



Summary of Scoping Consultation

Scoping Document (May 2026)

October 2026



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Translation

If you have difficulty understanding this publication or English is not your first language, please contact the Strategic Planning Team on 01462 474000 and we will do our best to help you.

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਆ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ਜਾਂ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਰਣਨੀਤਕ ਯੋਜਨਾਬੰਦੀ ਟੀਮ ਨਾਲ 01462 474000 'ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ ਅਤੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਪੂਰੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕਰਾਂਗੇ।

(Panjabi)

Jeżeli masz trudności ze zrozumieniem tej publikacji lub angielski nie jest Twoim językiem ojczystym, skontaktuj się z Zespołem Planowania Strategicznego pod numerem 01462 474000, a dołożymy wszelkich starań, aby Ci pomóc.

(Polish)

Dacă întâmpinați dificultăți în înțelegerea acestei publicații sau dacă engleza nu este limba dumneavoastră maternă, vă rugăm să contactați Echipa de Planificare Strategică la numărul de telefon 01462 474000 și vom face tot posibilul să vă ajutăm.

(Romanian)

Se avete difficoltà a comprendere questa pubblicazione o se l'inglese non è la vostra lingua madre, contattate il team di pianificazione strategica al numero 01462 474000 e faremo del nostro meglio per aiutarvi.

(Italian)

Ha nehezen érti ezt a kiadványt, vagy az angol nem az anyanyelve, kérjük, vegye fel a kapcsolatot a Stratégiai Tervezési Csoporttal a 01462 474000 telefonszámon, és mi mindent megteszünk, hogy segítsünk Önnek.

(Hungarian)

இந்த வெளியீட்டைப் புரிந்துகொள்வதில் உங்களுக்குச் சிரமம் இருந்தாலோ அல்லது ஆங்கிலம் உங்கள் தாய்மொழி அல்ல என்றாலோ, தயவுசெய்து 01462 474000 என்ற எண்ணில் வியூகத் திட்டமிடல் குழுவைத் தொடர்புகொள்ளவும், நாங்கள்

உங்களுக்கு உதவ எங்களால் முடிந்த அனைத்தையும்
செய்வோம்.

(Tamil)

જો તમને આ પ્રકાશન સમજવામાં મુશ્કેલી પડતી હોય અથવા અંગ્રેજી તમારી માતૃભાષા
ન હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને 01462 474000 પર સ્ટ્રેટેજિક પ્લાનિંગ ટીમનો સંપર્ક કરો અને અમે
તમને મદદ કરવા માટે અમારા શ્રેષ્ઠ પ્રયાસો કરીશું.

(Gujarati)

Jei jums sunku suprasti šį leidinį arba anglų kalba nėra jūsų gimtoji kalba,
susisiekite su Strateginio planavimo komanda telefonu 01462 474000 ir mes
padarysime viską, kad jums padėtume.

(Lithuanian)

HOW DID WE CONSULT?

How did we consult?

Scoping Document Consultation

This consultation statement has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 22 of the [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](#).

The statement sets out who, how and when we consulted on our Scoping Document. The statement also summarises the representations received and how those representations will be taken forward into the Contents and Evidence Document and into the new Local Plan.

Consultation on the Scoping Document

At a meeting of Cabinet on [14 April 2026](#), we set out our timetable for the new Local Plan which included the consultation dates for the Scoping Document, 11 May to 28 June 2026.

We sent notification at the start of the consultation period by email or letter to:

- Statutory consultees;
- Town and Parish Councils;
- Landowners, developers and planning agents;
- Businesses;
- Community groups; and
- Individuals who had expressed an interest in the Local Plan.

We publicised the Scoping Document consultation in a number of ways. This included:

- Press releases
- Posters in community buildings
- The Council's quarterly Outlook Magazine
- Social media posts on Facebook, Instagram, X, Youtube and LinkedIn
- Officers also attended the Council's Community Forums in Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Royston and Southern and Rural during June.



In response to the consultation, we received representations from 73 different stakeholders, representing all of the groups listed above. Comments were received for all of the questions that we asked in the Scoping Document.

Summaries of those representations for each question are set out in a series of tables, together with our response setting out how those comments will be taken into account as we continue preparing the new Local Plan.

Methods of Communication: Summary of responses

The first section of our Scoping Document asked two questions about methods of communication and whether the communication methods are inclusive for different communities. The following tables set out a summary of the representations and our response to the issues raised.

Question 1: Are there any other methods of communication or engagement that you think we should be using that we haven't already included?

Summary of representations	Our response
Proposed consultation methods are not sufficient to ensure inclusive, accessible and meaningful engagement, especially for communities most affected by growth.	The Community Engagement Strategy will provide details of how we will consult all parts of the community
Representations set out a wide range of suggestions for additional consultation and engagement approaches, which included: • parish-level workshops and drop in sessions for all parish / community areas; • interactive mapping; • a standing liaison group; • accessible consultation materials; • pop-up engagement in everyday community locations; • recorded webinars; • paper response options; • topic-specific focus groups; • advance notice of 4 weeks for events; • early, informal engagement with landowners of large sites	What we are doing: In terms of how we consult the community, our Community Engagement Strategy will set out how we will consult all parts of the community. This will include: • Keeping our Local Plan website up to date; • Early notification of public consultation events; • Publishing short videos to help explain the Local Plan; • Holding public events in local communities during consultation periods; • Using venues across the District which are accessible, near to public transport and suitable for public participation; • Using the Community Forums and Councillor community surgeries which are already well established across the District; • Displaying posters in well used public locations;

Summary of representations	Our response
• focus groups for landowners; • use of councillor surgeries for in person information sessions; • interactive participative workshops at the early stages; • manned stalls in town centres on Saturdays to help feedback; • information to be held at NHC office / Love Letchworth & MP offices; • engage business community; • articles in the Royston Crow and the Listing; • write to people – to reach people without access to IT; • enable people to respond by post; • door to door visits; • website links – need to be made obvious; • easy access to the response forms; and • more leaflets and posters.	• Using our social media channels; • contacting everyone on our Local Plan database, whether by email or letter; • making our consultation materials available in alternative formats on request; • specifically written to seldom hard groups, which includes those with protected characteristics, to offer to meet these groups to explain the plan as well as provide other offers of help. What we are trying to improve: We have invested in new software which will help to make our consultations easier to use by: • providing easy to read consultation documents where it is possible to make comments directly, rather than having to send an email or letter; • improving our interactive map based information; and • enabling anyone or any organisation to register to receive updates on all Local Plan issues. What we are unable to do The consultation responses also included a number of suggestions for engagement methods which the Council cannot take forward. These engagement methods included door to door visits, writing to everyone, drop in sessions in all Parishes. The Council has limited financial and staffing resources and must ensure that these are used in the most effective and proportionate way.

Summary of representations	Our response
The evidence base page of the website is missing a range of documents which are needed for effective consultation.	We have a dedicated page on our website for our Local Plan evidence base documents. Not all of the evidence studies have been completed, but the web page includes the details and dates when that we expect to publish these.
Scoping consultation does not explain how the full range of stakeholders and socio-economic groups will be reached or the methods by which their views and concerns will be obtained.	The Community Engagement Strategy will include details of our core stakeholders and will set out the details about how all stakeholders will be engaged in consultation.

Question 2: Do you have any views on how the Council can ensure that the consultation is inclusive to our different communities?

Summary of representations	Our response
A number of suggestions have been put forward to enhance inclusive, proactive engagement with our communities. These included: • Rural inclusion events in the villages, not just in the town; • Ensuring that all materials are available in print and meet accessibility standards; • Freepost for returning consultation responses; • Provision of translated summaries and work with local community groups; • Offer translations of the documents through the website; • Ensure all venues are accessible;	In terms of how we can ensure that consultation for our new Local Plan is inclusive for our different communities, our Community Engagement Strategy includes the following measures: • keeping our Local Plan website up to date; • early notification of public consultation events; • making our consultation materials available in alternative formats, in languages other than English and which meet accessibility standards on request; • holding public events in local communities during consultation periods in venues across the District which are accessible, near to public transport and suitable for public participation;

Summary of representations	Our response
• Use high footfall locations to reach those people who do not attend formal events; • Ensuring that engagement is well publicised; • Ensuring that the relevant online portals are clear, accessible, easy to use and have the capability to allow uploading of large format documents formats; • Approach community organisations to offer presentations; • Approach schools to select young people to be ambassadors and offer to attend assemblies; • Visit local faith leaders; • Host interactive participative workshops at the early stages; • Make it easier to submit comments; and • Contact community leaders to discuss this with their groups.	• publicising our consultations in community locations; • work in conjunction with our Community Partnership Team to engage with seldom heard groups within the community; and • specifically written to seldom hard groups, which includes those with protected characteristics, to offer to meet these groups to explain the plan as well as provide other offers of help.
Making everything inclusive for all communities is expensive and impractical.	Our Community Engagement Strategy sets out how the Council will consult as widely as possible in the most cost-effective way possible.
How are the very vulnerable, immobile and perhaps digitally excluded people going to find out about the Local Plan?	Our Community Engagement Strategy recognises that there are groups within the community who may be underrepresented in consultations and sets out how we can work to include them.
There are very large amounts of information and people will give up after a few pages.	We recognise that the Local Plan and the supporting evidence documents are long and complex.

