

Planning Policy and Projects



www.north-herts.gov.uk

Annual Monitoring Report 2016 – 2017

Recording developments and other changes in North Hertfordshire and measuring the use of planning policies

Note: Annual monitoring reports are prepared on a financial year (April – March) basis.

This Annual Monitoring Report covers the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. This predates the approval of the submission of the Local Plan to the Government by Full Council on 11 April 2017, its eventual submission on 9 June 2017; and subsequent hearing sessions that were held between autumn 2017 and spring 2018. The Plan and associated evidence base can be viewed on the Council's website at <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/local-plan>. Some of the issues discussed in this report will have been 'overtaken by events' and more up-to-date information may be available.

CONTENTS

0.	Executive Summary.....	4
	Progress in preparing new plans.....	4
	Current policies.....	4
	Neighbourhood planning	5
	Duty to co-operate	5
	Changes on the ground.....	5
1.	Introduction	7
	Existing monitoring	8
	Content of the AMR	8
2.	Progress in preparation of new plans	10
	Local Plan.....	10
	Statement of Community Involvement.....	10
3.	Current policies.....	11
	Figure 1: Efficacy of current local policies and key supplementary guidance	11
4.	Neighbourhood planning	13
5.	Duty to co-operate	14
6.	Contextual background	17
	Contextual Indicators.....	17
	Demographic Structure	18
	Figure 2: Population change 2011-2015	18
	Figure 3: Breakdown of North Hertfordshire population by age.....	18
	Socio-cultural issues.....	19
	Figure 4: Indices of Multiple Deprivation Rankings.....	19
	Figure 5: Range of Index of Multiple Deprivation scores .	19
	Figure 6: Qualification levels.....	20
	Economy	20
	Figure 7: Economic Activity rates	20
	Figure 8: Average earnings.....	21
	Figure 9: Number of jobs	22
	Environment & Biodiversity.....	22
	Figure 10: Green belt.....	22
	Housing and Built Environment	22
	Figure 11: Average value of property sales, April 2014 ..	23
	Figure 12: Listed buildings.....	23
	Figure 13: Historical assets.....	23
	Transport and Movement	23

7.	Housing	24
	Completions of dwellings.....	24
	Figure 14: Housing completions since 2011	24
	Figure 15: Development on previously developed land ...	25
	Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.....	25
	Affordable housing	25
	Figure 16: Affordable housing completions	26
	Size and type of new dwellings	27
	Figure 17: Dwelling completions by type	27
	Figure 18: Dwelling completions by number of bedrooms	27
	Distribution of new housing	28
	Figure 19: Net completions by parish.....	28
	Starts and dwellings under construction	28
	Figure 20: Dwelling starts	28
	Planning permissions and five year land supply	29
8.	Business Development.....	29
	Figure 21: Employment floorspace changes	32
	Figure 22: Employment land availability	33
	Floorspace completed within employment areas	33
	Figure 23: Employment completions in employment areas	
	33
	Loss of employment land to other uses	34
	Figure 24: Loss of employment floorspace.....	34
9.	Local Services (Retail, office and leisure development)	35
	Figure 25: Retail and leisure completions	35
	Supply of A & D use classes.....	35
	Figure 26: Retail and leisure completions in town centres	
	36
	Figure 27: Retail and leisure permissions	36
	Floorspace in town centres	36
	Figure 28: Floorspace in town centres.....	37
	Vacancy Rates	37
	Figure 29: Vacancy rates by town	37
10.	Environment and biodiversity.....	38
	Flood Protection and Water Quality.....	38
	Figure 30: Applications granted contrary to EA.....	38
	Biodiversity	38
	Figure 31: Wildlife sites.....	38
	Figure 32: Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
	39
	Open space	41
	Appendix 1: Glossary.....	42

0.EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 0.1 This is the thirteenth Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) we have produced. This AMR reports on the following matters:
- Progress in preparing new plans;
 - Current policies;
 - Neighbourhood planning;
 - Duty to co-operate;
 - Contextual data; and
 - Changes on the ground affecting housing, employment development, retail and facilities and the wider environment.
- 0.2 It covers the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. All references to 'current position' are therefore as at 31 March 2017 and do not take account of any changes which have occurred between then and the publication of this report.

Progress in preparing new plans

- 0.3 Work is underway on a new Local Plan for the district, during 2016/17; the Local Plan progressed towards the 'submission' stage. In October – November 2016, the Council consulted on the Proposed Submission Local Plan with an aim of submitting the Plan for examination in summer 2017.
- 0.4 Beyond this monitoring period, in April 2017, a new Local Development Scheme (LDS) was approved which sets out the timetable of plan production to adoption. The timetable for the Local Plan process is laid out in the LDS. The document can be viewed here: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/local-development-scheme>

Current policies

- 0.5 The saved policies from the District Local Plan No. 2 (1996) continue to form the basis of planning decisions. However, due to their age, other issues have to be taken into account when making planning decisions. In particular, national policies which require Councils to maintain a supply of housing land are a significant influence. The formulation of a Proposed Submission Local Plan has also allowed a certain amount of weighting to be given to proposed new policies.

Neighbourhood planning

- 0.6 During the year, two more Parishes took the first formal step towards the preparation of a neighbourhood plan. Neighbourhood plan area designations were made for Preston and Knebworth (both designated by Cabinet on 14 June 2016). These designations brought the total number of neighbourhood planning area designations to eleven by March 2017.
- 0.7 Significant progress has been made to progress the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan. The Draft Pirton Neighbourhood Plan was published for Regulation 14 consultation between 4 April 2016 – 16 May 2016. Subsequently, Pirton Parish Council submitted their Neighbourhood Development Plan to North Hertfordshire District Council on 31 October 2016, Regulation 16 consultation took place between 9 February 2017 – 23 March 2017.
- 0.8 Wymondley Parish Council undertook Regulation 14 consultation on the Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan from 11 April 2016 – 25 May 2016. The Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to North Hertfordshire District Council on 23 March 2017. Regulation 16 consultation of the Proposed Submission Neighbourhood Plan has taken place, but outside of the period for this AMR. It will be covered by the next AMR and will be appropriately reported on there.

Duty to co-operate

- 0.9 A variety of work is underway with the District's neighbours and other bodies. This is an ongoing process though substantial progress was made during 2016/17, especially in relation to the production of a shared and / or common evidence base with surrounding authorities.
- 0.10 Through consultation responses submitted to surrounding authorities, the Council set out its proposed intention to make positive contributions to unmet development needs from Luton (housing) and Stevenage (employment) subject to progression of the new Local Plan.

Changes on the ground

- 0.11 Some key points reported include:
- There was a net decrease of -7,212m² of employment floorspace;

- A net total of 539 new dwellings were completed;
- 57% of the gross housing completions were on previously developed land;
- There was a net gain of 10,214m² of shops, financial & professional services and leisure facilities; and
- No planning applications were granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency.

