LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE

OVERALL PROPOSAL 'SPINE' DOCUMENT

V3 draft - last saved 6th November 2025

Table of contents

Accompanying documents:

- Proposal for 2 Unitary Authorities
- Proposal for 3 Unitary Authorities
- Proposal for 4 Unitary Authorities
- Appendix C - Equalities Impact Assessment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

All 11 Councils in Hertfordshire are committed to reshaping local government to deliver simpler, more accountable and more sustainable services for our 1.2 million residents and being effective delivery partners with a future Strategic Authority.

This suite of documents has been prepared by Hertfordshire Councils in response to the government's English Devolution White Paper and the formal statutory invitation from the Secretary of State on 5 February 2025, which sets out expectations for stronger, more strategic local leadership, simplified governance structures and greater alignment of public services. Our proposals respond directly to that agenda: we aim to unlock the benefits of devolution, ensure readiness for a future Hertfordshire Strategic Authority and Mayoral model, and provide a foundation for resilient and effective public services for the long term.

Partners in Hertfordshire share a common ambition for what can be achieved through devolution and reorganisation but currently hold different views on the best delivery model. We have collaboratively developed and tested three credible options using a wide range of evidence and information. We have also undertaken extensive consultation with our residents, partners and other stakeholders to understand their views.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">A single, shared ambition for what devolution and reorganisation could unlock for Hertfordshire's communities, places and services.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Rigorously tested options for the best Unitary Authority delivery model.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Two Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire</td><td>Three Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire</td><td>Four Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>Three Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire (Modified)</td><td>Four Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire (Modified)</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">A commitment from all 11 Councils in Hertfordshire to work together to deliver whatever model is ultimately chosen by the Secretary of State</td></tr>
</table>

This 'spine' document sets out our common ambition and shared evidence base, summarises and appraises the options, and gives a clear indication of which Councils in Hertfordshire support each option, as required by the Secretary of State. It is accompanied by three distinct proposals, one for each of the identified unitary models. The three proposals are appended to this document.

Two of our proposals include a request for the Secretary of State to modify existing district and borough boundaries. Further information about these requests and the underlying base proposals is included, with the case being made for these changes in the relevant proposals.

Alongside our shared ambition and options appraisal, this document summarises:

- the financial context for Hertfordshire and the potential impact of LGR;
- our plan for empowering communities;
- the collaborative process we have undertaken to consult on proposals;
- our plans to mitigate the risks associated with disrupting critical services, and
- how we plan to deliver the transition to new Unitary Authorities.

Work across Hertfordshire is proceeding at pace beyond these proposals. Councils are working together to engage residents, staff and partners in shaping the future of services, exploring opportunities for prevention and integration and considering what we can do in the interim, alongside, planning carefully for the transition to new Unitary Authorities once our direction of travel is known following a decision by the Secretary of State.

Whatever decision is reached, all Councils in Hertfordshire will work together to deliver on it.

SCHEDULE OF SUPPORT

Guidance from MHCLG is clear that: "for the final proposal(s), each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography".

For avoidance of doubt, whilst this document has been developed collaboratively by all 11 Councils within Hertfordshire, individual first preferences for a specific unitary option are recorded below.

The legislation which enables Local Government Reorganisation requires that proposals submitted by local authorities, for consideration by the Secretary of State, must be based on existing district council boundaries. In cases where it is considered that there is a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification and changes to the boundaries are considered to be an improvement on the base proposal it is possible to request the Secretary of State to exercise their power to modify the base proposal to include the desired boundary changes.

In this submission we set out three base proposals 2UA, 3UA and 4UA. The local authorities who support the 3UA and 4UA models consider that they would be significantly improved if their boundaries were altered and in accordance with the legislation, those local authorities have decided to request the Secretary of State to exercise their power to modify the 3UA and 4UA proposals to include the boundary changes.

