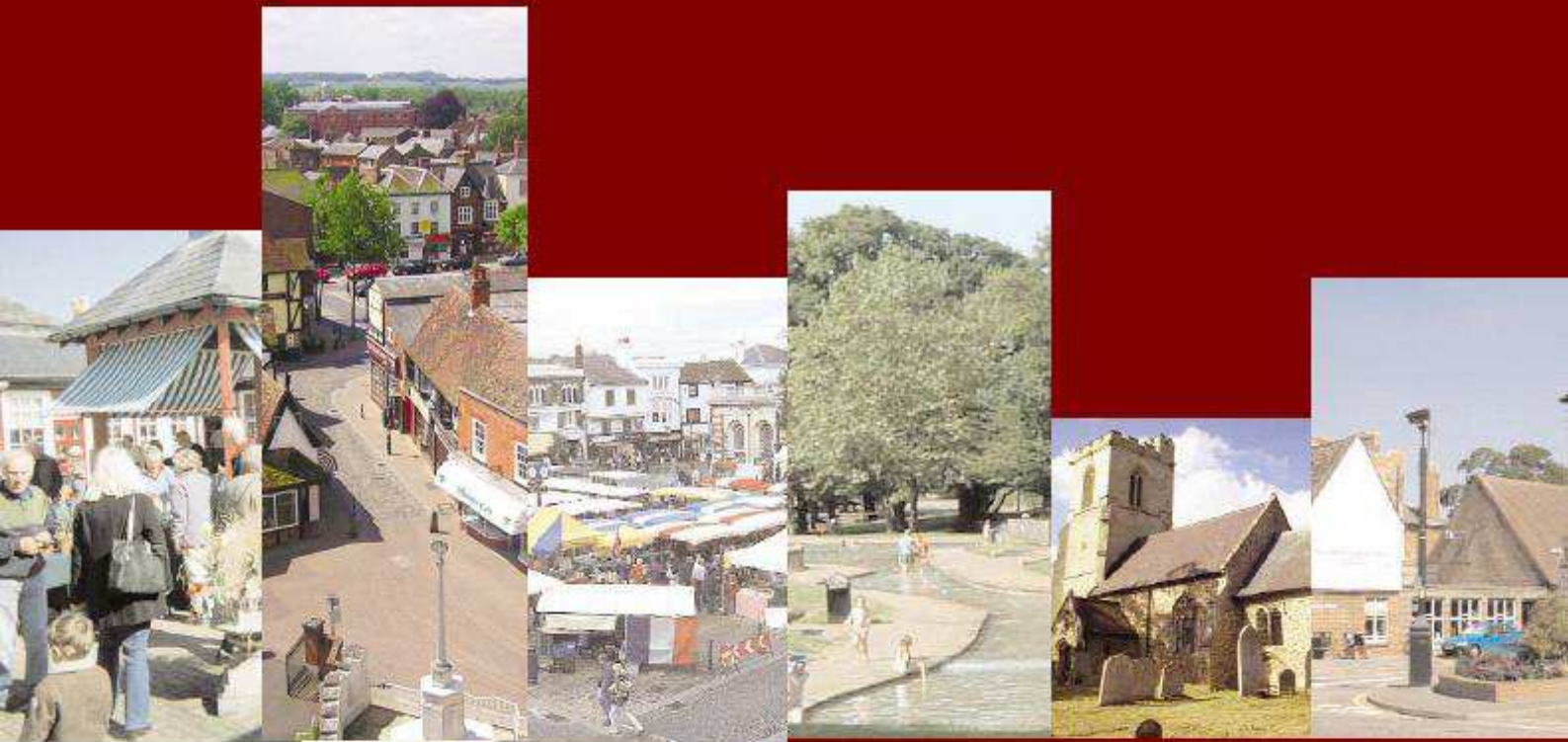


Strategic Planning and Enterprise



www.north-herts.gov.uk

Annual Monitoring Report

2015 – 2016

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

December 2016

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

This Annual Monitoring Report covers the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. This predates decisions taken by the Council in July 2016 and September 2016 relating to the local plan and the consultation upon the Proposed Submission plan held in October and November 2016.