1.INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Monitoring is an important part of the planning system. Keeping track of changes to the built and natural environment helps inform our future plans for the area and provides evidence on areas where change may be necessary. Monitoring also helps ensure that the effects policies are having are properly observed.
- 1.2 The Council has produced an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) each year since 2004, when they were introduced as part of wider changes to the planning system. Prior to 2004 we produced a number of different monitoring reports on an annual basis, reporting separately on matters such as housing and employment.
- 1.3 The AMR links with the Council's Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the emerging local plan as it identifies potential significant sustainability effects and will, if necessary, propose measures for addressing adverse effects, including unexpected problems.
- 1.4 Under the Localism Act 2011 (section 113), monitoring reports can be produced more frequently than annually if an authority so wishes. The term "Annual Monitoring Report" is therefore no longer used in the regulations. For the time being we will continue to publish monitoring reports annually, but will give consideration to publishing data more frequently in future if this proves practicable and useful.
- 1.5 During this monitoring period, Cabinet approved the Proposed Submission Local Plan on 26 September 2016. Public consultation on the plan started on Wednesday 19th October 2016 and ended on Wednesday 30th November 2016. The progression of the Council's new Local Plan (reported on below) will necessitate a review of the monitoring indicators to ensure they are properly capturing the most relevant information. This will be reflected in the next AMR.
- 1.6 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012 specify the list of matters which should be included in a monitoring report:
 - Progress against the timetable for preparing local plans or supplementary planning documents;

- Identifying policies that are no longer being used;
 - Housing growth;
 - Neighbourhood development orders or plans;
 - Community Infrastructure Levy progress; and
 - Co-operation with other bodies under the duty to co-operate.
- 1.7 Conversely, much of the prescription about detailed topics to monitor has been cancelled, although there remains a general duty to keep matters affecting the district under review.
- 1.8 For the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, the development plan for North Hertfordshire comprised the saved policies from the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations (DLP2a) along with relevant waste and minerals policies produced by the County Council.
- 1.9 These Council's own saved policies are listed in the Local Development Scheme available to view on the council's website.

Existing monitoring

- 1.10 Information for this AMR comes from a variety of sources. Some of the information has been collected through our own survey and monitoring work. For a number of years we have monitored housing and employment development. This involves officers carrying out a survey of sites which have planning permission for residential development or employment (B class uses), to see if the sites are under construction, completed or where no work has begun. This is done on a six monthly basis for employment and a quarterly basis for housing.
- 1.11 We have been monitoring retail and town centre development in the district since 2003. In a similar way to housing and employment, planning permissions for retail (A uses) and assembly and leisure (D2) uses are monitored through site surveys. This was first undertaken as part of the Town Centre and Retail Study (2004). Information surveyed included all ground floor units in the town centres, name of occupier; type of use; vacancy rate. Retail and town centre monitoring is carried out annually.

Content of the AMR

- 1.12 The AMR is effectively divided into two parts. The first part

(chapters 2 to 5) reports on work the council and others are doing towards trying to achieve sustainable development in North Hertfordshire.

- Chapter 2 looks at the progress being made in the preparation of new plans for the area.
- Chapter 3 examines how the district's current policies are being used.
- Chapter 4 reports on activity by local communities towards new neighbourhood plans.
- Chapter 5 sets out what activity has been carried out under the duty to co-operate.

1.13 The second part of the AMR (chapters 6 to 10) report on data about the district and how it has changed during the monitoring year.

- Chapter 6 looks at contextual data about the district.
- Chapter 7 reports changes to the housing stock.
- Chapter 8 examines employment developments.
- Chapter 9 considers changes affecting retail and other local facilities.
- Chapter 10 explores other developments affecting the wider environment.

2. PROGRESS IN PREPARATION OF NEW PLANS

- 2.1 The timetable for preparing the Local Plan is formally known as the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS in force at the end of the monitoring year in March 2017 was approved and adopted by the Council the Council in the previous monitoring year (January 2016). This sets out the detailed timetable for production of the plan. By 31 March 2017 the Plan had progressed on schedule as set out in the LDS.
- 2.2 The only document listed in the LDS is the local plan, which is intended to cover all aspects of the council's planning policies, including overall strategy, land allocations and development management policies.

Local Plan

- 2.3 Work on the Local Plan progressed during the monitoring year, bringing it closer to the 'submission' stage which the Council intends to do in summer 2017; provided the Plan is approved for submission by full council in spring 2017.
- 2.4 A further update will be provided in the next AMR, by which time it is expected that the Examination in Public will be underway.

Statement of Community Involvement

- 2.5 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was first adopted in 2006. Since the SCI was adopted, the use of social media and petitions has increased as a way of making comments on the Local Plan.
- 2.6 A revised SCI reflecting these matters was adopted in September 2015. No further work on the SCI was undertaken in this monitoring year.

3.CURRENT POLICIES

- 3.1 The AMR has to report on the extent to which current policies are being achieved.
- 3.2 This is particularly important in light of the National Planning Policy Framework, which indicates that local policies should only be applied where they are broadly consistent with the NPPF.

Figure 1: Efficacy of current local policies and key supplementary guidance

Local policy documents currently in force	Efficacy
<p>Saved policies (2007) from District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations (1996)</p>	<p>Despite its age, the policies from the saved local plan still form the basis for determining planning applications in accordance with statutory requirements.</p> <p>However, in certain areas, notably affordable housing and overall level of housing, more recent factors always have to be taken into account in coming to decisions on individual planning applications. This includes consideration of matters such as five-year housing supply and, consequentially, whether relevant policies can be considered 'up to date'.</p> <p>During 2016/17, the Council granted planning permission for housing on some sites identified in the Proposed Submission Local Plan version of the local plan (RY2 & RY5) and outside of the development boundaries identified in the current District Plan in order to maintain supply of housing land.</p>
<p>Planning obligations SPD (2006)</p>	<p>The Planning Obligations SPD has been generally very effective at ensuring that new development contributes towards the costs to society which arise from the development.</p> <p>Legislative changes associated with the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the Government's recent curtailment of the ability to collect contributions or affordable housing from small schemes indicate that a review of this document will be necessary.</p> <p>It is anticipated that an 'in principle' decision on whether to pursue CIL will be taken following the Local Plan's Examination in Public.</p>

Local policy documents currently in force	Efficacy
Vehicle parking provision at new development SPD (2011)	The Vehicle Parking SPD was adopted in November 2011 and is considered up to date.
Statement of Community Involvement (2012)	The revised SCI was adopted in September 2015.
The Design Supplementary Planning Document (July 2011)	The Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is a guide for the future development of the towns, villages and rural areas in North Hertfordshire. The Design SPD is not prescriptive in terms of standards or requirements as it encourages developers and designers to think about the context of the site and how their development might contribute to and enhance the local area. This should ensure high quality development throughout the district regardless of scale or location.

- 3.3 A range of further supplementary planning guidance (SPG) and supplementary planning documents (SPD) remain 'extant' (in force). Alongside the 'in principle' decision on CIL referenced above, the Council will initiate a review of all SPG and SPD during 2017/18.

4.NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

- 4.1 Neighbourhood planning is an additional tier of the planning system introduced by the Localism Act 2011. During the monitoring year, Pirton and Wymondley Parish Councils undertook consultation on their draft pre-submission neighbourhood plans (Regulation 14).
- 4.2 Pirton Parish Council then submitted the Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan and accompanying documents to the District Council for further consultation (Regulation 16) which took place in February and March 2017.
- 4.3 During the year, two more Parishes took the first formal step towards the preparation of a neighbourhood plan. Neighbourhood plan area designations were made for Preston and Knebworth (both designated by Cabinet on 14 June 2016). These designations brought the total number of neighbourhood planning area designations to eleven by March 2017.

