

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.

THE PROPOSITION (MHCLG CRITERION 1)

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 engagement¹ 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

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

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

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.

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:

- **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

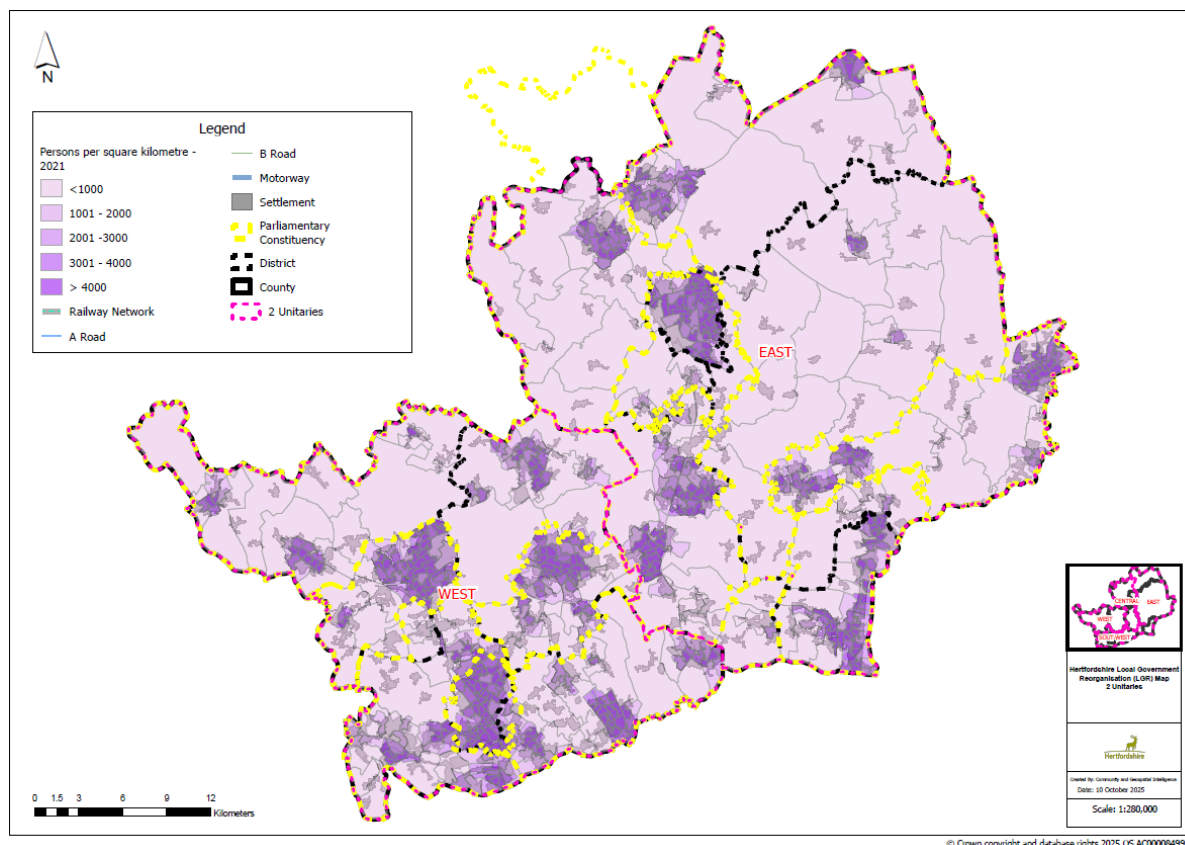
The 2UA model mitigates key risks associated with reorganisation:

- **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

² Source: 2UA map (HCC)

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

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.

³ Source: Hertfordshire Economic Strategy 2025-20235

⁴ Source: ONS, Regional Gross Value Added (Balanced by Industry)

Table 2⁵

	West Hertfordshire	East Hertfordshire
District areas covered	Dacorum, Hertsmeire, 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 km ²)	1,043	562
Parliamentary constituencies	Harpenden and Berkhamsted; Hemel Hempstead; Hertsmeire; 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 overstressing 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 floorspace⁶ (over **771,000 sq. m. lost** county-wide) and supporting place-based regeneration. The choices made in a

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*

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.

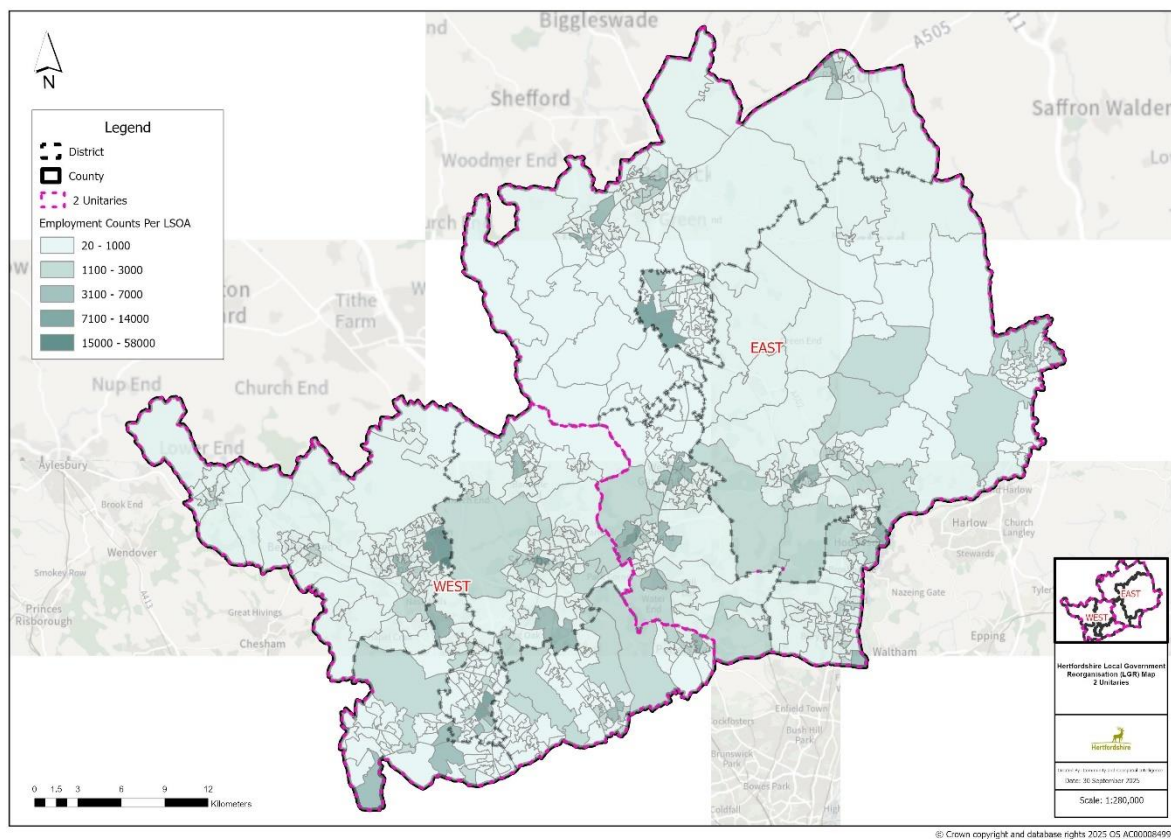
The employment density map (Map 2) provides further evidence for the 2UA model by visualising job concentrations across Hertfordshire. It shows high-density employment zones in Watford, Hemel Hempstead and St Albans in the West, and more dispersed but significant clusters in Stevenage, Welwyn Garden 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

