge LTC, both clubs will still operate within the guidelines. If the aforementioned clubs were to obtain new sports lighting it would bring Aston Tennis Club closer to the recommended guidelines and give Datchworth Tennis Club scope to greatly increase its membership.
Netball	There are five courts available for community use and eight which are not. There are currently no leagues taking place in the analysis area suggesting demand is exported to other analysis areas.	The assessment suggests that there is a future need for improvements to the recreational supply and recreational access (aligned to England Netball participation schemes).
Bowls	There are four bowling greens in the Buntingford Analysis Area, three of which are good and one standard. Buntingford BC is currently operating well above the recommended Bowls England membership guidelines meaning there is no room for growth at the Club. Datchworth is also operating over the guidelines whilst Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green have spare capacity.	Across the analysis area there is a shortfall meaning growth is limited. This would see newcomers having to export to other areas.
Athletics	No provision exists in the analysis area. All demand is exported outside of the area.	Considerations should be made for the installation of play, mini, compact or active tracks as to provide the district with some form of athletics provision.
Golf	East Herts Golf Club represents the only course in the analysis area and offers an 18-hole course.	This is a sufficient supply for the analysis area to accommodate future demand.

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations
Football	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Work with Buntingford Cougars and landowners to protect the pitch at London Road Playing Fields or to mitigate the loss. ◄ Improve pitch quality especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as London Road Playing Fields, Ware Lions FC (Thundridge) and Walkern Sports & Community Centre. ◄ Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs if appropriate, Thundridge sports Ground currently has no teams accessing it for formal demand and could be offered to a club.

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Sport	Priority recommendations
	◄ Improve changing and other facilities where required, such as the ancillary provision at Thundridge Sports Ground. ◄ Look to obtain more formal community use agreements for Watton YFC which are currently nomadic and access several sites in the analysis area, such as Aston Playing Field and Aston St Mary's VA School. ◄ Explore more formal community use agreements at education sites to secure future use for football demand. ◄ Where possible look to develop new provision as a means of meeting the demand for football in the Analysis Area.
3G pitches	◄ Support the development of the new 11v11 3G pitch being installed at Freman College. ◄ Look to increase the number of 11v11 size 3G pitches as to address the current theoretical shortfall of 1.25 pitches, with The Bury as a potential suitable site. ◄ Explore option to install the small sided 3G pitch at Norfolk Road Playing Field, highlighted by Buntingford Town Council, should the steering group all agree. ◄ Ensure all future pitches have a sinking fund in place. ◄ Ensure all future pitches look to be placed on the FA register to host competitive matches. ◄ Given the size of the Analysis Area, consider accessing 3G provision in neighbouring analysis areas such as Watton-at-Stone and Hertford, Ware.
Cricket	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Utilise spare capacity at sites such as Thundridge Sports Ground, Walkern Sports & Community Centre and Freman College. ◄ Improve existing provision at Datchworth CC to enhance square quality and reduce overplay. ◄ Improve the ancillary provision of sites where necessary such as Aston CC. ◄ Support Datchworth CC with the fundraising of its new clubhouse build.
Rugby union	◄ Improve quality of existing provision, with Datchworth RFC and Datchworth Village hall outlined as the priority sites. ◄ Work with key stakeholders to help with fundraising ideas or other ways to support Datchworth RFC in the building of its new clubhouse.
Rugby league	◄ No action required.
Hockey	◄ Discuss potential conversion of small sided AGP to 3G at Norfolk Road Playing Fields with key stakeholders. ◄ Resurface the pitch at St Edmunds College & Prep School within the lifespan of the PPOSS. ◄ Explore opening the pitch at St Edmunds College & Prep School for community use
Bowls	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Sustain good and standard quality of existing provision. ◄ Ensure clubs such as Buntingford and Datchworth, with capacity issues manage access to its greens effectively. ◄ Utilise actual spare capacity at Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green.
Tennis	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Ensure clubs with capacity issues manage access to its courts effectively, with Aston Tennis Club as a key site which is operating over the LTA recommended guidelines currently. This will be exacerbated if Club ambitions are achieved. ◄ Discuss the conversion of Norfolk Road Playing Fields AGP to 3G as this would mean the loss of three tennis courts. ◄ Support Datchworth Tennis Club and Aston Tennis Club ambitions for the installation of sports lighting on its courts.
Netball	◄ Protect provision.
Athletics	◄ Considerations should be made for the installation of play, mini, compact or active tracks as to provide the district with some form of athletics provision.

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Sport	Priority recommendations
Golf	◀ Protect provision.

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BUNTINGFORD ANALYSIS AREA

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
5	Aston Bowls Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One good flat green with good ancillary facilities.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, BE	Local site	L	L	L	Protect
6	Aston Cricket Club (Herts)	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard rated square and outfield alongside poor ancillary facilities. Site has spare capacity for midweek cricket.	Utilise actual spare capacity.	Sports Club, HCCC	Local site	M	S	L	Protect
7	Aston Playing Field	Football	Aston Village Hall Committee	Two community available standard 7v7 pitches. One pitch has actual spare capacity of 0.5 MES The pitches are accessed by Watton YFC on a monthly rental basis.	Sustain pitch quality. Utilise spare capacity. Seek a more formal community use agreement.	Committee, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
8	Aston St Mary's VA School	Football	Education	Two poor 7v7 pitches available to community use. The pitches are accessed by Watton YFC on a monthly rental basis.	Sustain pitch quality. A formal security of tenure agreement should be sought with the Club to secure its use.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
8	Aston St Mary's VA School	Netball	Education	One poor shale court with no sports lighting or community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
9	Aston Tennis Courts	Tennis	Sports Club	Two good non-sports lit macadam courts available for community use and accessed by Aston Tennis Club. The Club is operating 43 members over the LTA capacity guidelines. The Club has expressed ambitions for sports lighting on its courts which if fitted would position the Club only three members over capacity.	Protect for community use. The stakeholder group should install sports lighting to the courts to improve the capacity balance.	Sports Club, LTA	Local site	H	M	M	Protect Enhance
14	Benington Recreation Ground	Football	Sport Club	One poor youth 11v11 and one poor 9v9 pitch.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
26	Buntingford Bowls Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One good flat green with good ancillary facilities. The green has no spare capacity as it is currently over by 81 members. It has no scope to grow and has no future demand ambitions.	Protect for community use. Monitor activity levels of club and ensure the green is continuing to cope with the level of demand it gets.	Sports Club, BE	Local site	L	L	L	Protect
31	Cottered Playing Field	Football	Cottered & Throcking Parish Council	One standard adult pitch and one standard youth 11v11 pitch.	Sustain pitch quality.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
31	Cottered Playing Field	Cricket	Cottered & Throcking Parish Council	Site formerly provided a grass wicket square and is now has two football pitches marked.	Explore reinstating a cricket square to the site to increase the total number of squares in the Authority as to better support demand for cricket.	The Council, HCCC, ECB	Local site	M	M	M	Provide
36	Datchworth All Saints C Of Primary School	Football	Education	Three standard 5v5 pitches open to community use and is accessed by Watton YFC. Actual spare capacity has been discounted across the pitches due to unsecure tenure.	Sustain pitch quality. Seek a formal community use agreement with the School to obtain actual spare capacity.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
36	Datchworth All Saints C Of Primary School	Netball	Education	One poor shale court with no sports lighting or community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
37	Datchworth Bowls Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One standard flat green with good ancillary facilities. The Club is currently operating over the recommended capacity guidelines by ten members and consequently, has no future demand ambitions.	Protect for community use. Monitor activity levels of club and ensure the green is continuing to cope with the level of demand it gets.	Sports Club, BE	Local site	L	L	L	Protect

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Cricket	Sports Club	Two grass cricket squares, one rated poor and the other standard which also has an accompanying NTP. Site has no actual spare capacity. Datchworth CC is currently fundraising to refurbish its clubhouse and ancillary offering as it has had planning permission granted.	Work with partners to help with the development of a new ancillary provision.	Sports Club, HCCC	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect Enhance
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Rugby Union	Sports Club	Three senior pitches, one of good quality, one of standard quality and one of poor quality. Datchworth RFC is currently fundraising to refurbish its clubhouse and ancillary offering as it has had planning permission granted.	Improve poor quality pitch through an enhanced maintenance regime. Work with partners to help with the development of a new ancillary provision.	Sports Club, RFU	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect Enhance
38	Datchworth Sports Club	Tennis	Sports Club	Two good macadam non sports lit courts with actual spare capacity for 34 new members currently and in the future should the Club realise growth ambitions. It would however, come close to the recommended guidelines. The Club has expressed a need for sports lighting on its courts.	Protect for community use. Explore the installation of sports lighting to improve the Clubs capacity for future growth.	Sports Club, LTA	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
39	Edwinstree C Of E Middle School	Cricket	Education	One standard standalone NTP with no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, HCCC	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
39	Edwinstree C Of E Middle School	Football	Education	One standard 9v9 pitch with community use. Spare capacity has been discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Sustain pitch quality.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
39	Edwinstree C Of E Middle School	Netball	Education	Three poor shale courts with no sports lighting or community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
40	Freman College	Cricket	Education	One standard grass square and outfield accessed by Reed CC, a North Herts cricket club. The site has actual spare capacity across Saturday, Sunday and midweek.	Sustain pitch quality.	The School, HCCC	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
40	Freman College	Football	Education	One good adult and one good youth 11v11 pitch. The School will be getting a new 11v11 WR 3G pitch that will be ready for the 25/26 season.	Sustain pitch quality. Utilise the 11v11 3G pitch to support the football training need.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	S	L	Protect
40	Freman College	Rugby Union	Education	Two good senior pitches which are not open for community use.	Sustain pitch quality.	The School, RFU	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
40	Freman College	Tennis	Education	Three poor non sports lit shale courts	Protect for curricular use.	The School, LTA	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
40	Freman College	Netball	Education	Three poor non sports lit shale courts	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
59	Horseman's Meadow	Football	Great Munder Parish Council	Site formerly provided one adult football pitch.	Reinstate the football pitches to increase the total supply of provision in the Authority.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local site	M	M	M	Provide
64	Little Munden Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard grass square and outfield. Small village club that has spare capacity for midweek play.	Sustain pitch quality.	The School, HCCC	Local site	L	S	L	Protect

