



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।

(Punjabi)

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(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 érte 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 padėtų.

(Lithuanian)

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

What is an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)?

This EqIA looks at the potential positive and negative effects of the objectives of our North Herts Local Plan update.

The main aim of this EqIA is to provide us with information about the impact on the [protected characteristics](#)¹ identified in the [2010 Equality Act](#)² and support our decision making in developing our Local Plan.

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, of the Act, we are required to have ‘due regard’ to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. This means having regard particularly to the need to
 - Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - Take steps to meet the needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic; and
 - Encourage people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life equally
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. This means having regard in particular to the need to
 - Tackle prejudice; and
 - Promote understanding.

What are the protected characteristics?

The protected characteristics defined in the 2010 Equality Act include

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/2/chapter/1>

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Because income and deprivation are not included as a protected characteristic within the Act, we are including socio-economic as an additional characteristic due to its bearings on equality of life opportunities.

What is the purpose of this EqlA Scoping Report?

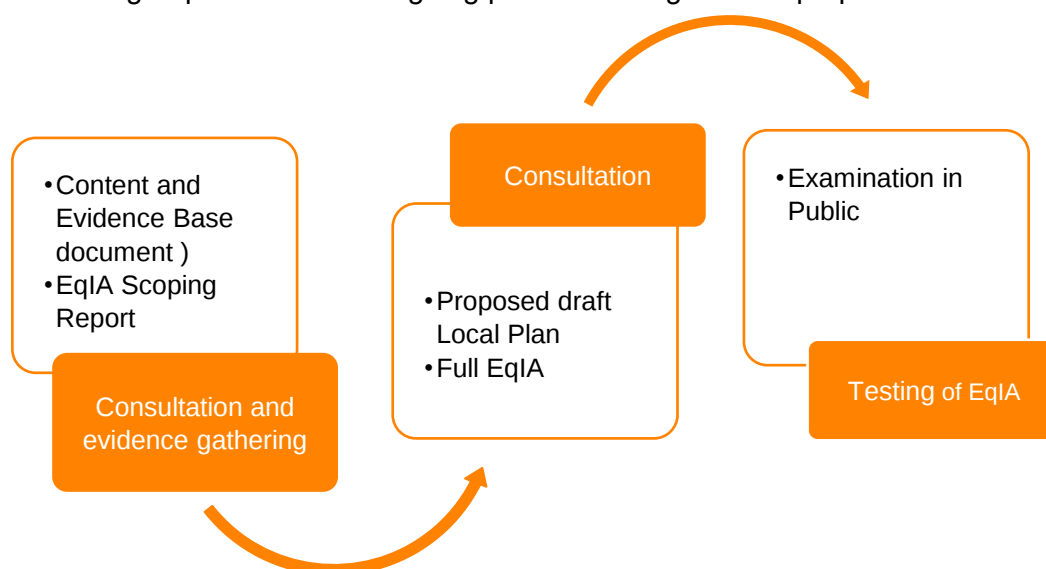
Planning has a key role in achieving greater social and economic inclusion, promoting equality and reducing poverty.

Planning policies and decisions impact people differently and there is a risk that some groups of people are disproportionately negatively impacted by planning decisions, particularly unintended consequences.

This EqlA helps inform the development of our planning policies by assessing how policies can be strengthened so they maximise the positive impacts of promoting equality and inclusion, and, where required, remove or mitigate any negative or discriminatory impacts of policies on specific groups.

The EqlA is an ongoing process to genuinely inform the development of planning policies.

The EqlA Scoping Report is the first stage of the EqlA for our North Herts Local Plan. It builds an evidence base to identify potential equalities issues for the different protected characteristics. Building our evidence base to effectively evaluate the policy impacts involves ongoing and meaningful consultation to gather information on how our policies and issues affect different groups. This is an on-going process throughout the preparation of the EqlA.



This scoping report will

1. Provide a baseline of data related to each protected characteristic group within North Hertfordshire.
2. Set out key issues that our Local Plan should cover in relation to each protected characteristic.
3. Create a framework to identify potential positive and negative impacts of our Local Plan and whether any mitigation is required.

4. Assess potential impacts of the spatial development options sets out in the Content and Evidence Base document.

Local Plan Context

What is the proposal or policy?

Every local planning authority in England is required to have an up-to-date Local Plan.

Our Local Plan sets out our vision for the future of North Hertfordshire up to 2040, helping to guide the District through a period of change before a new Local Plan is produced for the new Central Hertfordshire Authority.

It is a long-term plan for how our towns, villages and countryside will grow and develop. It helps determine where new homes, jobs, green spaces and community facilities should be provided, and how development can support thriving and sustainable communities.

The Government has introduced a new plan-making system in March 2026 that set out new regulations as to how Local Plans should be prepared. Understanding the potential equality impacts of

What are the main objectives and purpose of the proposal or policy

Our Local Plan will:

- Set a clear vision for how North Hertfordshire will grow and change over the next 15 years or so.
- Guide planning decisions by providing the framework for deciding where development should take place and what it should look like.
- Support high-quality development by setting standards for design, sustainability and infrastructure.
- Balance competing needs by protecting our environment and heritage while planning for new homes, employment opportunities and local services.
- Create better places by helping to build healthy, well-connected and inclusive communities for everyone.

We undertook an initial scoping consultation with our communities and stakeholders between 11 May and 28 June 2026 to scope key issues for the Local Plan to cover and asked how they wanted to be involved in the preparation of the Plan as it develops.

We have prepared a Content and Evidence Base document, which is the second stage in the new plan-making process. It sets out the Council's proposed approach across a number of thematic issues:

- Introduction
- Vision and Measurable Outcomes
- Our North Herts – Context
- Spatial Strategy
- Homes

- Economy and Employment Opportunities
- Town Centres
- Natural Environment
- Climate Change
- Transport and Connectivity
- Communities and Placemaking
- Communications and Utilities

The Content and Evidence Base document is currently being consulted on alongside this EqlA scoping report.

The next stage of the Local Plan is the proposed draft Local Plan, which is anticipated to be consulted on in October 2027.

Is this a new policy or proposal or a change to an existing?

Our current Local Plan was adopted in 2022 and sets a vision and framework for development across North Hertfordshire up to 2031.

Local Plans need to be reviewed every 5 years to ensure they provide an up-to-date planning framework for the area. Without an up-to-date Local Plan, we lose some local discretion on deciding planning applications.

We also need to ensure that our planning policies remain fit for purpose and reflect our current needs, addresses emerging challenges and help us make the most of new opportunities.

Who is affected by the policy or proposal?

The preparation of the new Local Plan includes a wide range of stakeholders and involves cross-council working. It affects residents, businesses and local organisations and involves the input of statutory consultees, public bodies and council partners.

Our new Local Plan will cover the current geographical area of North Hertfordshire and will guide decisions about development, growth and investment across our District up to 2040.

Changes to local government arrangements mean that, from 2028, North Hertfordshire will become part of a new Central Hertfordshire Authority. Responsibility for preparing any future Local Plan, beyond LGR, covering that wider area will rest with the new authority.

Will the policy or decision influence how the Council operates or have substantial changes in resources?

Our Local Plan (alongside any Neighbourhood Plans and the County Councils' Waste and Minerals Plans) forms part of the Development Plan for North Herts and is used in planning decisions for new development and to shape growth in the District.

Is the policy associated with other Council policies, if so identify the policy/policies?

At the heart of the Local Plan will be the delivery of the Council's core strategies. These include

- [Council Plan 2024-2028](#)³
- [North Herts Climate Change Strategy 2022 – 2027](#)⁴
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022 - 2027](#)⁵

As part of the preparation of the new Local Plan, we have also prepared a **Community and Engagement Strategy** which aims to ensure consultation and engagement are as accessible as possible, and any method addresses equalities considerations.

³ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024%20-%202028%20Council%20Plan%20FINAL.pdf>

⁴ https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/NHDC-811%20NHDC%20Climate%20change%20Strategy%202022-27_V3.pdf

⁵ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/Equality%2C%20Diversity%2C%20and%20Inclusion%20Strategy%202022-2027.pdf>

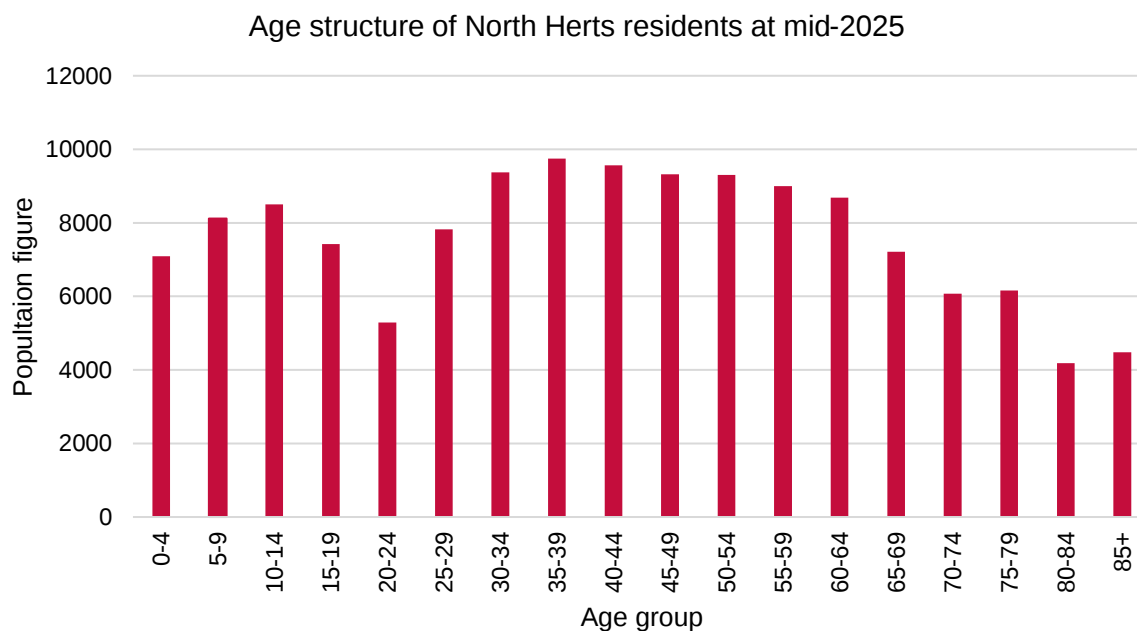
AGE

Age

Age Structure of Residents of North Herts

Of the estimated total population of North Herts at mid-2025, **137,365**, this is the age structure of residents.

It is clear the largest proportion of residents are between the ages of 30 – 59 years of age.



Source – [ONS – Mid-year population estimates 2025](#)⁶

The data does not indicate that there is a particularly sensitive age profile in our District among our residents.

Estimates and Projections of 0–15-year-olds

Of the estimated total population of North Herts at mid-2025

25,447 (18.5%) were **aged under 16** and

23,781 (16%) are projected in 2047⁷

Of these 25,447 residents under 16 years, 51% (13,010) are male and 49% (12,437) are female.



⁶

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationestimatesforenglandandwales/mid2025#local-authorities>

⁷

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/subnationalpopulationprojectionsforengland/2022based#projected-change-by-local-authority>

Estimates and Projections of 16–64-year-olds

Of the estimated total population of North Herts at mid-2025

83,795 (61.0%) were **aged 16 to 64** and

88,890 (60.2%) are projected in 2047⁸

Of these 83,795 residents of working age, 49% (40,736) are male and 51% (43,059) are female.



Estimates and Projections of 65+ year olds

Of the estimated total population of North Herts at mid-2025

28,123 (20.5%) were **aged 65+** and

35,090 (23.9%) are projected in 2047⁸

Of these 28,123 older residents, 45% (12,764) are male and 55% (15,359) are female.



Key issues the Local Plan should consider

The location and nature of new development can affect age groups in different ways. Accessibility plays a crucial role, with some individuals and age groups experiencing greater impacts than others. For example, older adults may place particular importance on proximity to essential services such as healthcare, social care, convenience shopping, and community facilities. Safe and easy access to these services, especially via public transport, is often a key consideration.

In contrast, younger people are more likely to prioritise access to quality employment, education, and training opportunities, as well as the ability to enter the housing market. For households with young children, access to pre-school facilities, play areas, and healthcare services is likely to be especially important.

The availability of suitable and flexible housing in the right locations is vital for the entire community and can be shaped by local planning policies. However, this need is often more pronounced at either end of the age spectrum.

For older individuals, the provision and location of adaptable homes, retirement housing, sheltered accommodation, and extra care housing are particularly significant. Meanwhile, younger people may face challenges in accessing affordable housing, which is essential for enabling independent living and establishing a foothold in the local property market.

The effects of climate change and poor air quality vary across different age groups. Older adults are especially vulnerable to rising temperatures, which can worsen existing health conditions and increase the risk of heat-related illness. Children, meanwhile, are particularly sensitive to air pollution due to their developing lungs and higher exposure levels, which can lead to respiratory issues and long-term health impacts.

Particular consideration should be given to creating age-friendly environments through high-quality design, accessible public spaces, safe walking and cycling routes, and good public

⁸

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/subnationalpopulationprojectionsforengland/2022based#projected-change-by-local-authority>

transport connections. The Plan should also support healthy lifestyles, social interaction and community cohesion, helping to reduce loneliness and social isolation, particularly amongst older people and more vulnerable residents.

Well-designed places can reduce fear of crime, improve safety and accessibility of public spaces, and help ensure that people of all ages are able to move around and use their local environment confidently and independently. For older people, this may include features such as good street lighting, clear signage, seating, accessible walking routes, safe crossing points and step-free access, which can encourage active lifestyles and reduce social isolation. For children and young people, safe and well-overlooked streets, public spaces and recreational areas can support independent mobility, play and social interaction

Recommendations

Our new Local Plan should gather more evidence on the experience of people of different age groups to assess the impact of the Local Plan policies on different age groups. This includes ensuring that the voices of young people are heard through consultation and engagement activities.

Demographic analysis, housing needs evidence, health and wellbeing data, and engagement with relevant organisations should be used to identify any barriers that may prevent particular age groups from fully benefiting from growth and development.

DISABILITY

Disability

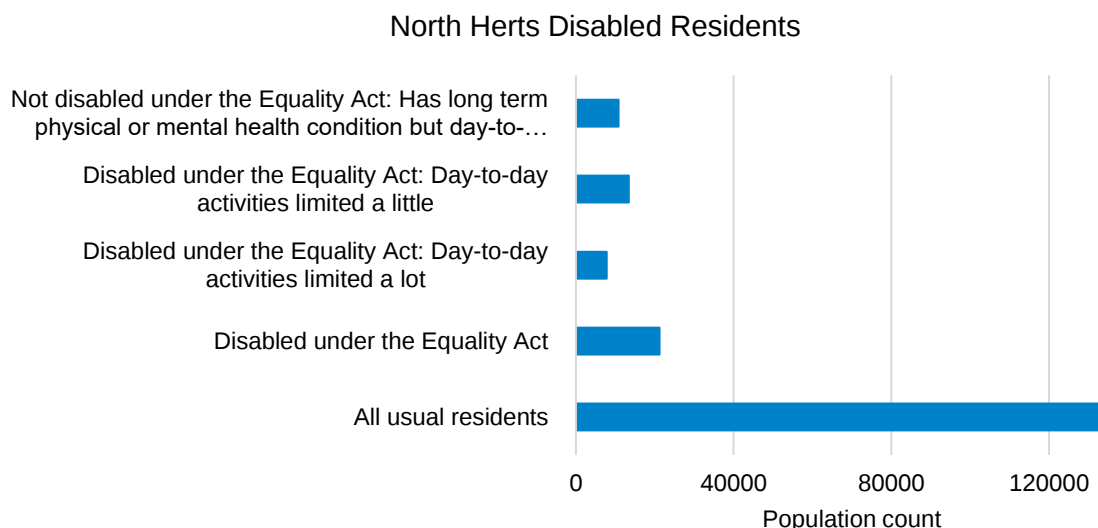
A person has a disability if they

- Have a physical or mental impairment, and
- The impairment has a substantial long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities ([Equality Act 2010, Section 6](#)⁹).

