

East Herts Council Report

Council

Date Of Meeting: Wednesday, 13 May 2026

Report By: Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward – Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Report Title: The Hertfordshire Healthy and Safe Places Framework

Ward(s) Affected: All Wards

Summary – Members have agreed to undertake a review of the District Plan, including an update of the evidence documents needed to support a new District Plan. The Hertfordshire Healthy and Safe Places Framework provides practical guidance on how to implement health-focused policies that can usefully inform local planning policies in East Herts. Therefore, this report summarises key priorities of the Framework and seeks agreement to use the document as part of the new District Plan evidence base, and to inform Development Management decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL:

- a) **That the Hertfordshire Healthy and Safe Places Framework (2025) attached as Appendix A, be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform the new East Herts District Plan and as a material consideration for Development Management purposes in the determination of planning applications.**

1.0 Proposal

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to agree that the Hertfordshire Healthy and Safe Places Framework can be used as part of the evidence base for the new District Plan and as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Local planning authorities are required to complete a review of their local plans at least once every 5 years from the adoption date to ensure that plans remain relevant. In October 2023, the Council agreed that East Herts District Plan 2018 needs updating, and that

work should commence in 2023/24 on updating the technical studies and other preparatory work required to provide a robust evidence base to support this Review¹. The Council has been waiting for the Government to provide details of the new plan-making system, but it is now expected that the 30-month period of formal plan-making will commence later in 2026.

- 2.2 A clear, relevant and proportionate evidence base is essential for efficient and sound plan-making to ensure that all future planning policy and decisions are based on up-to-date information. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) sets out the requirement for the preparation and review of all policies to be, *'underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence'* (paragraph 32).
- 2.3 The evidence base consists of supporting documents that will help inform the future policies and site allocations in the new District Plan. It will cover a range of social, economic, and environmental topics and help identify local needs, constraints and opportunities.
- 2.4 The evidence base will be developed throughout the preparation of the new District Plan and the planning policy team will seek agreement from Executive to include relevant studies as part of the evidence base. Because of the nature of the Healthy and Safe Places Framework, and its potential to influence policy formulation, it is considered appropriate to include it within the Council's evidence base.

Development of the Healthy and Safe Places Framework

- 2.5 The Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB)² commissioned Prior + Partners to develop the Framework as a direct result of their 'Healthy and Safe Places for All' mission³.
- 2.6 Published in November 2025, the Framework presents guidance on how to implement health focused policies into local plans and spatial development strategies.

¹ [Agenda for Executive on Tuesday 3rd October 2023, 7.00 pm - East Herts District Council](#)

² Hertfordshire Growth Board comprises of Hertfordshire County Council, the 10 district and borough Councils, the NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB), Homes England, Hertfordshire Futures and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

³ <https://www.hertfordshiregrowthboard.com/documents/vision-and-missions/#sec-10>

2.7 The Framework responds to wider national policy context, such as the NPPF's aim to promote healthy and safe communities (paragraph 96)⁴. The 2024 update of the NPPF placed explicit emphasis on promoting health and wellbeing through the planning system, reflecting wider trends in national strategy to address health outcomes and inequalities. The draft NPPF, published in December 2025, also places an emphasis on promoting healthy communities in Chapter 16⁵. Additionally, the Government released the 10 Year Health Plan for England⁶ in July 2025 which looks to tackle the nation's rising costs and pressures on healthcare.

3.0 Reason(s)

Importance of Healthy Placemaking

3.1 Our environment determines around 60% of health outcomes and planning policy plays a key role in shaping our environment. It is important that this relationship is explored and utilised to ensure health outcomes are improved.

3.2 Across Hertfordshire and within the district of East Herts, health outcomes vary drastically due to a range of factors and inequalities. For instance, life expectancy varies by 14 years across the county.

3.3 The Framework aims to tackle the social and environmental determinants of health through planning policy, with a focus on key action areas where inequalities impact health outcomes, by providing guidance for local planning authorities (LPA) to integrate health into local plan policies and the planning process.