Strategy: Knight Kavanagh & Page

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
65	London Road Playing Fields	Football	Sport Club	One poor quality 9v9 pitch with no accompanying ancillary facilities. Buntingford Cougars FC is concerned the land will be sold and they will lose the pitch.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime. Work with stakeholders to protect pitch. If the pitch is lost ensure appropriate mitigation is provided in a suitable location.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Local site	H	M	L	Protect
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Football	Buntingford Town Council	Site formerly provided one adult pitch and is now used as a cricket square. Site has a good quality ancillary provision.	Look to re-instate the football pitch as to increase the total supply of football provision in the Authority.	Buntingford Town Council, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	M	Provide
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Cricket	Buntingford Town Council	One standard grass square and outfield that is accessed by both Buntingford CC and Hare Street & Hormead CC with no spare capacity.	Sustain pitch quality.	Buntingford Town Council, HCCC	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	AGP	Buntingford Town Council	One standard small sided (51m x 32m) hockey suitable AGP. Primarily used for affiliated football training and recreational use. Consultation with Buntingford Cougars highlights the possibility of the Council converting the pitch to 3G.	Discuss a potential conversion to 3G to address shortfall in Analysis Area. Ensure there is a sink fund to replace or convert the pitch surface when it has surpassed its lifespan. Freman School is getting a 11v11 3G which is neighbours the site.	Buntingford Town Council, EH, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	H	Protect
72	Norfolk Road Playing Fields	Tennis	Buntingford Town Council	Three courts overmarked on the small sided AGP. Buntingford Town Council were proposing to convert this pitch to a 3G pitch.	Discuss a potential conversion to 3G to address shortfall in Analysis Area. Ensure there is a singing fund to replace the carpet which has surpassed its lifespan. Freman School is getting a 11v11 3G which neighbours the site.	Sports Club, LTA	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Football	Education	One standard 9v9, three good 7v7s and two 5v5s, one good and one poor. The site does have spare capacity on all pitches which was discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Provide a more formal lease agreement to the club to enable actual spare capacity.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	S	L	Protect
76	Ralph Sadleir School	Netball	Education	Two standard shale courts with community use but no sports lighting.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
86	Seth Ward Community Centre	Football	Buntingford Town Council	One adult and one youth 11v11 pitch, both of which are standard. The adult pitch has actual spare capacity of 0.5 MES.	Sustain pitch quality.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Cricket	Education	One standard grass square and outfield and two standalone NTPs with no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, HCCC	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Football	Education	Two good adult pitches and two good youth 11v11 pitches accessed by Bully's Crusaders and Watton YFC. Spare capacity has been discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Sustain pitch quality.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Rugby Union	Education	Two good senior pitches open to community use with spare capacity of four MES across both pitches discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Sustain pitch quality.	The School, RFU	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Tennis	Education	Six standard macadam non sports lit courts not available for community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, LTA	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	Netball	Education	Three standard sports lit macadam courts with no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
90	St Edmunds College & Prep School	AGP	Education	One standard hockey suitable sand filled AGP that is not open for community use.	The pitch will need to be resurfaced within the lifespan of the PPOSS. Explore options to open the pitch up to Hertford HC to allow hockey to grow in the Analysis Area.	The School, EH	Key Centre	M	M	H	Protect Enhance
98	Standon Memorial Playing Field	Football	Standon Parish Council	One poor youth 11v11 pitch with standard ancillary facilities, accessed by Standon & Puckeridge Hares FC and Standon & Puckeridge Vets. The pitch is used at capacity.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
104	The Bury	Football	Sport Club	One adult pitch, one 7v7 and two 5v5 pitches all rated standard. The site is accessed by both Buntingford Town and Buntingford Cougars. Club consultation confirms good quality ancillary provision on site with self-contained showers and toilets. The site is identified in the LFFP for an 11v11 3G pitch.	Sustain pitch quality. Given the current ancillary provision it is an ideal site to promote and grow the women's and girls game. Look to develop an 11v11 3G pitch as to reduce the shortfalls in the Buntingford Analysis Area.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect Provide
107	The Meads	Football	Hormead Parish Council	Site formerly provided one adult, one youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, two mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch. The site is now accessible open space. The site has a basic metal container servicing the grass pitches.	Look to re-instate the provision to increase the total supply of football pitches in the Authority.	Hormead Parish Council HFA, FF	Local site	M	M	M	Provide
107	The Meads	Cricket	Hormead Parish Council	Site formerly provided one cricket square and is now accessible open space. The site has a basic metal container servicing the grass pitches.	Look to re-instate the provision to increase the total supply of cricket squares in the Authority.	Hormead Parish Council HCCC	Local site	M	M	M	Provide
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard grass square and outfield which was previously accessed by Thundridge CC which has now folded. Consequently, there is no current demand on the square with actual spare capacity Saturday, Sunday and midweek.	Utilise actual spare capacity.	Sports Club, HCCC	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
111	Thundridge Sports Ground	Football	Thundridge Parish Council	One adult and two standard 7v7s pitches with poor ancillary provision. Site is un-used and has actual spare capacity. The site has a basic poor quality ancillary provision.	Improve ancillary provision to facilitate re-introducing demand to the site. Utilise actual spare capacity. Consider granting a Club a lease agreement to use the site as a new home ground.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local site	M	M	H	Protect Enhance Provide
113	Walkern School	Football	Education	One standard 7v7 pitch accessed by AFC Walkern. The pitch has had spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Sustain pitch quality. Seek a formal community use agreement with the School to obtain actual spare capacity.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
118	Ware Lions FC	Football	Sport Club	One standard youth 11v11, one standard 9v9, one standard 7v7 and one poor 5v5 with standard ancillary provision. The 5v5 and the 9v9 area overplayed by one and 0.5 MES respectively whilst the youth 11v11 is at capacity and the 7v7 has no actual spare capacity due to already having 2.5 MES of demand.	Sustain pitch quality and improve 5v5 quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	L	Protect
122	Westmill Recreation Ground	Football	Westmill Parish Council	One standard adult pitch with poor ancillary provision.	Improve ancillary provision.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard grass square and outfield accessed by Ardeley Walkern CC with spare capacity across Saturday, Sunday and midweek.	Utilise actual spare capacity.	Sports Club, HCCC	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
127	Walkern Sports & Community Centre	Football	Walkern Parish Council	One poor adult pitch and one poor 9v9 with standard ancillary provision. The adult pitch is overplayed by 0.5 MES and the youth 9v9 is used at capacity.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
129	Aspenden Standon & Puckeridge Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard grass square and outfield accessed by Aspenden, Standon and Puckeridge Cricket Club with spare capacity for midweek cricket.	Sustain pitch quality.	Sports Club, HCCC	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
134	Standon & Puckeridge Lawn Tennis Club	Tennis	Sports Club	Three good artificial turf sports lit courts with good ancillary provision. The Club has space for 25 new members currently and has not stated any demand for future growth.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, LTA	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
135	Standon & Puckeridge Bowling Green	Bowls	Sports Club	One good flat green with good ancillary facilities. The green has actual spare capacity for 37 new members currently and 27 should future ambitions be realised.	Protect for community use. Utilise actual spare capacity especially if the other bowls club are turning newcomers away, they should be signposted here where they can be accommodated.	Sports Club, BE	Local site	L	L	L	Protect
148	Thundridge Primary School	Football	Education	One poor 5v5 pitch which is not currently accessed for football demand. Spare capacity has been discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
166	Layston C of E First School	Football	Education	One poor 7v7 pitch accessed by Buntingford Cougars and is used at capacity.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
170	Datchworth Village Hall	Rugby Union	Sports Club	One standard senior pitch that is accessed by Datchworth RFC for training and junior match play that is overplayed by 5.5 MES.	Sustain pitch quality.	Sports Club, RFU	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
174	East Herts Golf Club	Golf	Sports Club	One members owned, 18-hole golf course.	Sustain course quality.	Sports Club, EG	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
-	New site	AGP	Local Authority	The East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Stevenage 2025 Playing Pitch Strategies have identified the need for a new AGP	Work with the necessary stakeholders to develop a new AGP to support the need across East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Stevenage. If possible this should be located in a location to allow it to service demand from all three Authorities, such as the Buntingford Analysis Area.	Local Authority EH, SE, NHDC, SBC	Key Centre	H	L	H	Provide

HERTFORD, WARE ANALYSIS AREA

Summary pitch sports (Hertford, Ware Analysis Area)

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES[1]	Future capacity total in MES (2043)[15]
Football (grass)	Hertford, Ware	Adult	Spare capacity of 1	**Shortfall of 1**
Football (grass)	Hertford, Ware	Youth 11v11	Spare capacity of 1	**Shortfall of 1**
Football (grass)	Hertford, Ware	Youth 9v9	**Shortfall of 6**	**Shortfall of 7.5**
Football (grass)	Hertford, Ware	Mini 7v7	**Shortfall of 0.5**	**Shortfall of 2.5**
Football (grass)	Hertford, Ware	Mini 5v5	At capacity	**Shortfall of 1.5**
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Adult	Spare capacity of 2.5	At capacity
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Youth 11v11	**Shortfall of 2**	**Shortfall of 5**
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Youth 9v9	**Shortfall of 11**	**Shortfall of 14**
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 0.5	**Shortfall of 3**
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Mini 5v5	At capacity	**Shortfall of 2**
Football (3G)	Hertford, Ware	11v11	**Shortfall of 2.5**	**Shortfall of 3**
Football (3G)	East Hertfordshire	11v11	**Shortfall of 4**	**Shortfall of 4.75**
Cricket	Hertford, Ware	Saturday	**Shortfall of 10**	**Shortfall of 22**
Cricket	Hertford, Ware	Sunday	Spare capacity of 14	Spare capacity of 14
Cricket	Hertford, Ware	Midweek	Spare capacity of 44	Spare capacity of 38
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Saturday	**Shortfall of 29**	**Shortfall of 41**
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Sunday	Spare capacity of 67	Spare capacity of 67
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Midweek	Spare capacity of 175	Spare capacity of 163
Rugby union	Hertford, Ware	Senior	**Shortfall of 1**	**Shortall of 1.5**
Rugby union	East Hertfordshire	Senior	**Shortfall of 20.75**	**Shortall of 21.75**
Rugby league	East Hertfordshire	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required

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[1] MES – match equivalent sessions per week (per season for cricket)
[15] Future demand (2043) is determined via ONS forecasts and club aspirations identified in PPS Assessment Report (2025).

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Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES[1]	Future capacity total in MES (2043)[15]
Hockey (sand AGPs)	East Hertfordshire	Full size, floodlit	An insufficient supply to meet current demand	With the AGPs provided at the Simon Balle School and Bishop's Stortford College having surpassed end of life, there is the need to provide a pitch replacement at each site in order to accommodate existing and future hockey demand.

Summary non-pitch sports

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	Four clubs currently operating in the Analysis Area, Hertford LTC, Legends Tennis Club, St Margaretsbury Tennis Club and Allenburys Sports & Social Club. All clubs are currently operating within the recommended capacity guidelines. Hartham Leisure centre has a single poor macadam court that has no demand.	Only Legends Tennis Club has stated future demand ambitions and would still be well within the recommended guidelines.
Netball	There are currently 14 community accessible courts with five not accessible. The Presdales School currently hosts the Hertford and District League which has strong membership with four good macadam courts.	There is a good level of sports lit and community available courts to meet future levels of demand in the analysis area.
Bowls	Five clubs in the analysis area, with no poor greens or ancillary facilities highlighted. Hertford Castle Bowls Club which is shared by Hertford Bowls Club and Hertford Castle Bowls Club is over the BE recommended guidelines by 69 members. Bengeo BC and Sele Farm both have spare capacity currently.	Hertford Bowls Club and Hertford Castle Bowls Club will continue to operate over Bowls England capacity guidelines in future and cannot grow. However, Bengeo BC and Sele Farm both have spare capacity should future demand ambitions be realised.
Athletics	One standard eight lane 400m athletics track, The Stuart Storey Track. It is sports lit and is open for community use. The sports lighting covers both track and field events. The track could benefit from minor repairs and cleaning before reaccreditation, however, will likely need respraying in 2026. Herts Phoenix AC reports it is operating a waiting list and wants to continue to grow its membership.	The track will need to be resprayed in 2026 to continue to service future demand.

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Water sports	Abbotts Lake is a 25-acre lake based in Stanstead Abbotts in East Hertfordshire. The lake caters for various water sports including yachting and canoeing. The Lake forms part of the Lea Valley Regional Park. Ware Priory Lido offers a 30m main pool as well as a teaching pool and ancillary provision for its users which includes changing facilities as well as food and drink offerings. Herts Canoe Club access the River Lea for various forms of water sports such as canoeing, paddling and kayaking.	There is adequate supply to cater for future demand.

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations
Football	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Improve pitch quality especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Presdales School, Ware YFC and Hartham Common & Kingsmead. ◄ Utilise actual spare capacity. ◄ Support Hertford Heath FC in improving its pitch to comply with ground grading regulations so it can use its home pitch for league games and not have to export to St Margaretsbury FC. ◄ Explore potential conversion of St Margaretsbury FC main pitch to 3G 11v11 to reduce the shortfall in the Analysis Area. ◄ Explore potentially handing over Presdales Recreation Ground to Bury Rangers FC to manage.
3G pitches	◄ Look to increase the number of 3G pitches as to address the current theoretical shortfall of 2.25 pitches, with The Sele School, Ware YFC and The Chauncy School as potential suitable sites. ◄ Ensure all future pitches have a sinking fund in place. ◄ Ensure all future pitches look to be placed on the FA register to host competitive matches. ◄ Discuss the potential loss of two small sided 3G pitch to padel conversion at Hartham Leisure Centre. If delivered mitigation towards an 11v11 3G pitch should look to be sourced given the shortfalls of 3G pitches in the Analysis Area. ◄ The poor small sided 3G pitch at Allenburys Sport & Social Club and the 11v11 poor 3G pitch at Wodson Park Sports Centre should be resurfaced within the lifespan of the PPOSS to ensure long-term usability.
Cricket	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Given the current overplay in the Analysis Area discussions surrounding opening the provision at Haileybury Sports Complex to community use should be sought. ◄ Improve existing provision at Allenburys Sport & Social Club and Morgans Field. ◄ Improve the ancillary provision of sites where necessary such as St Margaretsbury Sports & Social Club and Hertford CC.
Rugby union	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Explore adding sports lighting to another pitch at Hertford RFC to help spread training demand better and reduce overplay. ◄ Support Hertford RFC with the refurbishment of its clubhouse. ◄ Given the current overplay in the Analysis Area discussions surrounding opening the provision at Haileybury Sports Complex to community use should be sought.

Sport	Priority recommendations
Rugby league	◀ No action required.
Hockey	◀ Protect provision. ◀ Look to re-surface the small sided AGP at Amwell View School as well as the full size pitches at Simon Balle School and Haileybury College. ◀ The resurface at Simon Balle should be a priority to ensure the future of Hertford HC.
Bowls	◀ Protect provision. ◀ Sustain quality of existing provision. ◀ Monitor levels of demand and quality of green at Hertford Castle Bowls Club, with two clubs accessing one site which is already over capacity.
Tennis	◀ Protect provision. ◀ Key stakeholders to discuss the potential conversion of tennis court at Hartham Leisure Centre to padel, given the lack of tennis demand for this court, the shortfall of padel courts and the growing demand for padel in East Hertfordshire. ◀ Utilise spare capacity at four tennis clubs in the analysis area and promote new membership initiatives.
Netball	◀ Protect provision. ◀ Monitor levels of demand for the Hertford and District League to ensure the supply of courts at Presdales School is sufficient. Alternative good, sports lit provision, such as Wodson Park Sports Centre, is available in the Analysis Area should the league grow and need further courts.
Athletics	◀ The track will need to be resprayed in 2026 to continue to service future demand. ◀ The track could benefit from minor repairs and cleaning before reaccreditation. ◀ Support athletics clubs, such as Herts Phoenix AC that are looking to grow membership.
Golf	◀ Protect provision.
Water sports	◀ Protect provision.