MAP 2: Employment Density⁷



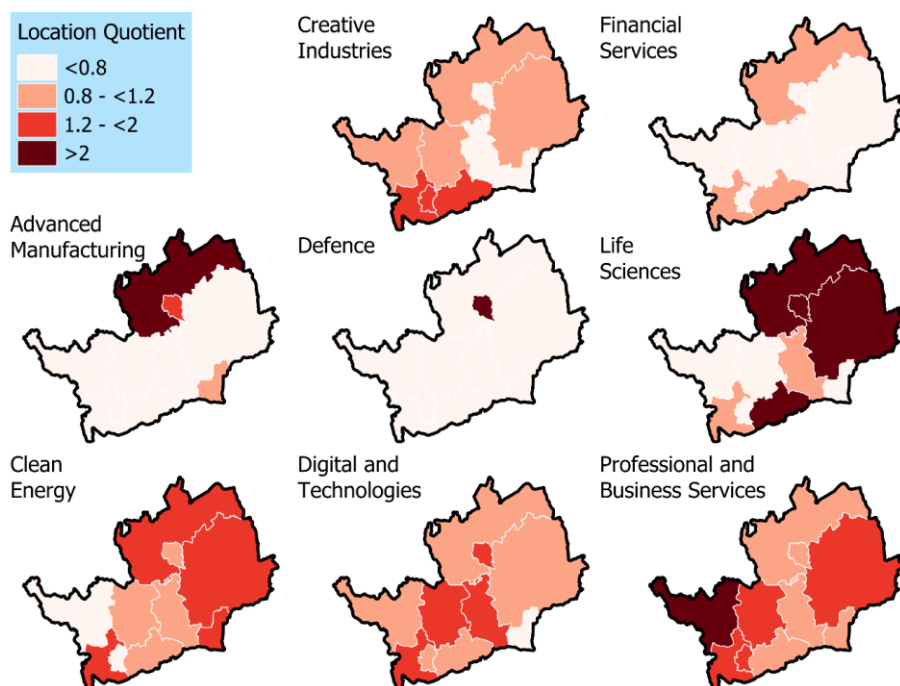
This model allows each authority to respond to these dynamics through locally tailored transport and infrastructure planning. It also supports strategic coherence by ensuring shared planning led by the Mayoral Strategic Authority, while allowing each unitary to focus on its distinct economic geography.

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.

⁷ Source: HCC

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 figures⁹, 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

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)

& 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 Acorn¹⁰ categories. As shown in the Acorn breakdown:

- **Luxury Lifestyles & Established Affluence:**
 - West: 38%
 - East: 27%
 - Herts average: 32%
- **Stretched Society & Low Income Living:**
 - West: 19%
 - East: 23%
 - 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 2¹¹: Hertfordshire Personas

Persona	West	East	Herts
Percentage of households			
Highly Affluent Maturity	18%	13%	16%
Financially Secure Maturity	3%	4%	3%

¹⁰ Source: LGR Acorn Analysis, September 2025 (HCC)

¹¹ Source: LGR Acorn Analysis: Breakdown of Hertfordshire Personas, September 2025 (HCC)

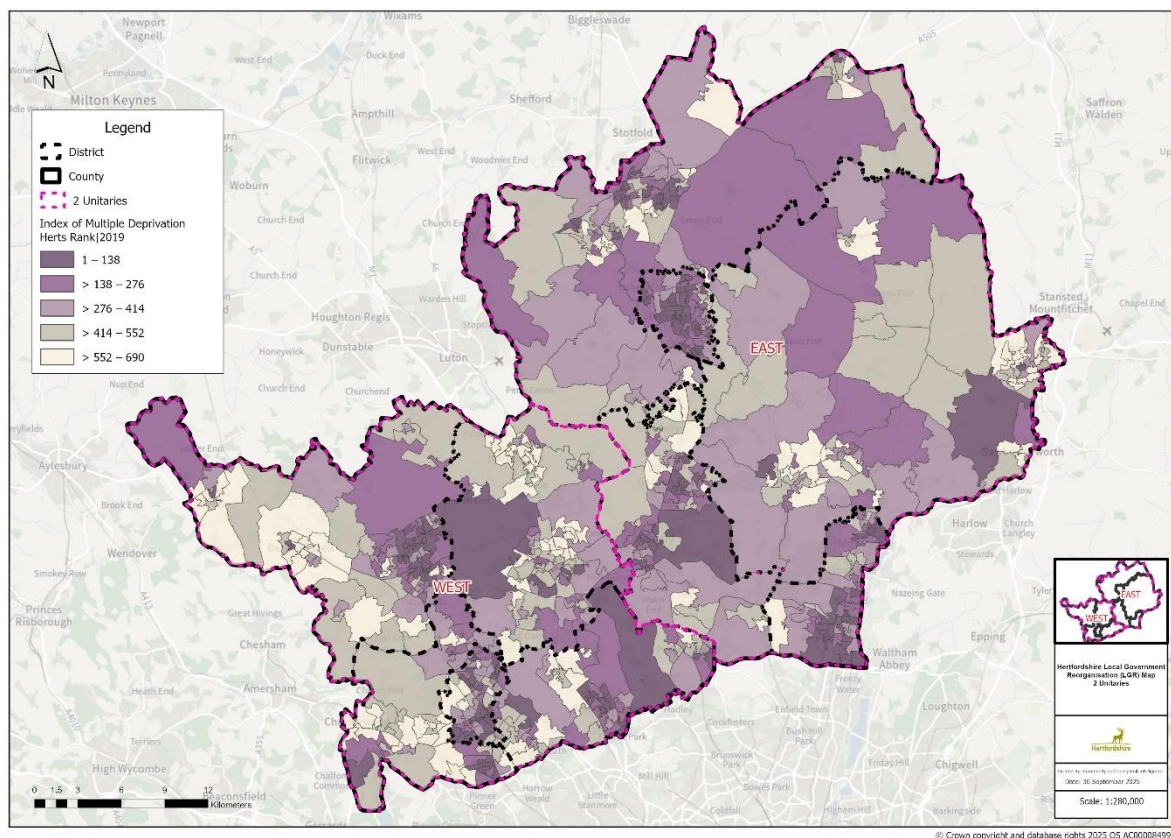
Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

