

North Herts Gateway 1 Assessment



How we got ready to prepare a new Local Plan

Although we started a lot of preparatory work on the evidence base for the Local Plan and during the Get Ready period, in terms of the 30 month requirements for preparing the Local Plan, we officially started preparing a new Local Plan for North Herts Council on 9 October 2026 (publication of the Gateway 1 assessment)

[The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2026¹](#) says we should adopt a new Plan within 30 months of this date. This helps ensure we have an up-to-date Local Plan that responds to the needs of North Hertfordshire and our communities.

This page explains what we've done to get ready to meet the 30-month timeframe. It also has links to further information and where you can get updates.

We have published a timetable for preparing our Plan

The timetable shows when we expect to carry out the different stages and activities for preparing our Plan. It helps us check if and how we can adopt our Plan within the 30-month timeframe. We'll keep this updated as we make more progress.

The analysis of the responses to the two forthcoming public consultations

- proposed Local Plan Content and Evidence (13 October and 24 November 2026), and
- Proposed Local Plan, (anticipated for 26 October 2027 and 4 January 2028)

may take us some time to process.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2026/186/contents/made>

To ensure we deliver our plan within 30 months, we:

- have proactively engaged with stakeholders and community groups as part of our Scoping Consultation
- will promote the use of a digital response form to help us analyse the responses more efficiently

Engaging in this way has helped generate initial ideas and key criteria within our Plan. It also ensured that stakeholders and residents had sight of the plan-making process and the requirements for the new plan-making system early on. We will continue to work with these groups through our consultation periods.

We're confident we will be able to adopt our plan within 30 months.

You can view our [Local Plan timetable](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/local-plan-timetable)² on our webpage.

We have established project management and governance arrangements

Preparing a Local Plan involves many people across the Council and from other organisations. Thinking early about how the work is planned, managed and signed off helps us:

- check our progress and keep the work on track
- anticipate and manage any risks to us adopting the plan within 30 months

We have developed a project plan to help us prepare our Plan in line with our Local Plan timetable and will meet regularly with our key decision makers to monitor how this is going. When we developed the project plan, we identified some risks to its delivery. We have reflected on these risks and identified things we can do to reduce these risks.

Guidance advises us:

- to consider our governance procedures
- to ensure we have efficient sign off processes in place with key decisions makers

We report to a Strategic Planning Project Board, which is chaired by the Executive Member for Place and includes cross-party representation from all political groups. The Board provides informal guidance on key issues and receives regular updates on the progress of the programme.

We have undertaken a series of informal Member workshops prior to the Scoping Consultation, as part of the "Get Ready" stage, to scope out issues to be included in our Plan and to start developing a vision to further develop with our communities

² <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/local-plan-timetable>

through the public engagement.

We are currently undertaking a review of our governance processes in consultation with Councillors to ensure our constitution aligns with the new plan-making system regulations so that decisions can be taken in a timely way.

We planned how we will consult on our Plan

Public consultation is essential for our Local Plan to represent the needs of our communities. It must be easy for people to have their say in a way that works for them, so they can influence the way the area develops. By planning this early, we can ensure people are aware in advance and can get involved from the start.

We have already undertaken a Scoping Consultation to get people's views on what our Plan could contain and how we propose to consult on our Plan at key stages.

We used this consultation to help us prepare a Community Engagement Strategy. This sets out how we'll consult and communicate with our communities as we continue to prepare our Plan.

We have already undertaken some informal engagement activities and planned to increase our resource and use of digital software to analyse the responses in a timely manner.

We have planned a mix of consultation and communication approaches to get more people involved. This includes:

- Community drop-in sessions in different parts of North Hertfordshire
- Area Forums and Councillor Surgeries
- Briefing sessions with Parish and Town Councils
- Attendance at meetings with seldom-heard groups
- Targeted meetings with other stakeholders

We are using [PlaceMaker](https://placemaker.north-hertfordshire.urbanintelligence.co.uk/p/document/2/)³, provided by Urban Intelligence, as our digital platform.

You can find more information about upcoming consultation activities on our [website](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/new-local-plan)⁴, in our [Community Engagement Strategy](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-engagement-strategy)⁵, and on our social media channels.



³ <https://placemaker.north-hertfordshire.urbanintelligence.co.uk/p/document/2/>

⁴ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/new-local-plan>

⁵ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-engagement-strategy>

We began scoping out the content of our Plan

Scoping includes considering how well our existing Plan is working and gathering updated baseline information about our District. This helps to identify our future needs and ambitions. Starting this work early means we can begin preparing our new Plan with a clear vision, which makes it quicker and easier to consult on our Plan and make decisions about it.

To gain an understanding of the development needs for North Hertfordshire, we have looked at the existing evidence about our District and the people our Plan needs to provide for.

Using the information we have gathered along with the input from our Members, we have:

- begun to draft a vision for our District
- started to understand our development requirements for North Hertfordshire
- started to assess sites that have been submitted to us for where new developments could be located
- started to procure evidence base to inform proposed policy approaches and identify where we need to commission and/or prepare further evidence where there are gaps. We've shared some of this [evidence](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/evidence-base)⁶ through early engagement activities and published summaries of consultation responses on our website.

We began a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (which incorporates the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA))

We're legally required to identify, describe and evaluate any likely significant effects on the environment of:

- implementing our Local Plan
- reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of our Plan

This process will consider how we take account of community, national and international environmental, social and economic objectives in our Plan. It will help us to predict significant effects and develop ways of preventing, reducing and offsetting these.

It is important we start this work early and are transparent about how we are doing the assessment when engaging stakeholders and communities.

⁶ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/evidence-base>

We have identified other relevant plans and programmes and collected baseline information, looking at our District's environment and relevant designations to identify potential issues or problems.

We started the initial work on the SA scoping report, the baseline and SA framework, prior to the new plan-making system coming into force. We consulted with the statutory consultees

- Natural England,
- Environment Agency and
- Historic England

as per the requirements of the SEA framework (which have been incorporated into the SA), between October and November 2025.

Comments received during the consultation were carefully reviewed, and where appropriate incorporated into the assessment framework. We will be consulting on the revised Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report which includes assessment of reasonable alternatives alongside the Content and Evidence document.

Equality Impact Assessment

We have also prepared an Equality Impact Assessment Scoping Report which provides a baseline of data related to each protected characteristic group as identified by the Equality Act 2010 within North Hertfordshire, sets out key issues that the Local Plan should cover in relation to each protected characteristic, and creates a framework to identify potential positive and negative impacts of the Local Plan and whether any mitigation is required.

Health Impact Assessment

In addition, we have prepared a Health Impact Assessment Scoping Report which sets out a baseline of information and assesses the four strategic development growth options against the wider determinants of health. Although a HIA is not a legal requirement, it 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.

How to stay up to date

For updates about upcoming consultation activities, sign up to our [Local Plan Updates](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/subscribe-email-updates-and-text-alerts)⁷

⁷ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/subscribe-email-updates-and-text-alerts>

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