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HERTFORD, WARE ANALYSIS AREA

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
3	Amwell View School	AGP	Education	One poor small sided hockey suitable sand filled AGP pitch installed in 2013.	Look to resurface the pitch within the lifespan of the PPOSS.	The School, EH	Local site	L	M	M	Protect Enhance
11	Bengeo Bowls Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One good flat bowling green with standard ancillary facilities. The Club is operating within Bowls England capacity guidelines.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, BE	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard senior square and outfield that is accessed by Bengeo CC. Site has no actual spare capacity.	Sustain pitch quality.	Sports Club, HCCC	Local site	M	S	L	Protect
12	Bengeo Sports Ground	Football	Sports Club	One poor adult pitch that is accessed by Bengeo Trinity FC. Site is overplayed by 1.5 MES.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime and reduce overplay.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Local site	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
29	Christ Church C Of E (VA) Primary School And Nursery	Football	Education	One standard 5v5 pitch that is open to community use but is un-used.	Sustain pitch quality. Utilise un-used provision.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
29	Christ Church C Of E (VA) Primary School And Nursery	Netball	Education	Two poor shale courts with no sports lighting or community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	Cricket	Education	Four grass cricket squares, two of which are good and two are standard. The site further has two standalone NTPs rated good and standard. None are available for community use.	Given the current overplay in the Analysis Area discussions surrounding opening the provision to community use should be sought.	The School, HCCC	Key Centre	M	S	L	Provide
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	Football	Education	Two good youth 11v11, four good 9v9s and one good 5v5 pitch. Pitches are open to community use but are un-used.	Protect for curricular use. Look to provide a partner club to utilise the large un-used playing field.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	S	L	Protect
43	Haileybury Sports Complex	Rugby Union	Education	Two good senior pitches with no community use.	Given the current overplay in the Analysis Area discussions surrounding opening the provision to community use should be sought.	The School, RFU	Key Centre	M	S	L	Provide
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	Football	Everyone Active	Two standard adult pitches and one standard youth 11v11 pitch. Youth 11v11 pitch has actual spare capacity.	Sustain pitch quality. Utilise actual spare capacity.	Everyone Active, EH Council, HFA, FF	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	3G	Everyone Active	Two poor small sided 3G pitches. Everyone Active are considering converting these pitches to padel courts and has a planning application in place to convert the provision.	Given the lack of usage and current state of pitches it may be beneficial for the area to explore conversion to padel with stakeholders. Given the shortfalls of 3G provision in the Hertford, Ware Analysis Area off site contributions towards an 11v11 3G pitch should be considered if the pitch is converted into padel courts.	Everyone Active, EH Council, HFA, FF	Key Centre	H	M	H	Provide
44	Hartham Leisure Centre	Tennis	Everyone Active	One poor macadam court with sports lighting and community use.	Given the lack of usage and current state of pitches it may be beneficial for the area to explore conversion to padel with stakeholders.	Everyone Active, EH Council, LTA	Key Centre	H	M	H	Provide
47	Hertford Castle Bowls Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One standard flat bowling green with standard ancillary facilities. The Club is	Protect for community use. Monitor the club's membership levels to ensure it can accommodate current demand.	Sports Club, BE	Local site	L	S	L	Protect

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
				operating above Bowls England capacity guidelines.							
48	Hertford Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	Two squares, one rated good and one standard, the latter having an NTP accompanying it. The Club shares ancillary provision with Hertford HC which states it would like to refurbish the changing rooms. The Club is in need of a new roller as its current roller is over 50 years old. The second square is of a standard quality and is overplayed.	Improve the quality of the second square to reduce overplay. Explore funding options to refurbish changing rooms that need it. Look to provide the Club with a new roller.	Sports Club, HCCC	Local site	H	M	M	Protect Enhance
49	Hertford Heath Playing Fields	Football	Hertford Heath Parish Council	One poor adult pitch with a poor ancillary provision. Hertford Heath FC states that the pitch does not meet FA regulations and the first team plays its games at St Margaretsbury FC. It currently plays at step 7 so initially needs to enhance its current provision to meet these regulations specifically ancillary provision. If the Club was to gain promotion it would need a lot of investment to meet ground grading regulations for step 6. The Club has a lease agreement with Hertford Town Council to access the site.	Discussions surrounding current and future ground grading requirements should be had to inform the Club. Fundraising options should be explored to progress this.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local site	M	M	M	Protect Enhance
50	Hertford Lawn Tennis Club	Tennis	Sports Club	Six good sports lit courts, three polymeric and three artificial turf open for community use. Club is operating within LTA capacity guidelines.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, LTA	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Rugby Union	Sports Club	Five standard senior pitches two of which are sports lit. The Club does have portable sports lighting which it uses in its training area. It is has had planning permission granted to refurbish its clubhouse.	Sustain pitch quality. Explore adding sports lighting to another pitch to help spread training demand better and reduce overplay. Support the Club in developing a new ancillary provision.	Sports Club, RFU	Key Centre	H	S	L	Protect Provide
51	Hertford Rugby Football Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One disused standalone NTP.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, HCCC	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
54	Hertingfordbury Park	3G	Sports Club	One good 11v11 3G pitch installed in 2021. Hertford Town YFC has identified a grass area behind the 3G pitch it shares with Hertford Town as a potential space to develop a mini 7v7 grass pitch. Alongside this, the Club would like a youth 11v11 pitch to be marked out near the River Lea which originally had a pitch on the marked out but an agreement with the council could not be reached. It feels that it is at capacity and cannot grow without additional pitch space.	Ensure an adequate sinking fund is in place to replace the carpet when required. The steering group to explore the possibility of the new pitches stated and support Hertford Town YFC in its efforts.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Local site	M	M	H	Protect
55	Hertingfordbury Recreation Ground	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard grass square accessed by Hertingfordbury CC. Site has actual spare capacity across Saturday, Sunday and	Utilise actual spare capacity. Support the Club in fitting new changing rooms to service its current demand.	Sports Club, HCCC	Local site	M	S	L	Protect

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
				midweek. The Club has plans to fit new changing rooms to the site. Hertford CC is looking to formalise access to the site for junior teams.	Support Hertford CC and Hertingfordbury CC in granting access to the site for Hertford CC junior teams.						
60	Legends Tennis Centre	Tennis	Sports Club	Eight good polymeric courts, four of which are outdoor with the other four under an air dome. The Club is operating within LTA recommended capacity guidelines.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, LTA	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
68	Morgans Field	Cricket	Education	One poor standalone NTP with no ancillary facilities.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	The School, HCCC	Key Centre	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
68	Morgans Field	Football	Education	One adult pitch, one youth 11v11 one 7v7 and two 5v5 all of which are rated standard. Adult pitch is un-used No ancillary facilities on site.	Sustain pitch quality. Utilise un-used adult pitch.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
74	Presdales Recreation Ground	Football	East Herts District Council	Four adult, one youth 11v11, one 9v9 and one 7v7, all of which are standard. East Herts District Council were previously looking to hand over management of the site to a football club and spoken to Bury Rangers FC but discussions broke down. Site has actual spare capacity.	Sustain pitch quality. Explore and discuss potentially handing the site over to Bury Rangers FC to manage. Utilise actual spare capacity.	The Council, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	S	L	Protect
75	Presdales School	Football	Education	Two youth 11v11, one 9v9, one 7v7 and one 5v5 all of which are standard. Youth 9v9 pitch is overplayed by 4 MES.	Improve pitch quality to reduce overplay.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
75	Presdales School	3G	Education	One good 11v11 3G pitch installed in 2025.	Ensure an adequate pitch replacement fund is in place to replace the carpet when required.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	H	Protect
75	Presdales School	Netball	Education	Four good macadam courts which are sports lit and available for community use. Currently the home of The Hertford and District League.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
75	Presdales School	Tennis	Education	Four good macadam courts with sports lighting and are available for community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, LTA	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
79	Richard Hale School	3G	Education	One standard 11v11 3G pitch installed in 2017. Bury Rangers FC is looking to develop a classroom and kitchen at the site to deliver lessons for its youth teams and provide the school with an additional space.	Ensure an adequate pitch replacement fund is in place to replace the carpet when required. Support Bury Rangers FC in developing a new classroom to give the Club a space to deliver lessons.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	H	M	H	Protect Provide
79	Richard Hale School	Tennis	Education	Seven poor shale courts with no community use or sports lighting.	Protect for community use.	The School, LTA	Local site	M	M	H	Protect
80	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	Football	Education	Two standard 9v9 pitches that are open to community use but are un-used.	Sustain pitch quality. Utilise un-used provision.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
80	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	Netball	Education	One poor shale courts with no sports lighting or community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
85	Sele Farm Bowls Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One standard flat bowling green with standard ancillary facilities. Club is operating within Bowls England capacity guidelines.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, BE	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
89	Simon Balle School	Football	Education	Two standard youth 11v11 and one standard 9v9 pitch that are open to community use but un-used.	Sustain pitch quality. Utilise un-used provision.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
89	Simon Balle School	Rugby Union	Education	One poor junior pitch.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	The School, RFU	Local site	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
89	Simon Balle School	Netball	Education	Two poor shale courts with community use and no sports lighting.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
89	Simon Balle School	AGP	Education	One poor hockey suitable sand filled AGP accessed for match play and training by Hertford HC. The pitch was last resurfaced in 2012. The school states it has a sink fund in place for the pitch.	The pitch needs to be resurfaced to ensure the future of the hockey Club which is already exporting demand to Welwyn Hatfield.	The School, EH	Local site	H	S	H	Protect Enhance
93	St Joseph's In The Park	Netball	Education	Two poor shale courts with no sports lighting or community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
94	St Margaretsbury FC	Football	Sport Club/ Association	Two standard adult pitches. The Club has aspirations of converting its main pitch to 3G and is seeking partners to enable the project.	Sustain pitch quality. Steering group should explore the possibility of converting the clubs main grass pitch to a 3G pitch to help reduce shortfall in the Analysis Area. The FA confirms there is further exploration needed to determine the viability of delivering an 11v11 3G pitch at the site.	Sports Club/Association, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	H	Protect Enhance
95	St Marys Junior School	Football	Education	One standard 7v7 and one standard 5v5 that are open to community use but un-used.	Sustain pitch quality. Utilise un-used provision.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
95	St Marys Junior School	Netball	Education	Two poor shale courts with community use and no sports lighting.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
97	St Margaretsbury Sports & Social Club	Tennis	Sports Club	Three artificial turf courts that area sport lit and available for community use.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, LTA	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
97	St Margaretsbury Sports & Social Club	Cricket	Sports Club	Two good grass cricket squares and outfields with standard ancillary facilities. The Club confirms the changing rooms could do with refurbishing due to being old and some being in poor condition.	Sustain pitch quality. Explore improving ancillary facilities.	Sports Club, HCCC	Key Centre	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
105	The Chauncy School	Cricket	Education	One standard standalone NTP not available for community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, HCCC	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
105	The Chauncy School	Football	Education	One adult, one youth 11v11 and one 9v9, all of which are standard. Site is identified in the 2025 LFFP as a potential option for an 11v11 3G pitch.	Sustain pitch quality. Explore the possibility of developing an 11v11 3G pitch at the site as to reduce the analysis area shortfalls.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	H	M	H	Protect Provide
105	The Chauncy School	Rugby Union	Education	One poor senior pitch with no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, RFU	Local site	L	S	L	Protect

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
105	The Chauncy School	Netball	Education	Two standard macadam courts with community use and no sports lighting.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
108	The Sele School	Football	Education	Three youth 11v11, one of which is good and two standard, one 9v9 which is good, one 7v7 which is standard and one 5v5 which is good. Site is identified in the 2025 LFFP as a potential option for an 11v11 3G pitch.	Sustain pitch quality. Explore the possibility of developing an 11v11 3G pitch at the site as to reduce the analysis area shortfalls.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	H	M	H	Protect Provide
108	The Sele School	Rugby Union	Education	One standard junior pitch.	Sustain pitch quality.	The School, RFU	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
108	The Sele School	Tennis	Education	Three standard shale courts with sports lighting and available for community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, LTA	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
108	The Sele School	Netball	Education	Three standard shale courts with no sports lighting but available for community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
116	Ware Football Club	3G	Sports Club	One standard 11v11 3G pitch installed in 2018.	Ensure an adequate pitch replacement fund is in place to replace the carpet when required.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Local site	M	M	H	Protect
117	Ware Lawn Bowling Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One standard flat bowling green with good ancillary facilities.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, BE	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
119	Ware Youth Football Club	Football	Sports Club	Two poor adult, two standard 9v9, two poor 7v7 and two 5v5 one is poor and one is good. Site is identified in the 2025 LFFP as a potential option for an 11v11 3G pitch.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime. Explore the possibility of developing an 11v11 3G pitch at the site as to reduce the analysis area shortfalls.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect Provide
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Football	Private	Two standard adult pitches. Site has actual spare capacity.	Sustain pitch quality. Utilise actual spare capacity.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	3G	Private	One poor 11v11 3G pitch last resurfaced in 2015. The site was initially funded by the Football Foundation meaning it should have a pitch replacement fund to resurface the pitch when necessary.	Explore funding options with stakeholders to replace the carpet as it is now at the end of its lifespan.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	M	Protect Enhance
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Athletics	Private	One standard eight lane 400m athletics track. It is sports lit and is open for community use. The sports lighting covers both track and field events. The track could benefit from minor repairs and cleaning before reaccreditation, however, will likely need respraying in 2026.	Ensure a sinking fund is in place for the repairs and respraying of the track.	Organisation, EA	Key Centre	H	M	M	Protect Enhance
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Tennis	Private	Four good macadam courts with sports lighting and available for community use.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, LTA	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
125	Wodson Park Sports Centre	Netball	Private	Four good macadam courts with sports lighting, available for community use.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, EN	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Cricket	Private	One poor grass cricket square and standard outfield with standard ancillary facilities. The Club states it has changed groundsman.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	Sports Club, HCCC	Key Centre	M	M	L	Protect Enhance