Summary of representations	Our response
	We will be preparing our consultation documents in accessible formats, downloadable PDFs and easy read versions of the key documents to make them as accessible as possible.
Council Officers should watch the “National Emergency Briefing” before working on the Local Plan.	We will be preparing the new Local Plan under current legislation and in consultation with a wide variety of organisations to ensure that we address climate change challenges which the planning system can influence.
Using scarce resources on the Local Plan appears pointless given the impending abolition of the Council. The resources could be better used for development management or enforcement.	A new, faster and streamlined approach to plan making was introduced earlier in 2026. At the heart of this reform is a new 30-month timeline for creating and adopting Local Plans, supporting the Government’s commitment to achieving universal Local Plan coverage across England. Despite Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire still needs to plan for future growth during the transition to the new unitary arrangements. Our District must continue to guide where development should take place so that new homes, jobs, and infrastructure come forward in the right locations and in a way that benefits local communities. Maintaining an up-to-date Local Plan is an important part of this. Ahead of the new Unitary Council preparing its own Local Plan, North Hertfordshire intends to ensure that a clear and effective planning framework remains in place. This will help to secure sustainable development that meets our District’s needs, including housing, economic opportunities, and the delivery of essential infrastructure, while providing certainty for residents, businesses, and developers

OUR PRIORITIES

Our priorities

Our Scoping Document set out a series of issues, challenges and opportunities. These included:

Issues, challenges and opportunities

We identified a number of issues, challenges and opportunities for each of the following themes:

- Efficient use of land
- Housing
- Economy
- Environment and climate change
- Transport
- Communities

In the following pages, we have summarised the comments and the issues raised during the consultation period and set out how we might address those issues through the development of the new Local Plan.

Efficient use of land: Summary of responses

Question 3: Do you think there are any other challenges or opportunities we should be aware of in relation to efficient use of land?

Summary of representations	Our response
The representations raised the following issues: • Support that the consultation document recognised the District's valued rural character and the need for sustainable development; • Opportunities to utilise non-Green Belt land should be prioritised given significant Green Belt constraints in the district; • Effective use of land generally relates to accommodating as much development as possible on PDL and the application of minimum densities for development sites and / or specific locations; • Restrictive settlement boundaries result in over development and increasing density at the cost of supporting infrastructure; • The Local Plan should review the settlement boundaries and the green Belt boundaries because it is an opportunity to: ▪ expand the settlement boundaries to accommodate the housing required; ▪ deliver sustainable urban extensions to existing settlements as they represent the most sustainable, deliverable and logical approach to accommodating new housing growth; and	In developing a new spatial strategy for the District, we will need to consider balancing our requirements for housing and employment developments against protecting our environmental assets. This will include a review of development opportunities on previously developed land and on greenfield sites. We will also consider the needs of individual settlements, infrastructure requirements and where development will be best placed for the future. This will include making the best use of previously developed land (PDL), increasing densities for development in appropriate locations, infill development, extensions to villages and towns and new settlements. In response to the issue raised about the London Metropolitan Green Belt, it is highlighted in our Contents and Evidence Document and recognised as an asset for the District. When we consider the spatial strategy for the new Local Plan, we will have to consider the role of the Green Belt. However, in terms of policy, this is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Summary of representations	Our response
▪ direct development to well-served existing settlements and review sustainable locations adjacent to existing settlements, including land within the Green Belt. One representation stated that it was disappointing that the London Metropolitan Green Belt has not been identified as a crucial land use asset for the District and that it should be recognised as a critical element in balancing demands for development, infrastructure, agriculture, leisure and recreation activities with environmental activities. One further representation stated that there had been widespread community concern at the level of erosion of the Green Belt in the last local plan and that there should be a clear commitment that no Green Belt land will have its Green Belt designation removed in this local plan update, unless there is a compelling and evidenced based strategic case.	
One representation stated that it is difficult to ensure that the most efficient use of land is achieved if plans are advanced for only a part of the local authority area rather than planning comprehensively across the full extents of that authority. It is quite possible that there are opportunities and challenges in adjoining or nearby areas that will shortly form part of the same area as North Hertfordshire that would not be apparent if the Local Plan were to be prepared based on the current local authority boundaries.	The Local Plan is being prepared for North Hertfordshire as required by the legislation. The Government have made it clear that local plans should be progressed quickly. It would be unlikely that if we were to wait for the new unitary authority, new local plans would not be in place until the mid-2030s. This would risk many local plans being out of date and authorities being at risk of not having a five-year housing land supply and receiving speculative development. This in turn does not result in the best or most efficient use of land.

Commented [RR1]: Does the GB need to be a separate summary and answer? From memory, I think there were a couple of GB responses?
evidence base - GB study
C&E doc will highlight its importance but the GB policy will be addressed through NPPF

Housing: Summary of responses

Question 4 - Do you think there are any other challenges or opportunities we should be aware of in relation to housing?

The responses to this question did not necessarily focus on the key challenges and opportunities that were highlighted in the Scoping Document. The summaries below set out the responses to the challenges and opportunities which were raised in the Scoping Document and these are followed by a summary of the wider issues that were raised.

Key Issues: Exploring the opportunities to deliver sufficient levels of affordable housing, ensuring a range of housing options are available to meet the needs of all residents	Our response
Issues raised in response to the question about delivering a sufficient level of affordable housing included: • Councils should strictly enforce affordable housing commitments rather than allowing later reductions through viability arguments; • Need genuinely affordable housing; • Affordable housing provision should be set at a sustainable level to ensure deliverability of both affordable housing and other contributions required to facilitate development; • Developers have, and will continue to have, an aggressive approach to the provision of housing for affordable rent, with consultants advising them on how to avoid it; • There is a severe lack of affordable homes; and • Towns like Hitchin Letchworth Baldock & Royston need new affordable housing for the local population increases but not in the number that are planning.	Our new Strategic Housing Market Assessment indicates that there is a substantial need for: • affordable rented homes; • affordable home ownership options; and • a range of affordable housing tenures. Providing affordable housing will remain a key priority for the new Local Plan. We will be undertaking an updated Viability Assessment to understand what level of affordable housing can reasonably be delivered in the future. This will help inform any new affordable housing requirements and ensure that policies remain both ambitious and achievable.

Key Issues: Ensure that a range of suitable homes are provided for older people, residents with disabilities as well as those with other specialist needs	Our response
Ensure a range of suitable homes are provided for older people, residents with disabilities and other specialist needs.	Comments noted

Key Issues: Deliver housing designed to be accessible and adaptable to meet changing needs	Our response
Comments made in response to this key issue included: • The local plan should include accessibility design standards, Building Regulations M4(2) accessible and adaptable and M4(3) wheelchair user homes; • All new homes should be built to M4(2) standards and 10% should be built to M4(3) standards; • Accessible and adaptable housing standards are supported in principle, but should be justified by local evidence, viability and national standards; and • Units built to M4(3) standards requires significant modifications to a typical M4(2) unit and this must be considered in a viability assessment.	Evidence from our SHMA suggests that the need for accessible housing is likely to increase over the coming years and recommends that all new homes should be built to the M4(2) standard. There is also evidence of a continuing need for wheelchair-accessible housing. Our Contents and Evidence Document will seek to ask whether all new dwellings should meet the M4(2) standard. All our policies will be subjected to viability testing to ensure that they can be delivered.

Key Issues: Planning for the land and housing needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities	Our response
Sites for these communities should be allocated away from towns and villages so that communities can carry on with their preferred way of life.	We are reviewing our Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment. This will provide up-to-date evidence on the current and future accommodation needs of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities; whether additional pitches or plots may be required during our Plan period, ensuring any future needs are planned for appropriately.

The summaries below set out the responses to the wider issues raised about housing issues which should be addressed in the new Local Plan.

Key Issues	Our response
A number of representations made wider comments about new residential development. These included: • the need to provide infrastructure as an integral part of new residential development; • that residential development should be mixed with light industry, shops to create little neighbourhoods and a community; • a view that developers are using community infrastructure proposals, such as special schools or care homes, to justify large-scale market housing on Green Belt land; • developers exploiting delays in existing housing delivery to support greenfield development; • Focus on homes for young people who cannot afford them;	Our new Local Plan will address the location of new development and the spatial strategy will help to focus new growth in the most sustainable locations. The importance of providing the necessary community infrastructure for new development is also recognised in our Contents and Evidence Base document and we will be inviting further comments about the types of policies we should be including in the new Local Plan. In response to issues raised about the delivery of sites allocated in the adopted Local Plan, we will be assessing those allocations to ensure that they remain deliverable. As our policies are developed for the new Local Plan, we will be undertaking a Viability Assessment to ensure that development is capable of being delivered. The Viability Assessment will be published alongside the draft Local Plan to show how the evidence has informed our policy approach.

Key Issues	Our response
• Need to ensure that existing allocations are genuinely deliverable and developable – recognising that some of the allocations have failed to deliver to date; • No mention of the need to build a minimum of c. 20,000 homes, which should be added as a priority; • No reference to a brownfield first approach – this should be embedded in the Local Plan; • Infrastructure and utilities are under strain and unable to meet modern day demands; • Rural villages should be protected from town expansion and changes to the countryside; • Views that increasing planning and regulatory pressures are slowing down housing development; • Councils should reduce planning obligations and supporting information requirements for applications as higher costs and burdens reduce the amount of housing delivered; and • Site viability must be considered to ensure that sites remain deliverable and are not overburdened with developer contributions.	
<u>Housing design</u> A number of representations were made in respect of the design of new housing developments: • Keep building heights below 4 floors; • Local Plan should prioritise urban densification, airspace development, and small infill sites; • New housing should be water neutral;	A large number of representations made comments about the design of new developments. Many of the issues raised about the design of new homes will be addressed through the Building Regulations and the Future Homes Standards, rather than through the Local Plan. The design of new residential development in North Hertfordshire will also be guided by the District Design Code. The Government's Design and

Key Issues	Our response
• New development should not result in sub standard living conditions for existing residents; • Although the Government has mandated solar panels on new build homes, they should also include a battery as well to store excess energy; • embedding inclusive design and adaptability, a mix of housing types, liveable space standards; • and daylight amenity, new homes will support health, dignity and wellbeing for all residents; • important to ensure that housing growth is aligned with sustainable water supply and supported by an appropriate evidence base, including a Water Cycle Strategy; • High density housing development which includes a mix of flats, terraced and semi-detached homes should be the focus in order to address the need for affordable housing and to enable more people to buy their own home. • Large developments (100+ homes) should include single storey homes; • New housing delivered through the re-purposing of existing buildings should achieve the highest EPC rating. Climate change requirements should override heritage aspirations; • New housing should be required to have a design which: ▪ Avoids overheating; ▪ No mains gas; ▪ Reduces energy demand; ▪ Capable of generating and storing energy;	Placemaking Planning Practice Guide also contains design principles that should be addressed through applications. We will be using our evidence base such as the watercycle strategy to inform our site allocations. We are proposing to set water efficiency standards lower than the Government benchmark in recognition of being in a water stressed area. We are proposing to require developments of a certain size to submit circular economy statements and whole life carbon statements to support objectives on climate change.