Disabled Residents

Of the estimated total population of North Herts from the 2021 Census ([133,210](#)¹⁰)

21,236 (15.9%) assess themselves as disabled under the Equalities Act 2010¹¹



Source – [ONS, Table TS038](#)

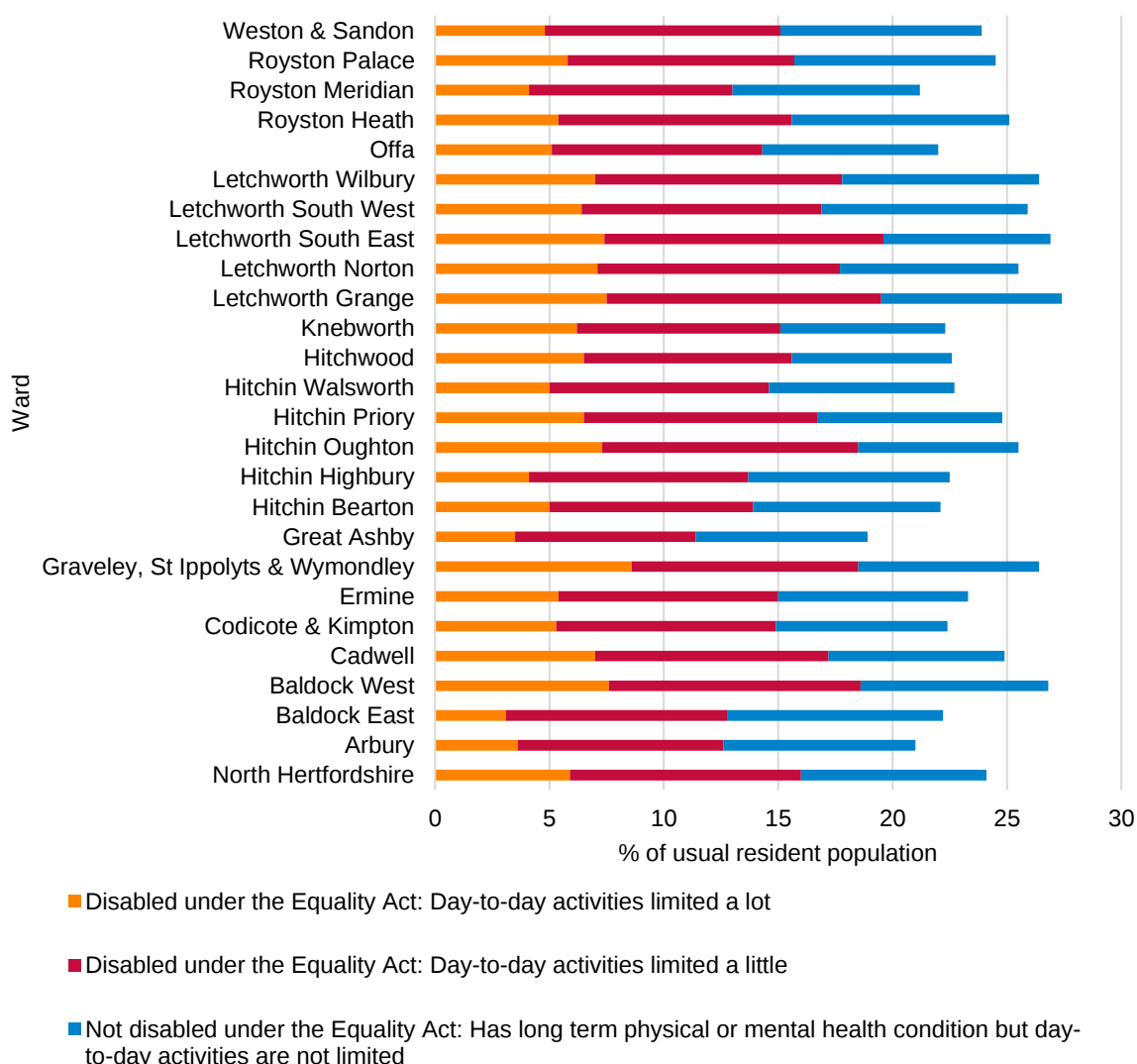
Of these 21,236 residents who assessed themselves as disabled under the Equalities Act 2010, 6% (7,846) considered that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot, whilst 10% (13,390) considered that their day-to-day activities were limited a little.

⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/6>

¹⁰ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E07000099>

¹¹ ONS Census 2021, Table TS038 - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS038/editions/2021/versions/3#get-data>

% of Residents Whose Day-to-Day Activities are Limited by a Long-Term Illness or Disability in 2021



Source – [ONS, Table TS038](#)

Key issues that the Local Plan should consider

The location, design and delivery of future development can have a significant impact on disabled people. Barriers such as poor access to essential services, limited transport choices, and a lack of specialist or adaptable housing can affect independence, wellbeing and quality of life. These challenges may be exacerbated where the built environment is not designed to be accessible and inclusive.

The way development is planned can also influence access to employment, education and training opportunities. Ensuring that homes, workplaces, services and community facilities are well connected, easy to access and designed to meet a range of needs can help disabled people participate more fully in economic and social life.

Disabled people may have a wide range of mobility, sensory, cognitive and mental health needs. Providing a greater choice of accessible and specialist housing, delivering inclusive

environments, and creating healthy and welcoming communities can help remove barriers and support independent living.

Access to open spaces, community facilities and the public realm is also important. Safe, attractive and accessible places can improve health and wellbeing, reduce social isolation, and enable greater participation in community life. Embedding inclusive design principles throughout future development can help create places that are usable by everyone and provide equal access to opportunities and services.

Disabled people may also be disproportionately affected by climate change and poor air quality, particularly those with respiratory, cardiovascular or other long-term health conditions. Extreme weather events, including heatwaves and flooding, can create additional challenges and increase vulnerability.

Recommendations

The Local Plan can help address these issues by promoting healthy, climate-resilient and inclusive development. Measures such as improving air quality, enhancing green infrastructure, reducing environmental risks, and ensuring that transport networks, public spaces and community facilities remain accessible and functional during extreme weather events can help create more resilient and inclusive communities for disabled people.

The new Local Plan should gather further evidence on the experience of residents with disabilities to more fully understand lived experiences of these groups.

Engagement and consultation activities should be designed to be accessible and inclusive, enabling people with a range of physical, sensory, cognitive and mental health disabilities to participate meaningfully in the plan-making process. The Council should also seek input from disability organisations, service providers and individuals with lived experience to ensure that policies and site allocations reflect the needs of disabled residents.

GENDER REASSIGNMENT

Gender reassignment

A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex ([Equality Act 2010, Section 7](#)¹²).

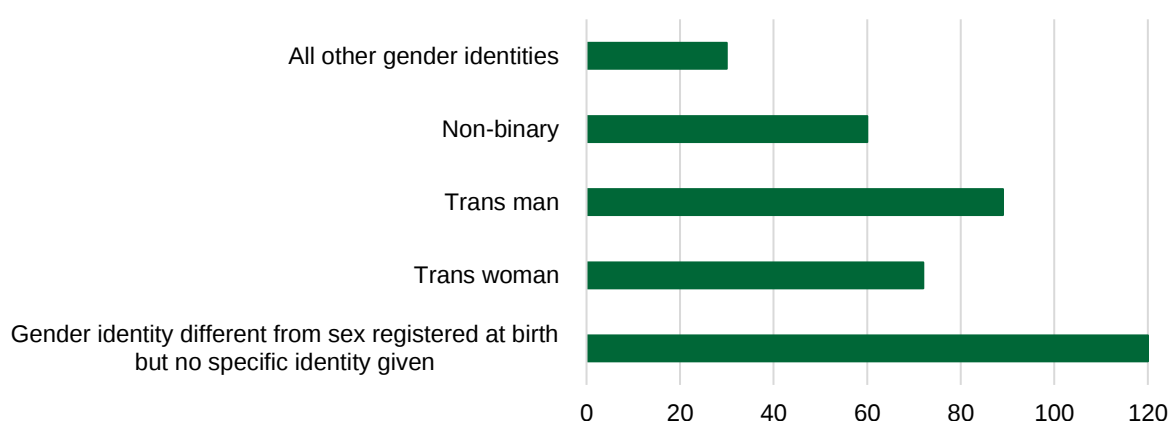
Residents who are considered under Gender Reassignment

According to the [2021 Census](#)¹³, the proportion of residents aged 16 years or over across our District who indicated that they have a gender identity different from their sex registered at birth is broadly in line with the average across the country.

94.9% (102,208) of usual residents aged 16 years and over in our District, in March 2021, said their gender identity was the same as sex registered at birth.

4.8% (5,163) of usual residents aged 16 years and over in our District, in March 2021, did not answer the voluntary gender identity question.

Count of usual residents aged 16 years and over in North Hertfordshire in 2021 by gender identity (excluding the same as sex at birth or not answered)



Key issues that the Local Plan should consider

Inclusive housing design is essential for trans and non-binary individuals, especially those who may face discrimination or feel unsafe in traditional housing settings. Those people currently undergoing or straight after transition, especially younger people, may be more vulnerable to finding themselves homelessness. Policies that support safe, affordable, and flexible housing options can help trans people live independently and securely, particularly during or after transition.

¹² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/7>

¹³ ONS, Census 2021, Table TS070, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS070/editions/2021/versions/1>

Proximity to healthcare services, mental health support, and community resources is critical. Local plans that consider transport links and service distribution can reduce barriers to accessing essential care.

The design of public spaces should promote safety, dignity, and inclusion for all gender identities. Features like gender-neutral toilets, inclusive signage, and safe lighting contribute to a more welcoming environment.

Recommendation

Our new Local Plan should gather further evidence on the experience of transgender residents to better assess the impact of the Local Plan policies on the gender reassignment protected character.

Consultation and engagement activities should be inclusive and accessible, ensuring that transgender residents feel they are able to participate. Policies relating to design, community facilities, health and wellbeing, transport and place-making are important in promoting equality, foster inclusive communities and do not inadvertently disadvantage people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.

MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Marriage and civil partnership

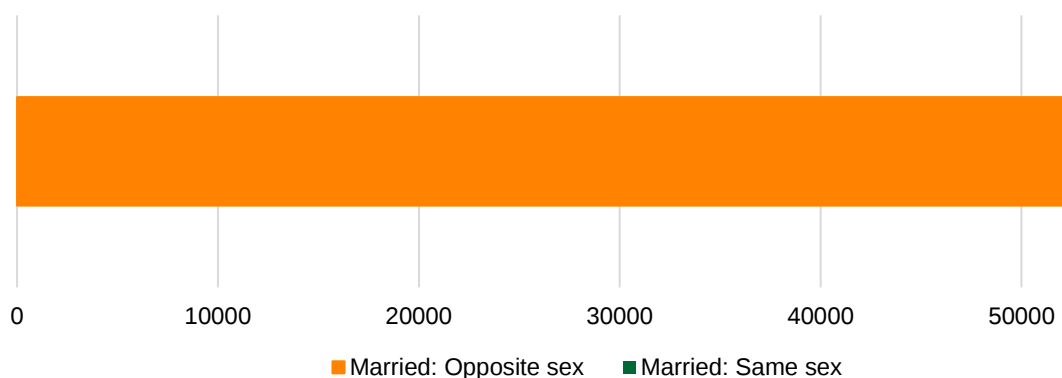
Following the implementation of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, the first marriages of same-sex couples took place on 29 March 2014. Civil partners have been able to convert their civil partnership into a marriage, if they so desired, from 10 December 2014.

Married Residents

In 2021¹⁴, 48% (52,088) of usual residents in our District were in a married relationship with a person of the opposite sex. Whilst 0.26% (280) of usual residents in our District were in a married relationship with a person of the same sex.



Count of Married relationships of usual residents aged 16 and over in North Herts in 2021



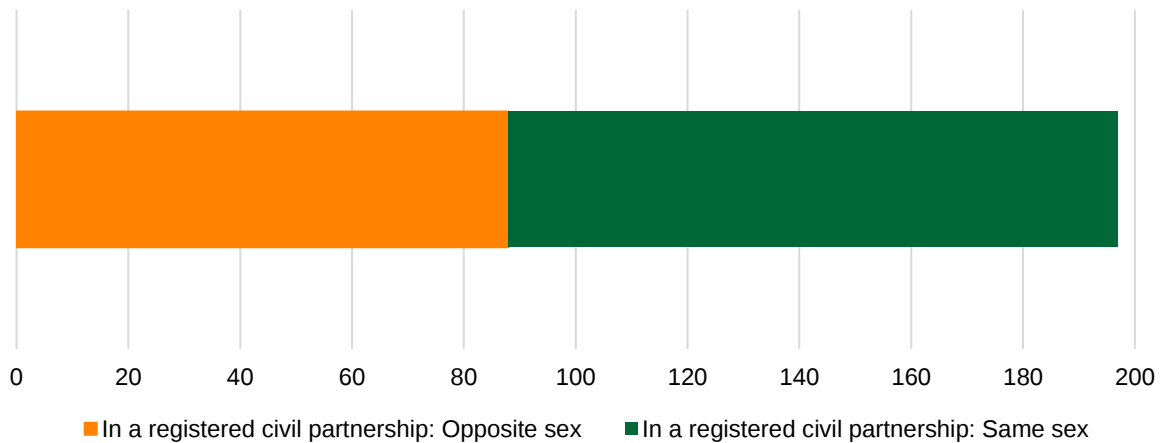
Civil Partnership Residents

In 2021¹⁴, 0.1% (88) of usual residents in our District were in a civil partnership with a person of the opposite sex. Another 0.1% (109) of usual residents in our District were in a civil partnership with a person of the same sex.



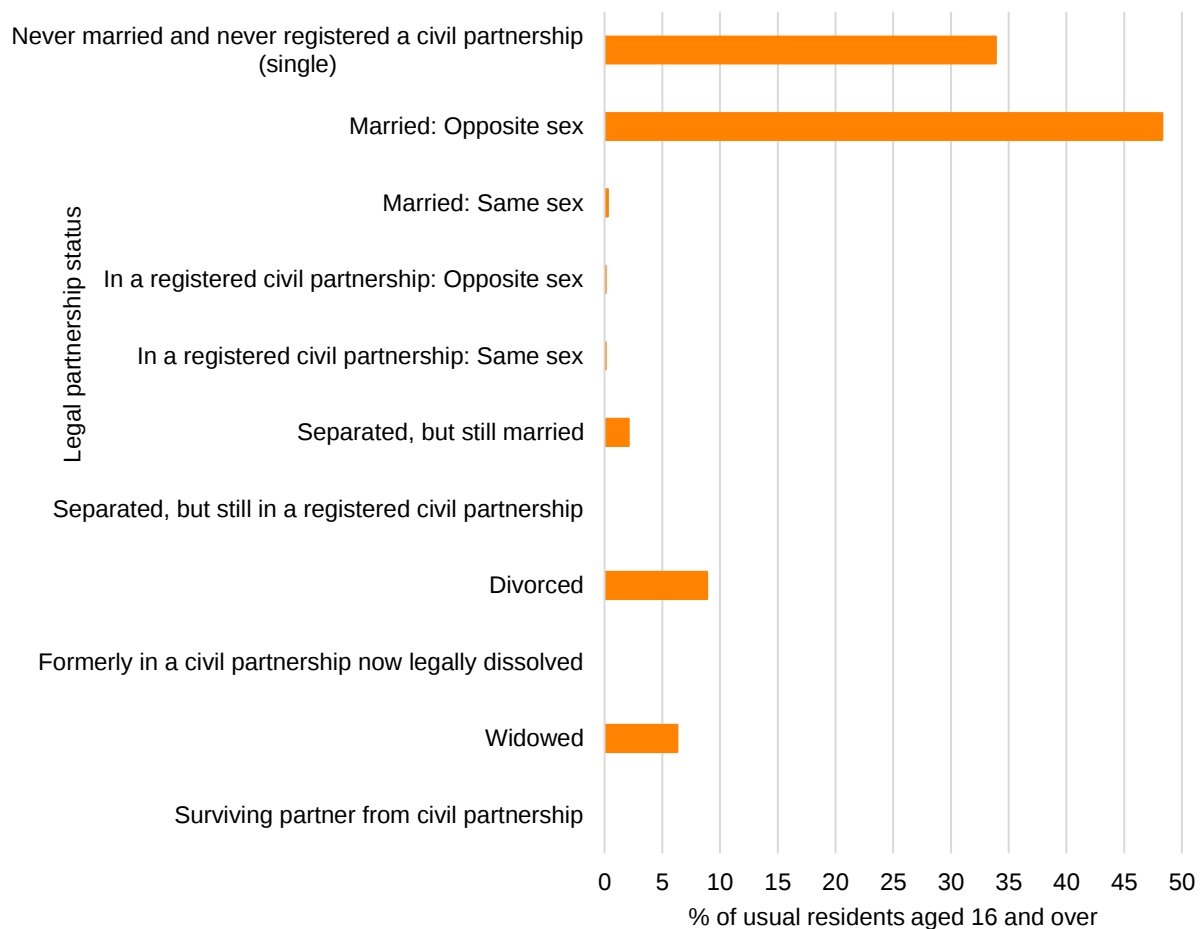
¹⁴ ONS, Census 2021, Table TS002, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS002/editions/2021/versions/1>

Count of Civil Partnerships of usual residents aged 16 and over in North Herts in 2021



The trends of relationships in our District are not dissimilar to the trends seen across Hertfordshire and the rest of the country¹⁵.