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Football	Private	One adult and one youth 11v11 both of which are good quality. Youth 11v11 pitch has actual spare capacity.	Sustain pitch quality. Utilise actual spare capacity.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	3G	Private	One poor small sided 3G pitch installed in 2009.	Resurface during the lifespan of the PPOSS.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	M	Protect Enhance
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Tennis	Private	One standard macadam court with sports lighting and available for community use.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, LTA	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Netball	Private	One standard macadam court with sports lighting and community use.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, EN	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
126	Allenburys Sports & Social Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One good flat bowling green with standard ancillary facilities.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, BE	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
131	Hartham Common & Kingsmead	Football	Everyone Active	Two adult pitches, one youth 11v11 and one 9v9 all rated poor quality. Site has overplay and actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to reduce overplay and create actual spare capacity.	Everyone Active, EH Council, HFA, FF	Local site	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
138	County Hall	Football	Hertfordshire County Council	The site formerly provided four grass football pitches.	The steering group should look to reinstate the provision. If the site is lost the steering group should look to source funds for mitigation in line with NPPF.	The Council HCCC	Local site	H	M	M	Provide
138	County Hall	Cricket	Hertfordshire County Council	The site formerly provided a grass cricket square and NTP.	The steering group should look to reinstate the provision. If the site is lost the steering group should look to source funds for mitigation in line with NPPF.	The Council HCCC	Local site	H	M	M	Provide
149	Abel Smith Primary School	Football	Education	One standard 7v7 pitch.	Sustain pitch quality.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
163	Haileybury College	AGP	Education	Two standard full size AGPs open for community use. Both pitches will need to be resurfaced within the lifespan of the PPOSS	Look to resurface the pitches within the lifespan of the PPOSS.	The School, EH	Local site	M	M	H	Protect Enhance
169	St John the Baptist CE VA Primary	Football	Education	One standard 5v5 pitch.	Sustain pitch quality.	The School, HFA, FF	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
172	Brickendon Grange Golf Club	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole golf course	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, EG	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
175	Whitehill Golf Club	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole golf course with 12 driving range bays.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, EG	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
178	Hanbury Manor Golf Club	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole golf course with eight driving range bays.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, EG	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
179	Chadwell Springs Golf Centre	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole golf course as well as a par 3 course and 17 driving range bays.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, EG	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
-	Abbotts Lake	Water Sports	Lee Valley Regional Park/Aquamaintain Ltd	Abbotts Lake is a 25-acre lake based in Stanstead Abbotts in East Hertfordshire. The lake caters for various water sports including yachting and canoeing. The Lake forms part of the Lea Valley Regional Park.	Protect for community use.	Lee Valley Regional Park/Aquamaintain Ltd	Local site	L	S	L	Protect
-	Ware Priory Lido	Water Sports	Ware Town Council	The site offers a 30m main pool as well as a teaching pool and ancillary provision for its users which includes changing facilities as well as food and drink offerings.	Protect for community use.	The Council.	Local site	L	S	L	Protect

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
-	Herts Canoe Club	Water sports	Sports Club	A Canoe club which offers various forms of water sports based on the River Lea beside Hartham Leisure Centre. It is affiliated to Paddle UK and offers canoeing, paddling and whitewater kayaking.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, EH Council	Local site	L	S	L	Protect

SAWBRIDGEWORTH ANALYSIS AREA

Summary pitch sports (Sawbridgeworth Analysis Area)

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES[1]	Future capacity total in MES (2043)[16]
Football (grass)	Sawbridgeworth	Adult	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	Sawbridgeworth	Youth 11v11	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	Sawbridgeworth	Youth 9v9	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Football (grass)	Sawbridgeworth	Mini 7v7	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	Sawbridgeworth	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Adult	Spare capacity of 2.5	At capacity
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Youth 11v11	**Shortfall of 2**	**Shortfall of 5**
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Youth 9v9	**Shortfall of 11**	**Shortfall of 14**
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 0.5	**Shortfall of 3**
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Mini 5v5	At capacity	**Shortfall of 2**
Football (3G)	Sawbridgeworth	11v11	Spare capacity of 0.5	Spare capacity of 0.5
Football (3G)	East Hertfordshire	11v11	**Shortfall of 4**	**Shortfall of 4.75**
Cricket	Sawbridgeworth	Saturday	**Shortfall of 28**	**Shortfall of 28**
Cricket	Sawbridgeworth	Sunday	**Shortfall of 4**	**Shortfall of 4**
Cricket	Sawbridgeworth	Midweek	Spare capacity of 8	Spare capacity of 8
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Saturday	**Shortfall of 29**	**Shortfall of 41**
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Sunday	Spare capacity of 67	Spare capacity of 67
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Midweek	Spare capacity of 175	Spare capacity of 163
Rugby union	Sawbridgeworth	Senior	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby union	East Hertfordshire	Senior	**Shortfall of 20.75**	**Shortall of 21.75**
Rugby league	East Hertfordshire	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required

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[1] MES – match equivalent sessions per week (per season for cricket)
[16] Future demand (2043) is determined via ONS forecasts and club aspirations identified in PPS Assessment Report (2025).

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES[1]	Future capacity total in MES (2043)[16]
Hockey (sand AGPs)	East Hertfordshire	Full size, floodlit	An insufficient supply to meet current demand	With the AGPs provided at the Simon Balle School and Bishop's Stortford College having surpassed end of life, there is the need to provide a pitch replacement at each site in order to accommodate existing and future hockey demand.

Summary non-pitch sports

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	Much Hadham Tennis Club is currently operating above LTA recommended guidelines. Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club is operating within LTA capacity guidelines. The Club has ambitions to upgrade its sports lights to LED.	Consider installing an extra court at Much Hadham Tennis Club as a means of accommodating the high levels of demand identified.
Netball	All demand is currently exported into neighbouring analysis areas when competing in the Bishop's Stortford District Netball League and Hertford and District Netball League.	Look to increasingly use the accessible sports lit courts at Leventhorpe School for Play Netball sessions to grow the sport.
Lawn Bowls	Much Hadham Bowls Club and Sawbridgeworth Bowls Club are the two clubs within the analysis area. Neither Club is known to be operating outside of the Bowls England capacity guidelines.	Monitor the future capacity balance of Much Hadham Bowls Club and Sawbridgeworth Bowls Club to ensure both clubs continue to adequately cater for its current demand and do not come under risk of folding as clubs.
Athletics	No provision exists in the analysis area. All demand is exported outside of the Analysis Area to Wodson Park Sports Centre (Hertford, Ware), which provides a sports lit 400m track.	Considerations should be made for the installation of play, mini, compact or active tracks as to provide the district with some form of athletics provision.
Golf	There are three 18-hole golf courses in the Sawbridgeworth Analysis Area.	If demand continues to grow in Sawbridgeworth, membership levels should be monitored to ensure all three courses can accommodate the new levels of demand.
Water sports	No provision identified.	No provision identified.

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations
Football	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Improve pitch quality especially at key, poor quality sites such as Bullfields and St George's Playing Field both of which would create actual spare capacity if quality improved. ◄ Enable use of currently unavailable sites. ◄ Look to improve the ancillary provision at relevant poor-quality sites such as Crouchfields which is accessed by Wodson Park FC. ◄ Explore the possibility of developing a new site to service Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club and Sawbridgeworth Town FC.

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Sport	Priority recommendations
3G pitches	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Ensure the existing pitch at Leventhorpe School has a pitch replacement fund in place. ◄ Ensure the Leventhorpe School pitch remains on the FA 3G pitch register after its retest in June 2027 to ensure it can continue to host competitive matches. ◄ Consider installing additional provision at Sawbridgeworth Town FC to ensure adequate capacity for future demand and reduce the shortfall across East Hertfordshire.
Cricket	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Improve square quality at Town Fields and Leventhorpe School to reduce overplay and improve the user experience for Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club. ◄ Explore the possibility of developing a new site to service Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club and Sawbridgeworth Town FC. This will provide Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club with the second site required if it does stop accessing Leventhorpe School in 2027. ◄ Support Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club in enhancing the changing rooms for its clubhouse.
Rugby union	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Improve quality of existing provision. ◄ Consider formalising use of the two senior pitches at The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood) for Bishops Stortford RFC as a means of reducing the overplay identified at the site.
Rugby league	◄ No action required.
Hockey	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Look to identify a site to potentially house a new full sized AGP to service the need in East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Stevenage.
Lawn Bowls	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Sustain quality of existing provision at Sawbridgeworth Bowls Club. ◄ Look to improve green quality at Much Hadham Bowls Club.
Tennis/padel	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Monitor the membership levels of Much Hadham Tennis Club and ensure the Club can continue to operate above LTA capacity guidelines. ◄ Consider developing an extra court at Much Hadham Tennis Club to support the Club with its high membership levels. ◄ Look to enhance the sports lights at Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club.
Netball	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Look to increasingly use the courts at Leventhorpe School to grow the sport.
Athletics	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Consider installing play, mini, compact or active tracks as a means of increasing the amount of provision in the Authority.
Golf	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Ensure Manor of Groves Golf Club, Ash Valley Golf Club and Great Hadham Golf & Country Club continue to operate sustainably and can balance its current membership levels.
Water sports	◄ No action required.

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SAWBRIDGEWORTH ANALYSIS AREA