It also predates certain matters, decisions and / or information relating to the plans of surrounding authorities (such as the examination of Luton's 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.

The Proposed Submission Local Plan and associated evidence base can be viewed on the Council's website at www.north-herts.gov.uk/localplan.

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0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

0.1 This is the twelfth 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 2015 to 31 March 2016. All references to 'current position' are therefore as at 31 March 2016 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 2015/16, work on the Local Plan progressed towards the 'publication' stage. In January 2016, the Council approved a new Local Development Scheme (LDS) which sets out the detailed timetable for production of the plan.

0.4 This explains that the Council are planning to carry out 'publication' consultation on the new Local Plan by the autumn of 2016 and that are working towards submission of the Local Plan for March 2017.

Current policies

0.5 The existing policies from the development plan 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.

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 St Pauls Walden and Wymondley. These designations brought the total number of neighbourhood planning area designations to nine by March 2016.

- 0.7 Further consultations were anticipated to take place during the 2016/17 and these will be reported in the next monitoring report.

Duty to co-operate

- 0.8 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 2015/16, especially in relation to the production of a shared and / or common evidence base with surrounding authorities.
- 0.9 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

- 0.10 Some key points reported include:
- There was a net increase of 18,913m² of employment floorspace;
 - A net total of 341 new dwellings were completed;
 - 64% of the gross housing completions were on previously developed land;
 - There was a net gain of 8,646m² 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 In particular, 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 2015 to 31 March 2016, 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 2016 was approved and adopted by the Council in January 2016. This sets out the detailed timetable for production of the plan.
- 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 Following completion of the Preferred Options consultation in February 2015, and the subsequent identification of key issues raised through the consultation process, significant additional work has been undertaken and / or initiated. This will ensure that the Council can progress a new plan that satisfactorily addresses these various matters.
- 2.4 Work on the Local Plan progressed during the monitoring year, bringing it closer to the 'publication' stage which the Council hopes to consult on in the autumn 2016. This marks the point at which the Council should issue a draft plan that it considers ready for examination.
- 2.5 A further update will be provided in the next AMR.

Statement of Community Involvement

- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 A revised SCI reflecting these matters was adopted in September 2015.

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 2015/16, the Council granted planning permission for housing on some sites identified in the 'Preferred Options' version of the local plan 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 during 2016/17.</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.

- 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 2016/17.

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, two more neighbourhood planning areas were designated for St Pauls Walden and Wymondley (July 2015).
- 4.2 At the end of the monitoring year in March 2016, no neighbourhood plans had reached the pre-submission consultation stage.

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 2015/16, 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 2015/16, substantial progress was made. Some of the key outcomes have included:
- Completion of a **joint Housing Market Area (HMA) study with six other authorities** to reach a shared understanding of HMA geographies. The NPPF requires that plans meet housing requirements across HMAs where this is consistent with other policy objectives.
 - Housing Market Areas in Bedfordshire and surrounding areas (Opinion Research Services (ORS))
 - Date: December 2015
 - Partner authorities: Luton Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Stevenage Borough, Bedford Borough, Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale District Councils

- Completion of a **joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)** to provide an updated assessment of objectively assessed housing needs. This included formation of a steering group to ensure wider 'buy-in' to the results and consistency with the studies of surrounding authorities
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update (ORS)
- Date: July 2015
- Partner authority: Stevenage Borough Council

- 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 to March 2016 (ongoing)
- Partner authorities: Central Bedfordshire, Luton Borough and Aylesbury Vale District Councils

- Completion of a **joint Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) study** to define an appropriate economic geography in line with government guidance and to identify the need and supply across the FEMA area.
- Functional Economic Market Area Study (Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners)
- Date: July 2015
- Partner authorities: Stevenage Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils

- Submission of **pro-active representations to the Regulation 19 consultations** of Luton and Stevenage Borough 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: January – March 2016 (ongoing)
- Partner authorities: Stevenage Borough and Luton Borough Councils

- Participation in a completed and agreed **water cycle study review** to ensure infrastructure demands arising from development in and around Stevenage, and other areas of the district, have been properly understood.
- Rye Meads Water Cycle Strategy Review (Stevenage Borough Council)
- Date: September 2015
- Partners: Stevenage Borough Council, Environment Agency, Thames Water.