Key Issues	Our response
▪ Low carbon heating; ▪ Minimises use of mains water; ▪ Supports electric car charging • Climate change necessities should override heritage aspirations; • Authentic Traditional Architecture Design Codes will help address common challenges in large-scale housebuilding. They can support well-designed streets that fit with the existing area and help new residents and businesses feel part of the community; • HCC Public Health recommends the Council considers including a policy to explicitly prioritise healthy housing. This should address indoor air quality, thermal comfort, low-carbon and energy-efficient housing, pollution reduction and environmental protection; • Consider a policy which restricts biomass and solid fuel burning in new developments to improve indoor and outdoor air quality. New developments will then use alternative heating methods which reduce pollution and support wider sustainable environmental and climate targets; and • Design green and blue spaces in housing developments help with health benefits.	
<u>Housing Market Area</u> • The Local Plan should consider North Hertfordshire's role within the wider Housing Market Area, including Stevenage and part of Luton; • Unmet needs from Stevenage and Luton must be transparently assessed; and	We will be working with colleagues in our adjoining authorities to understand the housing needs across the wider housing market area.

Key Issues	Our response
• Need to consider unmet needs from outside the Housing Market Area.	
<u>Housing Numbers</u> A number of representations were received in respect of housing numbers for the new Local Plan: • The Local Plan should plan positively for growth, using the standard method housing need figure as a minimum rather than a ceiling; • Necessary to meet the overall housing need target for the District; • The housing requirement may need to exceed local housing need where justified by affordable housing need, economic growth, infrastructure investment or unmet needs from neighbouring authorities; • Flexibility should be built into housing supply through appropriate buffers; • The discussion of housing concentrates on the provision of a theoretically derived number of units. This is inappropriate and damaging for North Herts. The Local Plan should reflect the complexity of housing provision, including unimplemented housing consents; the use of previously developed land; the use of empty units and the demographic context; and • In determining housing numbers and allocations, villages should be treated proportionately and there should be an individualised assessment of the settlement boundaries.	Our new Local Plan will be prepared in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework which requires us to plan for enough homes to meet the needs of our communities. The Government uses a standard method to calculate the minimum number of homes we should plan for. Based on that methodology, North Hertfordshire has a housing requirement of 1,036 homes per year.
<u>Representations about sites for residential development</u>	

Key Issues	Our response
These representations can be split between those representations which made generic comments about site allocations for residential development and those which were made about specific sites: <u>General comments included:</u> • Existing site allocations should be assessed to establish why they are not being delivered as expected; • Green Belt should be released to ensure housing takes place in the most sustainable locations; • The necessity to build on Green Belt should be referenced as a challenge and as an opportunity and there should be a Green Belt Review to understand the opportunities to deliver new homes; • A mix of housing sites should be considered, including brownfield, greenfield, small, medium and large sites, rather than relying on one source of supply; • Housing delivery in North Hertfordshire should prioritise locations which are demonstrably deliverable, well-connected, and capable of supporting both new and existing communities. Strategic urban extensions to sustainable settlements represent one of the most effective ways of achieving this; • Small and medium sites may be particularly important for short-to medium-term delivery; and • Opportunities to bring forward sites of a larger scale will enable the delivery of schools and other services rather than relying on the expansion of existing facilities.	All sites submitted through the Call for Sites will be assessed before allocations are made in the new Local Plan and we will follow Government guidance.
<u>Specific Sites:</u>	

Key Issues	Our response
A number of representations were made about specific sites which could be considered in the Local Plan for residential development: • Royston – development is restricted because of the A505, the county boundary and Therfield Heath. Every development around Royston leads to pressure on Therfield Heath; • Land west of the A1(M), Stevenage is safeguarded in the adopted development plan for future development and has already been removed from the Green Belt, with exceptional circumstances established; and • East of Luton & Icknield Downs promoted as suitable sites to help meet housing needs.	
<u>Housing Type & Tenure</u> The following issues were raised in the representations: • The type and tenure of housing should be robustly justified with an ability to adjust the mix should changes in demand happen; • The minimum 20,000 homes should be allocated through a mixture of small, medium and larger strategic sites; • The previous local plan did not address uneven social housing provision across North Herts towns. The updated plan should set housing mix targets at town level; • The Local Plan should stipulate a proportion of older persons housing, where newly developed, to be designed to fully wheelchair accessible standard; • policies which support a range of housing types and tenures such as affordable housing and specialist housing for vulnerable groups; and	Providing a range of house types, sizes, and tenures is essential to ensure that homes are available for families, young people, older people, and those with different incomes. We will use the updated SHMA to inform future housing types and tenure requirements. Our policies will be informed by the SHMA and by responses to our Contents and Evidence Document consultation.

Key Issues	Our response
• The type and tenure of housing should be robustly justified with an ability to adjust the mix should changes in demand happen.	

Economy and Town Centres: Summary of responses

The responses to Question 5 have been split between those which focussed on the economy and employment issues and those which focussed on our Town Centres.

Question 5 - Do you think there are any other challenges and opportunities we should be aware of in relation to economic issues?

Key Issues / Economy & Employment	Our response
<u>Location</u> In terms of the location of employment opportunities, a wide range of issues were raised in the representations. These included: • Jobs and amenities need to be located close to where people live; • Keep industry and commerce near good transport connections, brownfield sites, and existing industrial sites; • The loss of commercial sites results in reduced employment opportunities for local people which in turn results in people having to travel further for work; • Where sites are within active travel distance of key services, consider mixed-use development including residential and office space; • Sort out existing employment land, e.g in Baldock and empty units in Letchworth; • Consideration for the location, accessibility and flexibility of workplaces can help reduce long commutes and support work-life balance;	We recognise that employment land should be located close to where people live and that transport links to those employment areas are important. Our Contents and Evidence Document will seek to establish whether our existing employment areas should continue to be protected for employment uses. If our evidence shows that we need to allocate more employment land, we will consider the accessibility of those locations as part of the site assessment process.

Key Issues / Economy & Employment	Our response
• there is an opportunity to reduce net out-commuting by delivering homes in sustainable locations alongside existing employment centres; • Strategic growth at locations such as Royston provides an opportunity to reinforce its economic role; • The Local Plan should acknowledge Royston's strategic location close to Cambridge which the Government has identified as a focus for 'nationally significant growth'; • Use the Call for Sites to encourage submissions for undeveloped land within walking distance of train stations; and • Recognise Cambridge as a growing employment centre that is accessible from North Hertfordshire.	
<u>Employment uses and transport links</u> A number of representations mentioned the importance of transport links with the employment areas, both in the District and further afield, to ensure that it is easy for people to travel to those areas. Other comments included; • Focus on improving transport links to London for highly paid jobs as opposed to creating small local jobs needing more car journeys; • Keep industry and commerce near good transport connections, brownfield sites, and existing industrial sites; • Transport links are critical – many residents will not work in the County;	We recognise the importance of transport links to local employment areas and work opportunities further afield. Transport and active travel links will be one of the factors that we will consider when assessing sites which could be used for economic growth in the future.

Key Issues / Economy & Employment	Our response
• Locate new industrial sites next to major roads; • Include transport infrastructure to reduce potential traffic impacts on local residents; • Would be appropriate to improve cross District transport links; • Transport constraints affecting business growth; and • Policies should consider the accessibility of employment locations to reduce car dependency and supporting active travel and public transport use.	
<u>Economic growth</u> The Local Plan should clearly recognise that new development, including residential developments, supports economic growth. Embedding healthy economy policies within the Local Plan would help support the health of the local population because they create employment opportunities, support local businesses, increase access to local services and reduce social disparities linked to unemployment. Support the refurbishment of existing employment infrastructure. The ageing employment stock needs to be regenerated and modernised Digital connectivity in rural areas needs to be addressed.	Our Local Plan will recognise that new development will support economic growth and health in the District. If the Local Plan includes policies to designate employment areas, this will help to focus investment and provide employment opportunities for the future. The Health Impact Assessment will assess policy against a healthy economy as part of the wider determinants of health. Issues around digital connectivity are picked up through Building Regulations.
<u>Types of development</u>	We have commissioned an Employment Needs Review Study which will set out the current economic profile of the District. In turn, this

Key Issues / Economy & Employment	Our response
Several representations suggested particular types of development which could contribute towards the local economy: • AI data centres would bring investment and jobs; • A good mixture of small, medium and large industries would work; • Medical technology link up with Cambridge and Stevenage companies; and • Agri-tech and green economy growth – aligned to the District's strengths. Additional comments on AI Data Centres mentioned that these types of development need to consider water and energy supplies and efficiency.	will help to frame the strategy for future economic growth in the District. Our Contents and Evidence Document will include questions about whether the Local Plan should focus policies on developing an economic identity for North Hertfordshire or whether the District should position itself as a complementary economic centre for Stevenage, Cambridge and Luton.
<u>Economic growth and water resources</u> Economic growth, particularly where it includes water-intensive uses, has the potential to place additional pressure on water resources and infrastructure. This should be considered at an early stage in the plan-making process. Water scarcity is also an important issue when dealing with commercial development. This relates to both water supplies and water efficiency. This is becoming more important with the emergence of water heavy developments such as data centres.	As part of our evidence base for the new Local Plan, we will be undertaking a Water Cycle Study and a new Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to help us assess new sites for employment generating uses. The water companies will also be consulted as part of the preparation for the new Local Plan.
<u>Stevenage</u>	We recognise the significance of Stevenage as one of the major employment centres nearby. We will frame policies in the Local Plan to reflect the relationship between North Hertfordshire and these

Key Issues / Economy & Employment	Our response
Stevenage plays a significant sub regional economic role, particularly in life sciences, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing. Many North Hertfordshire residents work in Stevenage, and the two economies are closely interlinked. The Local Plan should: • Recognises Stevenage's role as a strategic employment centre; • Ensures employment land strategies and site allocations are complementary rather than competing; and • Includes joint labour market and commuting evidence.	nearby employment centres and have commissioned an Employment Needs Review Study which will help to inform these policies.
<u>Omissions</u> There were representations which stated that there was an omission in the Scoping Document: The Scoping Document did not recognise the protection of agricultural land and the farming community and the potential contribution of the countryside to the North Herts economy. The significance of the contributions of agriculture, leisure, recreation and retail activity linked to the rural economy are unspecified, and challenges and opportunities are seen only in terms of employment land, urban areas and town centres.	We do recognise that our rural areas make a valuable contribution to the local economy. In particular, our Contents and Evidence Document will consider whether the new Local Plan should include policies for rural tourism and visitor accommodation. The NPPF also includes policies which will help to support the rural economy.
<u>Other comments</u> Would recommend the inclusion of policies to increase education and training opportunities, especially in areas of deprivation.	Any policies in the Local Plan can only address the use and development of land, they cannot address education and training opportunities that maybe offered by educational establishments.