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.

DeprivationMAP 3¹²: 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.

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.

¹³ Source: Local Government Statistical Selection Model (HCC)

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

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 3¹⁴: Distribution of Key Infrastructure and Service Assets across Hertfordshire (2023)

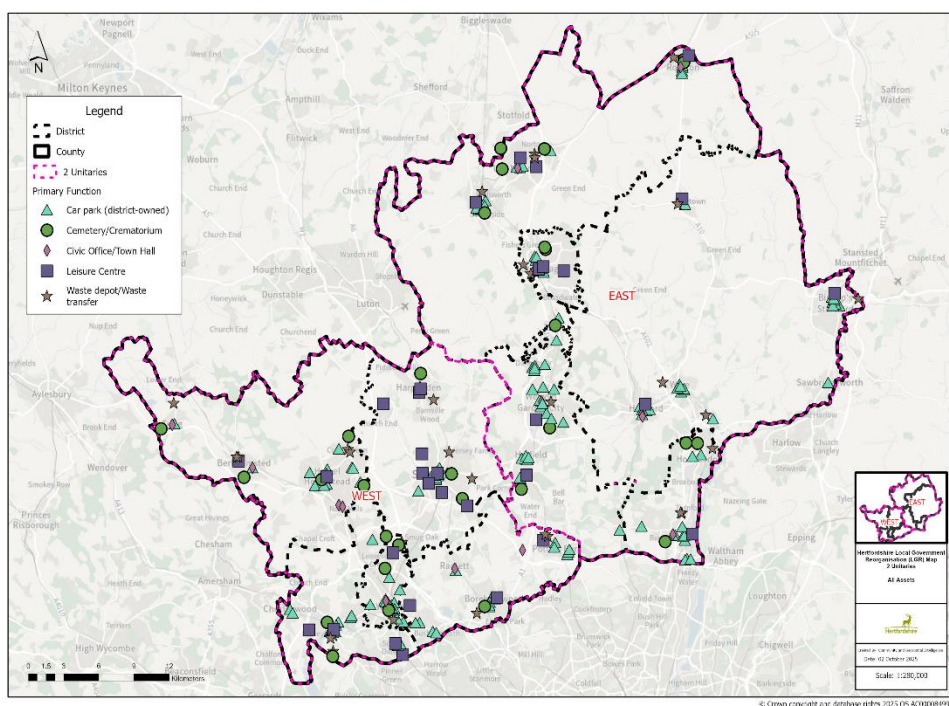


Table 4¹⁵

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

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 5¹⁶

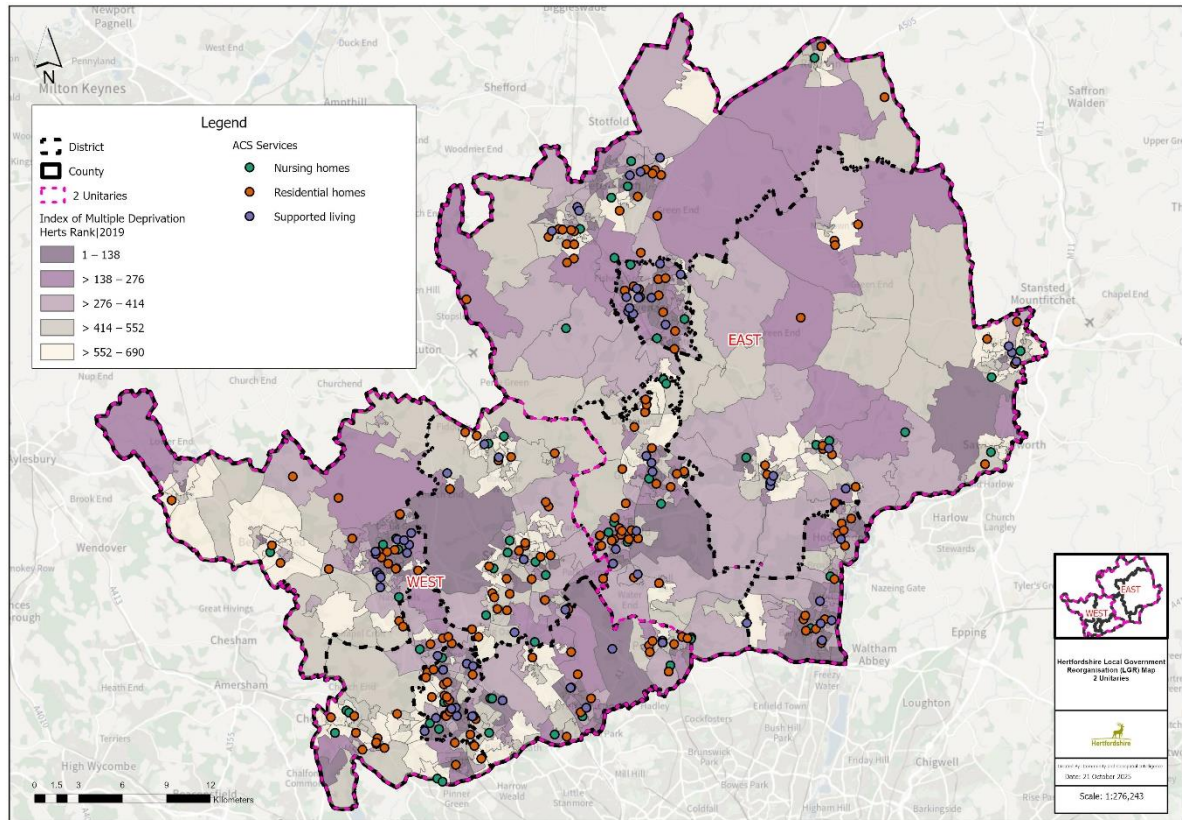
Services Demands	West	East
Adults in Long Term Nursing	433	483
Adults in Long Term Residential	928	940
Adults in Long Term Homecare	1,729	1,834
Number of Adult Care Services (ACS) Assessments (Adults)	8,296	7,205
Number of Residential/Nursing settings	132	117
Number of Homecare/Supported Living settings	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.