In summary, the required modifications are thought to be necessary for the primary reasons of aligning boundaries to reflect the realities of the place; to align administrative boundaries with established communities, to position local economic and social areas, and for the financial sustainability of new councils. A fuller explanation of the justification for these modifications is set out within this document and the accompanying individual proposals.

The undersigned are agreed that whatever decision is ultimately made regarding a preferred model of unitary local government for Hertfordshire, following consultation with the Secretary of State, all Councils will work together to implement it positively, constructively and at pace, in pursuit of our shared ambition.

OPTION A -TWO UNITARY AUTHORITIES - IS SUPPORTED BY:

Authority	Signature
Logo and name	.....
	[Name – position]
Logo and name	.....
	[Name – position]
Logo and name	.....
	[Name – position]

OPTION B - THREE UNITARY AUTHORITIES - IS SUPPORTED BY:

Authority	Signature
Logo and name	.....
	[Name – position]
Logo and name	.....
	[Name – position]
Logo and name	.....
	[Name – position]

OPTION C – FOUR UNITARY AUTHORITIES - IS SUPPORTED BY:

Authority	Signature
Logo and name	.....
	[Name – position]
Logo and name	.....
	[Name – position]
Logo and name	.....
	[Name – position]

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This 'spine' document and the accompanying three proposals are a direct response to the government's stated assessment criteria for local government reorganisation. The table below shows how and where each criterion is addressed.

MHCLG criteria (summarised)	MHCLG sub-criteria (summarised)	This 'spine' document includes...	The accompanying three proposals include...
1. Establishing a single tier of local government	*a) Sensible economic areas and tax base.* *b) Sensible geography that meets housing supply and local needs.* *c) Robust evidence and analysis.* *d) Clear description of structures and intended outcomes.*	• A factual summary of each proposal, its structure, geography and key features. • A summary of analysis undertaken and evidence available.	• Further information and evidence on each option. • Key arguments from the supporters of each model on why theirs is the best option to deliver our shared ambition.
2. Size, efficiency, capacity	*a) & b) Guiding principles on population sizes.* *c) Efficiency and VFM.* *d) Managing transition costs.* *e) BV intervention / EFS – not relevant.* *f) Debt – not relevant.*	• Comparative analysis of population sizes. • A description of our approach to financial assessment and comparison of models and a summary of results.	• Key arguments from the supporters of each model on the appropriate scale of unitary organisations. • Accompanying narrative on financial resilience.
3. Quality, sustainable services	*a) Improving services.* *b) Public service reform.* *c) Impacts on critical services.*	• Our shared ambition for improving services to residents and the public. • How we plan to mitigate the risk of disaggregating critical services.	• Key arguments from the supporters of each model on service improvements, public service reform and the future shape of critical services.
4. Collaboration and local engagement	*a) Local collaboration.* *b) Local identity, culture, history.* *c) Local engagement.*	• The process we have followed to work together in response to the White Paper. • How we have engaged with the public, partners and other key stakeholders to consult on options for reorganisation.	• Key arguments from the supporters of each model on identity, culture and history. • A summary of relevant findings from the stakeholder engagement process and how these have shaped each proposal.
5. Unlocking devolution	*a) Existing case – not relevant.* *b) 'unlock devolution'.* *c) Population ratios and timelines.*	• A description of how all proposals will facilitate a future Strategic Authority and unlock devolution.	• Specific considerations for each model around working with a Strategic Authority and supporting devolution.
6. Community empowerment	*a) Community engagement.* *b) Building on existing arrangements.*	• Overview of strategy and approach to community empowerment.	• Specific considerations for each proposed model.

"BASE" PROPOSAL AND MODIFIED PROPOSAL

The "base" proposal for the 3 and 4 unitary options is detailed within the options appraisal chapter on page 30, along with the specific boundary changes that supporters are requesting the Secretary of State to enact in parallel. This chapter provides a side-by-side comparison of the "base" and modified proposals and sets out key differences between the two.

The rationale for specific boundary change requests is set out in more detail within the accompanying proposals for 3 and 4 unitary authorities.