Percentage of usual residents aged 16 and over by legal partnership status in North Hertfordshire at March 2021



¹⁵ ONS, Census 2021, Table TS002 - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS002/editions/2021/versions/1>

Key issues that the Local Plan should consider

Whilst Local Plan policies are unlikely to have significant direct impacts on people because they are married or in a civil partnership, planning decisions can influence the availability of housing, access to services, employment opportunities and the quality of the places in which people live. Policies that support a diverse housing stock, sustainable communities, access to healthcare, community facilities and employment opportunities can contribute positively to the wellbeing of married couples and civil partners.

Recommendation

The new Local Plan should continue to consider the needs of different household types and family structures.

The Local Plan should seek to ensure that all households can access suitable housing, infrastructure and other services so that no groups are disproportionately disadvantaged by policy requirements or the location of development.

PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY

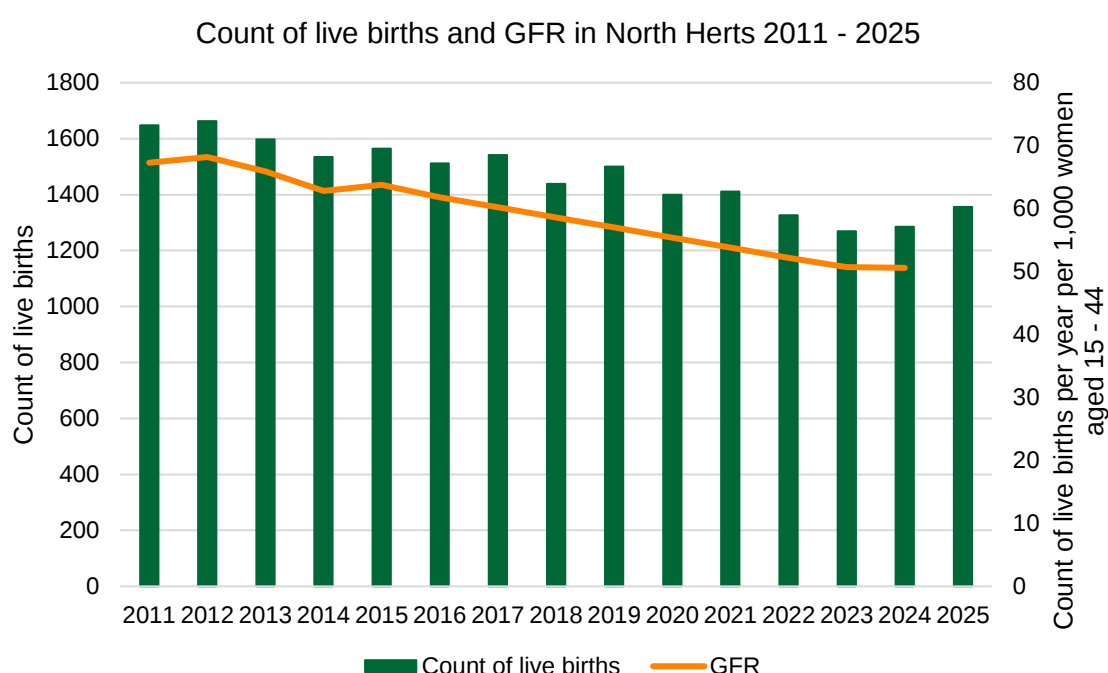
The ONS does not provide statistics on the number of people who are pregnant. Therefore, this baseline analysis considered live birth data as a proxy. The general fertility rate (GFR), measured as number of live births in a year per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 years,



Pregnancy and Maternity Rates amongst our Residents

In 2025, 1,356 live births were recorded for our District. The resulting GFR was 50.7

Live birth rates and GFR have been gradually reducing over the last 12 years



Source – [ONS, Births in England and Wales: birth registrations](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/datasets/birthsinenglandandwalesbirthregistrations)¹⁶

Key issues that the Local Plan should consider

Proximity to maternity care (e.g. clinics, hospitals, midwifery services) is essential for pregnant women. The promotion of integrated health hubs and ensuring new developments are well-connected to healthcare facilities can improve maternal health outcomes.

Pregnant people and new parents benefit from safe, stable, and affordable housing, especially during periods of reduced income. Planning policies that support family-friendly housing, with access to green spaces, play areas, and community services, can enhance wellbeing during and after pregnancy.

Reliable and accessible public transport is crucial for attending medical appointments, accessing childcare, and returning to work

¹⁶

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/datasets/birthsinenglandandwalesbirthregistrations>

The location and accessibility of employment centres can influence return-to-work options after maternity leave. The creation of a diverse economy can increase employment opportunities with flexible workspaces, childcare facilities, and inclusive transport links can help reduce barriers to re-entering the workforce.

Access to nurseries, pre-schools, and parenting support services is also vital for new parents.

Pregnant women and young children can be more vulnerable to the effects of poor air quality, excessive heat and environmental pollution.

Recommendations

Our new Local Plan should gather further evidence on the experiences and needs of pregnant women, new mothers and families with young children to better understand the potential impacts of planning policies on the pregnancy and maternity protected characteristic. Consultation and engagement activities should be designed to capture these views, recognising that these groups may face practical barriers to participation. Engagement with healthcare providers, family support organisations and early years services could also help identify local needs and opportunities to improve outcomes through planning policy.

The Local Plan should promote healthy, inclusive and sustainable environments for families. This could include supporting walkable neighbourhoods, safe and attractive walking and cycling routes, and inclusive transport networks that are accessible for people with prams or temporary mobility limitations associated with pregnancy and childbirth. The Plan should also seek to improve air quality, increase access to green infrastructure and open spaces, and support climate-resilient development to help create healthier and more resilient places for families. Consideration of access to suitable housing, healthcare, childcare, employment opportunities, transport, community facilities, open spaces and other services that support family life is also important.

RACE

Race

A person's race includes several personal characteristics. The [Equalities Act 2010, Section 9](#)¹⁷ defines race to include

- colour,
- nationality; and
- ethnic or national origins.

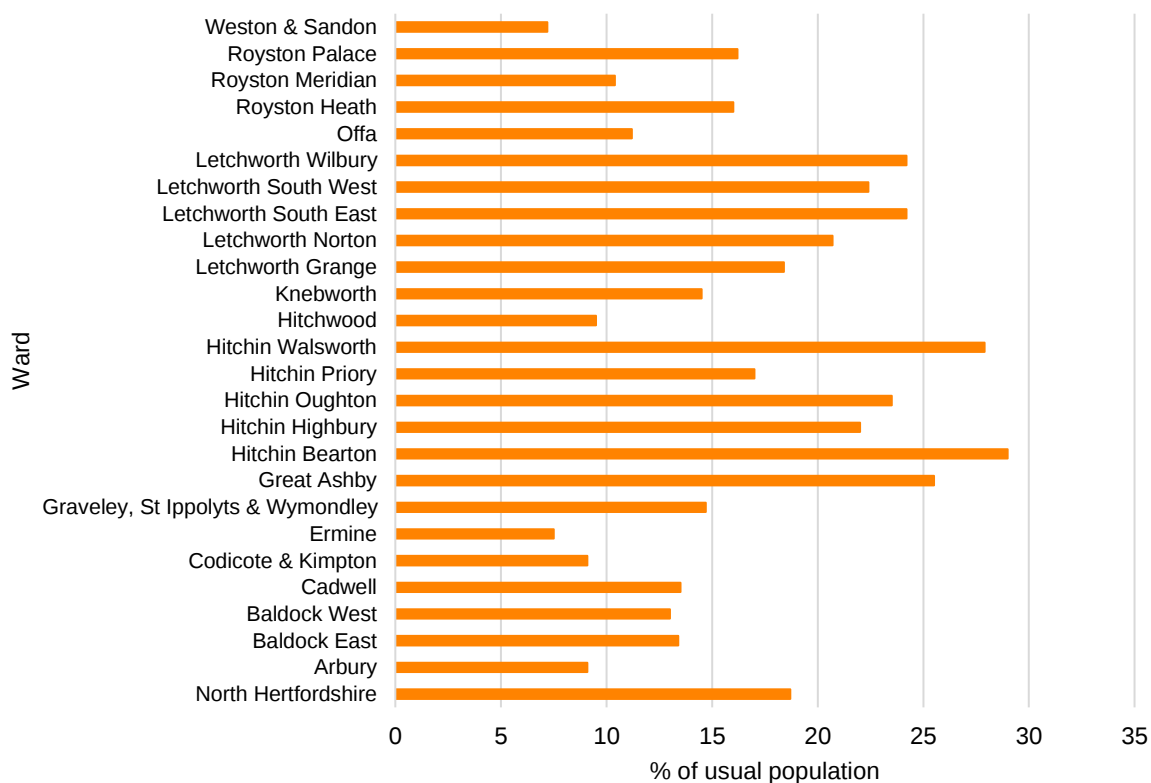
As such, our baseline assessment considers a range of data sources including ethnicity, place of birth and language spoken to provide a baseline analysis of our District relating to race.

Ethnicity

Ethnic group was categorised in the 2021 Census by broad groupings, e.g. "Asian / Asian British" as well as more specific categories such as "Pakistani".

Data from the [2021 Census](#)¹⁸ shows 18.7% (24,912) of residents were from an ethnic minority (not white-British).

% of Minority Ethnic Groups in North Herts and its Wards in 2021

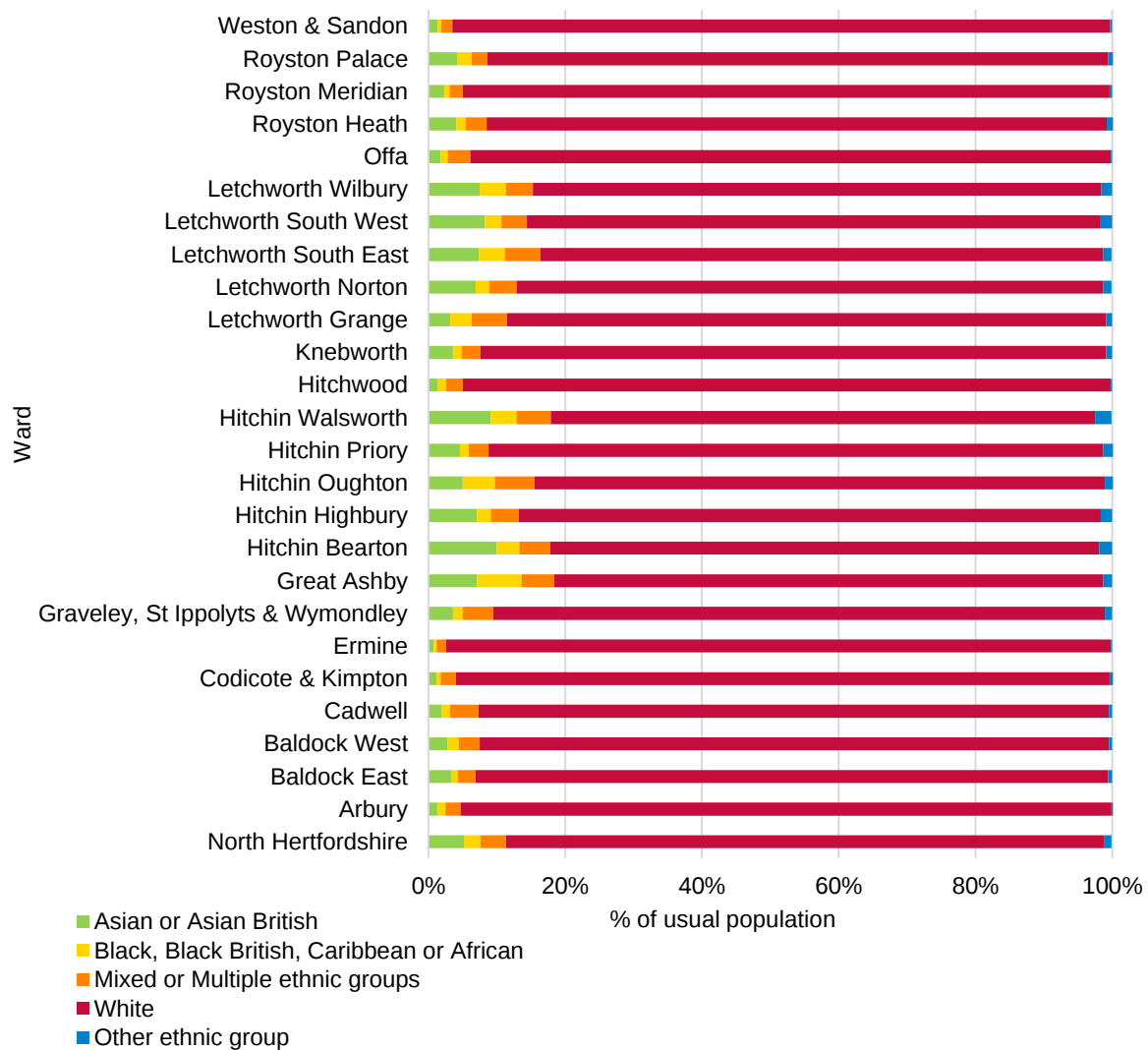


Source – [ONS, Table TS021](#)

¹⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/9>

¹⁸ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS021/editions/2021/versions/1>

% of usual residents in North Herts and its Wards in 2021 by broad ethnic group



Source - [ONS, Table TS021](#)

Broad Ethnic Groups

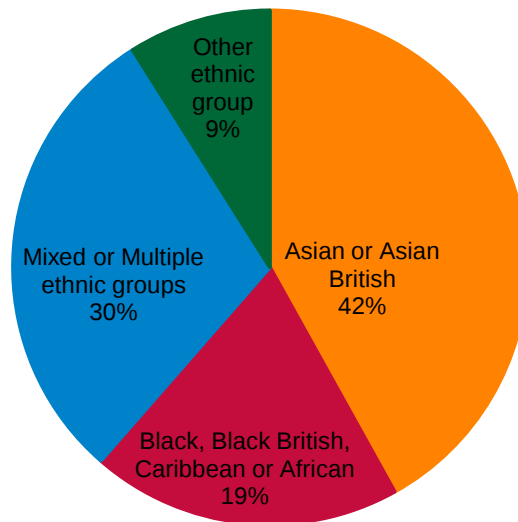
Our ethnic minority groups¹⁹ can be broken down further into broad ethnic groups which include

- Asian or Asian British
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups
- Other ethnic groups

¹⁹ ONS, Census 2021, Table TS021, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS021/editions/2021/versions/1>

We have excluded 'White British' as an Ethnic Group so that the other categories can be clearly seen.