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
25	Bullfields	Football	Sawbridgeworth Town Council	One poor adult pitch and one poor youth 11v11. Site is accessed by Sawbridgeworth Town FC and has actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to create actual spare capacity.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local Site	H	S	L	Protect Enhance
57	High Wych Ce Primary School	Netball	Education	One poor shale court with no community use or sports lighting.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
62	Leventhorpe School	Football	Education	One standard adult, one poor youth 11v11 and one standard 9v9. Provision is open to community use and is used by Sawbridgeworth Town FC. Adult and youth 9v9 pitches are un-used.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime. Utilise un-used provision.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	S	L	Protect Enhance
62	Leventhorpe School	Cricket	Education	One poor cricket square with an accompanying NTP. The site is accessed by Sawbridgeworth CC and is overplayed by 28 MES due to being poor quality. The site has no covers and the outfield grass is cut to football pitch length.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime and reduce overplay. Consider providing a set of covers for the square. Look to cut the outfield to a shorter length to make it more suitable for cricket.	The School, HCCC	Key Centre	M	S	M	Protect Enhance Provide
62	Leventhorpe School	Rugby Union	Education	One senior and one junior pitch, both of which are poor.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	The School, RFU	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect Enhance
62	Leventhorpe School	3G	Education	One good quality 11v11 3G pitch that was installed in 2024.	Ensure an adequate pitch replacement fund is in place to replace the carpet when required.	The School, HFA, FF	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
62	Leventhorpe School	Tennis	Education	Five good polymeric courts with sports lighting and community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, LTA	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
62	Leventhorpe School	Netball	Education	Three good polymeric courts with sports lighting and community use.	Protect for community use.	The School, EN	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
69	Much Hadham Bowls Club	Bowls	Sport Club	One standard flat bowls green with good ancillary provision. Club is operating within Bowls England capacity guidelines.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, BE	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
70	Much Hadham Recreation Ground	Football	Sports Club	Site formerly provided one adult football pitch.	Reinstate the football pitches to increase the total supply of provision in the Authority.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local site	M	M	M	Provide
71	Much Hadham Tennis Club	Tennis	Sport Club	Three good macadam courts with sports lighting and community use. The Club is operating marginally above LTA capacity guidelines.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, LTA	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
78	Reedings Junior School	Football	Education	One standard 7v7 pitch that is open to community use and accessed by Sawbridgeworth Town FC.	Sustain pitch quality for community use.	The School, HFA, FF	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
82	Sawbridgeworth Bowling Club	Bowls	Sport Club	One good flat bowls green with good ancillary provision.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, BE	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
83	Sawbridgeworth Tennis Club	Tennis	Sport Club	Two good sports lit clay courts, one good non sports lit clay court and three standard artificial turf courts are all available for community use. The Club aspires to changes it current sports lighting to LED as its priority.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, LTA	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
84	Sawbridgeworth Town Football Club	Football	Sport Club	Two good adult pitches that are accessed by Sawbridgeworth Town FC which play at Step 5 in the NLS.	Sustain pitch quality.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	S	L	Protect
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	Football	Education	Three adult pitches, three youth 11v11, one 9v9 and one 5v5, all of which are rated standard and open to community use. Pitches are underutilised.	Sustain pitch quality. Look to maximise the use of the provision.	The School, HFA, FF	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	Cricket	Education	Two standard quality cricket squares with no community access. One square has an accompanying NTP and there is also a standalone NTP.	Discuss possibility of opening provision to the community to address Saturday shortfalls in the Analysis Area.	The School, HCCC	Local Site	M	S	L	Provide
102	The Bishop's Stortford High School Playing Fields (Jobbers Wood)	Rugby Union	Education	Two standard senior pitches that are open to community use.	Sustain pitch quality. Consider granting access to the pitches to Biship's Stortford RFC as a means of reducing overplay.	The School, RFU	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
112	Town Fields	Cricket	Sport Club	One standard square and outfield that is accessed by Sawbridgeworth CC. The Club is seeking to refurbish its clubhouse to make it more inclusive for women's and girls as well as space for umpires. This plan would also include a patio for socialising. It also raises that ball striking is an issue at its site.	Support the Club in developing new changing rooms at the site and erecting a ball stopping fence.	Sports Club, HCCC	Key Centre	H	M	M	Protect Enhance Provide
115	Ware Cricket Club	Cricket	Private	One standard square and outfield. The site has actual spare capacity for Sunday and midweek cricket. The Club rents the pitch from the landowner which maintains the square.	Sustain pitch quality and utilise spare capacity.	Sports Club, landowner, HCCC	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
123	Widford Playing Field	Football	Widford Parish Council	Site formerly provided one adult pitch. Site has no ancillary provision but borders Ware Cricket Club which has a standard quality ancillary provision.	Look to re-instate the football pitch as to increase the total supply of football provision in the Authority.	The Council, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	M	Provide
141	St. George's Playing Field	Football	High Wych Parish Council	One poor 5v5 pitch that is open to community use but is un-used.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime and create actual spare capacity. Utilise un-used pitch.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local Site	M	S	L	Protect Enhance
167	Mandeville Primary School	Football	Education	One poor and one standard 9v9 that is open to community use but is un-used.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime. Utilise un-used provision.	The School, HFA, FF	Local Site	M	S	L	Protect Enhance
171	Manor Of Groves Golf Club	Golf	Sport Club	An 18-hole course at a proprietary managed club.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, EG	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
176	Ash Valley Golf Club	Golf	Sport Club	An 18-hole and par 3 short course offering the cheapest membership in East Hertfordshire and the only club to offer membership under the national average of £1,071	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, EG	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
177	Great Hadham Golf & Country Club	Golf	Sport Club	An 18-hole course and driving range with 18 covered bays which are sports lit and available for pay and play.	Protect for community use.	Sports Club, EG	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
	Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club and Town Football Club new site	Cricket and Football	Sports Club	Consultation with Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club confirms the Club is considering working with Sawbridgeworth Town FC to develop a new site to service football and cricket need. Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club requires two squares and its current lease agreement with Leventhorpe School is scheduled to expire in 2027.	Look to develop a new site with a cricket square and grass football pitches to service the need of Sawbridgeworth CC and Sawbridgeworth Town FC.	Sports Club, HCCC, HFA, FF	Local Site	M	L	H	Provide

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

WATTON-AT-STONE ANALYSIS AREA

Summary pitch sports (Watton-at-Stone Analysis Area)

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES[1]	Future capacity total in MES (2043)[17]
Football (grass)	Watton-at-Stone	Adult	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	Watton-at-Stone	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 0.5
Football (grass)	Watton-at-Stone	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 0.5
Football (grass)	Watton-at-Stone	Mini 7v7	At capacity	At capacity
Football (grass)	Watton-at-Stone	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Adult	Spare capacity of 2.5	At capacity
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 5
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 11	Shortfall of 14
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 0.5	Shortfall of 3
Football (grass)	East Hertfordshire	Mini 5v5	At capacity	Shortfall of 2
Football (3G)	Watton-at-Stone	11v11	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 0.5
Football (3G)	East Hertfordshire	11v11	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 4.75
Cricket	Watton-at-Stone	Saturday	Spare capacity of 6	Spare capacity of 6
Cricket	Watton-at-Stone	Sunday	Spare capacity of 30	Spare capacity of 30
Cricket	Watton-at-Stone	Midweek	Spare capacity of 42	Spare capacity of 42
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Saturday	Shortfall of 29	Shortfall of 41
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Sunday	Spare capacity of 67	Spare capacity of 67
Cricket	East Hertfordshire	Midweek	Spare capacity of 175	Spare capacity of 163
Rugby union	Watton-at-Stone	Senior	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby union	East Hertfordshire	Senior	Shortfall of 20.75	Shortall of 21.75
Rugby league	East Hertfordshire	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required.

[1] MES – match equivalent sessions per week (per season for cricket)

[17] Future demand (2043) is determined via ONS forecasts and club aspirations identified in PPS Assessment Report (2025).

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current capacity total in MES[1]	Future capacity total in MES (2043)[17]
Hockey (sand AGPs)	East Hertfordshire	Full size, floodlit	An insufficient supply to meet current demand	With the AGPs provided at the Simon Balle School and Bishop's Stortford College having surpassed end of life, there is the need to provide a pitch replacement at each site in order to accommodate existing and future hockey demand.

Summary non-pitch sports

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	Tewin Tennis Club is the most overcapacity tennis Club in the Authority. There is the need to fit sports lights to improve its capacity balance. Watton at Stone Tennis Club is operating within LTA capacity guidelines.	Neither Tewin Tennis Club or Watton at Stone Tennis Club express any future demand ambitions. Watton at Stone Tennis Club has plans to resurface its courts as part of a site development plan.
Netball	There are no sports lit community accessible courts in the Analysis Area. All demand is currently exported into neighbouring analysis areas when competing in the Bishop's Stortford District Netball League and Hertford and District Netball League.	Consider opening the Heath Mount School courts to community to improve the recreational access (aligned to England Netball participation schemes).
Bowls	Shire Park Bowls Club is operating marginally above Bowls England recommended guidelines.	Shire Park Bowls Club has future demand ambitions to gain 22 members which will mean the Club is operating further outside of Bowls England recommended capacity guidelines. Monitor the membership levels at Shire Park Bowls Club to ensure it continues to adequately cater its demand.
Athletics	No provision exists in the analysis area. All demand is exported outside of the district to Wodson Park Sports Centre (Hertford, Ware), which provides a sports lit 400m track.	Considerations should be made for the installation of play, mini, compact or active tracks as to provide the district with some form of athletics provision.
Golf	No provision exists in the analysis area. All demand is exported into neighbouring analysis areas.	Ensure that neighbouring clubs can continue to accommodate demand from residents within the Watton at Stone Analysis Area.
Water sports	No provision identified.	No provision identified.

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Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations
Football	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Improve pitch quality especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Crouchfields. ◄ Look to improve the ancillary provision provided at Crouchfields to better support Wodson Park FC. ◄ Support Watton at Stone YFC in developing a new site with grass football pitches, a small sided 3G pitch and new build ancillary provision. Explore any viable multi-sport opportunities within this project.
3G pitches	◄ Look to increase the number of 3G pitches as to address the current theoretical shortfall of 0.5 of a pitch, with the Watton at Stone YFC new site as the priority potential site. ◄ Ensure all future pitches have a sinking fund in place. ◄ Ensure all future pitches look to be placed on the FA register to host competitive matches.
Cricket	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Improve existing provision at Bramfield Playing Field to reduce overplay and support Bramfield CC. ◄ Improve the poor-quality ancillary provision at Little Berkhamsted Recreation Ground to support Little Berkhamsted Sahibs CC.
Rugby union	◄ No action required.
Rugby league	◄ No action required.
Hockey	◄ Look to identify a site to potentially house a new full sized AGP to service the need in East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Stevenage.
Bowls	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Improve quality of existing provision at Shire Park BC. ◄ Ensure Shire Park BC manages the access to its green effectively as the site is operating above Bowls England capacity guidelines.
Tennis	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Work with Tewin Tennis Club to install sports lighting to its courts to improve its capacity balance. ◄ Look to resurface the courts at Watton at Stone Tennis Club during the lifespan of the PPOSS.
Netball	◄ Protect provision. ◄ Consider opening the Heath Mount School courts to community use to provide the Analysis Area with accessible provision.
Athletics	◄ Consider the installation of play, mini, compact and active tracks as to increase the amount of athletics provision.
Golf	◄ No action required.
Water sports	◄ No action required.

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WATTON-AT-STONE ANALYSIS AREA

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Cricket	Bramfield Parish Council	One poor quality square that is accessed by Bramfield CC. Site is overplayed due to the poor-quality square.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to reduce overplay.	The Council, HCCC	Local Site	H	M	L	Protect Enhance
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Football	Bramfield Parish Council	One poor adult pitch accessed by Golden Griffin FC. Actual spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime as to create actual spare capacity.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local Site	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
21	Bramfield Playing Field	Tennis	Bramfield Parish Council	One poor non-sports lit shale tennis court overmarked with basketball. Site is accessed by Braughing Tennis Club which is operating within LTA capacity guidelines.	Improve court quality to encourage further community use.	The Council, LTA	Local Site	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
30	Church Lane Playing Field	Football	Stapleford Parish Council	One poor 5v5 pitch that is open to community use but is un-used.	Utilise un-used pitch.	The Council, HFA, FF	Local Site	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
35	Crouchfields	Football	Sports Club	Site has one pitch of all five pitch scales and is accessed by Wodson Park FC. Ancillary provision is of a poor quality. Mini 5v5 pitch has actual spare capacity and youth 11v11 pitch is overplayed.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime. Look at improving ancillary facilities. Utilise actual spare capacity.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	M	Protect Enhance
46	Heath Mount School	AGP	Education	One 70m x 44m pitch which is neither sports lit or community accessible.	Consider opening provision to community use to better service hockey and football need.	Education FA, FF, EH	Local Site	M	M	M	Protect Provide
46	Heath Mount School	Cricket	Education	One standard cricket pitch with no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, HCCC	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
46	Heath Mount School	Tennis	Education	Six standard artificial turf tennis courts overmarked on a small sided AGP which has no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, LTA	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
46	Heath Mount School	Netball	Education	Two standard non-sports lit shale netball courts with no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
63	Little Berkhamsted Recreation Ground	Cricket	Little Berkhamsted Parish Council	One standard cricket pitch accessed by Little Berkhamsted Sahibs CC with actual spare capacity for Sunday and midweek cricket. Ancillary provision if of a poor quality.	Sustain pitch quality. Consider enhancing the ancillary provision to improve the user experience for Little Berkhamsted Sahibs CC.	The Council, HCCC	Local Site	M	S	H	Protect Enhance
87	Shire Park Bowls Club	Bowls	Sports Club	One standard bowling green with standard ancillary facilities. The Club is operating marginally above Bowls England capacity guidelines.	Protect for community use and sustain green quality. Ensure the Club can continue to accommodate its current demand.	Sports Club, BE	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
99	Tewin Cowper Primary School	Netball	Education	One poor non-sports lit shale court with community use.	Protect for community.	The School, EN	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Cricket	Tewin Parish Council	One standard cricket pitch accessed by Tewin CC and has actual spare capacity for Sunday and midweek cricket. Tewin CC states it requires a fixed lane practice net to support its training demand.	Sustain pitch quality. Install a fixed lane practice net to support the clubs training need.	The Council, HCCC	Key Centre	M	S	M	Protect Provide
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Football	Tewin Parish Council	One poor 5v5 pitch with standard ancillary facilities. Stie is un-used and has actual spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Utilise un-used pitch. Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	The Council, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	S	L	Protect Enhance

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Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim
100	Tewin Recreation Ground	Tennis	Tewin Parish Council	Two good non-sports lit artificial turf tennis courts with community use. Site is accessed by Tewin Tennis Club and is the most overcapacity tennis site in the Authority.	Sustain court quality. Install sports lights to improve the club's capacity balance.	The Council, LTA	Key Centre	H	M	M	Protect Provide
120	Watton-At-Stone Primary School	Football	Education	One poor 9v9 pitch that is accessed by Watton YFC and overplayed by 0.5 MES.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime to remove overplay.	The School, HFA, FF	Local Site	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
120	Watton-At-Stone Primary School	Netball	Education	One poor non-sports lit shale netball court with no community use.	Protect for curricular use.	The School, EN	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard cricket pitch that is used by Watton at Stone CC. Site has actual spare capacity for Saturday, Sunday and midweek cricket.	Sustain pitch quality. Utilise actual spare capacity.	Sports Club, HCCC	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Football	Sports Club	One poor youth 11v11 with good ancillary facilities. Site is used at capacity by Watton YFC.	Improve pitch quality through an enhanced maintenance regime.	Sports Club, HFA, FF	Key Centre	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
128	Watton At Stone Community Hall & Recreation Ground	Tennis	Sports Club	Three sports lit macadam courts available for community use, two of which are good and one standard. Site is used by Watton at Stone Tennis Club and is operating within LTA capacity guidelines.	Sustain court quality.	Sports Club, LTA	Key Centre	L	S	L	Protect
130	Bayford & Hertford Nondescripts Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard cricket pitch which has actual spare capacity for Saturday, Sunday and midweek cricket.	Sustain pitch quality.	Sports Club, HCCC	Local Site	L	S	L	Protect
-	New site - Watton at Stone YFC	Football Padel	Sports Club	Watton at Stone YFC wants to build a new multi-sport site in the South East of the village. The main purpose is to obtain a small sided 3G pitch, however, it states a wish for a multi-sport site that could include grass pitches, padel as well as walking trails and ancillary provision. It currently has 19 teams and there is a shortfall of 3G pitches in the Watton-at-Stone Analysis Area.	The steering group should look to deliver new grass pitches, small sided 3G and ancillary provision to support Watton at Stone YFC. Considerations should also be made to install other sports or walking provision.	Sports Club, HFA, FF, LTA	Key Centre	H	H	H	Provide Enhance

PART 7: DELIVER THE STRATEGY AND KEEP IT ROBUST AND UP-TO-DATE

The section below is a generalised approach on how to deliver a PPOSS whilst also keeping it robust and up-to-date. However, a more tailored approach should also be considered and designed for the East Hertfordshire based on the requirements and priorities of the Steering Group.