5. DUTY TO CO-OPERATE

- 5.1 The duty to co-operate was introduced by the Localism Act 2011. It requires local planning authorities and other bodies to work together towards achieving sustainable development. Larger than local issues were previously resolved through regional plans. With the removal of regional plans the duty to co-operate is intended to allow issues which affect more than one district, or needs too great to be met in one district, to be properly considered and solutions found.
- 5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains a list of strategic issues which may require joint consideration under the Duty.
- 5.3 The duty to co-operate is an ongoing process. If the district has not co-operated meaningfully in preparing the plan then the plan may fail the duty to co-operate, which is a statutory test.
- 5.4 The activity currently underway under the duty to co-operate reported here is therefore a work in progress. The council has not yet reached the stage of having fully resolved all the issues. Further discussion and positive outcomes are anticipated before the Council submits its Local Plan for examination.
- 5.5 During 2016/17, the Council continued to negotiate with surrounding Councils and other agencies to make progress on key issues. This included a range of meetings between senior politicians and officers to discuss cross boundary issues.
- 5.6 However, the focus of the Duty is upon effective outcomes and not simply an audit trail of discussions. During 2016/17, substantial progress was made. Some of the key outcomes have included:
- Agreement of three memorandums of understanding (MOU) that will be submitted as a part of the Proposed Submission Local Plan examination library.
 - These MOUs have been agreed with East Hertfordshire District Council, Anglian Water and HCC Direction of Travel.
 - At 31 March 2017, further MOUs are being negotiated with other neighbouring authorities as well as bodies such as the Environment Agency and Thames Water, these will

be finalised and agreed in 2017/18.

- Agreement and issuing of a project brief to procure a **Luton HMA Growth Study** to explore spatial options for meeting objectively assessed housing needs in this area, including acknowledged unmet housing needs arising from Luton.
- Date: January 2016 to March 2017 (ongoing)
- Partner authorities: Central Bedfordshire, Luton Borough and Aylesbury Vale District Councils
- Completion of **North Hertfordshire Local Plan Model Testing** in consultation with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and utilising their 'WHaSH-BL' transport model and procurement framework. This approach is in line with the informal protocol issued by HCC to all districts setting out their preferred approach to transport modelling for emerging local plans.
- This is supplemented by the **Baldock Link Road Testing** paper **[TI5]** which specifically tests the implications of new connections which are proposed as part of the Plan's housing allocations in the town.
- *Date:* September 2016
- *Partner authorities:* Hertfordshire County Council
- The Proposed Submission Local Plan is supported by a comprehensive **Infrastructure Delivery Plan**. Relevant sections of this document were completed in consultation with key infrastructure and service providers. This included testing the implications of a 'preferred development scenario' which closely aligns to the final strategy included within the submitted Plan.
- Date: September 2016
- Co-operating authority: Hertfordshire County Council
- A **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment update** to ensure compliance with the requirements of national policy. The Environment Agency and Hertfordshire County Council (in their role as Lead Local Flood Authority) were consulted upon the contents of the SFRA as it was produced.
- Date: September 2016
- *Co-operating authorities:* Environment Agency, Hertfordshire County Council

- The **Habitat Regulation Assessment Screening Report [SOC4]** examines the potential impacts of the Local Plan upon sites of European significance. The key (potential) implications and mitigations relate to the treatment of wastewater from parts of the District at the Rye Meads works. Natural England were consulted upon the contents of the assessment as it was produced
- Date: September 2016
- Partner authorities: Natural England

- Submission of **pro-active representations to the Regulation 19 consultations** of East Hertfordshire District Council and Welwyn Hatfield District Councils' Local Plans. These set out a range of areas of broad support as well as this Council's intention to make positive provision under the Duty for unmet housing and employment needs respectively subject to the progression of North Hertfordshire's own plan. Agreement in principle to **preparation of a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding** (or equivalent) with both authorities and commencement of drafting of this.
- Date: March 2016 – April 2017 (ongoing)
- Partner authorities: East Hertfordshire District Council and Welwyn Hatfield District Council

- Active **participation at Local Plan Examinations in Public** of neighbouring authorities. Appearance at the examination of Stevenage Borough Council and Luton Borough Council's Local Plan to support their soundness regarding the duty-to-cooperate.
- Date: March 2016 – April 2017
- Partner authorities: Stevenage Borough Council and Luton Borough Council

6.CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

- 6.1 North Hertfordshire is a mainly rural district by land area, but the majority of the population live in its four towns. It lies less than 40 miles from central London. North Hertfordshire has good transport links and is served by fast rail services to the north, London and Cambridge. The A1(M) and A10 run north-south through the district while the A505 provides for east-west movement. There is easy access to the A1(M) and the airports at Luton and Stansted. The M1 motorway also passes close to the district's western edge.
- 6.2 North Hertfordshire is characterised by a number of small to medium sized towns with a range of facilities and smaller settlements in open countryside.
- 6.3 North Hertfordshire covers an area of 375 square kilometres. The main towns are Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Baldock and Royston. Most of the Great Ashby estate on the edge of Stevenage lies in North Hertfordshire. There are also about 40 villages and hamlets. Of these settlements, 14 villages have been identified in the saved local plan as being able to accommodate some level of development: Ashwell, Barkway, Barley, Codicote, Holwell, Ickleford, Kimpton, Knebworth, Little Wymondley, Offley, Pirton, Sandon, Therfield and Whitwell.

Contextual Indicators

- 6.4 As with previous AMRs, we include some contextual indicators to provide a backdrop against which to consider the effects of policies and inform the interpretation of data. The contextual indicators show the wider social, economic and environmental circumstances in the district.
- 6.5 We have tried to show the most up to date information available in this section and, where possible, comparison with relevant areas.
- 6.6 The indicators fall within the following topic areas: demographic structure; socio-cultural issues; economy; environment; housing and built environment; transport and spatial connectivity. The contextual indicators have been updated from last year where newer information has become available.

Demographic Structure

- 6.7 Mid-year population estimates are released annually by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
- 6.8 The population of North Hertfordshire stood at 132,700 in 2016 (See Figure 2). It increased by 0.75% between 2015 and 2016, compared with a 0.88% increase within Hertfordshire.

Figure 2: Population change 2013-2016

Area	2013	2014	2015	2016	2015-16 % increase
Hertfordshire	1,140.7	1,154.8	1,166.3	1,176.7	0.88%
North Hertfordshire	129.3	131.0	131.7	132.7	0.75%

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Population in thousands

Figure 3: Breakdown of North Hertfordshire population by age

Age group	Female	Male	Total
Under 1	800	800	1,600
1-4	3,200	3,600	6,800
5-9	4,200	4,400	8,600
10-14	3,700	3,800	7,500
15-19	3,500	3,600	7,100
20-24	3,000	3,100	6,000
25-29	3,800	3,700	7,500
30-34	4,500	4,100	8,600
35-39	4,800	4,600	9,400
40-44	5,000	4,800	9,800
45-49	5,100	4,900	10,000
50-54	5,000	5,000	10,000
55-59	4,100	4,200	8,300
60-64	3,500	3,400	6,900
65-69	3,800	3,500	7,300
70-74	3,000	2,800	5,800
75-79	2,400	2,000	4,400
80-84	2,000	1,600	3,600
85 and over	2,300	1,300	3,600
Total	67,600	65,100	132,700

Source: ONS, Population Estimates Analysis Tool, June 2016

- 6.9 The latest data shows that approximately 19% of the District's population are aged 65 or over while almost a

quarter (24%) are aged 19 or under.