Ethnic Makeup by Broad Groupings, North Herts, in 2021

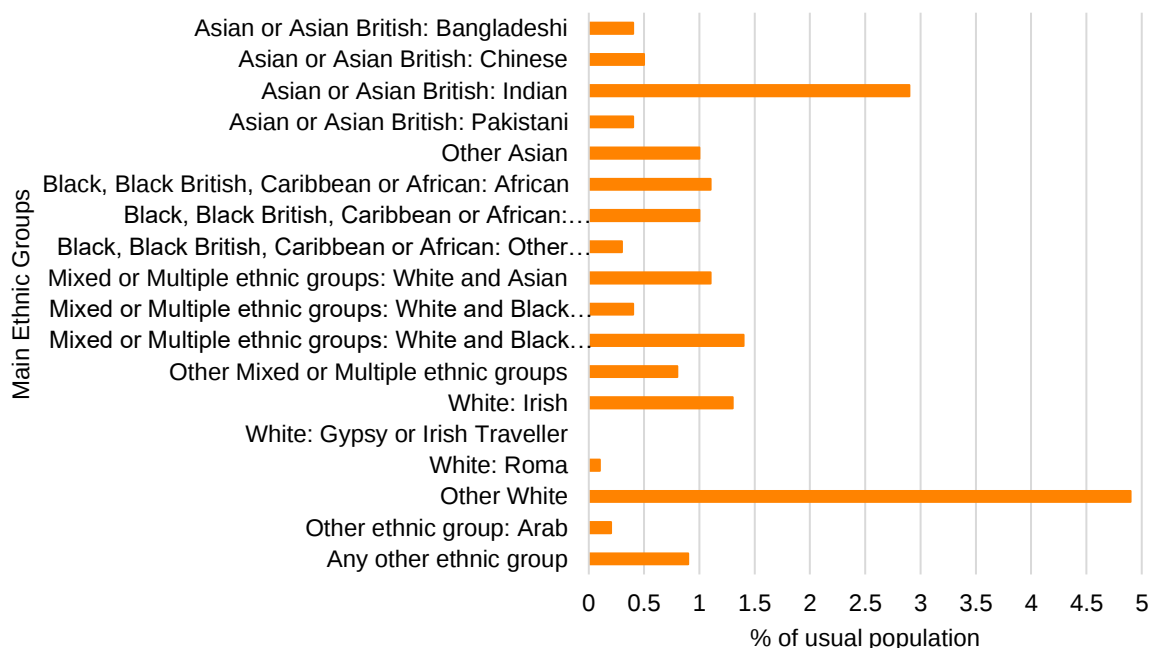


Source – [ONS, Table TS021](#)

Main Ethnic Groups

The Broad Ethnic Groups can be broken down further into Main Ethnic Groups. We have excluded 'White British' as an Ethnic Group so that the other categories can be clearly seen.

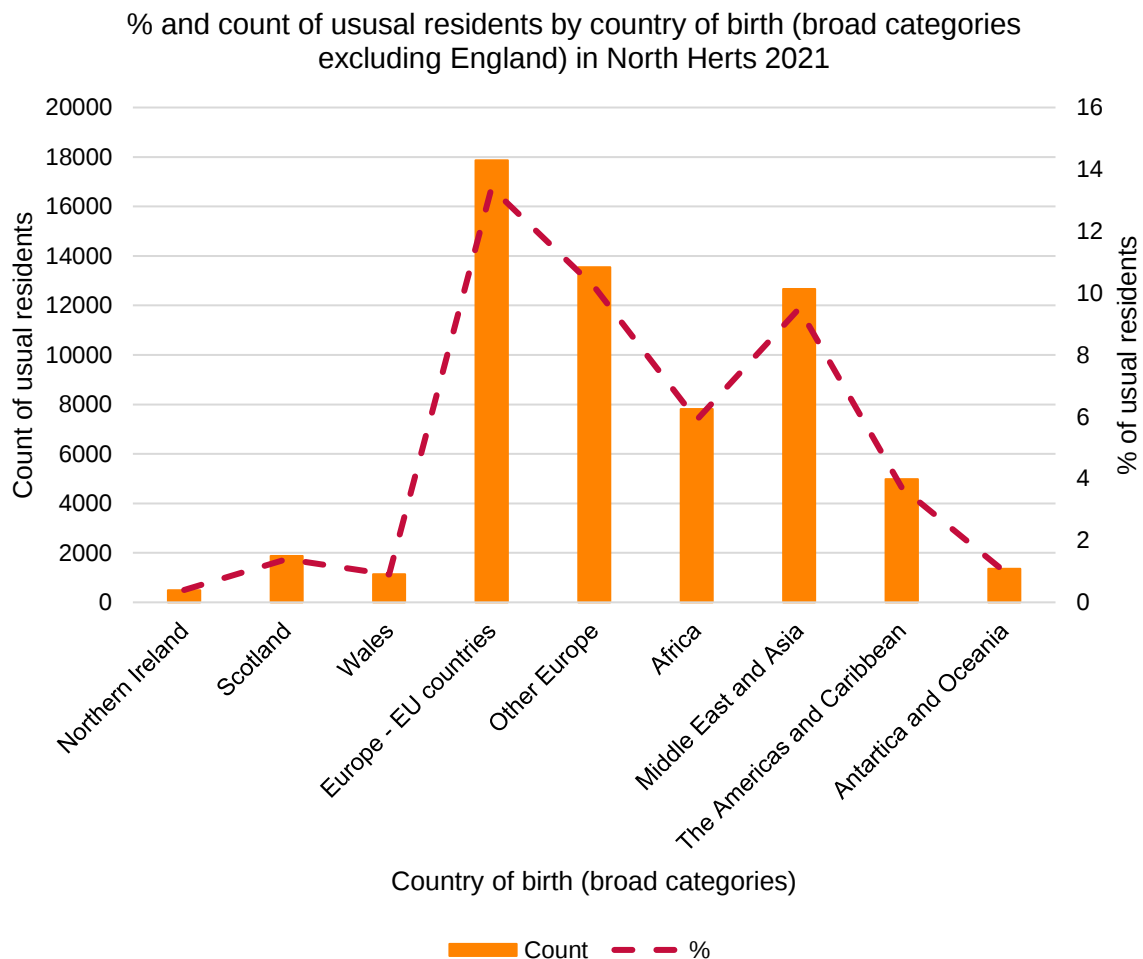
% of usual residents in Non-White British Ethnic Groups in North Herts in 2021



Source – [ONS, Table TS021](#)

Nationality

The [2021 Census](#)²⁰ provides data on place of birth. In North Herts, 88% of residents were born in the UK; 4.5% were born in EU Countries; 3.2% were born in the Middle East and Asia; 1.8% were born in Africa; 1.2% were born in the Americas and Caribbean, and 0.3% were born in Australasia.



Source – [ONS, Table TS012](#)

Language

Household Language

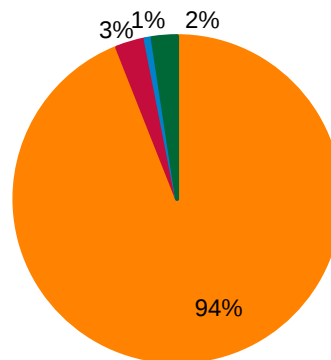
The [Census 2021](#)²¹ shows that 94% of all households in our District have English as their main language amongst the adults.

²⁰ ONS, Census 2021, Table TS012, <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/c2021ts012>

²¹ ONS, Census 2021, Table TS024, <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/c2021ts024>

English as a main language in households in North Herts in 2021

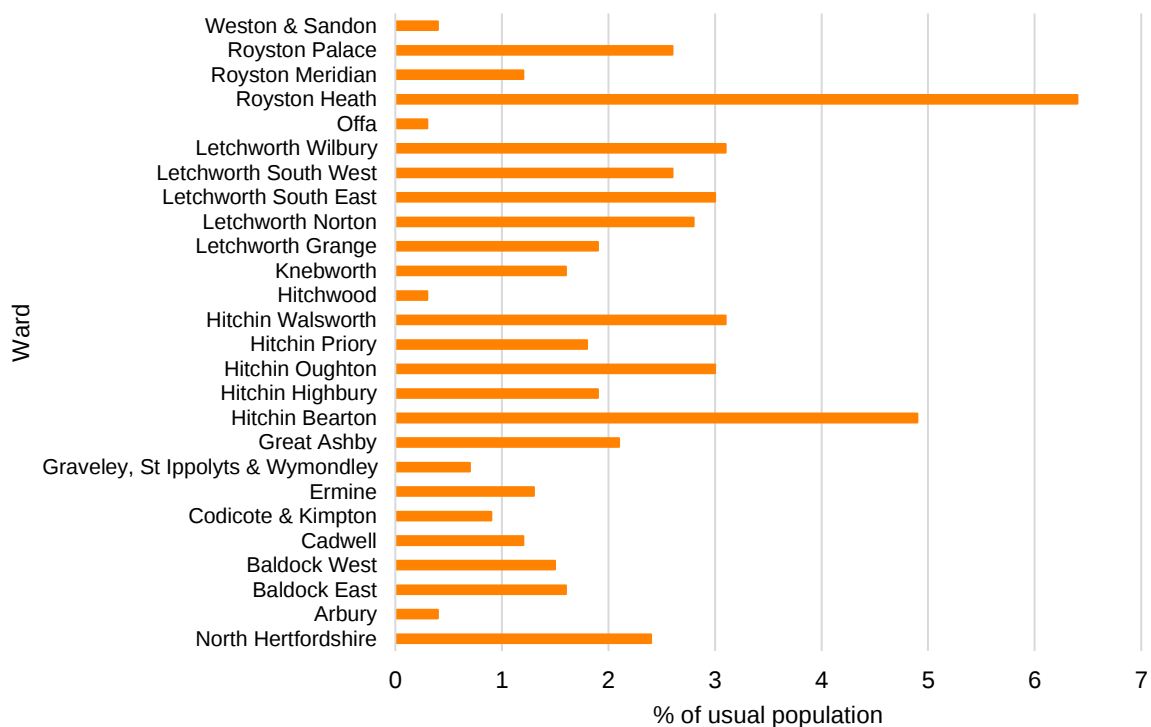
- All adults in household have English as a main language
- At least one but not all adults in household have English as a main language
- No adults in household, but at least one person aged 3 to 15 years, has English as a main language
- No people in household have English as a main language



Source – [ONS, Table TS024](#)

In 2021, 2.4% of households in our District had nobody who had English as a main language²².

% of households where nobody has English as a first language in North Herts and its Wards in 2021



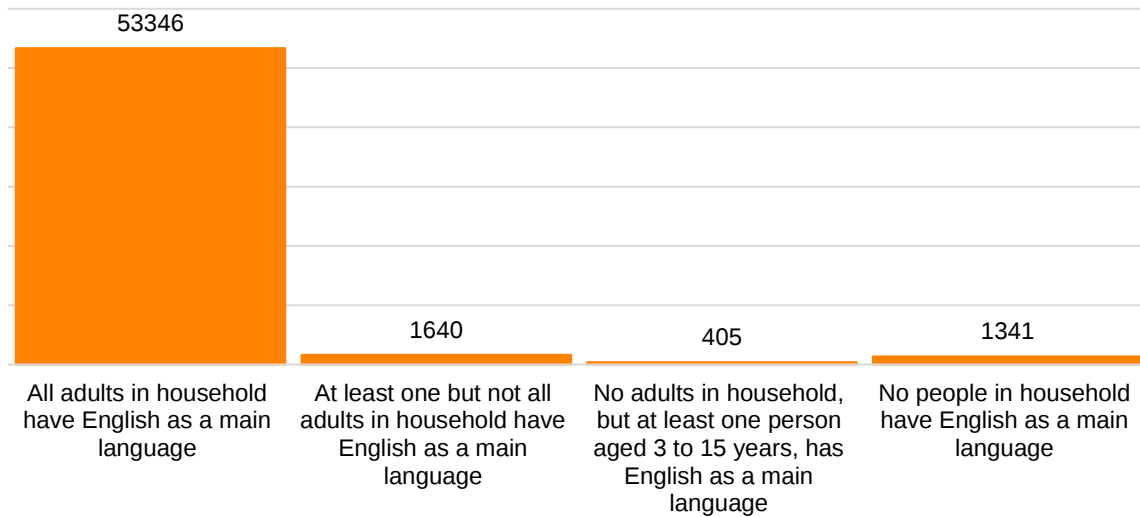
Source – [ONS, Table TS025](#)

²² ONS, Census 2021, Table TS025, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS025/editions/2021/versions/3>

Residents with English as a Main Language

The [2021 Census](#)²³ shows 0.7% (405) of households in North Herts had a child or children (3 to 15 years old) who had English as a main language amongst others who do not have English as their main language.

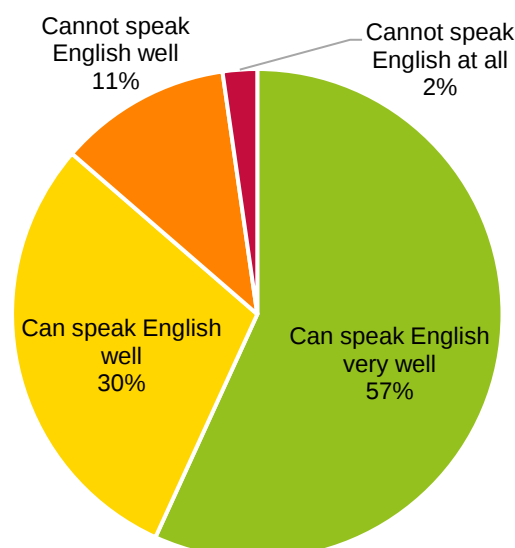
Number of households in North Herts in 2021 by household language



Source – [ONS, Table TS025](#)

0.1% of our residents in North Herts, aged 3 years and over, who do not have English as their main language, cannot speak English at all²⁴. These values are lower than the average across the Country.

Proficiency in English in North Herts when English is not the main language, 2021



Source – [ONS, Table TS024](#)

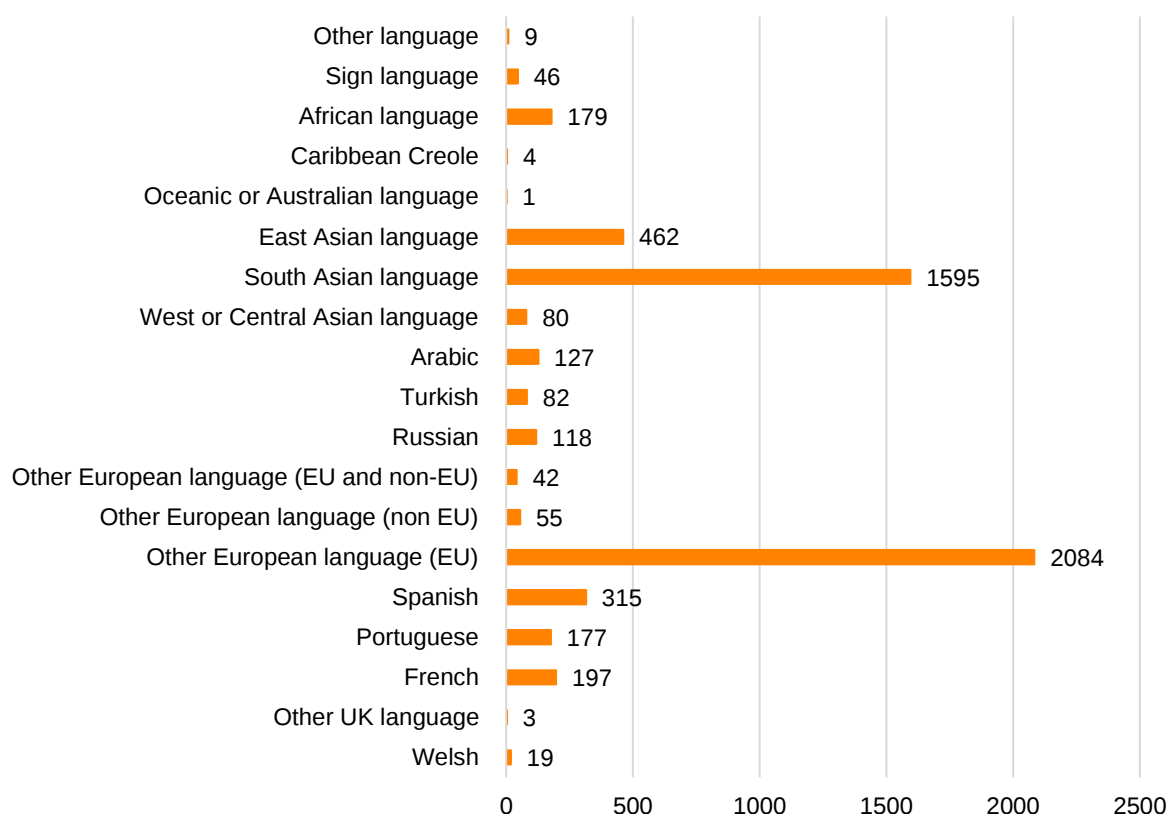
²³ ONS, Census 2021, Table TS025, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS025/editions/2021/versions/3>