Delivery

The PPOSS seeks to provide guidance for maintenance/management decisions and investment made across the East Hertfordshire. By addressing the issues identified in the Assessment Report and using the strategic framework presented in this Strategy, the current and future sporting and recreational needs of the district can be satisfied. The Strategy identifies where there is a deficiency in provision and recommends how best to resolve this in the future.

It is important that this document is used in a practical manner, is used to engage with partners and encourages partnerships to be developed, to ensure that outdoor sports facilities are regarded as a vital aspect of community life and which contribute to the achievement of Council priorities.

The creation of this document should be regarded as part of the planning process. The success of this Strategy and the benefits that are gained are dependent upon regular engagement between all partners involved and the adoption of a strategic approach. Each member of the steering group should take the lead to ensure the PPOSS is used and applied appropriately within their area of work and influence.

To help ensure the PPOSS is well used, it should be regarded as the key document within the study area guiding the improvement and protection of playing pitch and outdoor sport provision. It needs to be the document people regularly turn to for information on the how the current demand is met and what actions are needed to improve the situation and meet future demand. For this to be achieved, the Steering Group needs to have a clear understanding of how the PPOSS can be applied and therefore delivered.

The process of completing the PPOSS will hopefully have already resulted in a number of benefits that will help with its application and delivery. These may include enhanced partnership working across different agendas and organisations, pooling of resources along with strengthening relationships and understanding between different stakeholders and between members of the steering group and the sporting community. The drivers behind the PPOSS and the work to develop the recommendations and action plan will have also highlighted, and helped the steering group to understand, the key areas to which it can be applied and how it can be delivered.

Monitoring and updating

It is important that there is regular monitoring and review against the actions identified in the Strategy. This monitoring should continue be led by the local authority and supported by all members of, and reported back to, the Steering Group. Understanding and learning lessons from how the PPOSS has been applied should also form a key component of monitoring its delivery. It is possible that in the interim between reviews the Steering Group could also operate as a 'virtual' group; prepared to comment on suggestions and updates electronically when relevant.

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It is agreed that the Council (potentially via consultants e.g., KKP) is responsible for keeping the database and background supply and demand information up-to-date in order that area-by-area action plans can be updated. This should be carried out in consultation with the NGBs, particularly around affiliation time when information is updated.

As a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years of the PPS being signed off by the steering group, then Sport England and the NGBs would consider it and the information on which it is based to be out of date. The nature of the supply and in particular the demand for provision is likely to change year-on-year, meaning that without any form of review and update it would be difficult to make the case that the supply and demand information and assessment work is sufficiently robust.

An annual review should not be regarded as a particularly resource intensive task. However, it should highlight:

◄   How the delivery of the recommendations and action plan has progressed and any changes required to the priority afforded to each action (e.g., the priority of some may increase following the delivery of others).
◄   How the PPOSS has been applied and the lessons learnt.
◄   Any changes to particularly important sites and/or clubs in the area (e.g., the most used or high quality sites for a particular sport) and other supply and demand information, what this may mean for the overall assessment work and the key findings and issues.
◄   Any development of a specific sport or particular format of a sport.
◄   Any new or emerging issues and opportunities.

Alongside regular steering group meetings a good way to keep the strategy up-to-date and maintain relationships is to hold sport specific meetings with the NGBs and other relevant parties. These meetings look to update the key supply and demand information, if necessary amend the assessment work, track progress with implementing the recommendations and action plan and highlight any new issues and opportunities.

These meetings could be timed to fit with the annual affiliation process undertaken by the NGBs which would help to capture any changes in the number and nature of sports clubs in the area. Other information that is already collected on a regular basis such as pitch booking records for local authority and other sites could be fed into these meetings.

The NGBs are also able to indicate any further performance quality assessments that have been undertaken within the study area.

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Checklists

In order for this Strategy to be signed off by the steering group, a Stage D Checklist: Develop the Strategy, is signed off.

Stage D <u>Checklist</u>: Develop the Strategy	Tick ✔	
	Yes	Requires Attention
Step 7: Develop the recommendations and action plan 1. Have a number of study area specific scenarios been looked at to help explore key issues and findings along with possible recommendations and actions?	✔	
2. Have any recommendations and actions regarding AGP provision taken into account the guidance in the 'Selecting the Right Artificial Surface' document and any NGB specific information?	✔	
3. Do the recommendations reflect the drivers, vision and objectives of the work?	✔	
4. Are the recommendations precise enough to enable the development of clear individual area, sport and site specific actions to help achieve them?	✔	
5. Have all relevant parties been engaged with the development of, and are signed up to the delivery of, the recommendations and actions?	✔	
6. Are the recommendations and actions clearly presented?	✔	
7. Has particular attention been paid to the situation at priority sites and those which are being significantly overplayed?	✔	
8. Have area, sport and site specific solutions been proposed to protect, enhance, and provide playing pitch provision to meet the current and future demand?	✔	
9. Has guidance on the future of any sites highlighted as being at risk been provided?	✔	
10. Do the recommendations and actions seek to make the best use of existing pitches?	✔	
11. Has the detriment and benefit of proposals to relocate provision been presented?	✔	
12. Has the level and type of any new playing pitch provision required been presented?	✔	
13. Has the importance of providing appropriate and fit for purpose ancillary facilities been highlighted in order to maximise the potential benefit to sport of any pitches?	✔	
14. Have the recommendations sought to ensure an adequate amount of spare capacity in the provision of accessible pitches with secured community use?	✔	
15. Does the PPS provide a steer as to the future of any spare capacity and any provision that may be genuinely surplus to requirements (paragraphs D12 to D15)?	✔	
16. Does the action plan cover the points listed in paragraph D17?	✔	
17. Does the action plan provide the most appropriate actions to improve provision in the study area rather than just those which the local authority can deliver?	✔	
18. Does the action plan represent an infrastructure plan for playing pitches with deliverable area, sport and site specific actions and projects?	✔	
Step 8: Write and Adopt the Strategy 1. Does the PPS document provide the reader with a clear understanding of the areas listed in paragraph D20?	✔	

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		Yes	Requires Attention
2.	Is it clear from the PPS document why the recommendations and actions have been included, how they are to be delivered and what they will achieve?	✓	
3.	Does the PPS document indicate how it should be used and applied in different areas and circumstances along with the benefits of doing so?	✓	
4.	Has the PPS document been subject to appropriate consultation?	✓	
5.	Do all members of the steering group and other relevant parties endorse the PPS and recognise its lead role in guiding the improvement of pitches in the study area?	✓	
6.	Has the PPS document been formally adopted by the local authority and is its status recognised across all relevant departments?	✓	

To help ensure the PPOSS is delivered and is kept robust and up-to-date, the steering group can refer to the new methodology Stage E Checklist: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up-to-date:

	Tick ✓	
Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up-to-date	Yes	Requires Attention
Step 9: Apply and deliver the strategy		
1. Are steering group members clear on how the PPS can be applied across a range of relevant areas?		
2. Is each member of the steering group committed to taking the lead to help ensure the PPS is used and applied appropriately within their area of work and influence?		
3. Has a process been put in place to ensure regular monitoring of how the recommendations and action plan are being delivered and the PPS is being applied?		
Step 10: Keep the strategy robust and up-to-date		
1. Has a process been put in place to ensure the PPS is kept robust and up-to-date?		
2. Does the process involve an annual update of the PPS?		
3. Is the steering group to be maintained and is it clear of its on-going role?		
4. Is regular liaison with the NGBs and other parties planned?		
5. Has all the supply and demand information been collated and presented in a format (i.e. single document that can be filtered accordingly) that will help people to review it and highlight any changes?		
6. Have any changes made to the Active Places Power data been fed back to Sport England?		

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

APPENDIX ONE: SPORTING CONTEXT

The following section outlines a series of national, regional and local policies pertaining to the study and which will have an important influence on the Strategy.

National context

The provision of high quality and accessible community outdoor sports facilities at a local level is a key requirement for achieving the targets set out by the Government and Sport England. It is vital that this strategy is cognisant of and works towards these targets in addition to local priorities and plans.

Department of Culture, Media and Sport Get Active: A Strategy for the Future of Sport and Physical Activity (2023)

The Government published its new strategy for sport in August 2023. The 2015 government sport strategy, Sporting Future: A New Strategy for a More Active Nation, was a fundamental re-framing of sport and physical activity in the UK. It set out five outcomes delivered by sport and physical activity:

‹ Physical wellbeing
‹ Mental wellbeing
‹ Individual development
‹ Social and community development
‹ Sustainable economic development

This new strategy builds on the foundations of Sporting Future and retains these five outcomes at its core. In order to measure its success in producing outputs which accord with these aims it has also adopted a series of three core priorities, with seven indicators to achieve these priorities as follows:

‹ **Being unapologetically ambitious in making the nation more active**
  ‹ Ensuring everyone is focused on increasing physical activity, meaning fewer inactive children, and narrowing the gap on inactivity where groups are not being reached, with visible progress across the country by 2030
  ‹ Focusing on evidence, data and metrics
  ‹ Setting the future direction for facilities and spaces where people can be active

‹ **Making sport and physical activity more inclusive and welcoming for all that everyone can have confidence that there is a place for them in sport**
  ‹ Helping the sector to be welcoming to all
  ‹ Improving how issues and concerns are dealt within the sector

‹ **Moving towards a more sustainable sector that is more financially resilient and robust**
  ‹ Supporting the sector to access additional, alternative forms of investment
  ‹ Working towards a more environmentally sustainable sector

Delivering against these priorities will help create a more active nation and a more sustainable sport sector. These aims are complementary; greater participation, stronger governance and confidence in the sector will help to drive investment, which in turn helps to attract new audiences. The vision is to make sport and physical activity accessible, resilient, fun and fair, for now and the years to come – for the benefit of individuals and the country.

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Sport England Uniting the Movement: Our 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport (2021-2031)

Sport and physical activity makes people happier and healthier, and movement is the lens through which we can make that happen. It does the same thing for our communities, with life-changing, sustainable benefits that have huge economic and social value. That's why Sport England wants sport and physical activity to be recognised as essential to help overcome these national challenges.

The Strategy recognises the need to invest in sport and physical activity through NGBs, other sports bodies and local sports clubs, organisations and community groups to increase engagement for different groups as part of our core purpose. It states that there is now a need to go further in promoting movement in general as the means to unlock sport and activity for some people.

There are deep-rooted inequalities in sport and physical activity, which means that there are people who feel excluded from being active because the right options and opportunities aren't there. These inequalities are at the very core of the Uniting the Movement.

Sport England plans on having a laser focus on tackling inequalities in all that it does, because providing opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind, and helping to remove the barriers to activity is vitally important.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out planning policies for England. It details how these changes are expected to be applied to the planning system. It also provides a framework for local people and their councils to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities.

The NPPF states the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It identifies that the planning system needs to focus on three themes of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is a key aspect for any plan-making and decision-taking processes. In relation to plan-making the NPPF sets out that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs.

The 'promoting healthy communities' theme identifies that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficiencies or surpluses in local areas should also be identified. This information should be used to inform what provision is required in an area.

As a prerequisite the NPPF states existing open space, sports and recreation buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- An assessment has been undertaken, which has clearly shown that the open space, buildings or land is surplus to requirements.
- The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.
- The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

In order for planning policies to be 'sound' local authorities are required to carry out a robust assessment of need for open space, sport and recreation facilities.

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The FA National Football Facilities Strategy (2018-28)

The Football Association's (FA) National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS) provides a strategic framework that sets out key priorities and targets for the national game (i.e., football) over a ten-year period.

The Strategy sets out shared aims and objectives it aims to deliver on in conjunction with The Premier League, Sport England and the Government, to be delivered with support of the Football Foundation.