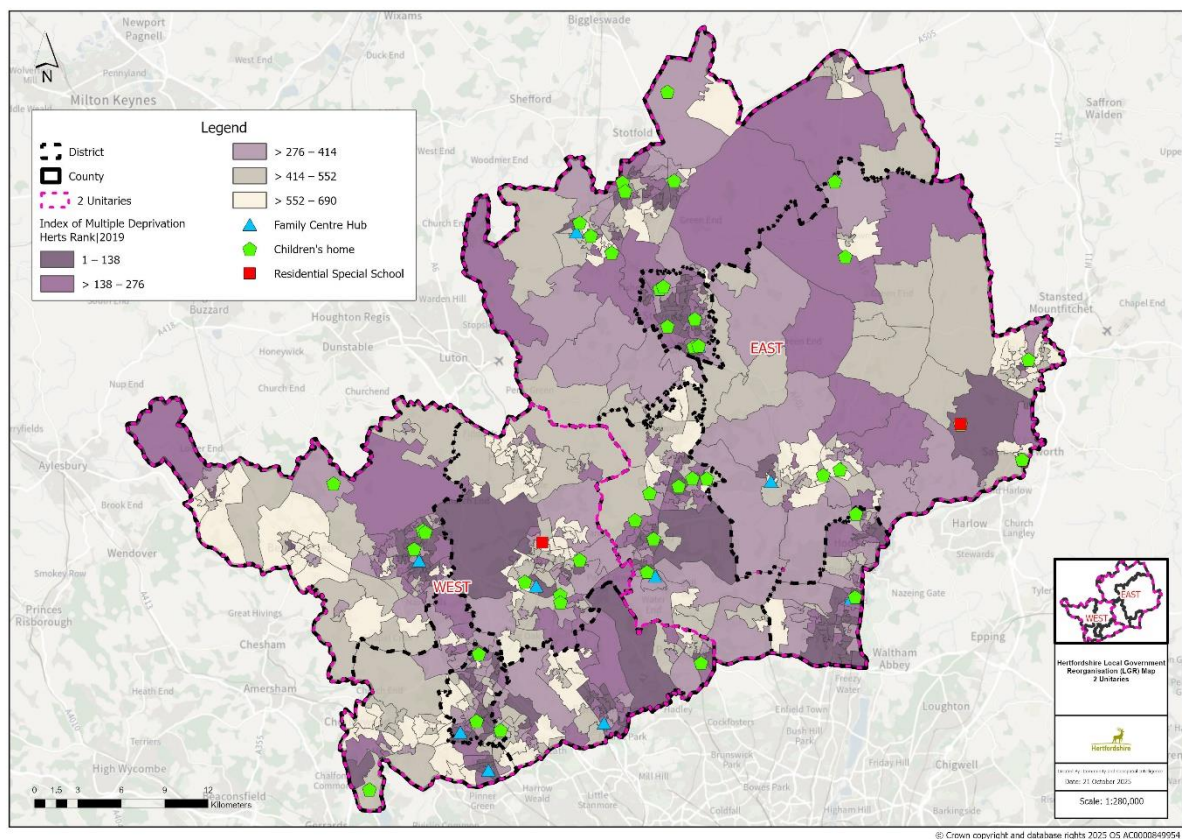
Map [4]: Alignment of Adult Social Care service points with deprivation

¹⁶ Source: Local Government Reorganisation Statistical Selection Model (HCC)

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

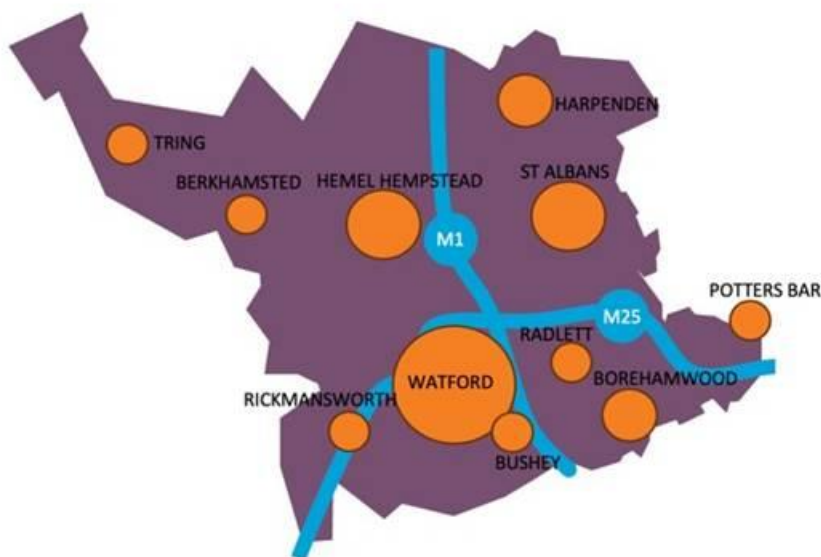


Map [5]: Alignment of Childrens Social Care service points with deprivation



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 96,000 people**) 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

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.