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). Releases refer to the mid-year population the previous calendar year. Mid-2014 population estimates were released in June 2015.
- 6.8 The population of North Hertfordshire stood at 131,000 in 2014 (See Figure 2). It increased by 1.3% between 2013 and 2014, compared with a 1.2% increase within Hertfordshire.

Figure 2: Population change 2011-2015

Area	2011	2012	2013	2014	2013-14 % increase
Hertfordshire	1,119.0	1,129.1	1,140.7	1,154.8	1.2%
North Hertfordshire	127.5	128.4	129.3	131.0	1.3%

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

Figure 3: Breakdown of North Hertfordshire population by age

Age group	Female	Male	Total
0-4	4,094	4,436	8,530
5-9	4,000	4,123	8,123
10-14	3,657	3,776	7,433
15-19	3,619	3,725	7,344
20-24	2,974	3,103	6,077
25-29	3,749	3,684	7,433
30-34	4,553	4,178	8,731
35-39	4,573	4,451	9,024
40-44	4,992	4,885	9,877
45-49	5,279	5,061	10,340
50-54	4,649	4,816	9,465
55-59	3,925	3,900	7,825
60-64	3,561	3,450	7,011
65-69	3,690	3,472	7,162
70-74	2,739	2,585	5,324
75-79	2,404	2,048	4,452
80-84	1,980	1,518	3,498
85-89	1,310	737	2,047
90+	955	395	1,350
Total	66,703	64,343	131,046

Source: ONS, Population Estimates Analysis Tool, June 2015

- 6.9 The latest data shows that approximately 18% 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. 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

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 2016 was 865, a resident-based rate of 1.1%. This represented a decrease of 143 people over twelve months from the March 2015 figure of 1,008.

- 6.15 At March 2016, the unemployment rates in North Herts (1.1%) was marginally above the figure for the county (0.9%).
- 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	35,600	44.4	42.4
NVQ3 and above	46,600	58.1	60.5
NVQ2 and above	64,100	80.0	78.9
NVQ1 and above	71,300	89.0	88.9
Other qualifications	3,700	4.6	5.1
No qualifications	5,100	6.3	6.0

Source: Nomis – Annual Population Survey (12 months to December 2015)

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	East of England	UK
Oct 10 - Sept 11	81.9	80.3	79.5	76.1
Oct 11 - Sept 12	81.7	80.5	79.6	76.7
Oct 12- Sept 13	84.7	80.7	79.9	77.4
Oct 13 - Sept 14	84.4	80.8	80.2	77.3
Apr 15 - Mar 16	86.9	80.5	80.2	77.8

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	529.6	500.4
Stevenage	543.2	531.5
East of England	551.0	488.7
Hertfordshire	614.1	540.3
North Herts	637.3	520.5

Source: ONS. Gross average weekly full time earnings (£) (2015)

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 4,000 more jobs were added between 2011 and 2014.

Figure 9: Number of jobs

Year	North Herts jobs	Herts jobs
2014	48,800	566,400
2013	46,700	537,300
2012	45,200	521,900
2011	44,800	518,000

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 over the last few years as this can only be altered through a review of the Local Plan.

Figure 10: Green belt

1997	2015
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 2014

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 from the previous AMR on heritage assets has not been updated this year. Last year's figures are presented below. These figures will be updated for the next monitoring report.