Key Issues / Economy & Employment	Our response
Need to provide more cycleways and better lighting for commuters who can't afford a car. Need low level lighting on Norton Common for commuters who walk from the Grange Estate area to the station.	We note these suggestions for improvements to travel routes to employment areas, although the Local Plan cannot address these directly.
The emphasis in the Scoping Document is on the economic characteristics of North Hertfordshire. However, the new authorities will need to consider planning for additional issues that may reflect types of locations different to those within the current boundaries of North Hertfordshire. The issues are likely to include the need for new warehousing, data centres and other forms of economic development, as well as other strategic economic development issues.	Whilst we cannot address wider issues in the new Local Plan for North Hertfordshire, we are working with our neighbouring local authorities and updating our evidence base to ensure that wider issues are considered.
LPAs should be conscious of the burden imposed on businesses through the planning process and the impact of policy requirements upon delivery.	The Local Plan seeks to set out policies which will encourage economic activity in the most suitable and sustainable locations. However, it is not possible for the Local Plan to influence business rates.
Reduce business rates to encourage business and employment	

Key Issues / Town Centres	Our response
Issues and observations raised in the consultation responses in respect of town centres included: • Recognising the importance of the town centres as part of the local economy and the challenges that are faced by them in light of changing shopping habits; • The Plan should consider the importance of maintaining and enhancing the vitality of town centres, recognising their role in supporting local economies and community life to become vibrant and adaptable places; • Support for the pedestrianisation of town centres; • Transport and accessibility to town centres should be improved to ensure that town centres thrive; • Our town centres are not going to ever be what they were, as shop retail battles with the internet; • Town centres cannot exist only as a cafe/restaurant culture, there needs to be more variety and more imaginative thinking; • Empty shops need to be repurposed more quickly, and not filled with the same old coffee shops, tattoo parlours, barbers and hairdressers; • Towns are being taken over by shops selling illegal goods; • Need to give people living here something to come into town for; • Consider more compact retail areas where appropriate;	We have commissioned an update to our Town Centre and Retail Study (December 2024) which will provide an updated assessment of our retail, leisure and town centre needs. We have also updated our Town Centre Strategy which sets out a broader view, setting out a long-term vision for how our town centres can evolve and thrive in the years ahead. Our Contents and Evidence Document sets out that we will consider: • Reviewing our Town Centre boundaries; • The diversification of our Town Centres to encourage a diverse mix of uses which would help the town centres stay active for longer periods of the day and attract a broad range of visitors and strengthen the local economy; and • The use of vacant premises and supporting meanwhile uses. There are issues which our new Local Plan cannot influence, including the type of shops, cafes and some services which are present in our in town centres as the Use Classes Order allows premises to change use without planning permission (E Class). Neither can our Local Plan include policies about car parking charges or business rates as these are set elsewhere by the Council.

Key Issues / Town Centres	Our response
• Update retail space requirements in the local plan to reflect these changes; • changes in how we shop and work provides an opportunity for mixed-use, low-carbon, re-development in town centres; • The Local Plan should recognise the role of population growth in supporting town centre vitality and enabling a more diverse and resilient local economy; • Some Town Centres and High Streets have experienced structural change from the rise in online retail and evolving consumer habits. Currently, Hitchin Town Centre is considered to be high performing, but its commercial viability remains vulnerable to changing market conditions; • Town centres should be sized to meet the needs of their own town populations and should not assume that town centre footfall will come from neighbouring towns; • Small businesses cannot afford the rent and rates that are charged to make high streets diverse and interesting; • Few people walk because of the weather and carrying shopping home – free parking is essential for a successful Town Centre; and • Insufficient affordable parking for commuters in town centres.	

Environment

Question 6 - Do you think there are any other challenges and opportunities we should be aware of in relation to environmental issues?

Key Issues – Reducing carbon emissions through sustainable construction methods and improving long term energy performance of buildings	Our response
The following comments were made in respect of reducing carbon emissions and improving the long-term energy performance of buildings: • Support the commitment to reducing carbon emissions, addressing water scarcity, managing flood risk, protecting and enhancing the natural environment by ensuring that developments work with nature, improving use of energy-efficient technology, and prioritising development in locations that support more sustainable travel choices. • Ensure builders are environmentally friendly; • Require whole life carbon assessments where there is a proposal to replace existing buildings, to encourage retrofit when this has the lowest carbon footprint; • Make use of sustainable construction methods, with the fitting of solar panels, heat pumps, EV charging points etc being a necessary condition to achieve planning permission; • Policies which include any standards related to these issues should be considered in the context of local evidence and viability;	We recognise that the retrofitting and refurbishing existing buildings can offer a number of benefits, including: • Reducing embodied carbon emissions associated with demolition and reconstruction; • Making better use of existing buildings and materials; • Preserving local character and heritage where appropriate; • Reducing construction waste; and • Supporting the transition to a more resource-efficient and circular economy. In our Contents and Evidence Document consultation, we will be consulting on the policy approach for the Local Plan which would encourage the retention, refurbishment and adaptation of existing buildings wherever practical and appropriate.

Key Issues – Reducing carbon emissions through sustainable construction methods and improving long term energy performance of buildings	Our response
• a policy requirement for sustainable and energy efficient dwellings should be relatively flexible and considerate of viability of development; • The Council's approach should recognise that standards for new homes are being addressed through the Future Homes Standard (2026) and policies should make reference to national standards and not duplicate them; and • Policies should proactively prevent the demolition of old buildings and historic buildings falling into decline.	

Key Issues / Water resources and managing flood risk	Our response
Responses suggested that the following water related issues should be addressed in the Local Plan: • Restricting development on flood plains; • Using a sequential approach and directing development to the lowest flood risk areas; • Reviewing and updating the SFRA; • Using an up to date Water Cycle Strategy to assess wastewater infrastructure, water quality impacts, cumulative catchment effects and wastewater treatment works capacity;	The NPPF requires that we minimise flood risk from all sources, including rivers, surface water and groundwater, taking into account the effects of climate change. Our Local Plan should ensure that new development is safe over its lifetime and does not increase flood risk elsewhere. As part of our evidence base work to inform and support policies and land allocations in the new Local Plan, we will be commissioning a Water Cycle Strategy and updating our Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. We are looking at introducing water consumption targets for new residential developments and our Contents and Evidence

Key Issues / Water resources and managing flood risk	Our response
- Existing wastewater and sewage infrastructure is already under pressure, and further housing could increase the risk of sewage overflows contaminating wildlife habitats and watercourses. - Treating water resources as a strategic constraint to growth; - Policies which require water efficiency and demand management measures; - Protection of the chalk aquifers, Source Protection Zones and sensitive receptors from pollution; - Design of Sustainable Drainage Systems to protect groundwater quality; - Recognising that transport infrastructure can have implications for flood risk and that new infrastructure should be designed to avoid flood risk, manage surface water and prevent of watercourses and groundwater; - Looking at opportunities to incorporate sustainable drainage, green infrastructure and nature based solutions within transport schemes to support climate resilience and environmental enhancement; - welcomes the scoping document's focus on carbon reduction, water scarcity, flood risk, nature protection, energy efficiency and sustainable travel; - The Local Plan needs to consider waterways and groundwater, air pollution, noise and light.	consultation document will seek to gather the levels of support or objection for this policy objective. The Local Plan will not duplicate policies already contained within the NPPF, which includes policies for sustainable drainage systems and watercourses.

Key Issues / Water resources and managing flood risk	Our response
the Local Plan should identify areas of water stress and control, protecting water courses and catchments.	

Key Issues / Natural environment / Biodiversity / LNRS / Air Quality	Our response
<u>Trees</u> The following issues should be considered in respect of trees: - Incorporating trees and open areas in new housing developments are essential to improve air quality and wellbeing; - Set a District wide % increase for canopy cover and site level minimum canopy standards for new development; - Treat trees as critical infrastructure; - Include a policy which states that development must align with LNRS priorities and opportunity areas; and - Use a woodland strategy to identify priority zones for woodland creation and buffers around existing woodland.	Trees are recognised as a valuable part of our rural and urban landscapes and the value of incorporating trees and open space in new development is recognised and the principles are established in our District Design Code. The NPPF also includes policies for trees in new developments. Our Contents and Evidence Document will ask whether the new Local Plan should set a higher BNG requirement for some site allocations and whether the existing Local Plan Policy, NE4 – Biodiversity and geological sites should continue to form part of the new Local Plan. We can consider whether setting canopy cover standards and preparing a woodland strategy as part of the work for the new Local Plan.
<u>National Nature Reserves</u> There is an intention to declare a super National Nature Reserve in the North Chilterns. This should be considered in preparing policies in the Local Plan and in assessing development proposals.	If this designation is confirmed, we can reflect this in our evidence base and in policies in the new Local Plan.