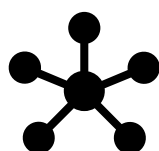
West Herts College plays a pivotal role in supporting the construction and clean growth sectors through its specialist programmes in modern methods of construction (MMC), engineering, and building services. The college offers apprenticeships and technical training aligned to the needs of Herts IQ and 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

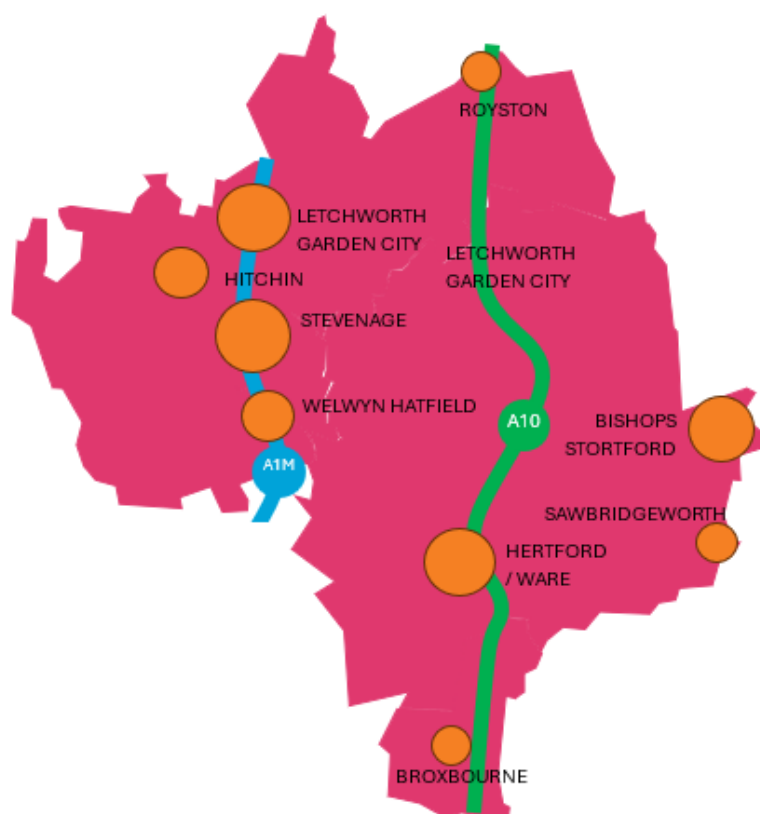
Major companies:
Bourne Leisure;
Costco; Elstree
Studios; Imagination
Technologies; JD
Wetherspoons;
Majestic Wines; Sky
Studios Elstree; TJX
Europe; Warner Bros.
Studios Leavesden;

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):** Luton
Airport; M1; M25,
West Coast Mainline
Chilterns National
Landscape (AONB)
including Ashridge Estate
and Tring Park;
Cassiobury Park;
Verulamium Park;
Whippendell Wood (Site
of Special Scientific
Interest);

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.

¹⁸ Source: Local Government Reorganisation Statistical Selection Model (HCC)

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**

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

- **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.

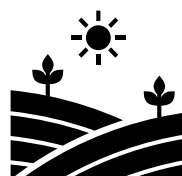
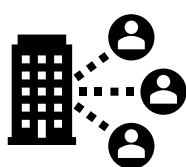
The University of Hertfordshire (UH) is a particularly significant anchor institution in East Hertfordshire. The **Hertfordshire Civic University Partnership** between UH and Hertfordshire County Council is a formal agreement designed to build and maintain a strategic and purposeful relationship between 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.

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



<p>Sectors: Advanced Manufacturing; AI and Data Centres, Defence; Life Sciences</p> <p>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;</p>	<p>Education/anchor institutions: University of Hertfordshire; North Herts College; Hertford Regional College; Oaklands College; Royal Veterinary College</p> <p>Major companies: Airbus Defence and Space; Computacenter; Eisai; Google; GSK; Johnson Matthey; MBDA; Roche; Willmott Dixon</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Connectivity: London Stansted (East); London Luton (West); A10, A1M, M25, East Coast Mainline</p>
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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.

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

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

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

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

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

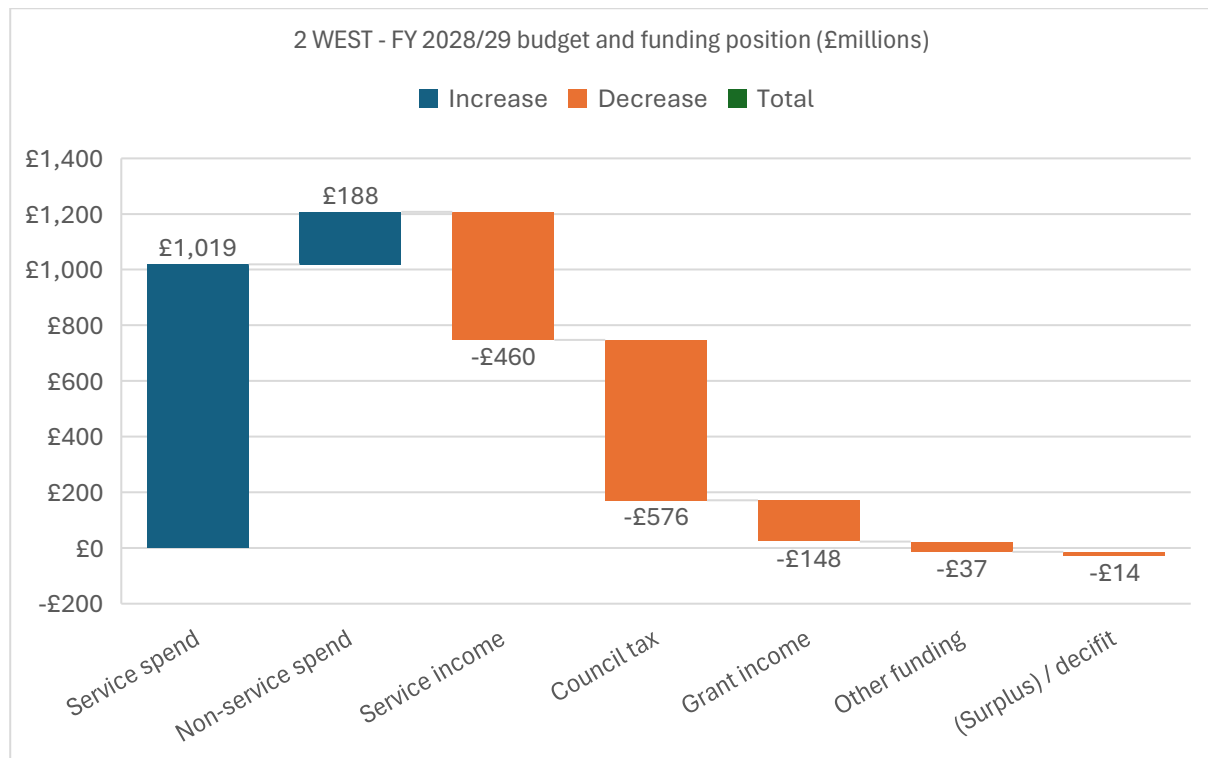
This summary scorecard shows the overall aggregate performance of the two unitary option. A further breakdown of the performance of individual authorities within this option is included later in this section. On an overall basis the headline results are:

- 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.