- 6.10 The 2011 Census remains the most comprehensive source of information on detailed population characteristics such as ethnicity and health. No new data was released during the monitoring year and previous AMRs should be referred to for more information.

Socio-cultural issues

- 6.11 An updated Index of Multiple Deprivation was released in September 2015 (no updated data was released during this monitoring year). It shows that North Hertfordshire is relatively affluent compared to other local authority areas. The district ranks 271th out of the 326 local authority areas in England, (1 being the most deprived). The Index of Multiple Deprivation is a measure based on seven different types ("domains") of deprivation.
- 6.12 North Herts ranks better than some neighbouring local authorities, such as Stevenage, Luton and Central Beds but below places such as East Hertfordshire and South Cambridgeshire (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Indices of Multiple Deprivation Rankings (out of 326 local authority areas in England)

North Hertfordshire	Stevenage	East Herts.
271	137	315
Central Beds.	Luton	South Cambs.
264	40	314

Source: Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015 for North Herts and comparator areas.

- 6.13 Only one Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in North Hertfordshire is in the most deprived category. The majority of the wards are in the 60-80 and 80-100% (least deprived) category.

Figure 5: Range of Index of Multiple Deprivation scores

<20% (most deprived)	20- 40%	40%- 60%	60%- 80%	>80% (least deprived)	Total LSOA
1	7	18	25	31	82

Source: Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015. Percentage of North Hertfordshire LSOAs by quintile.

- 6.14 The unemployment benefit claimant count in North Hertfordshire at March 2017 was 955. This represented an increase of 90 people over twelve months from the March 2016 figure of 865.

- 6.15 At March 2017, the number of claimants as a proportion of economically active residents aged 16+ is 1.3%, in the East the figure is 1.6% and 2.4% nationally.
- 6.16 Levels of qualifications in North Hertfordshire are high, in common with the county of Hertfordshire as a whole. The majority of the district's working age population is qualified to at least NVQ 3 (A-Level) standard.

Figure 6: Qualification levels

Qualification level	North Herts (numbers)	North Herts (%)	Hertfordshire (%)
NVQ4 and above	35,200	43.3	42.6
NVQ3 and above	47,800	58.7	58.8
NVQ2 and above	68,200	83.7	77.9
NVQ1 and above	75,800	93.2	88.8
Other qualifications	3,500	4.3	5.4
No qualifications	2,100	2.5	5.9

Source: Nomis – Annual Population Survey (12 months to December 2016)

Economy

- 6.17 Major employers in the district include Altro, Johnson Matthey, North Hertfordshire District Council, Unichem, Dorma, Sainsbury, Tesco, and Morrisons although the majority of businesses are very small in scale.
- 6.18 Economic output per head for jobs based in North Hertfordshire is much less than Hertfordshire, the East of England and the UK. This reflects the relatively rural nature of the district and the low intensity economic activities in this area. About half of North Hertfordshire's resident workforce work outside the district.
- 6.19 For information on specific sectors see previous employment monitoring reports, available on our website at:
<http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/monitoring>
- 6.20 The economic activity rate has remained above the rate for the East of England (See Figure 7). The activity rate is the labour force as a proportion of the population. The rates are significantly higher than those of the UK and higher than Stevenage and the East of England.

Figure 7: Economic Activity rates

Year	North Herts	Stevenage	Hertfordshire	East of England	UK
Apr 2011-Mar 2012	80.7	78.5	80.3	79.5	76.3
Apr 2012-Mar 2013	81.4	83.1	82.2	79.8	76.9
Apr 2013-Mar 2014	81.8	82.4	81.3	80.2	77.2
Apr 2014-Mar 2015	81.9	80.3	81.5	80.0	77.4
Apr 2015-Mar 2016	86.9	80.5	82.8	80.2	77.8
Apr 2016-Mar 2017	87.9	78.3	81.8	80.3	78.0

Source: Nomis local area labour force survey. (March 2016)

- 6.21 The residence-based average earnings are significantly higher than Stevenage, and higher than the county average (See Figure 8). For workplace-based rates Stevenage has slightly higher wage rates than North Herts.
- 6.22 This suggests that Stevenage employers are paying higher wages than those in North Herts, but that many economically active people in North Herts are commuting to high paid jobs outside the district, probably London, hence on a residence basis many are enjoying higher incomes.

Figure 8: Average earnings

Area	Residence based (£)	Workplace based (£)
UK	538.60	538.60
Stevenage	534.50	610.30
East of England	569.50	528.60
Hertfordshire	632.50	570.60

North Herts	671.10	537.80
-------------	--------	--------

Source: ONS. Gross average weekly full time earnings (£) (2016)

- 6.23 There is evidence to suggest that North Hertfordshire has been increasing the number of jobs available in the district. ONS's Annual Business Inquiry suggests 5,000 more jobs were added between 2013 and 2016.

Figure 9: Number of jobs

Year	North Herts jobs	Herts jobs
2016	61,000	690,000
2015	60,000	670,000
2014	60,000	653,000
2013	56,000	624,000

Source: ONS

Environment & Biodiversity

- 6.24 Green Belt accounts for approximately 38% of the district's land area. The area designated as green belt has remained unchanged as this can only be altered through a review of the Local Plan.

Figure 10: Green belt

1997	2017
14,248	14,248

Source: NHDC. Area in hectares.

- 6.25 Part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is within North Hertfordshire. The Chilterns AONB covers 833km², of which 23km² is in north-west North Hertfordshire.
- 6.26 Other data on land use and habitats has not been updated in the last twelve months and previous AMRs should be referred to for further information.

Housing and Built Environment

- 6.27 The 2011 Census remains the most comprehensive source of data on home ownership and housing tenure. This information has been reported in previous AMRs.
- 6.28 An issue of concern in the district is housing affordability. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) maintain data on house price to income ratios, shown in Figure 12 below.
- 6.29 In 2013, house prices were more than eight times incomes at both the lower quartile (i.e. entry level) and median

levels. Affordability ratios have continued to rise. It is particularly concerning that entry-level affordability appears to be deteriorating at a faster rate than median values.

- 6.30 Nationally, both lower quartile and median house prices are around seven times the respective incomes. This confirms that housing in North Hertfordshire is less affordable than the national average.

Figure 11: Average value of property sales, April 2015

Year	Lower quartile income / price ratio	Median income / price ratio
2013	8.57	8.29
2014	9.74	8.71
2015	10.32	9.41

Source: CLG Live Tables 576 and 577

- 6.31 Data below on heritage assets was updated this year for the first time since 2014. This update was completed in collaboration with North Hertfordshire District Council's Conservation Officer.

Figure 12: Listed buildings

Grade	Number
Grade I	26
Grade II*	104
Grade II	1,621

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council 2016

Figure 13: Historical assets

Type	Number
Buildings of local Interest	94
Conservation Areas	44
Listed Buildings	1751
Parks or Garden	13
Scheduled Monument	61
Total	1963

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council 2016

Transport and Movement

- 6.32 The 2011 Census remains the most comprehensive source of data on commuting patterns. This has been reported in previous AMRs which should be referred to for additional information.