Key Issues / Natural environment / Biodiversity / LNRS / Air Quality	Our response
Several issues were raised in respect of biodiversity and Biodiversity Net Gain through the consultation. These can be divided between comments on biodiversity and protection of habitats and the location of new development: <u>Protection of habitats and biodiversity:</u> • Welcome the references to protected sites and the Chilterns National Landscape; • The Council should consider taking part in the Nature Towns and Cities Accreditation scheme as part of the local plan process; • Some development sites can contribute positively to environmental objectives, for example habitat creation, open spaces and climate change adaptation; • Potential for cross-boundary discussions relating to updated Habitat Regulations Assessment evidence; • Consideration of introducing policies to require the installation of universal swift bricks in all new residential and non-residential developments; • Would suggest a separate policy for green and blue infrastructure; • Introducing a BNG requirement above the legal requirement can adversely impact housing delivery, where the requirement becomes too high for a development to be viable; • Opportunity to assess local nature reserves and make mitigation measures a policy in the Local Plan;	Many of the issues raised in the representations will be addressed, either through policies in national legislation, the NPPF or our District Design Code. We will be preparing a Habitats Regulation Assessment as we assess the sites which will be allocated in the new Local Plan. Our Contents and Evidence Document will ask whether the new Local Plan should set a higher BNG requirement for some site allocations and whether the existing Local Plan Policy, NE4 – Biodiversity and geological sites should continue to form part of the new Local Plan. In terms of the location of new development, we will be assessing all of the submitted sites in terms of the impact that they might have on our environmental assets. The location of active sports facilities needs to be balanced between the need for those facilities to be accessible by different modes of transport and the effects that there might be on residential areas.

Key Issues / Natural environment / Biodiversity / LNRS / Air Quality	Our response
• The development of solar farms cutting off wildlife corridors and possibly having an impact on bird migration; • The loss of key farmland habitats, e.g skylarks and corn buntings as a result of edge of settlement developments which are not justified through biodiversity net gain; • Farmland buffers should be designated as permanent ecological corridors; • The Local Plan should acknowledge and take full advantage of the natural environment beyond the specified landscapes and habitats; • Consider opportunities to enhance ecological corridors; • Undertake evidence on the landscape and green infrastructure in a coordinated way with neighbouring authorities; • the role of protection of valued landscapes and countryside should be a priority objective for the Local Plan and should include landscape beyond the Chilterns National Landscape, including the chalk ridge that extends towards Royston and into East Anglia; and • The impact of development on nocturnal protected species, e.g owls and bats from light and noise pollution. Location of new development • The objectives in the LNRS should be incorporated into the considerations of locations for new development;	

Key Issues / Natural environment / Biodiversity / LNRS / Air Quality	Our response
• Larger sites will have a greater opportunity to improve sustainable links and as such should be considered on their own merits; • Habitats which support protected or Red List species should be excluded from development allocations; • The implementation of biodiversity net gain has resulted in additional costs and larger land use being required to bring sites forward – this should be carefully considered in allocating land for development; • Active sports areas should be located away from residential areas because of light and noise pollution; and • There is significant pressure on Therfield Heath, particularly from new developments in Royston.	
A number of representations recognised the importance of the District's vulnerable chalk streams and the effect that development can have on them, the aquifers and on the species supported by the sensitive habitats. It was suggested that there should be a report on the potential impact that housing growth might have on the aquifers and that there should be a preference to select sites which have the least impact on the chalk streams.	The importance of our chalk streams will be recognised in the new Local Plan.

Key Issues / Energy efficient technologies / Retrofitting	Our response
A number of representations were made in support of using energy efficient technologies in new developments, recognising that they are a way to safeguard the environment and that developers should create green dwellings. One representation stated that where solar panels are installed, a battery should also be installed to store excess energy. Environmental, sustainability and carbon standards should be aligned with national guidance. It is important that these requirements do not place an undue burden on development viability.	Comments noted The Government is introducing the Future Homes and Buildings Standard from March 2027 to help ensure that new homes and buildings are more energy efficient and produce significantly lower carbon emissions than those built today. The new standards are intended to support the transition to a low-carbon future by reducing energy use, lowering running costs and helping meet national climate change targets. The standards are expected to: • Require low-carbon heating systems in new homes, reducing reliance on fossil fuels. • Support the use of on-site renewable energy technologies, such as solar panels and air source heat pumps. • Improve energy efficiency, helping homes use less energy for heating, cooling and everyday living. • Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from new development. • Create homes that are "zero-carbon ready", meaning they will not need significant retrofit work in the future to meet net-zero objectives.

Key Issues – Prioritising development in locations well served by public transport to support more sustainable travel choices / ensure new development is designed to enable and encourage walking and cycling both within sites and to surrounding area	Our response
A number of comments suggested ways in which future developments could address sustainable travel choices, including: • Treating access by public transport as a core issue in future development decisions; • Existing walking and cycling routes being incorporated and extended as part of new development; • Making it easier for residents to use off road parking for EV charging and / or ensuring the installation of EV charging points in residential areas; • A need for more cycle lanes; • There is an opportunity to enhance existing access to the countryside through protection of existing footpaths, woodlands, and chalk streams; • considering developing a system of cycleways to connect villages, new developments and small towns in the area; • The suggestion that that larger development sites might provide a greater opportunity to improve sustainable links; • New development should support access to good-quality green infrastructure within 15 minutes of every household, in line with the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023;	The comments are noted. We will be considering how public and active travel can be incorporated into the design of new developments.

Key Issues – Prioritising development in locations well served by public transport to support more sustainable travel choices / ensure new development is designed to enable and encourage walking and cycling both within sites and to surrounding area	Our response
• Connected, nature-rich routes should link both new and existing communities to green infrastructure, while avoiding harm to sensitive sites such as SSSIs; • Our plan should improve air quality and reduce heat risks by protecting and enhancing green and blue infrastructure, including more tree planting, and should avoid supporting schemes that would significantly reduce access to local green space; and • Future plans should include plans to reduce queuing times where there are significant commuter delays, Hitchin and Letchworth Gate were mentioned specifically.	
A comment was also made that although private cars remain the preferred option for most people, vehicle pollution is likely to fall as electric and hybrid vehicles become more common and that policies aiming to reduce car journeys could be trimmed back.	Comments noted

Key issues: Heritage	Our response
The representations suggested that the following policy approaches could be considered for the Local Plan: • Historic environment policies tailored to North Hertfordshire's towns, villages, locations, themes, and heritage assets.	With the publication of the NPPF and the National Decision Making Policies, there is limited scope for heritage policies for North Hertfordshire. We will prepare, in consultation with Historic England, a Heritage Strategy for North Hertfordshire which will provide a local framework for understanding our heritage assets and identifying

Key issues: Heritage	Our response
• Protection of prominent or sensitive heritage asset settings. • A Local List and protection of important views. • Heritage-informed site allocation policies, especially for major growth areas. • Design policies, guides and codes based on local character evidence. • Reuse and retrofit of historic buildings. • Flood risk, climate change and renewable energy policies that consider heritage impacts.	opportunities to protect, conserve and enhance their significance and contribution to the character of our District.

A number of issues were raised in the consultation responses to the Environment Section which we cannot address through the Local Plan. These included the following representations:

Summary of responses / Issues outside the Local Plan	Our response
The planning process is not set up to deal with many of these questions. It is not a flexible process and policy in particular is slow in its gestation. There is a danger that by enshrining initiatives into a draft local plan, by the time of adoption, the background landscape has changed.	We acknowledge that the Local Plan is not a flexible process. We will not include policies in our Local Plan which refer to environmental standards which have not been finally approved.
Responses suggested that the Local Authority should lead by example in making its own properties more carbon neutral whilst also noting that improvements to residential and commercial properties is expensive and requires upfront investment, grants or match funding. It was also suggested that a register of approved tradespeople should be established.	Home improvement grants and registers of tradespeople is not something which the Local Plan can address. The Local Plan can only address the use and development of land.
A representation suggested that there should be a move to electric vehicles for council use?	The Council does have a fleet of electric vehicles, used by our Waste Management, Parking and Environmental Enforcement teams.
The need for additional reservoirs to address water shortages.	The need for additional reservoirs is determined at a strategic level by the water companies working alongside the UK Government (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), Ofwat (Water Services Regulation Authority) and the Environment Agency, rather than through the Local Plan. Currently, there are no plans for a reservoir in North Hertfordshire.

Summary of responses / Issues outside the Local Plan	Our response
More areas should be covered in porous surfaces, rather than concrete.	Building Regulations require the use of porous surfaces and soakaways. Planning permission is required for impermeable surfaces in excess of 5 square metres.

Transport : Summary of responses

Question 7 - Do you think there are any other challenges and opportunities we should be aware of in relation to transport issues?