²⁴ ONS, Census 2021, Table TS024, <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/c2021ts024>

Main Languages other than English

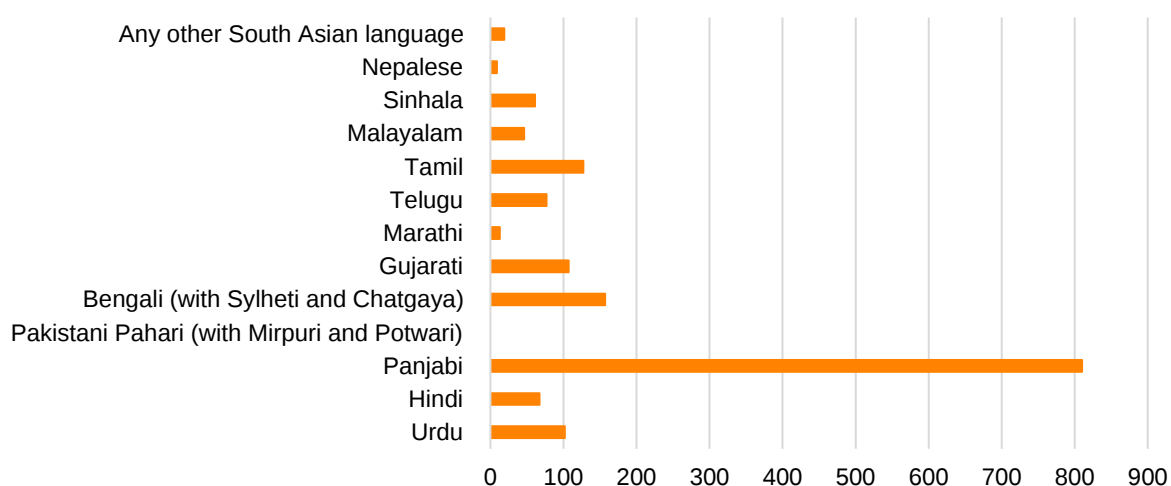
Punjabi²⁵ was the most spoken non-English language in our District in 2021 with 810 (0.6% of people speaking it. Followed by Polish with 679 (0.5%) speakers in North Herts.

Count of Main Spoken Language (other than English) by North Herts Residents in 2021



Source – [ONS, Table TS025](#)²⁶

South Asian Languages - Count

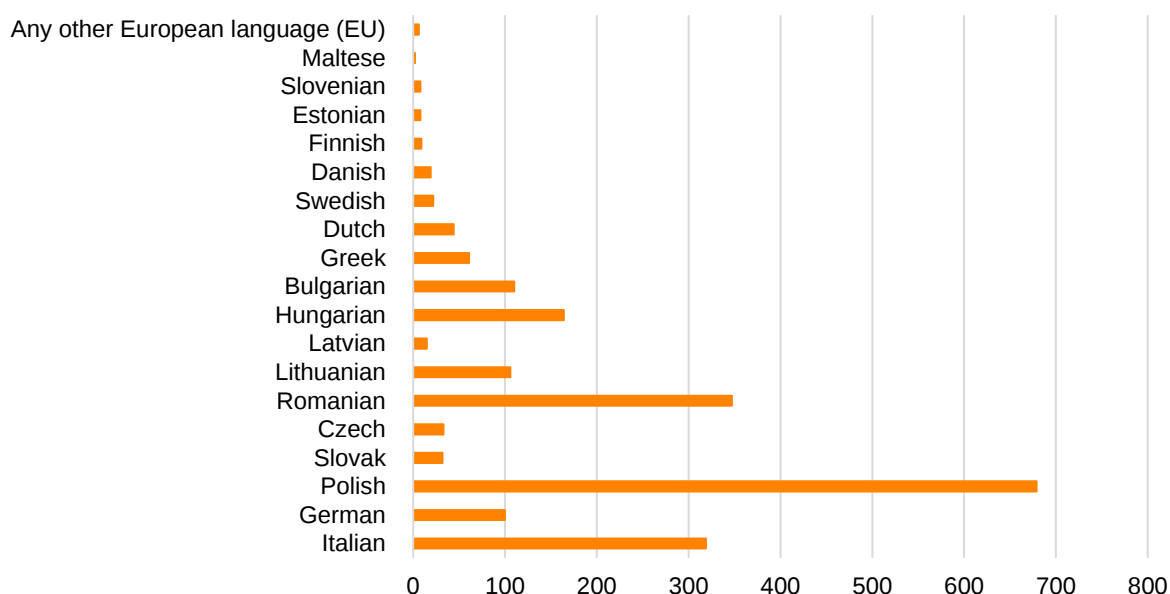


Source - [ONS, Table TS025](#)

²⁵ The correct transliteration replacing the use of 'Punjabi'

²⁶ ONS, Census 2021, Table TS025 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS025/editions/2021/versions/3>

Other European Languages (EU) - Count North Hertfordshire



Source - [ONS, Table TS025](#)

Key issues that the Local Plan should consider

People from different racial and ethnic backgrounds can experience a range of inequalities that may be influenced by the location, design and delivery of development. Some ethnic minority communities may face particular housing challenges, including affordability pressures, overcrowding and a greater reliance on the private rented sector, which can affect housing quality, stability and wellbeing.

Access to healthcare, education, employment opportunities, community facilities and transport infrastructure can also influence equality of opportunity. Barriers to accessing services, jobs and training may disproportionately affect some communities, particularly where affordable and sustainable transport options are limited.

The quality and design of places can affect how safe, welcome and included people feel within their communities. Some ethnic minority groups may be more likely to experience discrimination, harassment or social exclusion, which can influence their use of public spaces and local facilities. Environmental inequalities, including exposure to poor air quality and other environmental hazards, may also have a disproportionate impact on health and wellbeing.

Community facilities, public spaces and local centres can play an important role in supporting social interaction, cultural expression, community participation and a sense of belonging for people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Recommendation

Our new Local Plan should gather further evidence on the experiences and needs of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds to better understand the potential impacts of Local Plan policies on this protected characteristic. This should include consideration of

housing needs, access to services and facilities, transport, employment opportunities, health outcomes and the quality of the local environment.

Consultation and engagement activities should be designed to be inclusive and accessible, ensuring that people from all communities have opportunities to participate in the plan-making process. Consideration should be given to potential barriers to engagement, including language, cultural factors and awareness of consultation activities.

The Local Plan should seek to support the delivery of a range of housing types, sizes and tenures to meet the needs of diverse households, while helping to reduce inequalities in housing outcomes.

Policies should promote well-connected development with good access to employment, education, healthcare, community facilities and sustainable transport options. They should also support safe, inclusive and high-quality places, equitable access to green infrastructure and open spaces, and measures that help address environmental inequalities and improve health and wellbeing.

**RELIGION OR
BELIEF**

Religion or Belief

In the [Equality Act 2010 Section 10](#)²⁷, religion relates to any religion and includes a reference to a lack of religion.

Belief relates to any religious or philosophical belief including not having a belief.

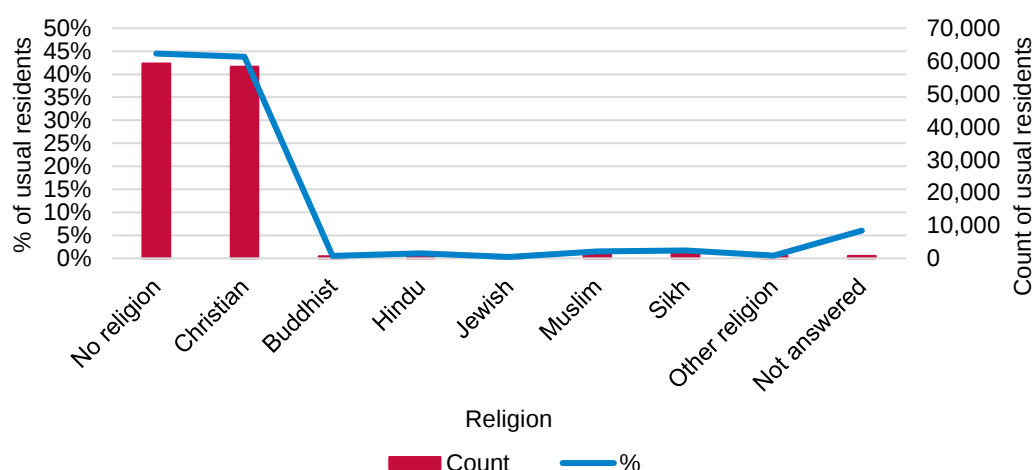
Non-Religious Residents

44.5% ([59,315](#))²⁸ of our residents choose not to follow a religion in 2021.

Religious Residents

At the same point in time, 43.8% (58,320) of our residents identify as Christian. Sikhism is the next most prevalent religion among our residents at 1.7% (2,280).

Percentage and Count of usual residents in North Herts in 2021 by religion



Key issues that the Local Plan should consider

People from different faith and belief groups may have particular needs relating to places of worship, community facilities and burial provision. Access to these facilities, alongside housing, employment, education, healthcare and open spaces, can influence how individuals participate in community life and practise their faith.

Some faith communities may experience discrimination, harassment or exclusion, which can affect their sense of safety and belonging. The availability of welcoming, inclusive and accessible spaces can therefore play an important role in supporting community cohesion, social interaction and cultural expression.

²⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/10>

²⁸ ONS, Census 2021, Table TS030, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS030/editions/2021/versions/3>

Recommendation

Our new Local Plan should engage with a range of faith and belief groups to better understand their needs, experiences and priorities, helping to inform future policies and site allocations.

The Plan should consider whether existing and future infrastructure is sufficient to meet the needs of North Hertfordshire's communities, including places of worship, community facilities and burial provision, where appropriate. It should also promote safe, accessible and inclusive environments, support equitable access to services and facilities, and encourage opportunities for interaction to help foster community cohesion and a sense of belonging.

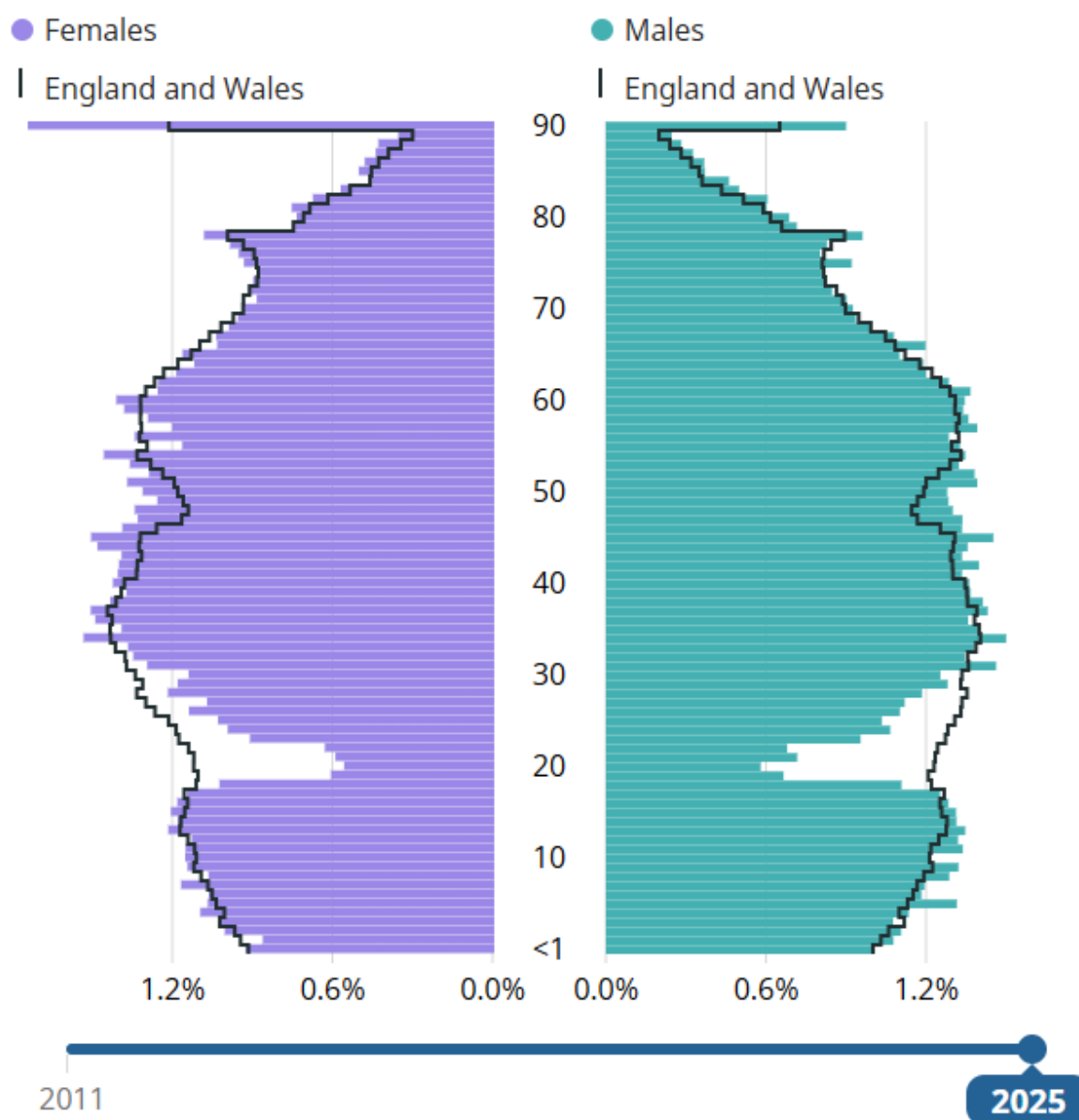
SEX

Sex

Sex relates to a person being a man or a woman in the [Equality Act 2020, Section 11](#)²⁹.

Sex of Residents

Of the population of our District, 137,365, 48.4% (66,510) were male and 51.6% (70,855) were female at mid-2025.



Source – [ONS, Population estimates for England and Wales: mid-2025](#)

²⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/11>

Key issues that the Local Plan should consider

Women and men can experience housing needs differently due to factors such as income inequality, caring responsibilities, household composition and vulnerability to homelessness. Women are more likely to be lone parents and may therefore face greater affordability pressures and challenges in accessing suitable housing.

Access to employment opportunities, services and community facilities can also vary between women and men. Women are more likely to combine employment with childcare and other caring responsibilities, often resulting in more complex travel patterns and a greater reliance on local services and public transport. These factors can influence access to jobs, education, healthcare, shops and recreational opportunities.

The design of places can affect how people experience and use their local environment. Women are more likely to report concerns about personal safety in public spaces, particularly after dark, which may influence travel choices and participation in community life. Differences in access to healthcare, open spaces, recreation and healthy environments can also contribute to varying physical and mental health outcomes for women and men.

Recommendations

Our new Local Plan should engage with a wide range of residents and organisations to better understand the differing experiences, and needs and priorities of women and men.

The Plan should support the delivery of a range of housing types and tenures that meet the needs of different households and help address barriers to accessing suitable and affordable housing.

Policies should promote accessible employment opportunities and ensure that development is well connected to services, community facilities and sustainable transport networks. Particular consideration should be given to the needs of people with caring responsibilities by supporting walkable neighbourhoods, reliable public transport and convenient access to everyday services.