7. HOUSING

7.1 This section reports on the following main aspects of housing development:

- Completions of dwellings;
- Gypsy and Traveller accommodation;
- Affordable housing completions;
- Size and type of new dwellings;
- Density of new residential development;
- Distribution of new housing;
- Starts and dwellings under construction; and
- Planning permissions and five year land supply.

Completions of dwellings

Figure 14: Housing completions since 2011

	2011- 2012	2012- 2013	2013- 2014	2014- 2015	2015- 2016	2016- 2017
Net dwellings	384	291	259	180	341	539
Cumulative since 2011	384	675	934	1,114	1,455	1,994

Source: NHDC monitoring

7.2 There was a net increase of 539 dwellings during the year. A total of 1,994 dwellings have been built since the start of the proposed new plan period in 2011. This is the highest number of completions since the beginning of the plan making period. This number was higher than the projected trajectory Proposed Submission Local Plan due to faster than expected completions on a small number of large sites within the district.

7.3 The proportion of gross housing completions on previously developed land (PDL) in 2016/17 was 57%. Larger greenfield sites located adjacent to Yeats Close and at Ivy Farm in Royston contributed to the highest proportion of greenfield completions since the start of the proposed new plan period in 2011. The decrease of development on PDL can be contributed to less PDL available for development and the Council's failure to demonstrate a five year land supply for development management purposes.

Figure 15: Development on previously developed land

	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016-2017
Gross completions on PDL	98.8%	86.3%	79.5%	84.4%	64.4%	56.7%

Gypsy and Traveller accommodation

- 7.4 There is only one Gypsy and Traveller site in the district. This is a privately owned site located at Pulmer Water / Wexford Park, St Albans Road, Codicote. The site currently has permission for 12 pitches. There are no sites for Travelling Showpeople in the district, nor are we aware of any having existed historically.
- 7.5 Paragraph 10 of the CLG Planning Policy for Travellers Sites (August 2015) identifies that LPAs should identify and update annually, as supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years worth sites against locally set targets.
- 7.6 As with housing land supply (discussed below), there is presently no formally adopted target. The Proposed Submission Local Plan identifies a requirement for 7 additional pitches up to 2031.
- 7.7 The 5 year temporary permission at Pulmer Water, granted on appeal, for an additional 6 pitches would appear to meet the requirements up to 2028. However the temporary permission will expire well before this point. The temporary permission was granted on appeal in 2012.

Affordable housing

- 7.8 Turning now to affordable housing, during the monitoring year, 118 affordable homes were completed. These were at the following sites:

Figure 16: Affordable housing completions

Site	Dwellings
Land adjacent to Walkdens, Ashwell Street, Ashwell	4
61 Station Road, Ashwell	2
Land rear of 117-151 High Street, Halls Green, Kimpton	8
Land on north west side, Blackhorse Road, Letchworth Garden City	55
Land east of Luton Road, Offley	6
Land at Ivy Farm, Baldock Road, Royston	20
Land south of A505, adjacent to Yeats Close, Royston	23

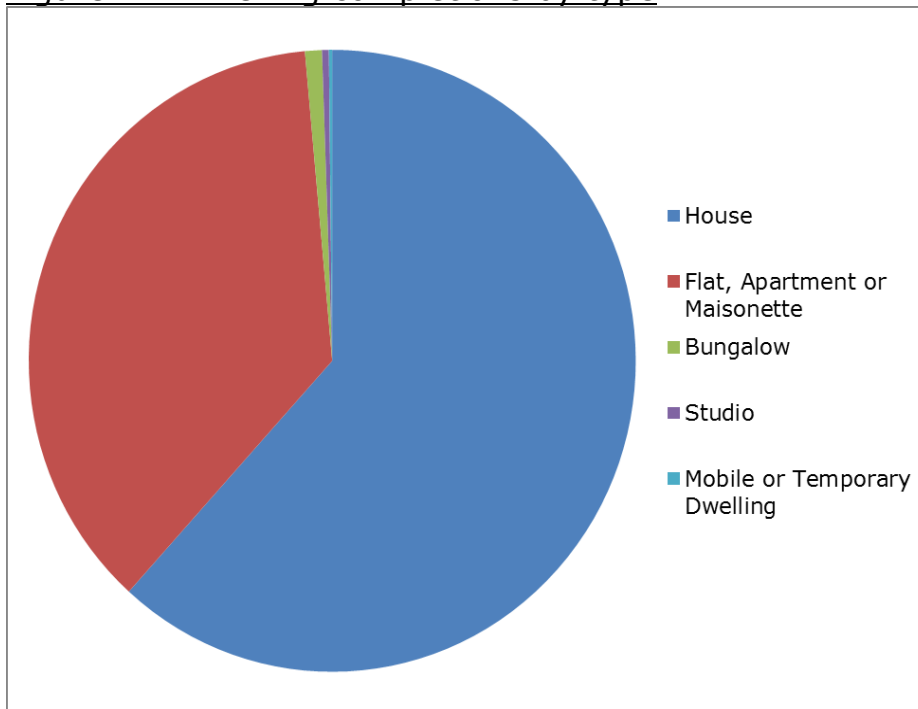
Year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Affordable completions	59	-4	52	118
% of net completions	23%	-2%	15%	22%

Source: NHDC monitoring

- 7.9 This represented around 22% of the net housing completions in the District. However, affordable housing completions will fluctuate from year to year depending on where new housing sites are in the development cycle.

Size and type of new dwellings

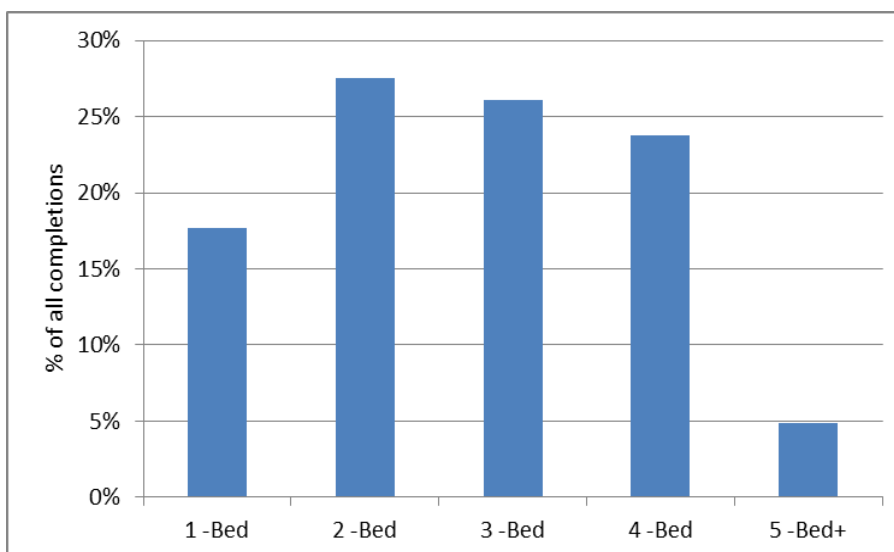
Figure 17: Dwelling completions by type



Source: NHDC monitoring

- 7.10 As Figure 17 above shows, there was a relatively even spread of dwelling completions by type. The majority of dwellings that have been built in 2016-17 took the form of housing (62%) with flats/apartments/maisonettes being the secondary dwelling type (37%). There were 5 bungalows, 2 studios and a single mobile/temporary dwelling completed in 2016-17

Figure 18: Dwelling completions by number of bedrooms



Source: NHDC monitoring

- 7.11 As Figure 18 above demonstrates, the largest proportion of housing completions in 2016/17 were two bed (~28%). This value of two bedroom completions is consistent with previous years; 28% in 2015/16 and 30% in 2014/15.