Overview of the Framework

3.4 The Framework is divided into two parts. This first provides context for the role of planning policy in promoting health and the importance of this approach. The second part provides guidance

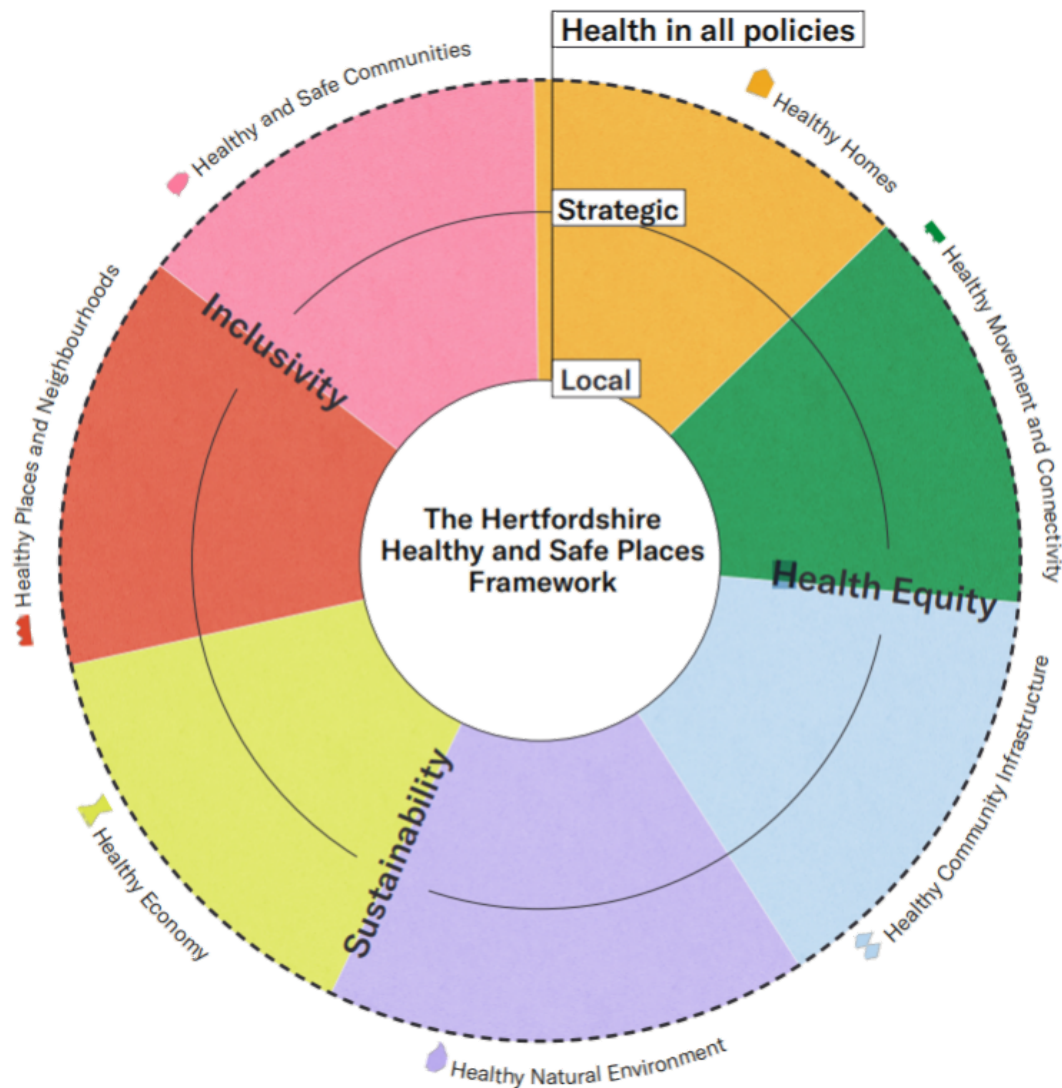
⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-proposed-reforms-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future>

on how the framework can be used to integrate health policies into all areas of planning.