Figure 12: Listed buildings

Grade	Number
Grade I	26
Grade II*	108
Grade II	1,675

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council 2014

Figure 13: Historical assets

Type	Number
Buildings of local Interest	96
Conservation Areas	40
Listed Buildings	1745
Parks or Garden	13
Scheduled Monument	61
Total	1955

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council 2013

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 The Council has monitored residential development since 1978 and has built up a wealth of information on the changes in the housing stock since then. 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
Net dwellings	384	291	259	180	341
Cumulative since 2011	384	675	934	1,114	1,455

Source: NHDC monitoring

7.2 There was a net increase of 341 dwellings during the year. A total of 1,455 dwellings have been built since the start of the proposed new plan period in 2011.

7.3 The proportion of gross housing completions on previously developed land (PDL) in 2015/16 was 64%. Larger greenfield sites at the north of Royston and in Offley contributed to the highest proportion of greenfield completions since the start of the proposed new plan period in 2011.

Figure 15: Development on previously developed land

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

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 Pulmore Water, 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 Preferred Options Local Plan (2014) identified the requirement for 7 additional pitches up to 2031.
- 7.7 The 5 year temporary permission at Pulmore 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.
- 7.8 When the new Local Plan reaches proposed submission stage, there will be greater clarity on this issue which will be reflected in future monitoring reports.

Affordable housing

- 7.9 Turning now to affordable housing, during the monitoring year, 52 affordable homes were completed. These were at the following sites:

Figure 16: Affordable housing completions

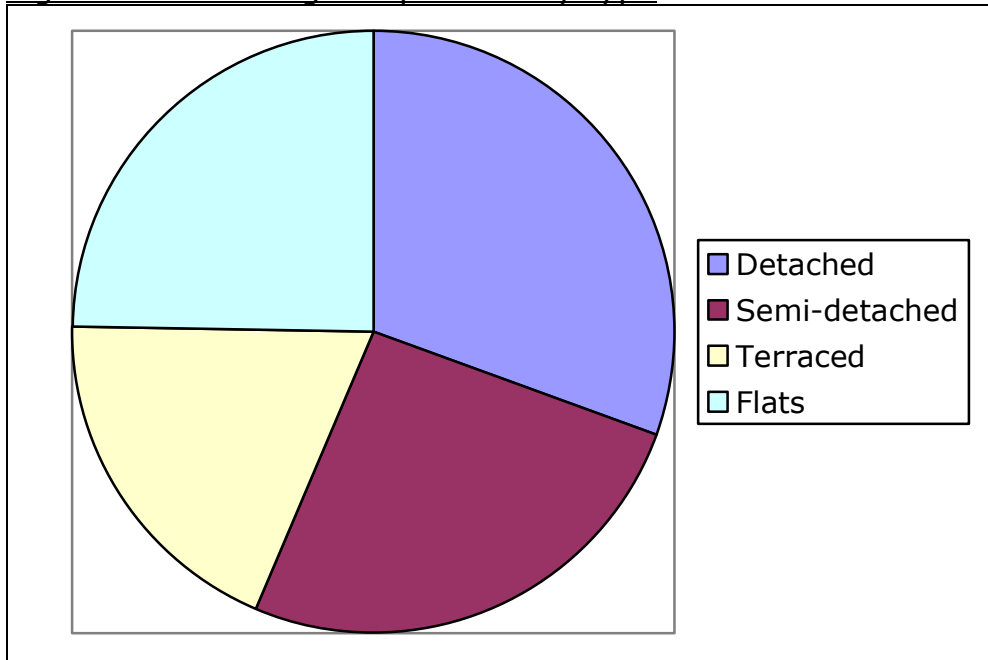
Site	Dwellings
61 Station Road, Ashwell	5
Land East of Luton Road, Offley	2
Land adjacent to Walkdens, Ashwell	11
Land East of Luton Road, Offley	16
Probyn House, Kimpton	3
Former Factory Site, Letchworth	8
Ling Dynamic Systems Ltd	7

Source: NHDC monitoring

- 7.10 This represented around 15% 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