Distribution of new housing

- 7.12 The completions were distributed as shown in Figure 19 below. It can be seen that most net completions were in Royston.

Figure 19: Net completions by parish

Parish	Total	Parish	Total
Ashwell	18	Langley	-1
Baldock	11	Letchworth	110
Barkway	11	Lilley	0
Barley	-1	Offley	34
Codicote	22	Offley (Cockernhoe)	1
Graveley	2	Preston	1
Hexton	1	Royston	192
Hitchin	36	St Ippolyts	13
Holwell	3	Therfield	2
Ickleford	3	Weston	2
Kimpton	31	Wymondley	2
Knebworth	46		
		Total	539

Source: NHDC monitoring

- 7.13 Since 2012-13, 77% of all new housing completions in North Hertfordshire have taken place in or adjoining the District's four main towns of Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston.

Starts and dwellings under construction

- 7.14 There were 215 dwellings started during the year, compared with 494 dwellings the previous year. This represents a decrease of 56% and is the second lowest recorded since the start of the proposed plan period in 2011.

Figure 20: Dwelling starts

Year	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15	2015/ 16	2016/ 17
Starts	300	276	202	290	494	215

Source: NHDC monitoring (Starts are calculated as: under construction at year end - under construction at start of the year + completions during the year.).

Planning permissions and five year land supply

Per the Proposed Submission Local Plan:

- 7.15 The Proposed Submission Local Plan establishes a phased target of 500 homes/year for the period of 2011-2021; and 1,100 homes/year for the period of 2021-2031.
- 7.16 In calculating five-year land supply, national policy requires an additional buffer of 5% to be added to requirements with this buffer increasing to 20% where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing.
- 7.17 The evidence supporting the Plan accepts that North Hertfordshire District Council has persistently under delivered against the 500 homes/year target since 2011 and a 20% buffer is applied.
- 7.18 The projected rates of delivery in a revised housing trajectory have been tested against a range of potential buffers, targets and methods for calculating a five-year supply. From this exercise it has been concluded that the phased target and *Liverpool* approach and the associated justification laid out in the Plan remains the most appropriate approach.
- 7.19 Completions in 2016-17 were above the 500 home target. Even with this being the case, a precautionary approach has been taken and the five-year supply has been calculated on the assumption that a 20% buffer is most appropriate to North Hertfordshire when housing delivery since 2011 is considered.
- 7.20 There is a total five-year housing requirement of 4,151 homes for the period 2017-2022. There is a total projected delivery of 4,412 new homes in the same period. The evidence supporting the new Local Plan therefore identifies a housing land supply of 5.3 years. The detailed calculations are shown in Figure 21 on the following page.
- 7.21 However, whilst this is in the emerging Plan, a precautionary approach has been taken when assessing planning applications.
- 7.22 The housing targets in the adopted Plan are time expired. Equally the emerging Plan has yet to be Examined which limits the weight that can be attributed to its proposed approaches to housing supply and development allocations

(and any supply anticipated from them within the five-year period) under paragraph 216 of the NPPF.

- 7.23 In this context, the Council accepts that for decision making purposes it cannot presently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. It is anticipated that this position will be remedied with the publication of any Main Modifications by the Local Plan Inspector.
- 7.24 Where a LPA does not have a recognisable 5 year housing land supply the NPPF is clear that the Local Plan, in respect of the provision of houses, is out of date.

Figure 21: Five-year land supply at 1 April 2017 (Emerging Plan)

A	Housing target 2011-2031	15,950
B	Completions 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2017	1,994
C	Target 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2017	3,000
D	Shortfall against target at 1 April 2017 (B-C)	-1,006
E	Target 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2022	3,100
F	Shortfall to be addressed in five-year period (Liverpool Method)(-D*[5/14])	359
G	Buffer to be applied	+20%
H	Total five-year requirement ((E+F)*G)	4,151
I	Projected Delivery 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2022	4,412
J	Years land supply ([I/H]*5)	5.3

Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Register

- 7.25 The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 places a duty on local authorities in England to keep and have regard to a register of people who are interested in acquiring serviced plots for self build or custom build projects in their area.
- 7.26 This register will help inform the Council of the level of demand for self-build and custom build plots in North Hertfordshire.

- 7.27 Self-build projects are defined as those where someone directly organises the design and construction of their own home. This could include traditional DIY self-build home to projects where the self-builder employs someone to build their home for them. Community-led projects can also be defined as self-build.
- 7.28 Custom build homes are those where individuals or a group work with a developer to help deliver their own home. The developer may help to find a plot, manage the construction and arrange the finance. This is more of a hands-off approach but the home will be tailored to match the occupier's requirements.
- 7.29 At 31 March 2017 there were 66 entries on the Council's Self-Build register.

8. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- 8.1 The following data on business development completions includes newly built floorspace as well as changes of use from other uses to employment. For planning purposes, most uses of land are identified within a 'use class'. They go from A-D and are set out in the Use Classes Order. The employment use classes are as follows:
- B1 – Business (including B1a: offices, B1b: Research & Development, and B1c: light industrial);
 - B2 – General Industrial; and
 - B8 – Storage or Distribution.
- 8.2 Some planning permissions are granted for a mixed B use, e.g. B1/B2, with no indication of how much floorspace will be for the different uses. In these cases, the floorspace has been estimated by dividing it equally between the use classes.
- 8.3 Gains and losses of B1, B1a, B1b, B1c, B2 and B8 floorspace are shown in Figure 22. The floorspace figures are taken from planning application forms, and are gross external floorspace. We have used a ratio to estimate the gross internal floorspace as this is not collected.
- 8.4 Also included are the jobs lost / created based on employment densities from the Employment Densities Guide (2010) published by the government . Figures this year are negative, with a net completion of -7,212m². Using standard ratios, this floorspace loss results in a theoretical decrease of 474 jobs.

Figure 22: Employment floorspace changes

Use	Gain	% PDL	Loss	% PDL	Net	Jobs
B1	0	0	235	100	-235	-18
B1a	272	100	5,090	100	-4,818	-401
B1b	0	0	0	0	0	0
B1c	228	100	1,300	100	-1,072	-22
B2	0	0	1,311	100	-1,311	-36
B8	789	100	565	100	224	3
Total	1,289	-	8,501	-	-7,212	-474

Source: NHDC monitoring. Completions of employment floorspace 2016-2017 in m² and proportion on previously developed land (PDL).

- 8.5 We do not currently have all information on the sub-types of B1 use. Therefore only some of the data under Business Development is broken down into B1a, b, & c. The Council

started recording B1a, b & c in April 2007, and we have also begun to monitor the specific type of B1 uses which have been completed. We do this by analysing planning applications, monitoring, and surveying companies where necessary. This will continue in future AMRs until all B1 uses are split between B1a, b & c.

