

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024. Paragraphs relevant to this socio-economic assessment are:

- **Paragraph 8** - considers the important social and economic role that planning plays to secure sustainable development;
- **Paragraph 9** - plans and decisions need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas;
- **Paragraph 61** - outlines the importance of sufficient land supply to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes;
- **Paragraph 85** - refers to the Government's commitment to secure economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development; and
- **Paragraph 96** - planning policies and decisions should promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for multiple connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontage. Additionally, planning policies and decisions should enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.
- **Paragraph 98** - planning policies and decisions should ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services;
- **Paragraph 109** – considers the importance of promoting sustainable travel by ensuring that opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued.
- **Paragraph 124** - planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

Regional Planning Policy

Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan 2017-2030 (2017)

The vision set out in the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) is that by 2030, Hertfordshire will be among the UK's leading economies, helping to realise the full economic potential of the assets and opportunities within the Golden Triangle - the most concentrated area in Europe for scientific research and development, benefiting the UK economy as a whole.

The SEP indicates that all of Hertfordshire's towns need to adapt to changes in patterns of living and working, and have a clear economic purpose. Appropriate provision must be made both in relation to where people live and where/how they work which means that more housing must be delivered but also that a good supply of employment land must be secured. The SEP also aims to ensure that development

takes into account the wider opportunities linked to key sectors, that appropriate accommodation is planned for new and small businesses to grow and that skills provision is aligned to local employment growth.

Draft Hertfordshire Local Industrial Strategy

The Draft Hertfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) is described by Hertfordshire LEP as a further “refinement” of the SEP with continuity in relation to key themes.

Improving productivity performance and achieving more inclusive growth are the overarching challenges for the LIS. Productivity in Hertfordshire has grown very slowly over the last decade and it has declined relative to the UK average. Levels of inequality in Hertfordshire are described as substantial. The county has some very prosperous communities, but is also very disadvantaged in parts. This causes issues in terms of housing affordability and the cost of living more generally.

The LIS refers to a series of new New Towns (Garden Towns/ communities) that are planned. It states that they should be delivered excellently and in a manner that is “future proofed” – both in terms of built environment and the communities that are created.

Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Funding Prospectus 2018 – 2031

The Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Funding Prospectus (HIFP) presents an overarching baseline of growth patterns, infrastructure projects and cost requirements and funding gaps in Hertfordshire. It suggests that from all Local Authorities in Hertfordshire there is a total housing supply of 83,530 dwellings expected between 2017/18 and 2031/32. However Local authorities across Hertfordshire have identified housing need for approximately 97,411 homes between 2018 and 2031. ONS Population projections also forecast a population increase of 107,400 people (an increase of 9%).

The HIFP also indicates that future education demand will expand to 2031 for new primary and secondary schools. Although it appears that there is an oversupply at the local authority level of schools, patterns of growth are shifting and occurring in localised areas which will require significant investment in education infrastructure to ensure strong future provision and accessibility that meets growth requirements.

Unlocking Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire’s Economic Recovery Plan (2020);

The Hertfordshire Economic Recovery Plan provides a strategic view of the next steps Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) will take to support local recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes accelerating the building of new homes. HCC will work alongside the Hertfordshire Growth Board to accelerate the building of new houses to support the delivery of up to 100,000 homes by the mid 2030’s to address market failure. HCC aim to seek a support package from HM Government to accelerate the delivery trajectory over the next ten years through a single housing delivery programme for the county.

The Plan also outlines the challenge for Hertfordshire in accommodating and supporting a growing population. Alongside the district and borough council partners, HCC are preparing for around 100,000 additional new homes over the next 15 years. It is essential that the necessary infrastructure and other community resources are in place to support these new developments.

Local Planning Policy

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (2022)

The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted on Tuesday 8 November 2022. Policies relevant to this socio-economic assessment include:

- **Policy SP8 – Housing** – The Plan outlines the aim to release sufficient land to deliver at least 11,600 net new homes for North Hertfordshire’s own needs. This should support a range of housing tenures, types and sizes including 33% of all homes over the plan period as Affordable Housing for local needs with targets to deliver up to 40% Affordable Housing where viable.
- **Policy HC1: Community facilities** – Outlines the importance of community facilities being situated within local communities so that they are accessible, help to reduce the need to travel and provide opportunities for people to participate in activities within their own community. The Plan refers to the Council’s Community Halls Strategy and Indoor Sports Facility Strategy and Action Plan which sets out detailed guidelines for the provision of new community facilities which developers should take into account in the design of any new development.
- **Policy SP1: Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire** - States that the Council will grant planning permission for proposals that, individually or cumulatively:
 - Deliver an appropriate mix of homes, jobs and facilities that contribute towards the targets and aspirations in the Plan;
 - Create high-quality developments that respect and improve their surroundings and provide opportunities for healthy lifestyle choices;
 - Provide the necessary infrastructure required to support an increasing population; and
 - Protect key elements of North Hertfordshire’s environment including biodiversity, important landscapes, heritage assets and green infrastructure.

- **Policy SP5 - Countryside and Green Belt-** The Plan states that the Council will only permit development proposals in the Green Belt where they would not result in inappropriate development or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated. However in part to offset the Green Belt releases necessary to meet housing needs, particularly in the Stevenage, Hitchin and Luton areas, an additional area of Green Belt is designated around Offley and Whitwell to cover an area which was not previously Green Belt.

Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (2019)

The Stevenage Local Plan was adopted on 22nd May 2019. Policies relevant to this socio-economic assessment include:

- **Policy SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development** - SBC will work proactively with applicants to find solutions that will allow proposals to be approved where possible including securing development that improves social, environmental and economic conditions in the area.
- **Policy SP7: High quality homes** The Local Plan supports significant growth in and around Stevenage to help meet needs across the market area. SBC aims to work with North Hertfordshire District Council to ensure any homes provided on the edge of Stevenage but outside the Borough boundary are successfully integrated into the urban fabric of the town.
- **Policy SP10: Green Belt SBC** will continue to work with North Hertfordshire Council to create a coherent and connected Green Belt boundary around the town, including the safeguarding of land in North Hertfordshire to meet the borough's needs beyond the plan period. In the past the Green Belt has been reviewed and land has been released to allow for development to the northeast of the town at Great Ashby.