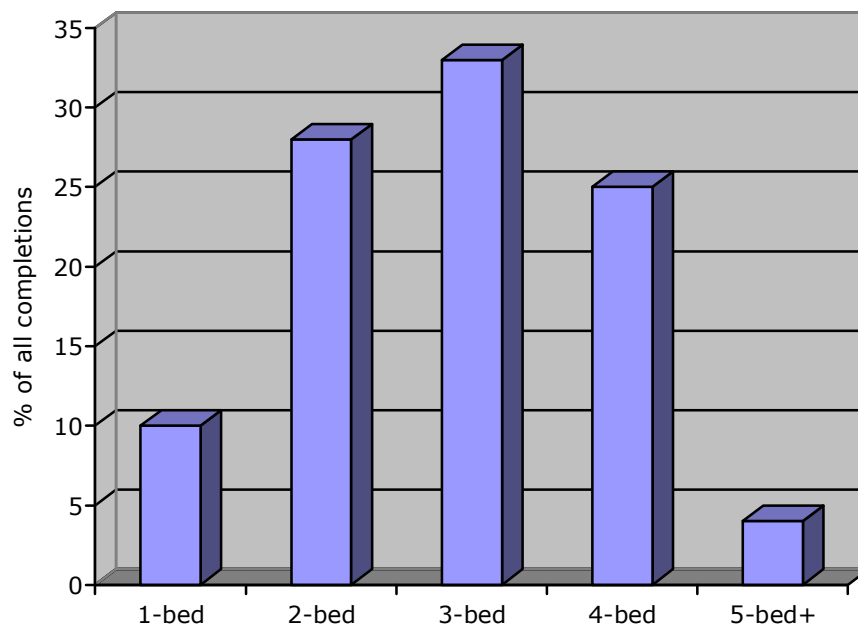
Figure 17: Dwelling completions by type



Source: NHDC monitoring

7.11 As Figure 17 above shows, there was a relatively even spread of dwelling completions by type. Detached properties accounted for around 30% of the total. Semi-detached and flats each represented around one quarter of the new homes built. The balance, just under 20%, were terraced houses.

Figure 18: Dwelling completions by number of bedrooms



Source: NHDC monitoring

7.12 As Figure 18 above demonstrates, the largest proportion of housing completions in 2015/16 were three bed (33%).

Distribution of new housing

7.13 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	28	Knebworth	6
Baldock	21	Letchworth	45
Barkway	4	Offley	29
Barley	1	Pirton	1
Codicote	12	Royston	128
Hitchin	46	Rushden	2
Ickleford	4	Sandon	2
Kelshall	-1	Therfield	3
Kimpton	11	Weston	-2
		Wymondley	1
		Total	341

Source: NHDC monitoring

7.14 Since 2011, 86% 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

7.15 There were 494 dwellings started during the year, compared with 290 dwellings the previous year. This represents an increase of 70% and is the highest figure 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
Starts	300	276	202	290	494

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

7.16 On 31 Mar 2015 there were 443 dwellings under construction, compared with 312 a year earlier (+42%). A further 589 homes have extant planning permission.

Planning permissions and five year land supply

- 7.17 At 31 March 2016 there was no formally adopted housing target for the district. During the monitoring year the Council has continued to work towards the Proposed Submission Local Plan.
- 7.18 During the monitoring year, the Council completed an update to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), jointly with Stevenage Borough Council (see Section 5). This identifies an Objectively Assessed Need for the District of 14,400 homes over the period 2011-2031.
- 7.19 Planning Practice Guidance recognises that untested SHMA figures should not necessarily be assumed as representing the housing target for the area.
- 7.20 The Council's position in relation to five-year land supply will be set out in the evidence base accompanying the local plan and kept up to date as the plan progresses. At this point, there will be greater certainty as to which sites the Council intends to promote for future development.
- 7.21 For the purposes of this AMR, it is recognised that at 31 March 2016, the Council could not demonstrate a five-year land supply.

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 21. 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 Land Review (2013). Figures this year are positive with a net completion of 18,913m². Using standard ratios, this floorspace provides a theoretical additional 399 jobs.