- 8.6 Employment land supply means outstanding capacity of employment land. This includes planning permissions not yet implemented, developments under construction but not completed. See Figure 23 for available employment land.

Figure 23: Employment land availability

	Gain	Loss	Net	Jobs
B1 –Permissions	1,532	85	2,672	222
B1a –Permissions	4,542	5,928	-7,457	-621
B1b –Permissions	136	0	136	11
B1c –Permissions	3,557	1,618	-1,019	-21
B2 –Permissions	3,742	3,459	-2,051	-56
B8 –Permissions	12,312	128	7,833	111
Total –Permissions	25,821	11,218	14,603	-591

Source: NHDC monitoring. Extant permissions at 31 Mar 2017 in m².

Floorspace completed within employment areas

Figure 24: Employment completions in employment areas

	Gain	Loss	Net	Jobs
Use Class B1		235	-235	-19
Use Class B1a	109	1,020	-911	-75
Use Class B1b		0	0	0
Use Class B1c	228	0	228	4
Use Class B2		0	0	0
Use Class B8		465	-465	-5
Total	337	1,720	-1,383	-95

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council. Floorspace in m², 2016/17

- 8.7 The Proposed Submission Local Plan for North Hertfordshire identifies employment areas in Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Baldock and Royston. Figure 24 shows gains and losses of floorspace in these areas. During the monitoring year a net total of 1,383m² of floorspace has been lost in the District's employment areas equivalent to 95 lost jobs.
- 8.8 This net completion figure is higher than the District-wide figure identified in Figure 22 demonstrating that there was a net loss of employment floorspace outside of

employment areas.

Loss of employment land to other uses

- 8.9 Figure 25 shows that 11,670m² of employment floorspace was lost to other employment uses and non-employment uses, including residential. Of the floorspace lost to non-employment uses, 26% (3014m²) was lost to housing. This can largely be explained by the Government's recent relaxation of permitted development rights. Of all floorspace lost 40% was lost to other non-employment uses and 29% to other employment uses.

Figure 25: Loss of employment floorspace

	B1	B1a	B1b	B1c	B2	B8	Total
Residential	0	4,142	0	1,300	1,119	100	6,661
% in emp. areas		1.7	0	0	0	0	0
Sui Generis	0	0	0	0	192	231	423
% in emp. areas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other non employment uses	235	948	0	0	0	234	1,417
% in emp. areas	100	18.6	0	0	0	41.4	0
Other emp. uses	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,388
% in emp. areas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total floorspace	235	5,090	0	1,300	1,311	565	8,501
Total % in emp. areas	100	20.3	0	0	0	41.4	

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council. Employment floorspace lost to different uses in m², 2016/17.

9. LOCAL SERVICES (RETAIL, OFFICE AND LEISURE DEVELOPMENT)

- 9.1 The following data on retail, office and leisure development includes newly built floorspace as well as changes of use. The floorspace figures are taken from planning application forms and are gross external floorspace.
- 9.2 Figure 26 shows the gains and losses of A1-5, D1, D2 and B1a floorspace. Clearly there has been an increase in most town centre uses, apart from drinking establishments (A1) and Offices (A2 and B1a). These uses have seen declines nationally, with regard to offices this is largely attributed to relaxation of permitted development rights.

Figure 26: Retail and leisure completions

Use Class	Gain	Loss	Net
A1 – Shops	111	1,621	-1,510
A2 – Financial and professional services	0	392	-392
A3 – Restaurants and cafes	419	815	-396
A4 – Drinking Establishments	238	120	118
A5 – Takeaways	0	114	-114
D1 – Non-residential institution	8,052	2,232	5,820
D2 – Assembly and leisure	1,394	941	453
B1a – Office	272	5,090	-4,818
Total	10,486	11,325	-839
Total (minus offices)	10,214	6,235	3,979

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council. Completions of A1, A2, B1a & D2 use class floorspace 2016-2017 in m².

Supply of A & D use classes

- 9.3 Figure 27 shows the completions of A and D uses within town centres. Shops (A1), Drinking Establishments (A4) and Non-residential institutions (D1) show a decrease, however the other uses show increases in floorspace illustrating a net gain in floorspace across the town centres.
- 9.4 The 5,820m² gain in D1 floorspace is mainly due to the redevelopment of the Highfield School site in Letchworth, while the significant loss of B1a floorspace is due to the conversion to residential properties at The Maltings, Royston, Factory 649, Letchworth and Kingsfield, Baldock.

- 9.5 The outstanding capacity in these use classes, based on unimplemented planning permissions or developments under construction, is shown in Figure 28.

Figure 27: Retail and leisure completions in town centres

Use Class	Gain	Loss	Net
A1 - Shops	95	1,307	-1,212
A2 – Financial and professional services	0	315	-315
*A3 – Food and Drink	419	413	6
A4 – Drinking Establishments	138	0	138
A5 - Takeaways	0	0	0
D1 – Non-residential institution	176	0	176
D2 – Assembly and leisure	688	210	478
Total	1,516	2,245	-729

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council. Net floorspace in m² completed A1-A5 & D use classes in town centres, 2016/17.

Figure 28: Retail and leisure permissions

Use Class	Gain	Loss	Net
A1 – Shops	4,382	1,157	3,225
A2 – Financial and professional	1,583	0	1,583
A3 – Food and Drink	1,394	289	1,105
A4 – Drinking Establishments	796	925	-129
A5 – Takeaways	157	86	71
D1 – Non-residential institution	18,722	6,536	12,186
D2 – Assembly and leisure	7,542	242	7,300
Total	34,576	9,235	25,341

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council: Outstanding capacity of permissions for floorspace in Use Classes A and D in m² as at 31 Mar 2017.

Floorspace in town centres

- 9.6 The basis of the information contained in the table below is a survey of town centre units in the four main centres: Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Baldock and Royston. The most recent monitoring took place in April 2017.
- 9.7 It is important to state that the increase in vacant town centre floorspace juxtaposed to the decrease in town centre vacancy rate can be attributed to the size of the units that are vacant.

Figure 29: Floorspace in town centres

	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2014/13
Use	%	%	%	%
A1	45.3	47.1	44.8	45.0
A2	9.9	6.5	6.9	6.8
A3	8.9	5.9	5.3	5.0
A4	3.8	6.0	6.0	5.2
A5	3.5	1.2	1.2	1.2
B1	5.0	7.7	7.7	8.2
B2	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5
B8	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
C1	0.3	1.6	1.1	1.6
C3	3.8	3.8	3.1	2.4
D1	5.4	7.0	6.4	6.6
D2	2.0	2.3	2.3	2.5
SG	0.9	1.5	1.3	1.6
Vacant	9.5	8.9	12.2	12.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100

Source: NHDC monitoring 2016-17. Gross floorspace, combined total for the four town centres of Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and Royston.

Vacancy Rates

- 9.8 Figure 30 below illustrates the vacancy rates in the four towns at April 2017. It is clear that the unit vacancy rate in Letchworth and Royston is much higher than Baldock and Hitchin. In all four town centre areas the vacancy rate is falling.