New unitary authorities – modelled budgets and funding position for year one (2028/29)

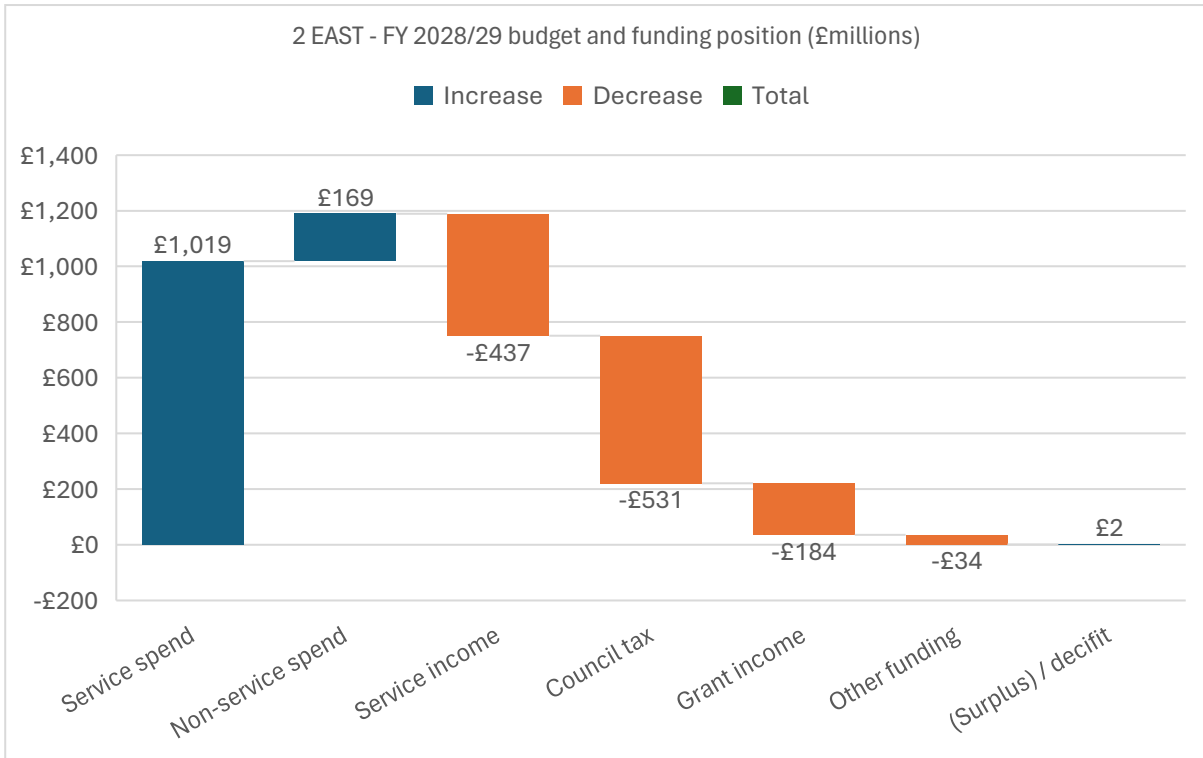
The graphs below show the anticipated year one budget for each proposed new unitary authority, excluding the initial costs and savings from LGR. On current assumptions and to different extents, new authorities will begin with opening surpluses or deficits based on modelled demand and service expenditure 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