Figure 21: Employment floorspace changes

Use	Gain	% PDL	Loss	% PDL	Net	Jobs
B1	2,808	100	463	100	2,345	135
B1a	617	100	5,024	100	-4,407	-253
B1b	2,221	100	266	100	1,955	112
B1c	1,844	100	2,676	100	-832	-20
B2	15,876	100	951	100	14,925	360
B8	7,217	100	2,290	100	4,927	66
Total	30,583		11,670		18,913	399

Source: NHDC monitoring. Completions of employment floorspace 2015-2016 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 22 for available employment land.

Figure 22: Employment land availability

	Gain	Loss	Net	Jobs
B1 –Permissions	2,825	153	2,672	154
B1a –Permissions	2,464	9,921	-7,457	-429
B1b –Permissions	136	0	136	8
B1c –Permissions	2,997	4,016	-1,019	-25
B2 –Permissions	2,332	4,383	-2,051	-49
B8 –Permissions	10,822	2,098	7,833	104
Total –Permissions	21,576	20,571	114	-237
Estimated Sites	6,710		6,710	150
Overall total	28,286	20,571	6,824	-87

Source: NHDC monitoring. Extant permissions at 31 Mar 2016 in m².

- 8.7 Until 2008, the area of sites which made up the outstanding capacity was not something the Council monitored. This information is contained in planning application forms. In previous reports the Council used a standard plot ratio assumption to convert floorspace figures to land area. The plot ratio used was 50% and was taken from Hertfordshire County Council Structure Plan - Technical Report No. 1 Employment Space Needs in Hertfordshire 2001-2016. This assumption is based on a single building on its own site, e.g. a building which is 1,000m² should on average require 0.2 hectares (2,000m²) of land.

Floorspace completed within employment areas

Figure 23: Employment completions in employment areas

	Gain	Loss	Net	Jobs
Use Class B1	2,808	162	2,646	152
Use Class B1a	571	2,896	-2,325	-134
Use Class B1b	2,221	0	2,221	127
Use Class B1c	1,484	2,438	-954	-23
Use Class B2	15,876	951	14,925	199
Use Class B8	6,551	1,241	5,310	128
Total	29,511	7,688	21,823	450

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council. Floorspace in m², 2015/16

- 8.8 The North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations identifies employment areas in Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Baldock and Royston. Figure 23 shows gains and loses of floorspace in these areas. During the monitoring year a net total of 21,823m² of floorspace has been created in the District's employment areas equivalent to 450 additional jobs.
- 8.9 This net completion figure is higher than the District-wide figure identified in Figure 21 demonstrating that there was a net loss of employment floorspace outside of employment areas.

Loss of employment land to other uses

- 8.10 Figure 24 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 24: Loss of employment floorspace

	B1	B1a	B1b	B1c	B2	B8	Total
Residential	0	1,693	266	238	0	817	3,014
% in emp. areas		0	0	0	0	0	
Sui Generis	0	0	0	0	0	326	326
% in emp. areas	0	0	0	0	0	64%	
Other non employment uses	0	2,906	0	679	586	441	4,612
% in emp. areas	0	0	0	100	100	100	
Other emp. uses	463	425	0	1,759	365	376	3,388
% in emp. areas	34	100	0	100	100	43%	
Total floorspace	463	5,024	266	2,676	951	2,290	11,670
Total % in emp. areas	34	8	0	92	100	16	

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council. Employment floorspace lost to different uses in m², 2015/16.

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 25 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 25: Retail and leisure completions

Use Class	Gain	Loss	Net
A1 - Shops	3,852	3,941	-89
A2 – Financial and professional services	60	614	-554
A3 – Restaurants and cafes	932	0	932
A4 – Drinking Establishments	1,061	359	702
A5 - Takeaways	60	0	60
D1 – Non-residential institution	5,973	2,480	3,493
D2 – Assembly and leisure	5,821	1,719	4,102
B1a - Office	617	5,024	-4,407
Total	18,376	14,137	4,239
Total (minus offices)	17,759	9,113	8,646

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council. Completions of A1, A2, B1a & D2 use class floorspace 2015-2016 in m².