Figure 30: Vacancy rates by town

	Hitchin	Letchworth	Baldock	Royston
Vacant Units	32	43	8	21
Vacancy rate % / unit	6.9%	15.5%	5.8%	10.0%
Average unit size (m ²)	200	200	300	150
% change from previous year	-0.2%	-1.3%	-0.7%	-3.8%

Source: Town Centre AMR 2016/17 Town Centre / Other environmental changes

10. ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

Flood Protection and Water Quality

- 10.1 No applications have been granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency (EA) on either flood defence or water quality grounds during the year.

Figure 31: Applications granted contrary to EA

Flood Defence	Water Quality
0	0

Source: Environment Agency

Biodiversity

- 10.2 There are six Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the District, which cover approximately 300 ha of land, the vast majority of which is in just two sites: Therfield Heath and Knebworth Woods.
- 10.3 Figure 34 (on following page) shows the condition of the SSSIs in the District at the time of their last published survey. Natural England is responsible for periodically updating the data.

Figure 32: Wildlife sites

Year	Number of sites	Area (hectares)
2011	325	1,789
2012	317	1,780
2013	318	1,775
2014	318	1,772

Source: Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre / Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre

- 10.4 Local Wildlife Sites are identified by the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre, run by the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.
- 10.5 They do not have legal protection like Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Nature Reserves but they complement these protected sites and provide vital linkages between habitats. Their long-term survival depends upon the interest and goodwill of their land managers and owners.
- 10.6 There was no change in the number of wildlife sites in the latest available ratification report (published February 2015). The fall in the number of sites in earlier periods followed a resurvey of a number of sites which showed they no longer met the relevant selection criteria.

Figure 33: Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Site	Main habitat	Hectares	Condition	Last assessed
Ashwell Springs	Rivers and streams	0.23	Favourable	Dec 2011
Blagrove Common, Sandon (part)	Neutral grassland - lowland	3.97	Favourable	Nov 2010
Blagrove Common, Sandon (part)	Neutral grassland - lowland	1.03	Unfavourable - no change	Nov 2010
Knebworth Woods (part)	Neutral grassland - lowland	5.98	Unfavourable recovering	Jul 2009
Knebworth Woods (part)	Acid grassland - lowland	2.39	Favourable	Jul 2009
Knebworth Woods (part)	Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland - lowland	66.92	Unfavourable - recovering	Sep 2009
Knebworth Woods (part)	Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland - lowland	18.56	Unfavourable - recovering	Nov 2010
Knebworth Woods (part)	Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland - lowland	34.99	Unfavourable - recovering	Nov 2010
Oughtonhead Lane, Hitchin	Earth heritage	0.98	Favourable	Mar 2013
Therfield Heath (part)	Calcareous grassland - lowland	26.40	Unfavourable - recovering	Jul 2012
Therfield Heath (part)	Calcareous grassland - lowland	33.88	Unfavourable - recovering	Jul 2012
Therfield Heath (part)	Calcareous grassland - lowland	26.14	Unfavourable - recovering	Jul 2012
Therfield Heath (part)	Calcareous grassland - lowland	56.55	Unfavourable - recovering	Jul 2012
Therfield Heath (part)	Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland - lowland	2.26	Favourable	Jul 2012

Site	Main habitat	Hectares	Condition	Last assessed
Therfield Heath (part)	Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland – lowland	1.29	Unfavourable - recovering	Jul 2012
Wain Wood, Preston	Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland – lowland	19.03	Unfavourable - Recovering	May 2009
Total		300.60		

Source: Natural England

Open space

- 10.7 North Hertfordshire has a significant stock of public open space. This includes open space within a number of typologies. Detailed figures have been reported in previous AMRs which should be referred to for more information.
- 10.8 A review of open space data has been carried out to support the proposed submission version of the Local Plan and the findings are commented on here. North Hertfordshire District Council Open Space Review and Standards 2016 is document OSC4 in the Submission Local Plan evidence base.
- 10.9 There are 585 open spaces identified in the District providing different types of open space and covering an area of approximately 2,343.18 hectares (ha). This equates to 6% of the entire District.
- 10.10 This 2016 review of open spaces has identified that there has been a net increase of 58.32 hectares of open spaces since the 2009 assessment. Thirty six new open spaces (covering 88.92ha) have been identified from a number of sources including recent planning applications, S106 reports and the 2012 parish survey.
- 10.11 A substantial proportion of the District's open spaces are classified as Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace (1195.61 ha). In contrast, Provision for Children and Young People represents the lowest provision (12.80ha). Amenity Greenspace accounts for the largest number of open space sites (201), although their often small scale is reflected by their more limited contribution to overall provision.

Appendix 1: Glossary

Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)

A report describing the characteristics of the authority's area and assessing the implementation and effectiveness of planning policies. Since 2011 technically referred to in legislation as the "Authority's Monitoring Report".

Biodiversity

The whole variety of life encompassing all genetics, species and ecosystem variations, including plant and animals.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

A method of securing financial contributions from developers to pay for infrastructure costs.

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

Government department with responsibility for planning.

Geographic Information System (GIS)

Computerised mapping system.

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

The Government publishes an Index of Multiple Deprivation combining into an overall measure of deprivation individual indices for the following domains:

- income deprivation;
- employment deprivation;
- health deprivation and disability;
- education, skills and training deprivation;
- barriers to housing and services;
- crime; and
- living environment deprivation.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

The term by which Local Plans were known between 2004 and 2012.

Local Development Scheme (LDS)

A document setting out a programme for the preparation of the different documents that makes up the Local Plan. It is reviewed periodically when timetables change.

Local Plan

The document (or documents) which set out the overall strategy for a district, allocate land for development and set the policies against which planning applications are assessed.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ)

They are work-related, competence based qualifications and represent national standards recognised by employers throughout the country.

Previously Developed Land (PDL)

Previously developed land is that which is or was occupied by a permanent structure (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings) – see the National Planning Policy Framework for full definition.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

An assessment of the social, economic and environmental impacts of the policies and proposals contained within the Local Development Framework. This appraisal is a requirement of the new planning system and normally done in conjunction with a SEA (see below).

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

A document that sets out how the Council will engage with the community in preparing and reviewing the Local Plan and major planning applications. In effect it is the Council's planning policy on consultation. A statement demonstrating how the local planning authority has complied with the Statement of Community Involvement will be required for all local development documents that the Council produces.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The European 'SEA Directive' (2001/42/EC) requires a formal 'environmental assessment' of certain plans and programmes, including those involving planning and land use. The assessment will examine the potential impacts of policies and proposals on the environment, and includes proposals for the mitigation of these impacts.

Super Output Areas (SOA)

Areas first designated in the 2001 Census, having relatively uniform numbers of residents (around 1,500). There are 32,482 SOAs in England as opposed to 8,414 local authority wards.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

These documents provide additional guidance on certain aspects of policies contained in the Development Plan. They are prepared subject to regulations, but do not form part of the Development Plan.

Sui Generis

A land use that does not fall within the classes specified in the

Use Classes Order. Sui generis uses include nightclubs, motor car showrooms' retail warehouse clubs, taxi or vehicle hire businesses, laundrettes, amusement centres and petrol stations.

Use Class / Use Classes Order

Most land uses are assigned to use classes, which are defined in the Use Classes Order. Broadly, there are four groupings:

- A: retail
- B: employment and industry
- C: domestic
- D: assembly and leisure.

These are then further broken down into the individual classes – houses are C3, shops are A1, warehouses are B8 and so on.