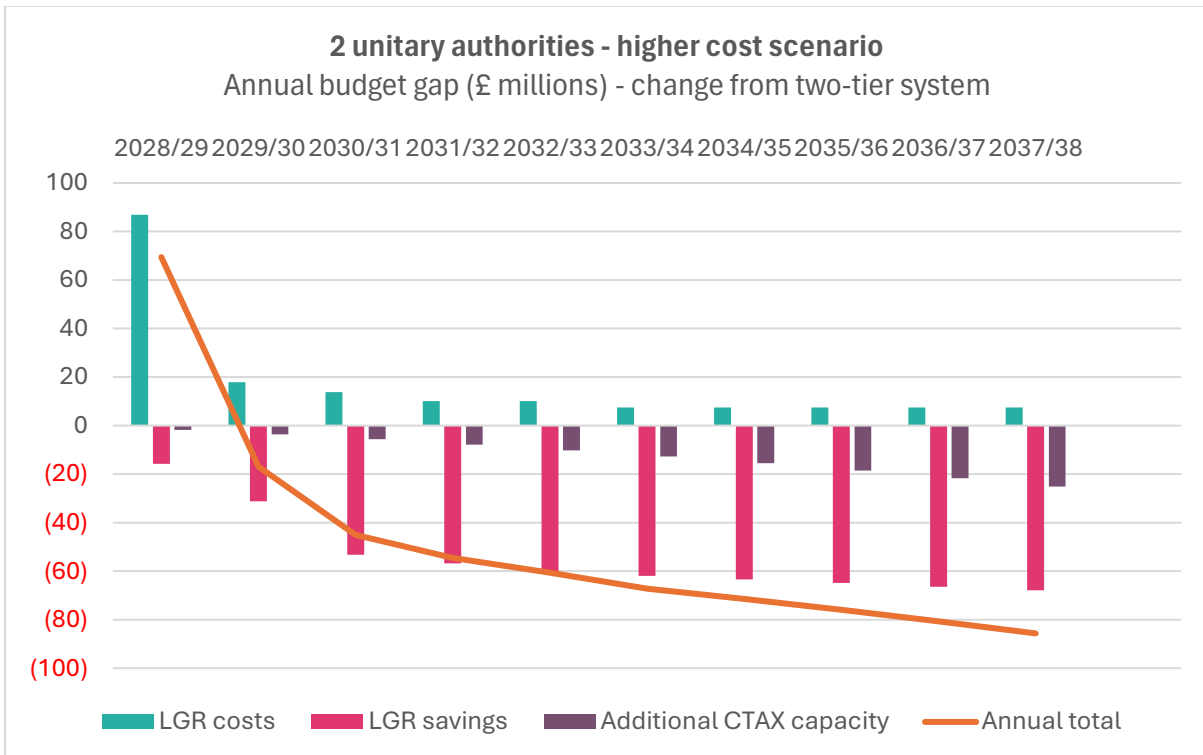


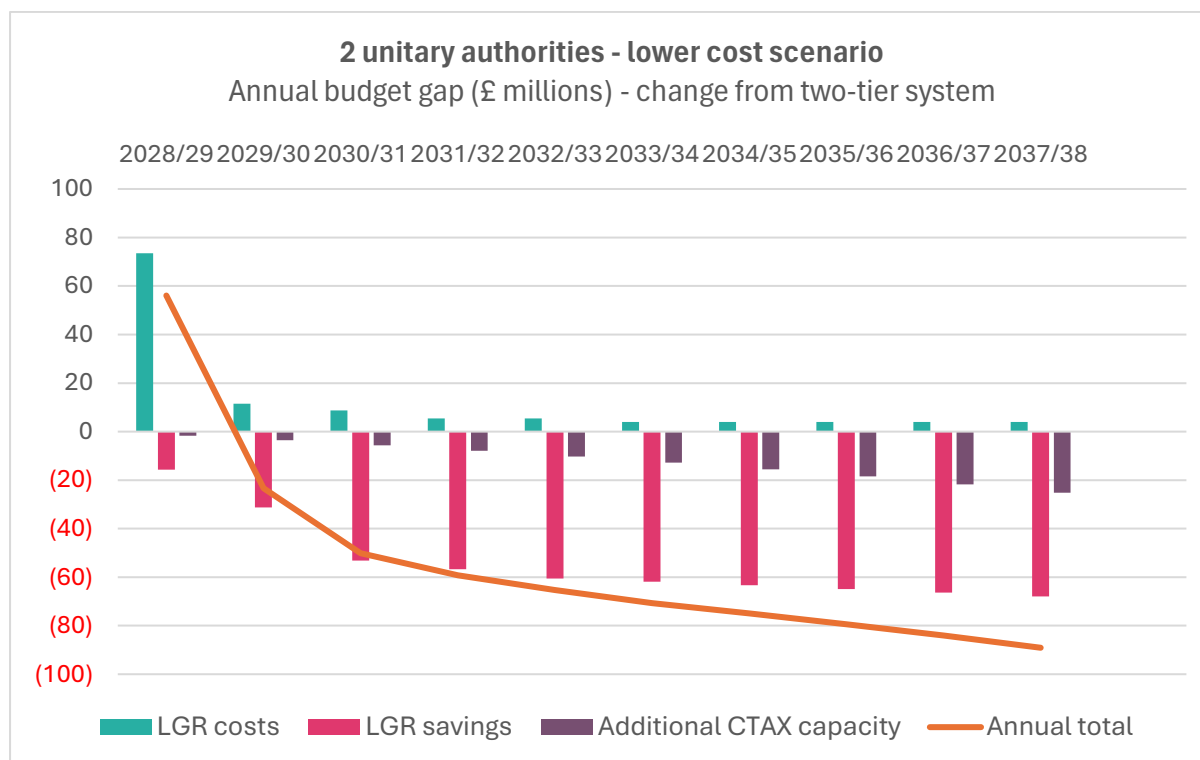
Year 1 budget and funding – 2 East

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Performance against the two-tier baseline over time

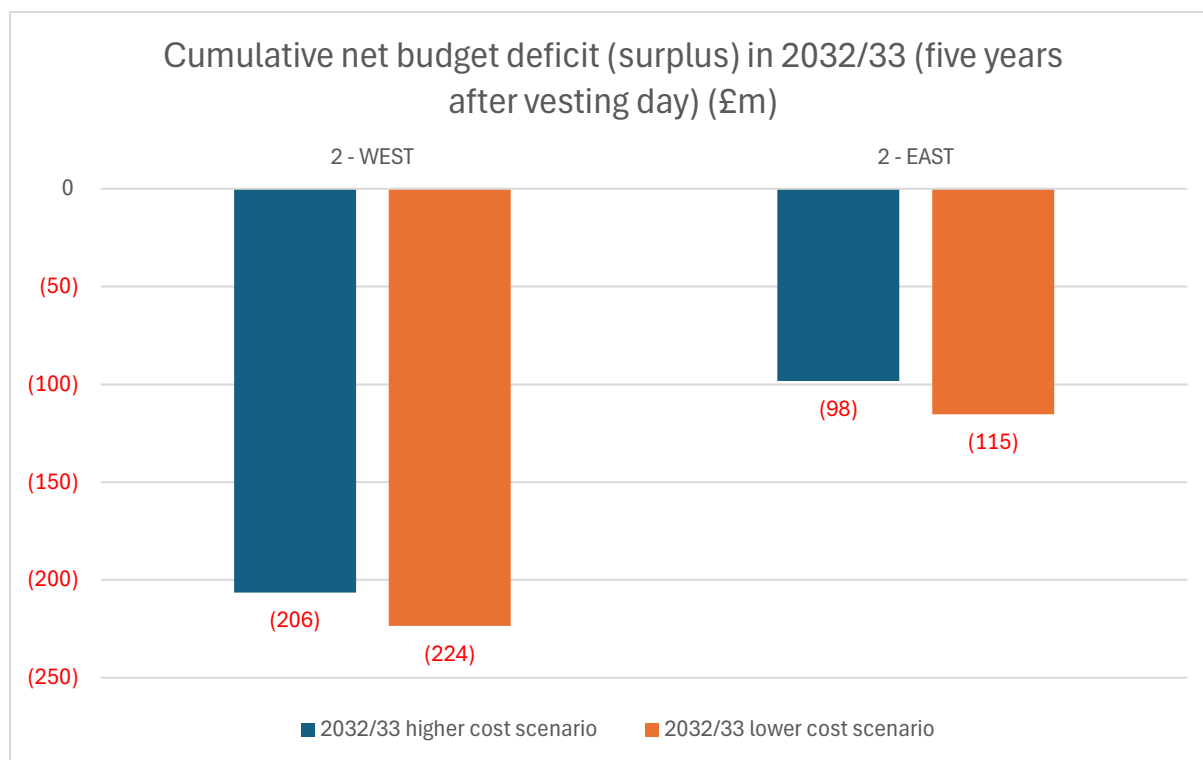




These two graphs are shown in-year rather than on a cumulative basis and show the in-year difference from the two-tier baseline that is delivered by LGR under this option. The modelled two-tier baseline is shown as zero, and the estimated impacts of LGR are shown as increases or (decreases) from that 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