Key Issues	Our response
<u>Active Travel : Walking and Cycling</u> A number of representations supported the emphasis on sustainable transport, in terms of reducing car use, congestion and pollution and for increasing active travel and consequential health benefits. Several representations were made in respect of encouraging people to walk and cycle: • consider lighting for people to walk and cycle safely, particularly in the winter; • recording an integrated network of cycleways on the Definitive Map to ensure routes can be viewed on Ordnance Survey maps; • develop a system of cycleways and active travel routes to connect villages, new development and small towns in the area; • Local Plan policies should focus on enabling 2 wheeled connectivity between towns and villages on safe and maintained cycleways; • Sport and other facilities should be accessible by public transport or cycle networks; • Active travel routes should include provision for equestrians, particularly in rural areas;	We note and welcome the number of representations which support the emphasis on sustainable transport and active travel. Our new Local Plan will seek to: • ensure that our new developments are well connected and that amenities are provided on large sites; • introduce conditional planning obligations to address any unknown transport impacts from vision led transport planning; • alter car parking standards to help encourage a shift towards active and public transport and reducing the dependence on the private car; • require larger developments to incorporate one or more travel hubs; and • seek to safeguard / allocate land for travel hubs in the most suitable locations in town and village centres, with funding being secured from developments that would be served by them. Some of the issues raised in the representations are the responsibility of the Highways Authority, for example lighting, the PRoW network and cycle networks. We will forward these

Key Issues	Our response
• S106 payments should be used to improve cycling and walking provision on roads into town centres; • Increase cycle routes and cycle storage at railway stations; • New development should include safe footpaths and cycleways, separated from roads; and • Active travel routes should be designed to be safe, direct, be inclusive for all users and include supportive infrastructure, e.g signs, lighting, benches Other comments included: • There is a lack of safe walking & cycling routes between villages and towns; • Hitchin has a good active travel network but some routes are poor quality, unsafe or not well connected; • Ensure that roads, cycleways and footpaths are maintained to a high standard; • There is a challenge to integrate cycle and pedestrian options without damaging rural habitats and landscapes; • New housing developments should be supported where good walking, cycle and public transport links already exist or will be provided; • The Local Plan should list the LCWIP cycle schemes to be delivered in the plan period; and	representations to Hertfordshire County Council for their consideration.

Key Issues	Our response
The Local Plan should better join up health, active travel, green infrastructure and transport policy, including through green corridors and cycleways.	
<u>Railway Stations</u> Representations supported the intention to build near to railway stations but stated that the following issues or comments should also be considered: - The use of land around railway stations will have sustainable travel benefits; - There should be good pedestrian and cycle access routes linking to the station; - The Local Plan should recognise the potential for development sites to improve linkages when selecting development sites; - there needs to be an assessment of the impacts on existing communities and services of this type of development; - Existing infrastructure needs stabilising before adding more; - the rail system from Baldock will not cope with increased demand; - A north entrance to Letchworth station from Nevells Road should be included; and - There needs to recognition that decisions to locate development near to railway stations remains a balanced decision taking into account the environment, the Herts LNRS, local infrastructure.	We understand that our railway stations are important transport hubs need to be accessible for all users. We are assessing which sites will be allocated for development in the new Local Plan and access to railway stations will be one factor in those deliberations. A future update to the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan will include greater focus on improving walking and cycling links to railway stations.

Key Issues	Our response
<u>Public Transport</u> Comments on existing public transport services included: • Providing public transport for all small villages would be expensive so planning should continue to make provision for cars so that towns can continue to prosper; • Doubt whether new development bus routes would be profitable; • Lack of an efficient and sufficiently useful bus service which would allow people to be less reliant on their cars; and • It is unrealistic to attempt to limit car use unless there are viable and affordable alternatives, e.g the Herts Lynx service.	The Local Plan will require developments to contribute financially towards significant enhancements to bus services – scheduled and/or demand-responsive (HertsLynx).
<u>Roads</u> Comments on the existing road network included: • Congestion and limited capacity on the A1(M) and A602; • Consider the pinch points, e.g. A505 and A602 in Hitchin which should be upgraded and redesigned and make it an integral part of the east / west traffic solution; • Road network at Great Ashby is overstretched at peak times; • Speeding and dangerous driving is unacceptable and the impact on residents is ignored – further development will compound these issues; • Illegal battery-operated bikes and scooters; and	What we cannot address: The Local Plan cannot address drivers' behaviour and speeding on local roads or enforce against the use of battery-operated bikes and scooters. However, these matters are the responsibility of the police, and we will send the comments to Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Key Issues	Our response
• Junction improvements are needed on roads serving the industrial areas where peak time delays are significant.	
<u>Transport Planning / Location of Development</u> In terms of the location of new development and transport, representations stated that: • Consideration should be given to sites which prioritise access to the strategic road network and allows for the integration of public transport at the outset; • There may be an opportunity to create a sustainable pattern of development that addresses transport challenges in the rural areas through planning across a wider geographical area; • New development should be located to reduce the use of private vehicles – this is particularly challenging for rural areas and should be a priority for the Local Plan; • Minimising the need to travel and maximising the use of public transport and active travel can be assisted by facilitating the growth of key settlements in the Green Belt; • Transport should be planned before growth – not after; • Integrated transport planning should be tied to spatial strategy choices; • If a proposed development site requires residents to use private vehicles on semi-rural roads, the site must be deemed structurally unsustainable and filtered out of the allocation process; and • The development of Universal Studios is a challenge unaccounted for in the Scoping Document. The development could saturate the	The new Local Plan will set criteria for sustainable development in transport terms that accord with the NPPF and Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan.

Key Issues	Our response
regional strategic network which in turn could affect local road networks in North Hertfordshire. A number of representations made comments about the design of new transport infrastructure: • Transport infrastructure can have implications for flood risk, water quality and the wider water environment; • There are opportunities for new infrastructure to incorporate sustainable drainage, green infrastructure and nature-based solutions within transport schemes to support climate resilience and environmental enhancement which should help to avoid flood risk, manage surface water and prevent pollution of watercourses and groundwater; • Transport infrastructure should also incorporate green infrastructure features, such as EV charging, green roofs on bus stations and cycle parking, permeable parking, and habitat features such as bee and bug hotels. • Policies on vehicle trips, air quality and carbon reduction should also consider impacts on the environment and protected sites, not just human health. Comments highlighted that development in North Hertfordshire has direct implications for transport networks serving Stevenage and that there was support for the inclusion of comprehensive transport modelling which should be jointly developed with Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council and National Highways.	
<u>Car Parking</u>	In our new Local Plan, we will encourage a shift towards active travel, public and shared transport and reduce people's need to own

Key Issues	Our response
Several representations were made in respect of car parking, these included: • The Council should consider introducing maximum car parking standards to discourage unnecessary use of the car; • Car parking should be free to streamline connectivity across the area; • There should be a significant increase in town centre parking in all the towns to accommodate the increased numbers of people living outside a 10-minute walking distance; • The capacity of long stay and commuter parking should be increased at affordable rates; • There should be at least one park and ride facility to reduce congestion and parking pressure; and • The Local Plan's evidence base must actively identify and protect town-specific characteristics—such as historic street layouts and residential pinch points, otherwise this will be overlooked by a district-wide parking strategy will overlook;	and use a private car. We will do this by setting lower minimum and, in some circumstances, maximum parking standards that reflect the availability and attractiveness of alternatives to owning a car – walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and car-sharing. We will require some residential parking to be provided off plot in shared parking squares or courts which will make better use of land and will provide greater scope for parking to be repurposed as and when private car ownership declines. There are no plans to build any park-and-rides in the District. They require a large amount of land, are expensive to build, require a car to access them, and undermine the viability of other bus services. The priority in the Local Transport Plan and new Local Plan will be to improve access to bus services from people's homes without the need to use a car.
<u>Using Private Cars</u> Some representations mentioned the use of private cars: • There are no safe alternatives to driving; • There is a need to address the reliance on private cars for everyday tasks; and	Our Local Plan can only influence the use of private cars through the design of new developments, setting car parking standards and ensuring that town centres and everyday amenities are located in locations which are served by reliable public transport and/or safe active travel routes.

Key Issues	Our response
Businesses and public services have no realistic option other than to use cars and commercial vehicles and adequate provision needs to be made for roads and car parking facilities. Failure to do this will result in reduced productivity.	

Community Issues: Summary of responses

Question 8 - Do you think there are any other challenges and opportunities we should be aware of in relation to community issues?

Summary of representations	Our response
Shopping, services, community facilities	
The challenges and opportunities are not specific to North Herts	Our Scoping Document set out the some of the key issues affecting the District. We asked for views on those issues and we will use the responses to reflect local issues in our new Local Plan.
Many representations highlighted the following issues in relation to existing and future community facilities: • Concern about the level of proposed development and the impact that development can have on existing community services and facilities, particularly in rural communities; • The Local Plan needs to include a cross-boundary assessment of infrastructure capacity and future needs, e.g the Lister Hospital, schools and leisure and community facilities; • The Local Plan should prohibit new development which add a significant population without a legally binding front loading for doctors, dentists and school places; • The new Local Plan is an opportunity to strengthen the protection for all community facilities, including public houses. In turn this will support the ambition to have enough community facilities,	We recognise that the provision of community facilities and service is important to both existing and future communities. As part of our work for the Local Plan, we will be updating our evidence base to give us an up-to-date picture of the levels of community facilities and services across the District. We will also be updating our Infrastructure Delivery Plan working with the statutory service providers and adjoining local authorities to ensure that these issues are considered through the Local Plan. We will consider whether any of these suggested additional policies can be incorporated into our new Local Plan, taking into account the National Development Management Policies and our existing policies.

Summary of representations	Our response
Shopping, services, community facilities	
improve employment opportunities and protecting our historic environment; • The Plan should support the delivery of well-connected, mixed and inclusive communities, with access to open space, community facilities and services; • Growth should be used as an opportunity to address existing infrastructure deficits and enhance provision for existing and new communities; • The location of community infrastructure should be based on meeting the needs of all residents of a town in a local plan not just located in a new development; • Strategic sites can provide the opportunity to deliver these elements in a coordinated manner; • Provision of community facilities should provide for day to day community needs where these are not already available locally; • Need more surgeries, dentists, school places, nursery places and cycle lanes. Investment needed in these if more houses are to be built; • Do not understand why developers are allowed to build houses without making provision for services, for example community centres with function space, shops, medical centre, schools, sports facilities, local council, police ambulance & fire services;	

Summary of representations	Our response
Shopping, services, community facilities	
• Facilities should be designed for multiple uses to maximise value, e.g BNG areas serving as open space, village halls including shops and school playing fields being available to the community outside school hours; • Increase the number of activities for under 25's, e.g community equestrian centres; • Facilities should be located in areas which are accessible without the need for a car; • Policies which seek to protect, enhance and create places that provide community, cultural, recreational, sport and leisure opportunities; and • Policies on healthy community infrastructure which should also specify that these facilities should be located within reasonable walking distances and be accessible by active travel routes and public transport.	
<u>Future community facilities</u> Some community facilities are strategic in nature and would be best planned for across the area of the new, larger authorities, including secondary schooling and major sports facilities. It would be more effective and sustainable if the Local Plan could address the new, wider authority area to take account of these issues and ensure a more joined-up approach to planning and minimise the risks of gaps in provision.	Whilst we cannot address wider issues in the new Local Plan for North Hertfordshire, we are working with our neighbouring local authorities and wider service providers to ensure that education, leisure and community facilities will be provided for in new developments.