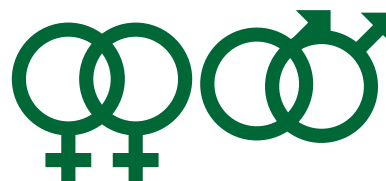
Planning policies should also promote safe, inclusive and accessible environments through high-quality design, which includes measures that help improve perceptions of safety, while supporting equal access to employment, services, open spaces, and other opportunities.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual Orientation

A person's sexual orientation includes their sexual behaviour, sexual attraction and sexual identity.

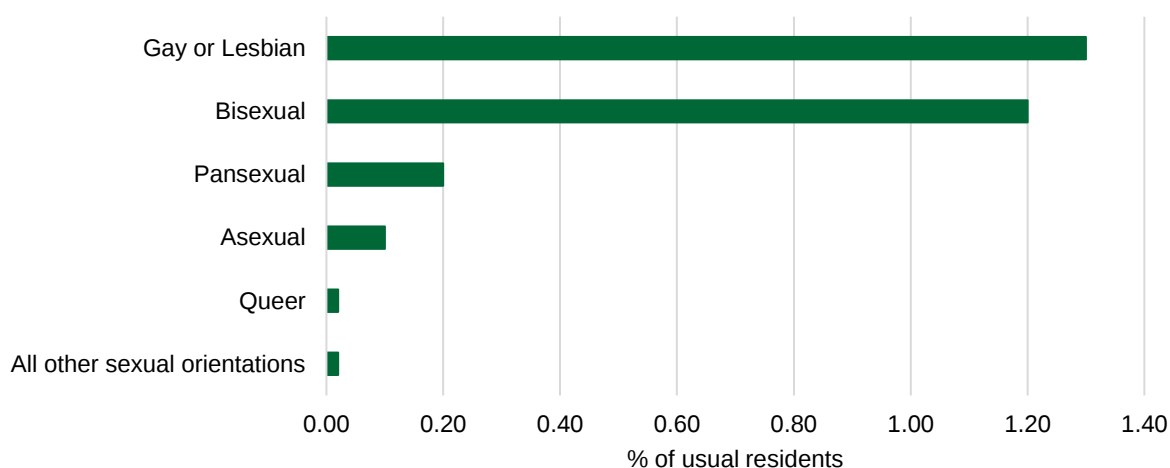
Sexual orientation is a protected characteristic to allow individuals to choose how they wish to express their sexual orientation without discrimination. This includes discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services on grounds of sexual orientation.



Discrimination towards sexual orientation is possible in various forms including

- discrimination arising from a person's self-perceived sexual identity;
- a person's perceived sexual orientation (discrimination by perception); or
- a person's links to other individuals and their sexual orientation (discrimination by association).

% of usual residents aged 16 years and over in North Herts in 2021 by sexual orientation



Source, [ONS - Census 2021](#)³⁰

Straight

Of our usual residents, aged 16 years and over, 90.8% (97,811) identified as straight, that is they are attracted to the opposite sex.

Gay or Lesbian

1.3% (1,378) of our usual residents, aged 16 years and over, identified as gay or lesbian, that is they are attracted to the same sex.

Bisexual

Of our usual residents, aged 16 years and over, 1.2% (1,273) identified as bisexual, that is they are attracted to more than one sex.

³⁰ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/c2021ts079>

Pansexual

0.2% (191) of our usual residents, aged 16 years and over, identified as pansexual, that is they are attracted to people regardless of their sex.

Asexual

Of our usual residents, aged 16 years and over, 0.1% (61) identified as asexual, that is they do not experience sexual attraction.

Queer

0.02% (17) of our usual residents, aged 16 years and over, identified as queer, that is that they reject specific labels of sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Key issues that the Local Plan should consider

People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual may experience discrimination, harassment or hate crime, which can affect their sense of safety and belonging within their communities. As a result, some individuals may feel less comfortable using public spaces, community facilities or public transport.

LGBTQ+ people can also experience poorer physical and mental health outcomes linked to discrimination, exclusion, social isolation and unequal access to support networks. Access to healthcare, social infrastructure, open spaces and opportunities for community participation can therefore be important factors in supporting wellbeing.

The availability of welcoming and inclusive places can influence social connections, community participation and quality of life. Ensuring that everyone feels able to participate fully in local communities, regardless of sexual orientation, is an important consideration for the Local Plan.

Recommendation

Our new Local Plan should seek to engage with a broad range of people and community organisations to better understand the experiences and needs of people with different sexual orientations. This can help identify barriers to inclusion and ensure that policies respond appropriately to the needs of LGBTQ+ communities.

The Plan should promote safe, inclusive and accessible environments through high-quality design and well-connected communities. Particular consideration should be given to creating places where all residents feel safe and welcome, and where opportunities for discrimination and antisocial behaviour are reduced.

The Local Plan should support equitable access to housing, employment opportunities, healthcare, transport networks, community facilities and open spaces; encouraging the provision of flexible and inclusive community spaces that support social interaction and community cohesion.

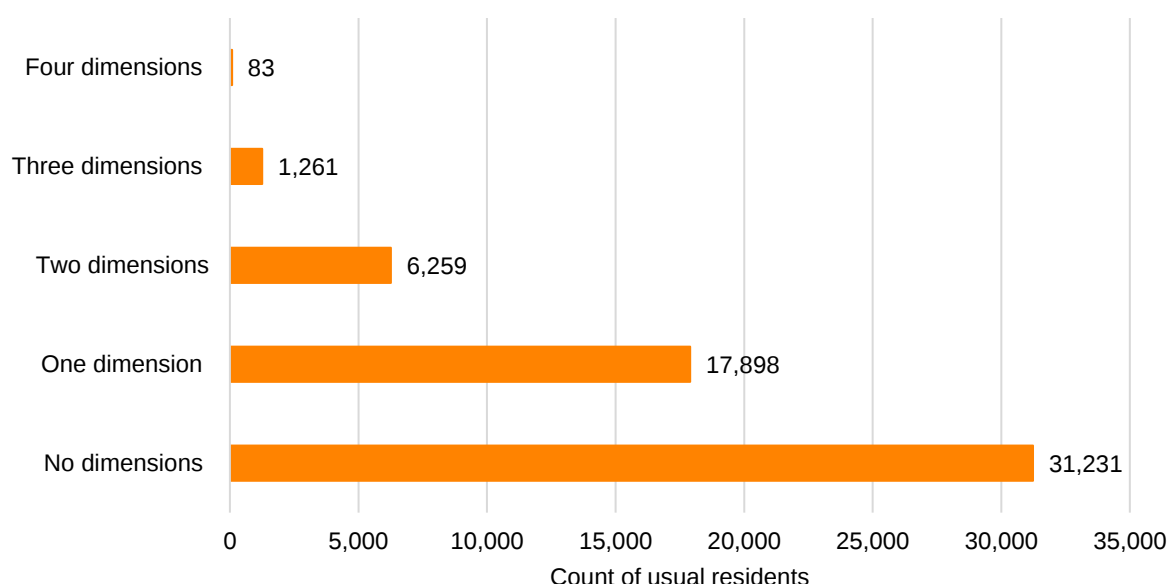
SOCIO-ECONOMIC

Household Deprivation

Census 2021 data was used to define four dimensions of deprivation in households, the dimensions are based on following household characteristics

- Employment - where any person in a household, who is not a full-time student, is either unemployed or economically inactive due to long-term sickness or disability.
- Education - where no person in the household has at least five or more GCSE passes (grade A* to C or grade 4 and above) or equivalent qualifications, and no person aged 16 to 18 years is a full-time student.
- Health and disability - where any person in the household has general health that is “bad” or “very bad” or is identified as disabled.
- Housing - the household’s accommodation is either overcrowded, with an occupancy rating of negative 1 or less (implying that it has one fewer room or bedroom required for the number of occupants), or is in a shared dwelling, or has no central heating.

Households by number of deprivation dimensions in North Herts at March 2021



Source – [ONS, Census 2021, Table TS011](https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS011/editions/2021/versions/6)³¹

Employment

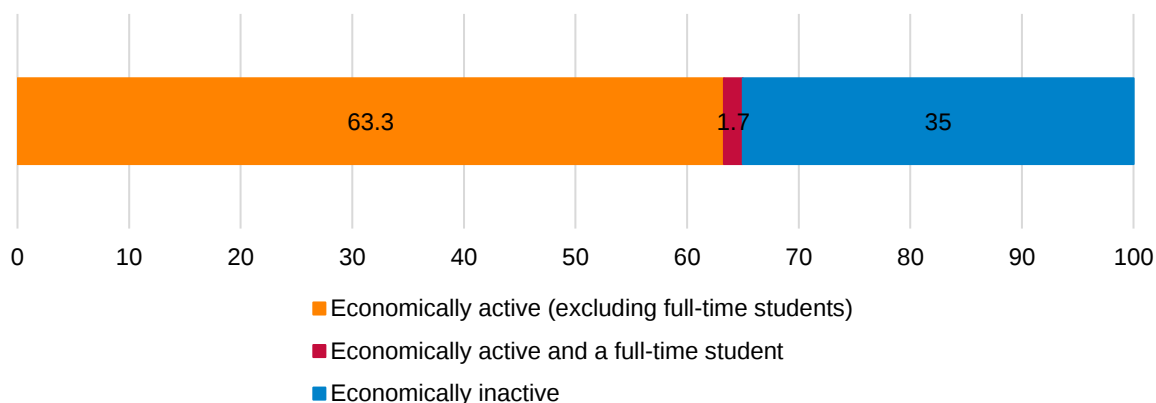
Economic activity status is a measure of whether or not a person is an active participant in the labour market, either working or unemployed but looking for or about to start a job.

It applies only to people aged 16 years and over and is split into those who are ‘economically active’ and those who are ‘economically inactive’. The economically active are also broken down by whether they were full-time students or not.

³¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS011/editions/2021/versions/6>

Census 2021 took place during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a period of unparalleled and rapid change; the national lockdown, associated guidance and furlough measures will have affected data on labour market topic.

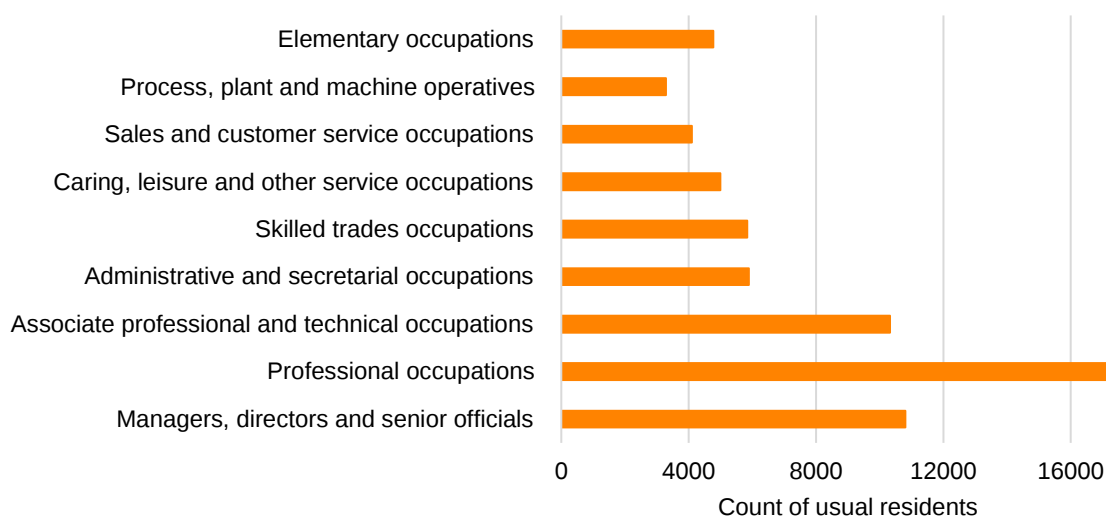
Percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over in North Herts in 2021 by economic activity status



Source – [ONS, Census 2021, Table TS066](#)³²

The proportion of people who are economically active in our District is higher than the average of England which was 58.6%.

Count of usual residents aged 16 years and over in North Herts in employment in 2021 by high-level occupation



Source – [ONS, Census 2021, Table TS063](#)³³

The largest proportion of our resident's work in professional occupations, and this proportion is significantly higher than the proportions in the rest of the County and England.

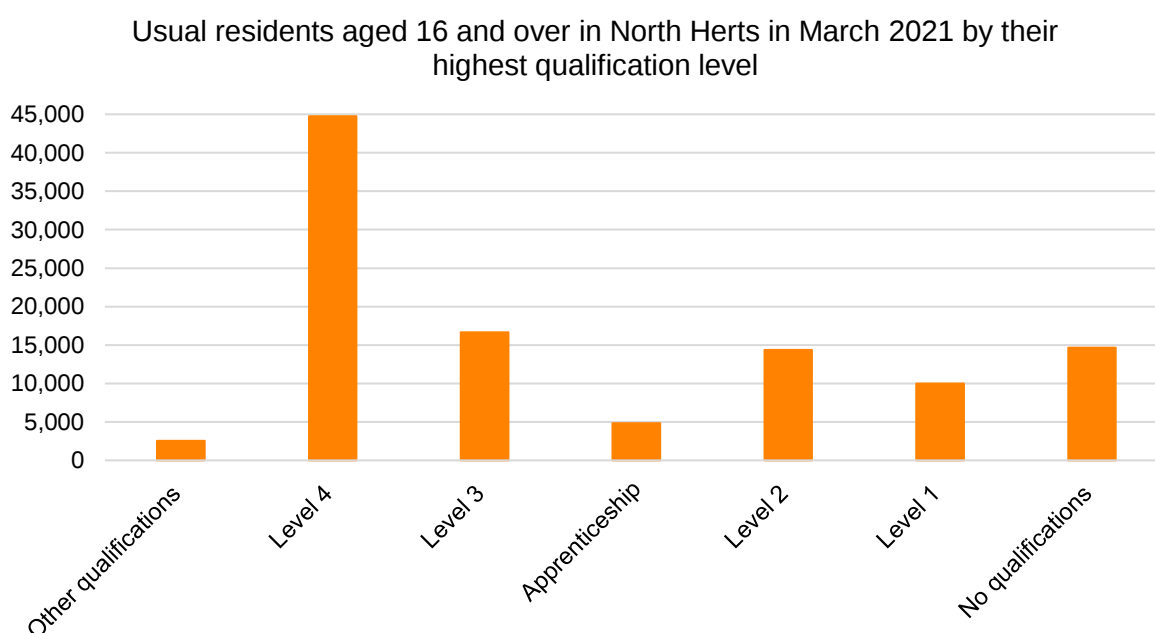
³² <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/c2021ts066>

³³ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/c2021ts063>

Education

Census data recorded residents aged 16 years and over to report any qualifications (including academic, vocational, and professional qualifications) they had achieved. This is used to calculate the highest level of qualification (so, the highest level of qualification that an individual reported irrespective of previous qualifications listed) using the following categories

- no qualifications - no formal qualifications
- Level 1 - one to four GCSE passes (grade A* to C or grade 4 and above) and any other GCSEs at other grades, or equivalent qualifications
- Level 2 - five or more GCSE passes (grade A* to C or grade 4 and above) or equivalent qualifications
- apprenticeships
- Level 3 - two or more A Levels or equivalent qualifications
- Level 4 or above - Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree, or post-graduate qualifications
- other qualifications - of unknown level



Source – [ONS, Census 2021, Table TS067](#)

A significant proportion of residents in our District are qualified to a high standard. This proportion is significantly higher than the rest of the County and England.

Health and Disability

This is covered in the Disability section above.