- 3.5 The Framework requires all local plans and spatial development strategies to include a policy adopting a Health in All Policies approach (HiAP). This approach ensures health is considered in all areas of planning, including housing, transport, natural environment and economy, highlighting the commitment for development to improve health outcomes and address health inequality.
- 3.6 To take a holistic approach to healthy placemaking, the Framework focuses on three main themes – Health Equity, Inclusivity and Sustainability – and seven principles across both local and strategic scales. These themes and principles are presented in Figure 2 of the Framework, which can be seen below.



- 3.7 Each theme is discussed in further detail, looking at why it matters to health, and how strategic and local planning policies can create conditions to encourage healthy behaviour and reduce harmful impacts. These policy guidance pages provide support and evidence for the Council's work on the new District Plan.
- 3.8 The Framework also identifies health action areas. These are high stress, moderate stress, emerging stress and low stress areas, which have been mapped across the county. Areas identified as having higher levels of stress are areas of greater priority for health improvements. Targeted actions can then be applied to priority areas and wider health embedded policies can be used to support neighbourhoods.

How the framework will be used

- 3.9 The Framework provides a number of requirements and guidance points for local authorities to use in plan making and the planning process. Firstly, all local plans and spatial development strategies must include a strategic policy adopting the HiAP approach.
- 3.10 Health Impact Assessments (HIA) should be required in the planning application process. The Framework guides LPAs to set thresholds based on local context for when a HIA is required, proportionate to the proposed development.
- 3.11 Policy should also require masterplans as an early design tool to support positive health outcomes from proposed developments. Again, local context should be used to define when a masterplan is required.
- 3.12 The Framework recommends embedding health and wellbeing into visioning work from the outset. This should be co-developed with the community to ensure it reflects local need.
- 3.13 Engagement is a tool central to healthy placemaking. It should be inclusive, iterative, representative, empowering, and collaborative to ensure real experiences are reflected. A mixture of engagement methods should be used, such as focus groups, workshops and digital tools, with local people and key stakeholders across strategic areas, including NHS boards, transport providers, and public health professionals.
- 3.14 Evidence of local need informs planning policy. Sufficient local health evidence needs to be gathered and analysed to understand the most concerning health areas in the district. The Framework is recommended to be used as an evidence base document to support embedding health into local policies. Further sources are highlighted in the Framework as reliable evidence databases, such as census data available through the Office for National Statistics and Herts Insight.

- 3.15 Planning should make use of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS). These are statutory assessments of local health and social care needs produced by Hertfordshire County Council and health boards⁷. These tools should be used to understand current and future health needs, to inform policy and plan making, and findings integrated into design proposals, to ensure plans align with local health objectives.
- 3.16 The Framework recommends that health indicators should be monitored to assess the effectiveness and long-term impacts on improving health outcomes through planning policies. Health and wellbeing indicators should be integrated into annual monitoring reports and demonstrate how they respond to local contexts and priorities.
- 3.17 An interactive webpage has been produced for the Framework where further resources can be found. This is available at <https://hertshealthyplacemaking-hertscc.hub.arcgis.com/>.
- 3.18 The Framework is presented in **Appendix A**.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 The Council could choose not to agree to endorse the Hertfordshire Healthy and Safe Places Framework as part of the new District Plan evidence base.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 If the Hertfordshire Healthy and Safe Places Framework is not agreed as part of the evidence base, the policy guidance on creating and supporting healthy outcomes through development will not benefit our communities, and health inequalities will continue to grow.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

⁷ <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/jsna/what-is-the-joint-strategic-needs-assessment.aspx>

6.1 There are no proposed consultations arising from this report.

Community Safety

There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising from this report.

Equalities

There are no direct equality, diversity, or inclusion implications in this report. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be carried out of the new District Plan in accordance with The Equality Act 2010.

Environmental Sustainability

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development and infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

Financial

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Health and Safety

There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.

Human Resources

There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

Human Rights

There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Specific Wards

All

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A – The Hertfordshire Healthy and Safe Places Framework

Contact Member Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward, Executive Member for Planning and Growth
Vicky.Glover-Ward@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer Sara Saunders, Director for Place,
Contact Tel. No. 01992 531656
Sara.Saunders@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author Julia Watson, Planning Policy Officer
julia.watson@eastherts.gov.uk