These stakeholders have clearly identified the aspirations for football to contribute directly to nationally important social and health priorities. Alongside this, the strategy is clear that traditional, affiliated football remains an important priority and a core component of the game, whilst recognising and supporting the more informal environments used for the community and recreational game.

Its vision is: "Within 10 years we aim to deliver great football facilities, wherever they are needed"

£1.3 billion has been spent by football and Government since 2000 to enhance existing football facilities and build new ones. However, more is needed if football and Government's shared objectives for participation, individual well-being and community cohesion are to be achieved. Nationally, direct investment will be increased – initially to £69 million per annum from football and Government (a 15% increase on recent years).

The NFFS investment priorities can be broadly grouped into six areas, recognising the need to grow the game, support existing players and better understand the different football environments:

◂ **Improve 20,000 Natural Turf pitches,** with a focus on addressing drop off due to a poor playing experience;
◂ **Deliver 1,000 3G AGP 'equivalents'** (mix of 11v11 and small sided provision, including MUGAs - small sided facilities are likely to have a key role in smaller / rural communities and encouraging multi-sport offers), enhancing the quality of playing experience and supporting a sustainable approach to grass roots provision;
◂ **Deliver 1,000 changing pavilions/clubhouses,** linked to multi-pitch or hub sites, supporting growth (particularly in women and girls football), sustainability and providing a facility infrastructure to underpin investment in coaching, officials and football development;
Support access to flexible indoor spaces, including equipment and court markings, to support growth in futsal, walking football and to support the education and skills outcomes, exploiting opportunities for football to positively impact on personal and social outcomes for young people in particular;
◂ **Refurbish existing stock to maintain current provision,** recognising the need to address historic under-investment and issues with refurbishment of existing facilities;
◂ **Support testing of technology and innovation,** building on customer insight to deliver hubs for innovation, testing and development of the game.

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Local Football Facility Plans

To support in delivery of both the current and superseding FA National Game Strategy (NGS), the FA commissioned a nationwide consultancy project. A Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) has now been produced for every local authority across England. Each plan is unique to its area as well as being diverse in its representation.

The LFFP is strategically aligned to the National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS); a 10-year plan to change the landscape of football facilities in England. The NFFS represents a major funding commitment from the national funding partners (The FA, Premier League, DCMS, Football Foundation) to inform and direct an estimated one billion pounds of investment into football facilities over the next ten years.

Each LFFP will build upon PPOSS findings (where present and current) regarding the formal and affiliated game, to also include strategic priorities for investment across small sided football (recreational and informal including indoors). The LFFP will also incorporate consultation with groups outside of formal football, as well as underrepresented communities. This could include those which may be key partners with regards to football for behavioural change and groups which may be key drivers of FA NGS priorities around participation in the likes of women and girls' football, disability football and futsal.

LFFPs will identify key projects to be delivered and act as an investment portfolio for projects that require funding. As such, around 90% of all national football investment through the funding partners will be identified via LFFPs.

It is important to recognise that a LFFP is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential investment - it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. Consequently, it cannot be used in place of a PPOSS and is not an accepted evidence base for site change of use or disposal. A LFFP will, however, build on available/existing local evidence and strategic plans and may adopt relevant actions from a PPS and/or complement these with additional investment priorities.

The FA: Inspiring Positive Change Through Football (2024-28)[18]
The FA launched its new Strategy which aims to 'take English football forward, with clear focus on the biggest opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed'.

To achieve this, eight key strategic priorities are identified which include four 'Game Changer' objectives and four 'Drivers' objectives as detailed below. The strategy also outlines how The FA's plans to achieve these objectives.

Game Changers:
- Win tournaments
  - Develop pathways
  - Support elite players
  - Enhance environments
  - Collaborate and influence
- A game free from discrimination
  - Boost representation
  - Drive more inclusion
  - Tackle discrimination
- Equal opportunities for women & girls
  - Increase school participation
  - Increase club participation

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[18] FA Strategy 2024-2028: The Football Association

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- Enhance women's competitions
- Support female coaches and referees
- Transform the pitch landscape
  - Sustain and grow high-quality grass pitches
  - Deliver new 3G pitches
  - Support inclusivity accessibility and environmental sustainability of facilities

Drivers:
- Thriving community clubs
  - Develop club opportunities
  - Support the current and future generation of club leaders
  - Equip clubs to add long-term value to local communities
- World-class FA cups
  - Broaden commercial appeal
  - Evolve the Adobe Women's FA Cup format
- Participant led
  - Place participants at the centre of decision making
  - Create flexible models to meet participants needs
  - Provide digital tools to improve experiences
- Progressive governance
  - Support integration of women's and girls' football
  - Support governance of the NLS
  - Support our County Football Associations (CFAs)

The FA: Reaching Higher (2024-28)[19]

The FA's 2020-2024 strategy, 'Inspiring Positive Change', coincided with record growth across the sport, with more women and girls playing, coaching, officiating and supporting the flourishing professional game than ever before.

This strategy aims to build on the success achieved to date and strives to continue working to unlock the full potential of the women's and girls' game. The strategy outlines four strategic priorities as seen below.

1. **Build and Protect the Uniqueness of the Women's Game**: Continue to honour the history of women's football and recognise those who have contributed towards making it so unique, whilst ensuring the distinct qualities and unique culture of the women's game are valued and protected.
2. **Win a Major Tournament**: Continue to be world-leaders both on and off the pitch, developing players and building an inclusive talent pathway system to make football more equal and accessible at every level of the game, ensuring the England pathway and teams represent society.
3. **Build Robust, High-Quality Competition**: Create compelling competition structures and support clubs to develop to the appropriate level within the game, while enabling people to grow and develop within The FA's competition structures.
4. **Deliver Equal Opportunities for Women and Girls to Play**: Sustain growth in schools whilst tackling inequalities. Continue to grow the number of female teams and deliver vibrant league offers whilst extending and enhancing the sessional football offer. The ambition is for 90% of schools to deliver equal access for girls to play football in key stages two and three.

There are five golden threads which weave through each of the four strategic priorities and across all levels of the women's and girls' game, which will be instrumental for delivering the next phase of growth by 2028:

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[19] The FA Women's & Girls Football Strategy 2024-28

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1. **Female Health and Wellbeing:** Develop the game to support women and girls with their health and wellbeing needs, providing them with environments in which they can thrive.
2. **Safeguarding:** Support the evolution of an ever-safer culture across the women's and girls' game.
3. **Refereeing:** Grow and nurture a new generation of referees who are representative of our society.
4. **Coaching:** Support and develop brilliant coaches capable of unleashing every player's potential in a safe and inclusive game.
5. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Ensure the game is more reflective of our society.

Inspiring Generations – Cricket's Game-wide Strategy (2025 – 28)[1]

In October 2024 the ECB released its updated Inspiring Generations – Cricket's Game-wide Strategy (2025–28). Cricket in England and Wales has seen transformative growth since the publication of its previous strategy Inspiring Generation (2020-24). Its new strategy represents an evolution of its plans, however, many of its previous themes are still relevant. Its main purpose is to say 'Cricket is a game for me' through its vision:

- To become the most inclusive team sport
- To grow and unite the game
- Lead the game through global transformation

It aims to obtain this vision through six key objectives

- Make cricket diverse, inclusive and accessible
- Transform Women's and Girl's cricket
- Connect communities through play
- Inspire through winning England teams
- Support a thriving and sustainable men's and women's professional game
- Win the battle for attention

Underpinning these six ambitions are a series of enablers that cut-across multiple areas of the game, alongside Cricket's Core Values.

The Rugby Football Union Strategy 2021 Onwards
Through the strategy, the RFU aims to enrich lives, introduce more people to rugby union and develop the sport for future generations. The goal is to achieve this by strengthening and uniting rugby union in England and producing consistently winning England teams.

Eight key strategic priorities are identified with all investment decisions aligned to these. The strategy also outlines the RFU's core activities which form the backbone of its business operations and services to the game.

The priorities include four 'Game Objectives' and four 'Driving Objectives' as detailed below.

Game Objectives:
- Enjoyment – enable positive player experiences on and off the field
- Winning England – create the best possible high-performance system for England Rugby
- Welfare – enhance player welfare to protect and support the wellbeing of players

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[1]https://resources.ecb.co.uk/ecb/document/2024/10/22/19a925d7-3c92-4a36-8e7b-f49cb470377f/ECB-Inspiring-Generations-2025-2028.pdf

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◂ Flourishing rugby communities – support clubs to sustain and grow themselves and to reflect society

Driving Objectives:
◂ Diversity & Inclusion – drive rugby union in England to reflect the diversity of society
◂ Understand – build a deep understanding of players, volunteers and fans to shape the future of the game
◂ Connect – connect with and grow the rugby community and create exceptional experiences
◂ Commercial and operational excellence – ensure a sustainable and efficient business model delivered by an inspired workforce

England Hockey Strategy (2023 – 2028)

England Hockey's Facilities Strategy can be found here.

Aiming to make hockey more noticeable, relevant, and accessible to all, England Hockey have launched their new strategy 'Creating a Future for Our Game Together' on 3rd October.
The new strategy is a continued effort to re-engage with the current hockey community and to reach out to potential newcomers to introduce them to hockey.

Underpinning the strategy and of importance to the hockey community are four values, "collaborate inclusively, care for people and places, play with spirit win with grace and resilient in everything we do".

The strategy is the culmination of two years consultation with various stakeholders across the sport and larger sporting sector. Hockey will be guided by five key objectives over the next five years.

1. Lead Positive Change: to create and champion positive change within the community by broadening and widening the engagement of the sport and making it more ethnically and culturally diverse.
2. Meaningful Growth: to make sure that our sport thrives and grows into the future, we want to nurture a love of hockey within a more diverse group of young players and communities to reflect society.
3. Drive Visible Impact: to produce and release high-quality, engaging content that shares the love of the game, captures the passion, builds a deep connection and amplifies the voices of the hockey community with new and existing participants.
4. Responsible Leadership: to provide forward thinking, compassionate and inclusive leadership. Leadership that fosters trust within physically and psychologically safe environments and which puts players, the community and sustainability at heart of every decision.
5. Inspirational International Success: inspirational club and national teams delivering podium success in Europe and on the world stage, underpinned by a thriving talent system and domestic game.

The strategy aligns with Sport England's 'Uniting the movement' strategy and UK Sport's Powering Success, Inspiring Impact' strategic plan.

Rugby Football League – National Community Facilities Strategy (2024 – 2030)

The RFL has developed a new National Facilities Strategy which will guide investment into the game from 2024 through to 2030. The proposed investment package aligned to the Strategy will not only transform facilities, but also bolster the sport's social impact, reinforcing

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its position as a vital part of the nation's sporting and social fabric. The four focus areas of the Strategy are:

◄ **Security of Tenure** – allowing clubs to plan for the long-term
◄ **Accessible and Inclusive Facilities** – providing suitable facilities for all and creating safe spaces for the wider community
◄ **Adequate and Appropriate Pitch Provision** – investment both in playing surfaces, and in upskilling a volunteer workforce to maintain them
◄ **Sustainability** – both environmental and financial

The Strategy will deliver on the four focus areas by delivering against a set of five recommendations which are set within the Strategy and are detailed below. These recommendations reflect the wider strategic aspirations across the sport and are for the RFL to work to deliver.

◄ **Focus Community Clubs**
  ◄ Ensure the RFL has sufficient capacity and resource to deliver the recommendations identified within this Strategy to support its community clubs.
  ◄ Ensure all community clubs have the knowledge and resource to provide good quality grass pitches.
  ◄ Supporting clubs to have good quality changing and social facilities which can support the scale of need at each club. These must be inclusive for all participants and benefit target user groups such as women and girls' participants.
  ◄ Ensure clubs can accommodate a sustainable operational programme for clubhouses to ensure the longevity of provision.
  ◄ Work with clubs and key partners to increase the number of clubs with secured tenure of their club facilities.
  ◄ Develop a dedicated funding programme which is specifically aimed at supporting clubs to gain security of tenure at their respective site.
  ◄ Highlight success stories and best practices from community clubs to inspire others and showcase the positive impact of these efforts.
◄ **Deliver positive social and environmental impact**
  ◄ Support clubs through training and advice on how to promote facilities for non-rugby league purposes.
  ◄ Work with Active Partnerships across England to enable higher usage and activation of rugby league assets for non-rugby league activity.
  ◄ Prioritise clubs for wellbeing hubs which may offer the widest social benefit (relative to local need) – particularly those in high deprivation areas.
  ◄ Use the activation of club facilities as a prerequisite to capital funding for club house improvements / new development.
  ◄ Collaborative working with sports partners and key agencies
◄ **Collaborative working with sports partners and key agencies**
  ◄ Ensure continued working with Sport England and National Governing Bodies of other sports to capitalise on shared investment opportunities.
  ◄ Work with the Football Foundation to maximise Multi-Sport funding opportunities – utilising the framework provided in this Strategy as the baseline of shared investment.
  ◄ Work closely with Active Partnerships in areas with high club densities to establish opportunities for pitch access via the Open School Facilities programme.