Supply of A & D use classes

- 9.3 Figure 26 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 outstanding capacity in these use classes, based on unimplemented planning permissions or developments under construction, is shown in Figure 27. The capacity for these uses is quite high. The figures are largely influenced by an application involving a change of use of school playing fields (D1) to public open space (D2) accounting for 46,000m².

Figure 26: Retail and leisure completions in town centres

Use Class	Gain	Loss	Net
A1 - Shops	1,000	1,835	835
A2 – Financial and professional services	60	614	-554
*A3 – Food and Drink	76	0	761
A4 – Drinking Establishments	851	239	612
A5 - Takeaways	0	0	0
D1 – Non-residential institution	901	0	901
D2 – Assembly and leisure	1,985	375	1,610
Total	4,873	3,063	2,495

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council. Net floorspace in m² completed A1-A5 & D use classes in town centres, 2015/16.

Figure 27: Retail and leisure permissions

Use Class	Gain	Loss	Net
A1 - Shops	3243	3903	-660
A2 – Financial and professional	2128	1923	205
A3 – Food and Drink	1009	909	100
A4 – Drinking Establishments	465	2752	-2287
A5 - Takeaways	195	194	1
D1 – Non-residential institution	11484	56361	-44877
D2 – Assembly and leisure	51181	1384	49797
Total	69705	67426	2279

Source: North Hertfordshire District Council: Outstanding capacity of permissions for floorspace in Use Classes A and D in m² as at 31 Mar 2016.

Floorspace in town centres

- 9.5 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 2015.

Figure 28: Floorspace in town centres

Use	2015		2014		2013	
	m ²	%	m ²	%	m ²	%
A1	105,499	47.1	98,847	44.8	100,377	45.0
A2	14,608	6.5	15,158	6.9	15,268	6.8
A3	13,117	5.9	11,647	5.3	11,227	5.0
A4	13,460	6.0	13,240	6.0	11,550	5.2
A5	2,740	1.2	2,740	1.2	2,690	1.2
B1	17,354	7.7	16,922	7.7	18,392	8.2
B2	3,290	1.5	3,290	1.5	3,290	1.5
B8	90	0.0	90	0.0	90	0.0
C1	3,640	1.6	2,480	1.1	3,640	1.6
C3	8,490	3.8	6,865	3.1	5,250	2.4
D1	15,585	7.0	14,205	6.4	14,680	6.6
D2	5,170	2.3	5,170	2.3	5,490	2.5
SG	3,440	1.5	2,970	1.3	3,630	1.6
Vacant	19,849	8.9	26,799	12.2	27,733	12.4
Total	224,072	100.0	220,423	100.0	223,307	100

Source: NHDC monitoring 2014-15. Gross floorspace, combined total for the four town centres of Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and Royston.

Vacancy Rates

- 9.6 Figure 29 below illustrates the vacancy rates in the four towns at April 2015. It is clear that the unit vacancy rate in Letchworth and Royston is much higher than Baldock and Hitchin. Although in Letchworth it would appear that this accounts for a small amount of the total floorspace.

Figure 29: Vacancy rates by town

	Hitchin	Letchworth	Baldock	Royston
Vacant Units	33	47	9	29
Vacancy rate % / unit	7.1%	16.8%	6.5%	13.8%
Vacant Floorspace (m ²)	9090	4905	1930	3924
Vacancy rate % / floorspace	10.1%	8.8%	4.2%	12.4%

Source: Town Centre AMR 2014/15 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 30: 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 32 (on following page) shows the condition of the SSSIs in the District at the time of their last published survey. Natural England are responsible for periodically updating the data.

Figure 31: 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 32: 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 is being carried out to support the proposed submission version of the Local Plan and any updated information will be published in the next AMR.

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.