Housing

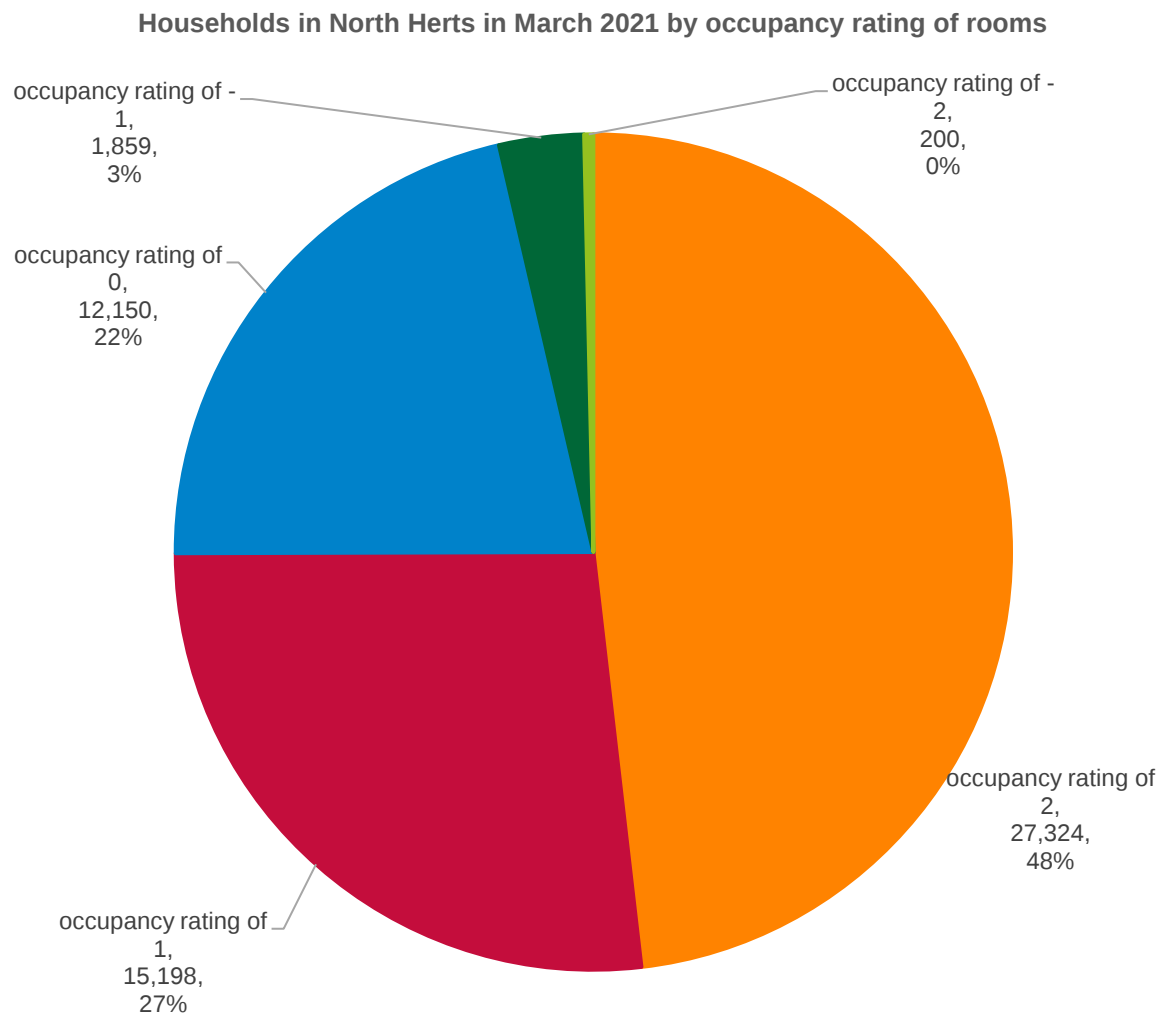
Occupancy rating provides a measure of whether a household's accommodation is overcrowded or under occupied.

There are two measures of occupancy rating

- based on the total number of rooms and
- based only on the number of bedrooms.

The ages of the household members and their relationships to each other are used to derive the number of rooms/bedrooms they require, based on a standard formula. The number of rooms/bedrooms required is subtracted from the number of rooms/bedrooms in the household's accommodation to obtain the occupancy rating values for both rooms and bedrooms.

An occupancy rating of -1 implies that a household has one fewer room/bedroom than required, whereas +1 implies that they have one more room/bedroom than the standard requirement. Therefore, overcrowded households are those with an occupancy rating of -1 or less.



Source – [ONS, Census 2021, Table TS053](#)

Overcrowding in our District is the lowest compared to the rest of the County³⁴ and well below levels in the rest of England.

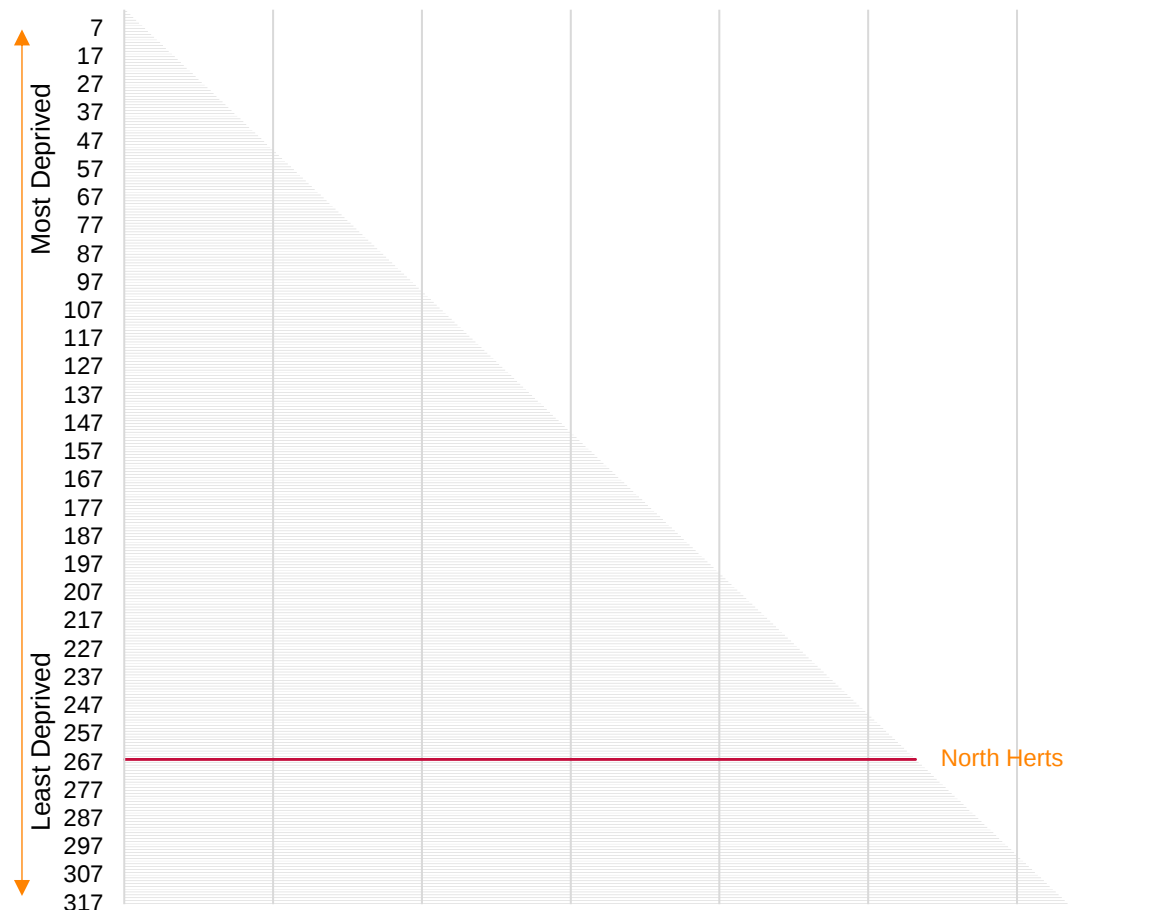
Indices of Multiple Deprivation

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) are a collection of statistical measures used in the country to identify and rank small areas by their relative deprivation.

The IMD combines multiple indicators across different areas to create a single score of deprivation.

The last publication was in 2025³⁵, it ranks local authorities on a scale of 1 – 317 with 1 being the most deprived and 317 being the least deprived. North Herts has ranking of 269 which means we are in the top 15% of the least deprived Local Authorities in the Country.

North Herts IMD ranking, 2025



Key issues that the Local Plan should consider

People experiencing socio-economic disadvantage may face greater difficulties accessing suitable and affordable housing, which can affect health, wellbeing and life opportunities.

³⁴ ONS, Census 2021, Table TS053

³⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2025>

Financial constraints can also increase reliance on local services, community facilities and public transport, making access to these, essential for day-to-day life.

Access to employment opportunities, skills development and affordable transport can have a significant influence on socio-economic outcomes. Individuals and households experiencing disadvantage may face barriers to employment, education and training, which can limit social mobility and economic prospects.

Socio-economic disadvantage is also often associated with poorer health outcomes and greater exposure to environmental inequalities. People on lower incomes may be more likely to experience poor air quality, noise, flood risk, lower-quality living environments and limited access to green spaces and recreational opportunities. These factors can have cumulative impacts on physical and mental wellbeing.

Recommendation

Although socio-economic status is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, it is an important consideration within an EqlA because planning policies can influence access to housing, employment, services, transport and environmental quality.

Our new Local Plan should seek to reduce inequalities and support inclusive growth by ensuring that residents from all socio-economic backgrounds can benefit from investment and development. This should include supporting the delivery of affordable housing, improving access to employment opportunities, education and training, and ensuring that communities are well connected to services and facilities by sustainable and affordable transport options.

The Plan should also promote healthy and high-quality environments by improving access to healthcare, green infrastructure, open spaces and recreational opportunities, while seeking to reduce environmental inequalities.

Consultation and engagement activities should be designed to be inclusive and accessible, ensuring that people from all socio-economic backgrounds have opportunities to participate in the plan-making process and help inform future policies and proposals.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology

Assessment Framework

This EqIA Scoping Report provides an initial high-level assessment of the potential equality implications of the Spatial Development Options for the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010, as well as for people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

The assessment framework set out below provides a consistent basis for considering how future Local Plan policies and proposals may affect different groups. As the Local Plan progresses, the assessment will be refined through further evidence gathering, stakeholder engagement and public consultation. This iterative approach will help identify potential positive and negative effects, inform policy development, and ensure that equality considerations are embedded throughout the plan-making process. It will also help identify opportunities to enhance positive outcomes, minimise adverse impacts and promote more inclusive and equitable development across North Hertfordshire.

Assessment of Strategic Development Growth Options

Growth option 1 – Infill development / urban intensification

This option focuses growth within existing towns and villages by redeveloping brownfield land, underused sites and vacant urban land. Development would generally occur within existing settlement boundaries, making better use of existing infrastructure, services and public transport connections. It seeks to accommodate growth without significant outward expansion into the countryside.

	Impact			Commentary	Mitigation
	Positive	Negative	No Impact		
Age	✓	✓		Improved access to housing, employment, healthcare, education and public transport can particularly benefit younger and older people. Walkable neighbourhoods support independence and access to services. However, increased urban densities could reduce access to	Ensure delivery of age-friendly and adaptable housing, accessible public spaces, healthcare capacity and green infrastructure improvements alongside growth.

				informal open space and may place pressure on existing facilities if growth is not matched by infrastructure provision.	
Disability	✓	✓		Development within existing urban areas improves access to services, public transport and employment opportunities for disabled people. New homes are likely to meet higher accessibility standards. However, intensified development may create construction disruption, overcrowding or accessibility challenges if public realm improvements are not delivered.	Require accessible and adaptable housing standards, inclusive design, step-free access, improved pedestrian environments and accessible transport infrastructure.
Sex	✓			Improved proximity to jobs, services, childcare facilities and public transport may particularly benefit groups more dependent on local services and sustainable travel such as women. Regeneration can contribute to safer streets and better overlooked public spaces.	Design developments using Secured by Design principles (referenced in the Design and Placemaking PPG), provide safe walking routes, lighting and accessible community facilities.
Gender reassignment	✓	✓		Improved access to housing, employment, community facilities and public transport within existing settlements may benefit transgender people by increasing access to essential services and support networks. However,	Promote inclusive place-making, design safe and overlooked public spaces, ensure equal access to services and

				increased urban densities may create concerns around personal safety, harassment or exclusion if public spaces are not inclusive and well-designed.	community facilities, and support diversity and inclusion policies.
Marriage	✓			Increased housing supply, access to employment opportunities, sustainable transport and local services may support household stability and wellbeing for people who are married or in civil partnerships. No specific adverse impacts are anticipated.	Ensure a range of housing types and tenures to meet the needs of different household structures and life stages.
Pregnancy	✓	✓		Locating development close to healthcare, childcare facilities, employment opportunities, public transport and local services can benefit pregnant people and families with young children. However, increased pressure on health services, schools and open spaces could adversely affect accessibility and quality of services if infrastructure delivery does not keep pace with growth.	Ensure timely provision of healthcare, childcare, school places, accessible public transport, green spaces and family-friendly housing.
Belief or religion	✓	✓		Good access to community facilities and sustainable transport may improve access to places of worship and faith-based services. However, redevelopment and increased densities	Protect and enhance community facilities, provide flexible community spaces and

				could place pressure on existing community facilities or reduce opportunities for faith groups if community space is lost.	engage with faith groups during planning and development processes.
Race	✓	✓		Increased access to affordable housing, employment, education, services and public transport may help reduce inequalities experienced by some ethnic minority communities. Regeneration can improve environmental quality in urban areas. However, rising land values and redevelopment could contribute to displacement or reduced affordability in some locations.	Promote affordable housing, inclusive engagement, equal access to employment opportunities, community cohesion initiatives and measures to prevent displacement.
Sexual orientation	✓	✓		Improved access to jobs, housing, services and public transport can support inclusion and wellbeing. Regeneration may create safer and more active urban environments. However, concerns about safety, discrimination or exclusion may arise if developments and public spaces are not inclusive.	Apply inclusive design principles, promote community safety, support equality and diversity measures, and provide accessible community spaces.
Socio-economic	✓	✓		Significant positive effects may arise through increased housing delivery, proximity to employment, reduced travel costs, improved public transport	Provide affordable housing, support local employment and skills development,

			accessibility, and better access to education, healthcare and community infrastructure. Urban intensification can also support climate change objectives by reducing car dependency and making efficient use of land. However, regeneration and increased demand may increase property prices and living costs, potentially affecting lower-income households.	improve sustainable transport options, invest in social infrastructure and green infrastructure, and monitor affordability impacts.
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Summary: The infill development / urban intensification approach broadly reflects that urban intensification is generally positive across all protected characteristics due to better access to housing, jobs, services and public transport, but that potential negative effects may arise where infrastructure capacity, affordability, community facilities, green space or perceptions of safety are not adequately addressed.

Growth option 2 – Urban expansion

This option directs growth to planned extensions on the edges of existing towns, such as Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and Royston, and our larger villages. New development would be delivered through larger strategic sites, supported by new infrastructure, schools, healthcare facilities, transport improvements and green spaces. The aim is to create well-connected extensions that integrate with existing communities.

	Impact			Commentary	Mitigation
	Positive	Negative	No Impact		
Age	✓	✓		New homes, schools, healthcare facilities, open spaces and improved transport links can benefit both younger and older people.	Phase development alongside schools, healthcare and transport infrastructure.