◄ **Technological solutions**
  ◄ Ensure the RFL gathers greater levels of information from clubs via affiliation. To include (e.g.) security of tenure information and an integrated self-assessment audit of community facilities.

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- Continue expanding the use and application of PitchPower so all clubs can self-assess provision and support clubs to make positive contributions to improving the quality of grass pitches.
- Promote technological solutions which progress clubs into being more sustainable, energy efficient and ensure their long-term viability as community assets.
- Create a platform or resource hub where clubs can access information on funding opportunities, facility management, and sustainable operational practices.
- **Working with Charitable Community Organisations and Wheelchair Rugby League**
  - Develop an investment package to support the operational delivery of professional club foundation led wheelchair activity focusing on storage and logistical solutions.
  - Prioritise capital investment into community club sites which also accommodate professional club foundations as tenants for community Rugby League activity.
  - Begin work on the feasibility of developing a national wheelchair centre which includes exploring partnership opportunities with other sports to maximise multisport value and return on investment.
  - Consult with professional club foundations, where possible, to understand the need for 3G access and work to ascertain sufficient access hours during peak times of need.

Herts Sport and Physical Activity Partnership

This is the active partnership area in which East Hertfordshire is located. The Partnership's vision is to 'strategically and collaboratively improve the lives of the people of Hertfordshire, by using the power of sport and physical activity to tackle inequality and disadvantage'. It is one of 43 active partnerships across England and is funded by Sport England to locally deliver the Uniting the Movement Strategy. Key insights which informed its Strategic Plan 2022-2027 are:

- The need for a joined-up approach between schools and community sport.
- The Covid-19 Pandemic affecting the most disadvantaged communities.
- Opportunities to use sport and physical activity to tackle the number of long-term health conditions and wider societal issues.
- Widening inequality gaps.
- The need for well-designed spaces to increase physical activity levels and improve mental health.

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EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Bowls England: Fit for the Future (2021-2026)

Bowls England's new Strategy: 'Fit For The Future' frames an exciting course for the sport. The five-year plan has been designed with the ultimate goal of getting more people playing & enjoying bowls. It sets out its vision for the sport, how it plans to achieve its objectives and what success looks like in 2026.The priorities that will get it the target of 1 million bowls experiences per year by 2026 are:

- Building the brand of bowls by increasing focus on international & top domestic bowls, and utilizing opportunities such as Birmingham 2022 to achieve larger media coverage;
- Ensuring the sport is truly accessible to all by offering different formats of the game which suit all time constraints, as well as driving more people to clubs in new ways;
- Creating positive playing experiences for everyone who steps on the green, both for casual and competitive players, as well as growing our events calendar and introducing a Performance Pathway
- Putting volunteers first, as the lifeblood of our sport, by increasing our support for clubs in order to empower them to thrive;
- Leading the sport with purpose by developing our Governance structures, diversifying our revenue streams, and work collaboratively with all the sport's key stakeholders.

England Netball

In November 2021 England Netball launched a 10-year 'Adventure Strategy' for the game with a new brand identity for the organisation.

England Netball's 'Adventure Strategy' shares a purpose-led ambition for the game, to build on the momentum the sport has seen in recent years and take it
to new heights for the decade ahead.

The 'Adventure Strategy' outlines the intention to:

- accelerate the development and growth of the game at every level, from grassroots to the elite,
- elevate the visibility of the sport, and
- lead a movement to impact lives on and beyond the court.

At the heart of its purpose, England Netball, with its proud and unique female foundations, will remain dedicated to increasing opportunities for women and girls to play the game as a priority, working tirelessly to address the gender participation gap in sport that has widened since the global pandemic.

Underpinned by years of engaging with and delivering netball for female communities, the organisation pledges to understand, support and nurture women and girls more deeply at every life stage, at every age.

The organisation is also committed to opening the sport to new audiences in every community, so netball better represents the rich diversity of the country it proudly represents, and ensures the sport continues to evolve and adapt to thrive in the future, helping to create a truly inclusive sport for all where everyone can belong, flourish and soar. A recent partnership announcement with England Men's and Mixed Netball Association (EMMNA) to help develop and grow male participation in the game, supports this commitment as England Netball pledges to promote difference and embrace the opportunity to make the sport a possibility within everyone's reach.

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Transforming netball for children and young people is a strategic priority to protect the future of the sport. Working with schools and policy makers to extend physical literacy within, and after the school day with a focus on netball specific provision will pave the way for greater community participation. The organisation will accelerate the expansion of its Bee Netball programme for young children, whilst supporting teens and young women to stay in the game to keep them physically active and in the game for life.

The elite game is in focus too, with the ambition for the Vitality Roses to be the best female sports team in the world, supporting the national team to consistently win on the world stage, with an outstanding talent pathway in place to fuel sustainable successes on court, and setting new standards for netball. The professionalisation of the game over the next decade is a priority, focusing on growing world-leading international and domestic competitions and events, and creating more careers in the sport.

Grounded in feedback from the Netball Family, with over 3,000 members and stakeholders consulted as part of the strategic process to understand what they wanted netball to 'look like' in 2031, the plan is aspirational and ambitious and sees the organisation pledge to continue to be a trailblazer for women's sport as it embarks on its new adventure.

Facility development

The facility development aspirations stated within the Strategy are to:-

◄ Take a fresh look at the spaces required to support the sport, creating accessible places in every community to allow netball to be incorporated into how and where women and girls live their lives;
◄ Protect, enhance, and extend the network of homes that house the sport at a local and regional level;
◄ Develop an elite domestic professional competition that supports full time athletes underpinned by a world class infrastructure and environments.
◄ For England Netball to achieve its ambitions to make the game accessible to wider audiences and in every community, it encourages Local Authorities to adopt policies within Playing Pitch Strategies and Built Facilities Strategies that:-
◄ Facilitates informal netball activity within neighbourhood multi use games areas for example by installing combined outdoor basketball and netball goals and art courts in Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs).
◄ Incorporates the cultural and health needs of women and girls within any designs for improved or new facilities.
◄ Protects and enhances netball facilities within all Primary and Secondary School environments so they offer a positive first experience of the sport for students and the wider community during out of school hours.
◄ Supports the installation of floodlights on outdoor courts to increase all year-round use.
◄ Facilitates the development of netball growth programmes, club training and competition within public leisure centres.
◄ Where appropriate, supports the development of netball homes and performance environments that enable local women and girls to pursue a career in netball as an elite athlete, official, coach or administrator.

EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

The purpose of this document is to set out our long term vision for athletics facilities in England. Facilities form a vital component of the overall England Athletics strategy.

The development, protection and enhancement of facilities will support our strategic plan and help England Athletics contribute to the delivery of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Sporting Futures: A New Strategy for Sport and Sport England's strategy Towards an Active Nation. Appropriate facilities help to attract and inspire new participants and provide the foundation and focus for a significant proportion of the England Athletics family.

The England Athletics Strategic Plan notes that the sport increasingly needs to become financially sustainable and that a business-like and innovative approach is a vital component of its future success. Facilities are fundamental, but they are also expensive to create and to maintain. The sport therefore faces a significant challenge to develop, improve and maintain facilities, most of which are currently operated and funded by third parties.

This strategy sets out a challenge to all those involved with the delivery of the sport to be innovative and business like in the operation and development of facilities at a time of financial challenge, as it aims "To create an innovative and inspiring network of sustainable athletic facilities, with the capacity to meet both current and future demand across England".

EAST HERTS COUNCIL REPORT

EXECUTIVE

DATE: 18 November 2025

Report by: Cllr Carl Brittain, Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

Report title: Disposal of Council-owned Assets Surplus to Requirements

Ward(s) affected: Sawbridgeworth, Hertford Kingsmead

Summary

This report identifies assets for disposal and seeks approval for disposal by the most appropriate means.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE:

That Executive agree that:

(A)   land at Harlow Mill, Sawbridgeworth be disposed of for best consideration, with authority to determine the method and management of the disposal delegated to the Director for Communities

(B)   land in Hertford be disposed of for best consideration, with authority to determine the method of disposal delegated to the Director for Communities and confirmation to proceed to actual disposal delegated to the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, acting in consultation with the Director for Communities.

1.0   Proposal

1.1   To dispose of two land assets by the sales method best able to achieve best consideration for the council. Site plans and further information are attached at the EXEMPT Appendix A.

2.0   Background

2.1 In support of the Medium-Term Financial Plan, the council has embarked on a programme of disposal of assets which are of no or very limited value to the council by virtue of them not generating any income and/or representing a financial liability in terms of maintenance or other costs subject to disposal not impairing any adjoining council asset.

2.2 The Executive first considered a list of assets at their meeting on 1 October 2024, this report now presents the next tranche of assets that have been identified for potential disposal.

2.3 Generation of capital receipts enables the council to pay down debt and thus relieve it of interest payments and the need to make a minimum revenue provision (MRP). For every £1m of debt repaid, the council makes a revenue saving around £85,000 in combined interest and MRP avoided.

2.4 The estimated value of the assets proposed for disposal in this report is presented in the EXEMPT Appendix A.

3.0 Reasons

Land at Harlow Mill

3.1 The land in question was acquired by the War Department in 1939 under CPO to place septic tanks on to dispose of sewage from war department camp. The land was never used for this intended function and passed via Sawbridgeworth Urban District Council into the East Herts Council's ownership. The site contains a large number of trees and is overgrown and inaccessible. The site has limited access from Harlow Road.

3.2 The site may have limited value or opportunity for development. Of note, it is not adjacent to any of the Gilston Garden Villages sites. Interest in acquisition, however, may come from adjoining owners and farmers who may wish to increase their landholdings for agricultural purposes.

3.3 This site is isolated from any other council landholdings such that its disposal would not sever any large council landholding nor impair the value of any adjacent council owned site. Furthermore, a sale or reduction in the ownership of this land would save the council from the liability of ongoing inspections and tree surveys.

Land in Hertford (further information in Appendix A - exempt by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 – 'Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)'.

3.4 The Land in Hertford is owned by East Herts Council but it is subject to two long leasehold interests, at very low returns to the council. Both leaseholds were granted in the late 1960s. The two buildings on the land are now at the end of their useful lives.

3.5 The tenants would like to work in partnership with East Herts to sell the site for best consideration. Council officers have negotiated an approach to disposal that would see the splitting the purchase price between the two leaseholds and the council on terms acceptable to the council. Proceeds from disposal of this site could be considered as a 'windful bonus' for the council given there was no indication before now that the leaseholds wished to consider any alternative to seeing out the remaining c50 years of their leases. This means that the council has not previously anticipated any capital value being derived from this site the end of the leases.

3.6 Given the unusual nature of this disposal, that is, that the council would be acting partnership with two leaseholds, and thus the inherent greater complexity when compared with other disposals, the recommendation in this report is that, confirmation of the actual disposal be delegated to the Executive Member for Finance, acting in consultation with the Director for Communities.

3.7 Disposal of this site would not sever a larger contiguous landholding nor would disposal impair the value of any adjacent council owned site. A reduction in the ownership of this land would save the council from the liability of ongoing road and street lighting

maintenance as the access road to these sites are not public highway and are maintained at East Herts expense but would be within the area it is proposed to dispose of.

4.0 Options

4.1 Retain some or all of the assets discussed in this report. NOT RECOMMENDED as it is in the council's interest to dispose of underused assets and/or those which are a financial liability subject to the this not impairing the value of any adjacent assets.

5.0 Risks

5.1 As with any property disposal, there is a risk that an acceptable sales price cannot be achieved. This risk will be mitigated by disposing of each site in line with officers' and their agents' professional advice and expertise as, indeed, the council is obliged to achieve best consideration.

5.2 Also, as with any sale there is the risk that the neighbours or close community may not welcome a change in ownership and/or use of the land or buildings. Any alternative use would be subject to planning approval which affords interested parties the opportunity to raise their objections or concerns.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 Should members approve for disposal any/all of the assets presented in this report, prior to actual disposal ward members of the wards affected would be notified and briefed. As noted above, any change of use would be subject to the appropriate planning permission.

Community Safety

None arising directly from this report.

Data Protection

None arising directly from this report.

Equalities

None arising directly from this report.

Environmental Sustainability

Any future works, redevelopment or change of use of any of the assets covered in this report would be subject to planning permission and building control. This is likely to maximise environmental sustainability improvements.

Financial

Finance colleagues have been consulted about these disposals. As noted in the report, every £1m of receipts would enable the paying down of a commensurate level of debt and thus relieve the council of around £85,000 of revenue liabilities. Future disposals are being modelled in the council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

Health and Safety

Disposing of surplus assets or aging assets relieves the council of any future health and safety responsibilities, which are only set to increase as the condition of those assets deteriorates.

Human Resources

None arising directly from this report.

Human Rights

None arising directly from this report.

Legal

For any site approved by the Executive for disposal, the Director for Communities shall work with colleagues to ensure an appropriate means of disposal such that s123(2) is adhered to, that is, the council will **not** dispose of any site '*for consideration less than the best that can be reasonably obtained'.*

Ward(s) affected: Sawbridgeworth, Hertford Kingsmead

7.0   Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1   Appendix A - Part II exempt information relating to each proposed
       disposal.

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