Summary of representations	Our response
Shopping, services, community facilities	
Detailed representations were made in respect of strengthening health and wellbeing policies in the Local Plan. These included: • the Local Plan should positively promote health and wellbeing and address local health inequalities; • facilitate improvements to health infrastructure; • the Local Plan should seek to ensure infrastructure providers, including the NHS receive a commensurate share of developer contributions to mitigate the healthcare impacts arising from housing growth; • the Local Plan should recognise the impact on health services arising from planning applications made by specialist housing providers; • support the ability of the NHS as a landowner to continually review its healthcare estate, optimise land use, and deliver health services from modern facilities; • Refusing planning permission where proposals would cause unacceptable harm to public health; • Preparing a Health Impact Assessment to ensure health and wellbeing are properly considered; • Managing harmful land uses such as hot food takeaways, vape shops, betting shops, gambling venues and alcohol-selling premises, particularly near schools and other sensitive locations and limiting the clustering of these uses to reduce antisocial	We recognise that a Health Impact Assessment is an important part of developing a Local Plan that supports healthy, sustainable communities and aligns with the Council's commitment to improving quality of life for residents. We will be seeking views on our Health Impact Assessment which we have prepared to accompany the Contents and Evidence Consultation Document. Developer Contributions will be sought where appropriate and this may include contributions for additional healthcare needs arising from proposed developments. Our Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document sets out further details. The NPPF has introduced Policy HC5: Hot food takeaways which sets out that proposals for hot food takeaways should be refused in some circumstances. The Government has announced separate changes to planning laws for shops selling vapes and betting shops.

Summary of representations	Our response
Shopping, services, community facilities	
behaviour, financial harm, poor health outcomes and impacts on community wellbeing; • Supporting local food growing through policies for allotments and community gardens, including provision on larger residential sites; • Adopting the Healthy Streets approach, requiring Healthy Streets Assessments for major developments; and • Applying Age Friendly Principles to support accessible, inclusive places that promote physical activity, social interaction and wellbeing.	
New development needs to take into account the inability for trans people to use male, female or disabled toilets or changing rooms. Separate facilities for trans and disabled people need to be provided.	We will be considering equality, accessibility and health issues across all of the policy areas in the new Local Plan. This is not an issue which can be addressed directly through the Local Plan but could be addressed through detailed planning proposals.

Key Issues / sufficient open space for local communities	Our response
A number of representations recognised the importance of accessible open spaces both for existing residents and for future residents. The responses suggested that policies in the Local Plan should protect the existing open spaces and playing pitches and that they provision should be made in new developments.	It is evident that open spaces, playing pitches and other recreational facilities are important to the local community which will be reflected in our new Local Plan. In terms of the definitions used, we will ensure that are definitions in our Local Plan and evidence base documents are clear.

Key Issues / sufficient open space for local communities	Our response
It was also suggested that the Local Plan should be more specific about what open space means, would suggest sports facilities, parks and gardens, woodlands	
A wide range of issues were raised in the representations in terms of open space: • It should be recognised that development on the outskirts of a town can increase the distance for existing residents to access the countryside and green space; • Provision should be made for sport and play facilities within housing allocations to encourage and facilitate physical activity; • Guidance on sport and play facilities from Sport England could be embedded into policy; • Open spaces should not just include making parks in new developments but should also ensure that parks are connected with green links to the countryside and other green spaces; • Provide sufficient, high-quality open spaces that are usable and accessible for communities, in a range of sizes and types, to meet local needs. This should take account of existing provision and help support both physical and emotional wellbeing; • The open spaces mentioned are not enjoyable because of the volume of drivers; • In relation to providing sufficient, high-quality open spaces the Local Plan policy approach should be proportionate to the scale of development sites and should reflect the potential of development sites to improve and such provision e.g., new open spaces; • No mention of children's play areas; • There is an opportunity to create places which are designed to support wellbeing, inclusion and safety for all. By promoting	National planning policy requires us to take a proactive approach to planning for social infrastructure, including open and recreational spaces and facilities. We will be considering what types of new or enhanced open and recreational spaces are required as part of our site assessment work, taking into account our evidence studies and the types, sizes and location of sites available.

Key Issues / sufficient open space for local communities	Our response
inclusive environments, multifunctional public spaces and well-designed streets and neighbourhoods, planning policies can support social interaction, active lifestyles and a strong sense of community; • The Council's Playing Pitch and Indoor Sports Strategies identify current and future needs that the Local Plan can help address. Some can be met by improving existing facilities, while others will require new sites, such as football, rugby, hockey and tennis provision in the Royston area. The Local Plan can support this through site allocations, on-site provision where appropriate, and financial contributions to off-site improvements; and • Consideration should be given to the multi-use of facilities to ensure they are fully utilised. Examples given included: • BNG areas could also be used for open space provision if they are correctly designed and maintained; • Village halls could have a variety of uses and include small convenience stores or community shops alongside flexible office space and larger hall areas; and • School playing fields could be used by the community outside school hours.	
<u>Allotments</u> There is no reference to allotments which benefit wellbeing, the environment and sustainability	The importance of allotments is recognised in the NPPF, Policies HC1 (Planning for Healthy Communities) and Policy HC7 (Development affecting existing recreational land and facilities). The Local Plan should not duplicate policies which are included in the NPPF.
<u>Public Rights of Way</u> There is no explicit reference to the Public Right of Way (PRoW) network. The Local Plan should explicitly recognise the role of the	The importance of the Public Right of Way network (PRoW) is recognised in Policy TR8 (Public rights of way) in the NPPF. The Local Plan should not duplicate policies in the NPPF.

Key Issues / sufficient open space for local communities	Our response
PRoW network and the requirement for protection, creation and improvement of the network.	

Question 9: Please choose the three most important issues out of the topic areas below

Our Scoping Document outlined that we will have to carefully balance the demand for homes, jobs and infrastructure with the need to protect and enhance our important environmental and historic assets. We asked respondents to choose the three most important issues from the following list:

- Building enough homes, including affordable, accessible/ specialist in our District for our residents
- Having enough community facilities including sports facilities, and recreation/open spaces
- Having vibrant Town Centres that provide the facilities and services that our residents need
- Providing a range of sustainable transport opportunities and ensuring that active travel is prioritised
- Reducing carbon emissions of all types and improving the adaption of buildings to climate change by making use of efficiency technology e.g. rainwater harvesting etc
- Protecting our landscape and natural environment, improving biodiversity, improving air quality and reducing the risk of flooding.
- Improving employment opportunities in our District
- Ensuring high-quality design
- Protecting our historic environment

This question was only answered by those people responding online. However, the following graph shows the important priorities from those who did respond:



OUR VISION

Our Vision

In the Scoping Document we set out the factors which could be considered when developing a vision for the District and the new Local Plan.

We asked two questions, the first asking whether we were considering the right issues for the new vision and secondly for any additional suggestions which should be considered.

A summary of responses to these questions is set out in the tables on the following pages...

Our Vision: Summary of responses

Question 10: Do you think these are the right issues to be considered for our Vision?

The responses have been summarised in the table by theme:

Key Issues / Issues to be considered for our vision	Our response
<u>General comments</u> The vision should reflect why people value living in the area, use those priorities to guide the plan, and set clear, measurable objectives so the plan can be monitored and remain effective. Many of these issues are common to the new local authority areas, but some are different. It would be better if a comprehensive vision could be achieved, rather than a vision for just part of the area. This can only be achieved by considering specific places and locational challenges and opportunities across the area.	The comments made in respect of the vision and objectives are noted. We have reviewed all of the comments in developing a vision and objectives for the new Local Plan. As we set out in the Scoping Document, the Vision will need to be a clear, forward looking statement setting out the long term aspirations for North Hertfordshire and the objectives will set out clear and specific goals which will explain how that vision will be delivered over the life of the Local Plan. Our Contents and Evidence Document includes a proposed vision for the new Local Plan and we expect to receive further comments on this through public consultation.
<u>Climate change / Flood risk / Reducing carbon emissions</u> • The vision lacks an understanding of the National Emergency Briefing held in Parliament (November 2025); • Insulating homes should take priority over heritage considerations; • The vision would benefit from being more explicit about the need to plan for a world of high energy prices through energy conservation standards and building in sustainable locations to reduce car dependency; • Flooding is less of a risk than drought and water shortages in North Hertfordshire;	Our new Local Plan will place greater emphasis on issues, challenges and opportunities that are specific to the current geographic area of North Hertfordshire, many of which have been highlighted in the representations. The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2026) has introduced national decision-making policies (NDMPs). Many of the policies which were previously included in the Local Plan will be covered by the NDMPs and they will not be included in our new Local Plan.