				Strategic developments provide opportunities for age-friendly neighbourhoods and access to employment. However, if services and public transport are not delivered early, older people, young people and those without access to a car may experience isolation and reduced accessibility.	Provide accessible walking and cycling routes, age-friendly design and a range of housing suitable for different life stages.
Disability	✓	✓		New development provides opportunities to deliver accessible housing, inclusive public spaces and improved transport infrastructure. Access to new services and employment opportunities may improve outcomes for disabled people. Negative impacts may arise where urban extensions are car-dependent or where access to existing town centres and facilities is limited.	Require accessible and adaptable homes, inclusive design standards, step-free transport infrastructure, accessible public realm and high-quality public transport connections.
Sex	✓	✓		New housing, jobs and community facilities can improve access to services and employment opportunities. Well-designed neighbourhoods can improve perceptions of safety and support sustainable travel. However, poorly connected developments, isolated	Implement Secured by Design principles (referenced in the Design and Placemaking PPG), provide well-lit and overlooked routes, ensure public transport provision and provide

				walking routes or inadequate public transport may disproportionately affect those reliant on non-car travel.	accessible community facilities.
Gender reassignment	✓	✓		New communities can improve access to housing, employment, healthcare and support services. High-quality public spaces and community infrastructure can promote inclusion. However, isolated environments or poorly designed public areas could increase perceptions of vulnerability or exclusion.	Promote inclusive place-making, community cohesion initiatives, safe public spaces and equal access to services and facilities.
Marriage	✓			Increased housing choice, employment opportunities and improved infrastructure may support household stability and wellbeing. No specific adverse impacts are anticipated beyond those affecting the wider population.	Ensure delivery of a mix of housing sizes, tenures and affordability levels to meet diverse household needs; and provision of timely infrastructure to ensure equitable access
Pregnancy	✓	✓		Access to new housing, healthcare facilities, childcare provision, green spaces and improved transport infrastructure can significantly benefit pregnant people and families with young children. However, adverse effects may	Ensure timely delivery of healthcare, childcare, schools, community facilities and accessible public transport as

				arise if healthcare, education and community facilities are not delivered in line with population growth.	development progresses.
Belief or religion	✓	✓		Urban expansions may improve access to community facilities, services and transport that support participation in religious and cultural activities. However, growth may place pressure on existing community facilities or fail to meet the needs of faith groups if provision is not planned.	Engage with faith communities, provide flexible community facilities and ensure accessible transport links to places of worship.
Race	✓	✓		Increased housing supply, employment opportunities and access to services may provide benefits for ethnically diverse communities. Strategic growth can support social integration and improve access to education and transport. However, inequalities may arise if affordable housing, transport and community services are not delivered equitably.	Deliver affordable housing, promote inclusive engagement, support community cohesion and ensure equitable access to services, employment and transport.
Sexual orientation	✓	✓		New development can improve access to housing, services, employment opportunities and community facilities. Well-designed places may enhance inclusion and safety. However, poorly designed public spaces or weak	Promote inclusive community development, safe public spaces, equality policies and accessible support networks.

				community integration could create barriers to participation and wellbeing.	
Socio-economic	✓	✓		Significant positive effects may arise through increased housing delivery, including affordable housing, access to jobs, improved transport connectivity and investment in schools, healthcare and other community infrastructure. Strategic growth may also provide opportunities for sustainable transport and energy-efficient homes. However, development may increase pressure on existing infrastructure, create temporary construction disruption, lead to higher housing costs in some areas and result in loss of greenfield land with implications for biodiversity and climate resilience if not carefully planned.	Secure affordable housing, local employment and training opportunities, investment in transport and social infrastructure, sustainable drainage, biodiversity net gain, green infrastructure, climate-resilient design and measures to reduce car dependency.

Summary: Overall, Urban expansion is likely to have predominantly positive impacts across all characteristics, provided that housing, employment opportunities, public transport, schools, healthcare, community facilities and green infrastructure are delivered alongside development. Most potential negative impacts relate to infrastructure lag, car dependency, affordability pressures and environmental effects, which can largely be mitigated through comprehensive masterplanning and phased infrastructure delivery.

Growth option 3 – Dispersed village growth

This option spreads development across a number of villages through smaller-scale housing schemes. The focus is on meeting local housing needs, supporting rural communities and helping maintain village services such as shops, schools and community facilities. It does not rely on major growth in a small number of locations but distributes development more widely across the District.

	Impact				
	Positive	Negative	No Impact		
Age	✓	✓		Small-scale housing growth can help younger people remain within their local communities and support the viability of village schools, shops and community facilities. Older people may benefit from remaining close to established social networks. However, limited access to healthcare, employment, public transport and other services in some rural locations may disadvantage younger and older residents who are less able to travel.	Ensure provision of accessible housing, support rural transport services, improve digital connectivity, and maintain access to healthcare, community facilities and local services.
Disability	✓	✓		Additional housing may provide opportunities for accessible homes within rural communities and help people remain close to family support networks. However, dispersed development may increase reliance on private vehicles where public transport and services are limited, creating accessibility challenges for disabled people.	Require accessible and adaptable housing standards, improve community transport services, ensure accessible public realm design and support local service provision.
Sex	✓	✓		New housing and support for local facilities may benefit residents by improving access to local services and strengthening communities. However, limited transport options,	Improve public and community transport, provide safe and well-lit pedestrian routes, and

				longer travel distances and isolated locations may affect those who rely more heavily on public transport or local services.	support access to local services and facilities.
Gender reassignment	✓	✓		Supporting the sustainability of rural communities may improve access to housing and local services. Conversely, smaller and more dispersed communities may provide fewer opportunities to access specialist support services, healthcare or community networks.	Promote inclusive communities, ensure equitable access to services, improve transport and digital connectivity, and support access to specialist services where required.
Marriage	✓			Increased housing choice within villages may support household formation, enable families to remain within local communities and improve housing opportunities for those wishing to live close to family networks.	Ensure a range of housing sizes, types and tenures to meet differing household needs and affordability requirements.
Pregnancy	✓	✓		Housing growth may help families remain within local communities and sustain schools, childcare facilities and local services. However, access to healthcare facilities, maternity services and public transport may be more limited in rural areas, resulting in longer journeys.	Support rural healthcare provision, community transport, childcare facilities and accessible pedestrian routes to services.

Belief or religion	✓	✓		Growth may help sustain community facilities that support social, cultural and faith activities and maintain community cohesion in villages. However, dispersed growth may not always provide easy access to places of worship or larger faith communities located in towns.	Engage with faith groups, support community facilities and improve transport links to larger service centres where appropriate.
Race	✓	✓		Additional housing and support for local services may benefit all communities. However, some ethnic minority groups may experience barriers if access to employment, specialist services, public transport and community networks is more limited in rural areas.	Promote inclusive community engagement, improve transport connectivity, ensure equitable access to housing and services, and support community cohesion initiatives.
Sexual orientation	✓	✓		Retaining population and supporting local facilities can help maintain vibrant rural communities. However, dispersed settlements may provide fewer opportunities to access specialist support services, social networks and community groups available in larger towns.	Encourage inclusive community development, improve transport and digital connectivity, and ensure equal access to services and support networks.
Socio-economic	✓	✓		Dispersed village growth may provide affordable housing opportunities, help sustain village services, support local construction employment	Deliver affordable housing, support local employment opportunities,

			and strengthen rural communities. However, limited employment opportunities, reduced public transport provision, increased travel costs and dependence on private vehicles may disproportionately affect lower-income households. Dispersed development may also increase transport-related carbon emissions and place pressure on rural landscapes and biodiversity if not carefully managed.	improve public and community transport, enhance active travel links, protect biodiversity, provide green infrastructure and incorporate climate-resilient and low-carbon development measures.
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Summary: Dispersed village growth is likely to result in a combination of positive and negative impacts across most protected characteristics. Positive effects relate to local housing provision, sustaining rural services and supporting community vitality. Negative effects primarily arise from limited access to employment, healthcare, public transport and other social infrastructure, together with potential climate change and environmental impacts associated with increased travel demand.

Growth option 4 – New settlement

This option accommodates a significant proportion of future growth in one or more new freestanding settlements. These would be comprehensively planned communities with their own housing, employment opportunities, schools, healthcare facilities, green spaces and supporting infrastructure. Rather than expanding existing towns and villages, growth would be focused in entirely new settlements designed to be largely self-sufficient.

	Impact			Commentary	Mitigation
	Positive	Negative	No Impact		
Age	✓	✓		A new settlement provides opportunities to deliver a range of housing, schools, healthcare facilities, employment	Deliver infrastructure alongside housing growth, apply age-friendly

				opportunities, accessible green spaces and sustainable transport from the outset. This can benefit both younger and older people. However, during early phases residents may have limited access to services and public transport until the settlement becomes established.	neighbourhood principles, provide accessible public transport and ensure a range of housing suitable for different life stages.
Disability	✓	✓		A new settlement can be designed around inclusive design principles, providing accessible homes, step-free routes, local employment opportunities and accessible community facilities. However, delays in infrastructure provision or a lack of transport connections in early phases may create accessibility barriers.	Require accessible and adaptable housing, inclusive design standards, accessible public realm, community transport and high-quality public transport links from the earliest phases.
Sex	✓	✓		New housing, employment opportunities and social infrastructure can improve quality of life and access to services. Well-planned neighbourhoods can support safe and active travel. However, isolated locations, particularly in the early stages of development, may create concerns regarding accessibility and personal safety.	Incorporate Secured by Design principles (referenced in the Design and Placemaking PPG), well-lit walking and cycling routes, frequent public transport services and accessible community facilities.

Gender reassignment	✓	✓		A comprehensively planned community offers opportunities for inclusive design, access to employment, healthcare and community facilities. However, there may be limited access to specialist support services during the early phases of development and risks of social exclusion if community integration is not supported.	Promote inclusive place-making, support community cohesion initiatives, ensure equitable access to services and provide strong transport and digital connectivity.
Marriage	✓			A broad mix of housing, employment opportunities and community facilities can support a range of household types and contribute positively to household stability and wellbeing. No specific adverse impacts are anticipated.	Deliver a diverse mix of housing types, sizes and tenures, including affordable housing.
Pregnancy	✓	✓		New healthcare facilities, childcare provision, schools, open spaces and family housing can provide significant benefits for families with young children. However, if facilities are not delivered in step with residential development, access to services may be limited during initial phases.	Phase healthcare, childcare, education and community facilities alongside housing development and ensure good public transport connectivity.
Belief or religion	✓	✓		New community facilities and transport links may improve opportunities for social, cultural and religious activities. However, faith communities may initially	Provide flexible community spaces, engage with faith groups during

				depend on facilities in existing settlements until the new community becomes established.	planning and ensure good transport connections to existing centres.
Race	✓	✓		New housing, jobs, schools and transport infrastructure can improve access to opportunities and support inclusive communities. However, barriers may arise if affordable housing, community facilities and public transport are not delivered equitably across the development.	Deliver affordable housing, undertake inclusive community engagement, support community cohesion and ensure equitable access to services, employment and transport infrastructure.
Sexual orientation	✓	✓		A new settlement can provide inclusive housing, employment opportunities, community facilities and public spaces that support wellbeing and participation. However, in the early stages there may be limited access to support networks and specialist services until the settlement reaches a critical population size.	Promote inclusive communities, provide safe public spaces, support equality and diversity initiatives and ensure strong transport and digital connectivity.
Socio-economic	✓	✓		Significant positive effects may arise through the delivery of substantial housing, including affordable housing, local employment opportunities, schools, healthcare facilities, green infrastructure and	Secure affordable housing, deliver employment land early, phase infrastructure provision with development,

sustainable transport networks. A well-designed settlement can support low-carbon lifestyles and climate change mitigation through walkable neighbourhoods and energy-efficient development. However, the scale of development could result in significant impacts on the natural environment, loss of agricultural land, biodiversity impacts and substantial upfront infrastructure costs. Residents may also rely on private vehicles if employment and services are not delivered early.

achieve biodiversity net gain, provide extensive green infrastructure, protect and enhance ecological networks, incorporate low-carbon and climate-resilient design, and prioritise sustainable transport connections.

Summary: New settlement is likely to have predominantly positive equality impacts because it provides the opportunity to plan housing, employment, transport, social infrastructure and green infrastructure comprehensively from the outset. However, negative effects are also possible for most characteristics if infrastructure, services and employment opportunities lag behind housing delivery, or if environmental impacts are not appropriately mitigated.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement

In preparing the new Local Plan, there are three main stages for consultation and engagement.

- Scoping
- Content and Evidence Base document
- Proposed draft Local Plan

Scoping Stage

We undertook an initial scoping consultation with our communities and stakeholders between 11 May and 28 June 2026 to scope key issues for the Local Plan to cover and asked how they wanted to be involved in the preparation of the Plan as it develops.

The consultation was published as follows:

- The outlook magazine, which was sent to every household
- Emails were sent to everyone on the Local Plan database
- Hard copies were available in the Council Offices and every library.
- Posters in libraries
- Social media posts and webpage

Officers attended the five area forums to present the scoping document and answer questions.

The scoping consultation was also promoted to seldom heard groups via the Council's community team.

Content and Evidence Base document

We have prepared a Content and Evidence Base document, which is the second stage in the new plan-making process. It sets out the Council's proposed approach across a number of thematic issues:

- Introduction
- Vision and Measurable Outcomes
- Our North Herts – Context
- Spatial Strategy
- Homes
- Economy and Employment Opportunities
- Town Centres
- Natural Environment

- Climate Change
- Transport and Connectivity
- Communities and Placemaking
- Communications and Utilities

The Content and Evidence Base document is currently being consulted on alongside this EqlA scoping report, which has assessed the Spatial Development Options, as set out in the Content and Evidence Base document.

We have also prepared a Consultation and Engagement Strategy that was informed by feedback from the scoping stage consultation. As part of that strategy, we have written directly to a number of groups that represent a number of protected characteristic groups to offer to meet directly with them and /or other support in engaging in the preparation of the Local Plan.

NEXT STEPS

Next Steps

The next stage of the Local Plan process will be the preparation and consultation on the Proposed Draft Local Plan, which is currently anticipated to take place in October 2027.

This EqIA Scoping Report forms the first stage of the equality assessment process and provides a high-level review of the potential equality issues that may arise from the Spatial Development Options as set out in the Content and Evidence Base document. It identifies the protected characteristics and socio-economic groups that may be affected by the Plan and highlights key matters that should be explored in greater detail as the Plan progresses.

Full Equality Impact Assessment

The findings of this Scoping Report will inform the preparation of a full Equality Impact Assessment alongside the Proposed Draft Local Plan. The full EqIA will build upon the baseline information and issues identified through this report and will assess the likely effects of proposed policies on people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, as well as other groups who may experience disadvantage such as socio-economic status.

Where potential adverse impacts are identified, the Council will consider whether mitigation measures, policy amendments or alternative approaches are necessary to minimise inequalities and maximise opportunities to advance equality, foster good relations and promote inclusive communities.

The full EqIA will remain an iterative document that evolves alongside the Local Plan, ensuring that equality considerations are embedded throughout the plan-making process and continue to inform policy development and decision-making.

Monitoring and Review

Equality considerations will continue to be reviewed as the Local Plan progresses through its subsequent stages. The findings of consultation, updates to the evidence base and engagement with relevant stakeholders and community groups will be used to refine the assessment and ensure that emerging policies respond appropriately to identified needs and issues.

Following adoption of the Local Plan, the Council [subsequent Unitary Authority] will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of relevant policies through the Authority Monitoring Report and other monitoring mechanisms where appropriate. This will help to identify whether the Plan is delivering positive outcomes for different groups within the community and whether any unintended adverse impacts are arising.

APPENDIX

Appendix – Seldom Heard Groups

Young People

- Fearnhill School Maths and Computing College, Letchworth
- Hitchin Boys' School, Hitchin
- Hitchin Girls' School, Hitchin
- The Highfield School, Letchworth Garden City
- The Knights Templar School, Baldock
- The Priory School, Hitchin
- North Hertfordshire College, Hitchin
- Youth Action

Ethnic Minority Communities

- North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum, Hitchin
- Jaswant Lunch Clubs, Hitchin & Letchworth
- Khalsa Youth Football Academy, Letchworth

Faith Communities

- North Hertfordshire Inter Faith Forum, Hitchin
- Churches Together, Hitchin
- Hitchin Mosque
- Letchworth Dhamma Nikethanaya Buddhist Meditation Centre
- Tanki Buddhist Therapists Forum
- Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Hitchin
- Ravidassia Community Centre, Hitchin & Letchworth
- Society of Friends (Hitchin Quakers)

Disabled People

- North Herts Day Service (OPPD), Hitchin
- Always Bee You

LGBTQ+ Communities

- Queers and Peers, Hitchin
- North Herts Pride
- Impactful Lives

Gypsy and Traveller Communities

- GATE Herts (Gypsy and Traveller Empowerment)

Rural Communities

- CDA Herts
- Farming Community Network
- North Hertfordshire Ramblers
- Triangle Community Garden

Small Business Owners

- Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce
- Business Buzz Hertfordshire
- Hertfordshire Growth Hub
- Federation of Small Businesses

Residents

- North Herts 50 Plus
- Green & Growing