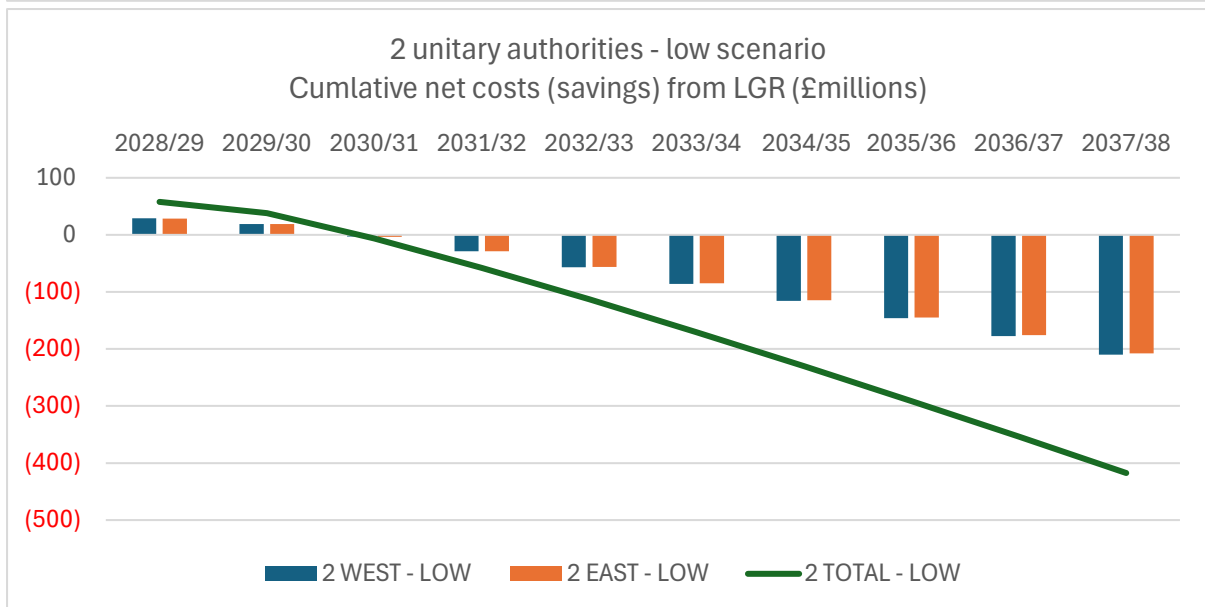
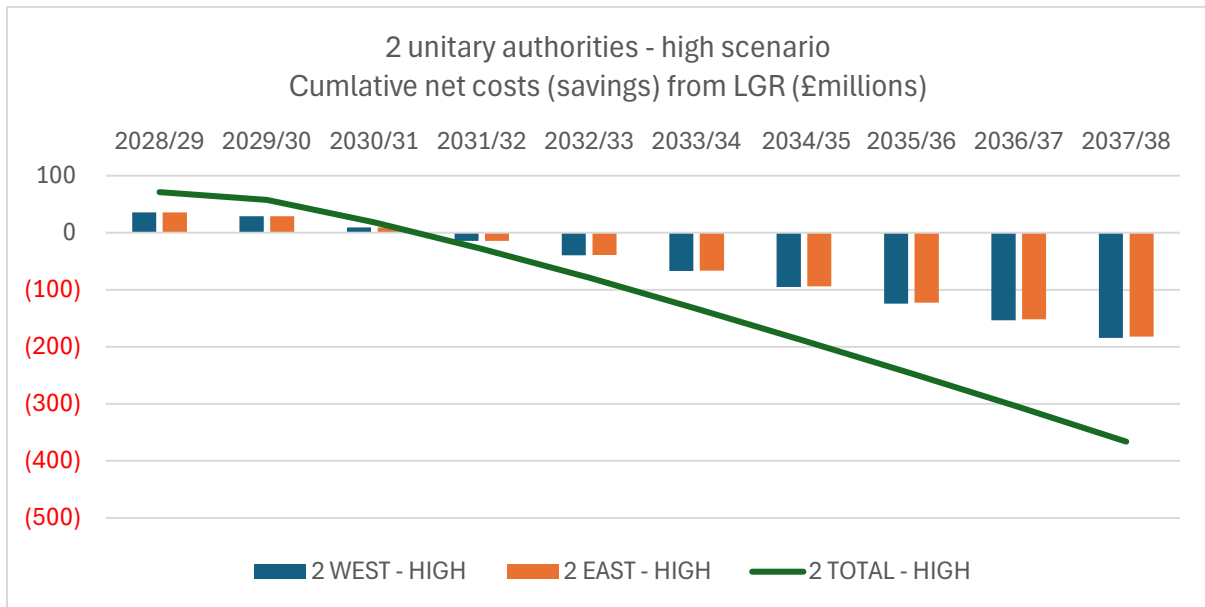
This graph combines all baseline modelling assumptions including inflation, assumed council tax increases and the impacts of LGR to show the cumulative net budget position for each unitary authority after the first five years of LGR. The set of baseline assumptions that we have used indicate that all 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

Proposal for two 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.

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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									

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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

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

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

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 a 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

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

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 report¹⁹ 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 Partnership²⁰ 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.

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, 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:

Table 6²¹



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:

²¹ Source: HCC

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

Table 7²²

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
<i>*IMD Score: Higher = more deprived.</i>		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

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.

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

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).

Table 8: Children’ Services and Schools²³

	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.

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.

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

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

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.

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- 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

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 households²⁴** 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 9²⁵

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

²⁴ Source: Local Authority Housing Data (supplied by Stevenage Borough Council)

²⁵ Source: Local Authority Housing Data (supplied by Stevenage Borough Council)

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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 systems²⁶), 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.

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.

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

Engagement²⁷ 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:

²⁷ Source: Local Government Engagement Feedback Report on Unitary Options and Appendix

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- **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

“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.

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

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.

Proposal for two unitary authorities in Hertfordshire

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

- **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.



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:

- **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.