Key Issues / Issues to be considered for our vision	Our response
• There should be stronger priority to water resilience as part of sustainable growth; and • Water should be treated as a central consideration within the Vision given the proposed scale of growth and the environmental sensitivities of the area, particularly in relation to groundwater and chalk streams.	
<u>Housing</u> • The vision should recognise the scale of housing growth required in North Hertfordshire; • Growth should be directed towards existing settlements to make the best use of established services and infrastructure; • Homes should be located on small, medium and large sites; • There should be some recognition of meeting housing needs in neighbouring authorities; • Greater emphasis should be placed on meeting and exceeding housing needs; and • The housing priority should include suitable, well located homes which support all parts of the community;	
<u>Thriving Communities / Health / Wellbeing</u> • Should recognise the role of new developments can play in supporting thriving communities by providing additional housing to meet local needs and sustaining local facilities;	

Key Issues / Issues to be considered for our vision	Our response
• Improve the health of the community by improving access to recreational facilities; • The Vision and Objectives should reflect local health challenges, embed health equity, inclusion and sustainability, and show how health connects to wider priorities such as the environment, economy, transport, communities, infrastructure and homes; and • Place making quality and long term stewardship should be considered throughout the Local Plan.	
<u>Environment</u> • Protection and enhancement of the natural environment is the most important and is being neglected by the council; • The Vision is too narrow as it focuses on “important habitats and landscapes”. It should consider both the natural and man-made environments; and • The Green Belt should be recognised as an important feature to protect	
<u>Heritage / Landscape</u> • As with heritage assets, important landscapes are already protected or covered by national policy – there is therefore no need of any local policies on these matters; and • The vision places too much emphasis on heritage and historic character, without enough reference to landscape or ecological value.	

Key Issues / Issues to be considered for our vision	Our response
In addition, several representations agreed that the right issues are considered in the Scoping Document which should then be reflected in a future Vision for North Hertfordshire and some respondents stated that there were no additional issues which should be considered.	The supporting representations are welcomed and noted.

Question 11 : Are there any other issues that you think we should be including?

A number of suggestions were made about issues that the Local Plan should consider, either as part of the Vision or in Local Plan policies. These suggestions included:

Key Issues	Our response
<u>Sustainability Appraisal</u> The Scoping Document does not include, summarise, or consult upon the required Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) Scoping content. There is no baseline environmental information, no proposed SA/SEA objectives, and no invitation to comment on the scope of the assessment.	We are preparing a series of evidence base documents to support our Local Plan. This will include a Sustainability Appraisal, which includes the requirements of a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This will be published as part of the Contents and Evidence Consultation. Details of all our evidence base documents are available on our website .
<u>Design</u> The use of traditional architectural Design Codes	We have recently adopted a District Design Code and this will inform policies in our Local Plan and be used in determining planning applications.
<u>Landscape</u> Consideration of the Mimram Valley Parklands Landscape area	We have included a question in our Contents and Evidence Base document about whether we should consider designating Locally Valued Landscapes, which could include the Mimram Valley Parklands Landscape.
<u>Heritage</u> Consideration of working with Hertfordshire Gardens Trust to ensure a comprehensive list of Historic Parks and Gardens of Local Interest/Importance for the North Herts District	We are preparing a Heritage Strategy for the District which will include Historic Parks and Gardens. Information and advice from the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust will be welcomed.

Key Issues	Our response
<u>Transport</u> A southern bypass for Hitchin to divert east – west traffic and take traffic off Hitchin streets and would also be beneficial to the wellbeing of Hitchin residents	There are no proposals to build a southern by-pass for Hitchin. Any proposals for significant new or improved transport routes would be considered as part of the site allocations in the Local Plan.
<u>Public Engagement and Consultation</u> There may be opportunities to make public consultation more accessible, public meetings and simple feedback methods could help gather a wide range of views.	We have prepared a Community Engagement Strategy to set out how we will consult for the Local Plan.
It is unclear what is meant by strong communities – perhaps this could be made clearer and it should clearly state the need for local facilities such as parks, sports grounds etc that promote wellbeing and thriving communities	Comments noted. We will endeavour to explain this in future documents.
<u>Letchworth Garden City</u> • How will the local plan protect the original vision for Letchworth with the planned locations for housing, industrial and countryside? • What weight should be given to the Ebenezer Howards concept that there is a maximum size of a town? and • How much Green Belt is needed to uphold the vision of Town meets Country?	The importance of Letchworth Garden City is recognised in the proposed vision for the Local Plan. The draft vision will form part of our Contents and Evidence Document consultation in October 2026.
<u>Vision</u>	We recognise the importance of green infrastructure and this will be reflected in the Contents and Evidence Document.

Key Issues	Our response
The vision should include delivery of “green” infrastructure because this will be essential for biodiversity, shade, flood management and long-term liveability. Ongoing maintenance provision should be agreed for community infrastructure and spaces as part of the planning process for any site.	
<u>Sustainable development</u> Respecting the future need for development whilst respecting and protecting the green built so boundaries do not blur.	Comments noted.
<u>Green Belt</u> Suggest that the need to test and identify suitable land for development on Green Belt land/release Green Belt land for development is included in the vision.	We will be assessing sites submitted through the Call for Sites to identify which will be the most suitable for allocating in the new Local Plan.
<u>Joint working</u> Evidence of working with adjoining authorities on the strategic issues.	We are working collaboratively with other authorities on a number of evidence studies and on wider, strategic issues.
As stated above, clear objectives should be confirmed to ensure that the plan succeeds and is measurable. The Vision should then outline how the objectives are met. Place making quality and long-term stewardship should be carefully considered throughout the Local Plan.	The Contents and Evidence Document will set out a proposed vision and objectives for consultation in October 2026. Place making will be at the centre of the new Local Plan and how sites are allocated and delivered will be considered in its preparation.

Key Issues	Our response
Deliverability and speed of delivery are particularly important given the current housing shortfalls. It is also vital that the delivery of infrastructure is provided to support housing development.	
We recommend that the Local Plan explicitly recognises the importance of planning for water-resilient growth, ensuring that development is aligned with sustainable water supply, infrastructure capacity and environmental constraints. This should include: • integrating water resources and water quality considerations into the spatial strategy and site selection process; • requiring ambitious water efficiency standards and demand management measures; • ensuring that growth is supported by an up-to-date Water Cycle Strategy; and • protecting groundwater resources and water-dependent habitats, including chalk streams Embedding these considerations at an early stage will help ensure that the Local Plan delivers development that is both sustainable and resilient over the long term.	The importance of water is recognised in planning for the District's future. Our Contents and Evidence Document will consider a number of water related issues and consultation responses will help frame policies for the new Local Plan. We have also commissioned a Water Cycle Strategy and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to accompany the new Local Plan.
Failure to Address Underground Archaeology and Non-Designated Heritage Assets: The Scoping Document places heavily simplified emphasis on "valued heritage assets" and their "reuse," but completely fails to mention the protection of non-designated heritage assets and highly sensitive underground archaeology.	There is very limited scope for us to introduce our own heritage policies specific to North Hertfordshire. For these reasons, our Local Plan will rely on national historic environment policy set out in the NPPF to conserve and enhance our heritage assets in our District which includes but is not limited to non-designated heritage assets and archaeological sites.

Key Issues	Our response
The Specific Challenge for Edge-of-Settlement Sites: Peripheral agricultural sites located along or adjacent to ancient corridors—such as the historic Icknield Way crossing at Ickleford—possess incredibly high potential for undisturbed Romano-British, Iron Age, and Anglo-Saxon archaeological remains. Allowing developers to clear and pave massive areas in these places risks obliterating unrecorded elements of our national story before they can even be identified. The Local Plan's Vision must mandate early, robust, front-loaded archaeological evaluations and declare that sites demonstrating a severe negative impact on the setting of ancient monuments or historic conservation areas will be strictly protected from allocation.	
People need a home/roof to live under - basis rule of security and health Kids need a school to attend GP used to keep up healthy - and trust Transport to get to shops, businesses, work, Green areas - wellbeing, community support Care homes for those who need them	Comments noted.
Monitoring and Implementation A clear and robust monitoring framework for local performance indicators should be included to understand if planning policies are delivering the objectives. These should include indicators from the Hertfordshire Healthy and Safe Places Framework to ensure the effective ongoing delivery of healthy place-making objectives.	Monitoring is an integral part of the local plan making process and a monitoring framework will be drafted alongside the Local Plan policies.

Key Issues	Our response
There were also a number of comments which stated that there were no additional issues to be considered but that the plan should be kept short and concise and remove anything which is duplicated in national policy.	Support noted

In addition to the comments summarised above, we also received a number of comments which raised issues which cannot be addressed through our Local Plan. These are summarised in the table below:

Key Issues	Our response
Transport bottle necks at Welwyn, both on the Welwyn rail viaduct and the A1M which have a significant impact on North Herts residents and causes unnecessary pollution.	Whilst we are aware of congestion and pinch points on the strategic road network, our Local Plan cannot address issues which arise out of the administrative boundary of North Hertfordshire.
There should be more demands and strict rules on developers to build what the community wants rather just accepting their plans.	We can use our Local Plan to set out criteria which help to guide the type of development that we expect to happen for our site allocations. These are used in considering applications for development, but at the point of determining planning applications there maybe a range of other factors which need to be considered by both planners and councillors.
The proper maintenance of trees and shrubs, some of which are Council's responsibility and other are homeowners. Preventing vehicles parking illegally on streets.	Although the Local Plan cannot influence the maintenance of trees and shrubs across the District, the Council does have a Greenspace Management Strategy 2022 – 2027 which sets out our approach to maintaining green spaces across the District. Our Local Plan cannot address illegal parking, but the Council does enforce parking restrictions across the District.
Reducing speed limits in urban areas and on major roads and dual carriageways	Hertfordshire County Council are proposing the introduction of new 20mph areas across the County as part of an initiative to improve road safety, create calmer streets and encourage more walking and cycling.

Key Issues	Our response
In Letchworth, consideration should be given to reducing the hard landscaping in the town centre and looking to deliver green squares with tree cover.	This is not a suggestion which we can consider in isolation through the Local Plan but we can encourage green spaces to be provided in all future development schemes.
As the Council starts to draft the Local Plan, it should include the following: • a Town Specific Parking Impact Assessments; and • a Transparent Transitional Framework - a formal mechanism ensuring that existing community petitions, localized grievances, and evidence gathered by current tiers of government are carried forward seamlessly into the post-2028 Unitary parking services design.	Whilst car parking in our towns will be considered as part of any development allocations, we will not be undertaking town specific parking impact assessments. Where responses are made in respect of the Local Plan, these will continue to be considered through the local planning process despite the changes that will take place through Local Government Reorganisation.