For clarity, beyond the opening section of the options appraisal chapter, the remainder of the document focuses on evaluation of our modified proposals, as the preferred end point for the supporters of each model.

ASKS OF GOVERNMENT

To help us deliver the policy objectives for the Devolution White Paper at pace, we have the following asks of government:

1. PROCESS AND TIMETABLE

- A clear government process and timetable for decisions, Structural Change Orders, and transition, with confirmation that the LGR/devolution programme remains on track and to the original timescales despite recent ministerial changes.
- Further clarity on the process and timeline for establishment of Strategic Authorities, with commitment that this proceeds in parallel with the creation of Unitary Authorities.
- Confirmation of legislative interpretation: clarity that, under the current Bill, (I) any new Unitary Authorities must operate a Leader and Cabinet model (Clause 57 and Schedule 25, new Section 9B); (ii) all existing Councils operating a committee system must convert to Leader and Cabinet model within 12 months of commencement, except where reorganisation is under way, in which case the requirement is disapplied until dissolution (Schedule 25, new Section 9K).[1]

2. FINANCE AND RESOURCING

- Clarity on the treatment of General Fund balances, earmarked reserves, and outstanding debt during transition.
- Clarity on Fair Funding Review (FFR) impacts on the new Unitary Authorities and Strategic Authority.
- How Housing Revenue Accounts will be considered and managed both through transition and post transition.

[1]Our interpretation (to be confirmed) is that the bill, if enacted, will require that (i) any new authorities created through a reorganisation process must operate a leader/cabinet model (Clause 57 & Sched 25 new section 9B) (ii) all existing LA's operating a committee system must convert to L/C within 12 months of the commencement of the Act, except for the following (iii) a special provision has been included for those existing committee system LA's which are undergoing LGR, the effect of which is to disapply the requirement to convert to L/C in the run up to their dissolution. (sched 25 new section 9K)

- Funding and capacity support for transition and implementation, covering both unitary Councils and the Strategic Authority. We expect the one-off costs of implementation alone to be in the range of £90m to £100m[2]
- Support with the costs of establishing new Town and Parish Councils, and clear government support for the principle of undertaking Community Governance Reviews in parallel with LGR.
- Clarity on approaches to borrowing and the handling of capital expenditure, particularly between now and 2028 and in the early stages of the new Authorities where capital projects might overlap this process.

3. HOUSING AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNTS (HRAS)

- Clarity on how HRAs can continue to deliver urgent works and investment into stock within Business Plans, including refinancing, under the restrictions of section 24 of the 2007 Act.
- Consent on the timing of HRA aggregation across new Unitary Authorities, ensuring continuity of service and investment, and confirmation of how houses currently held by non-HRA authorities will be treated when combined with HRA authorities.

4. SECTION 24 DIRECTIONS

- A review of the thresholds for issuing directions under Section 24 of the 2007 Act once Structural Change Orders are made, to facilitate smooth service delivery and transition.
- Specifically, confirmation of whether the government will retain precedent thresholds (land disposals over £100,000; capital contracts over £1m; non-capital contracts over £100,000 whole-life cost), and whether greater local discretion could be provided.

5. BOUNDARIES AND CIVIC IDENTITY

- Support to enact boundary changes required under the three-unitary and four-unitary models, including confirmation of the statutory process that will be followed.
- Supporting the preservation of civic status and ceremonial continuity in areas affected by reorganisation.
- Specifically, ensuring that Local Government Reorganisation plans are supported by legislation and the establishment of a Trustee Committee, that explicitly preserves and maintains the historic City status for St Albans and its associated ceremonial Mayoralty, and market rights set out within Letters Patent and Royal Charters.
- Support to ensure that all existing appointed Honorary Aldermen, Alderwomen, Freemen and Honorary Recorders would continue to hold their positions within Successor Unitary Authorities.
- Confirmation that there will be no “continuing authority” following the establishment of the new Unitary Authorities.

6. CREATION OF STATUTORY JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL AUTHORITIES

- Preserving the contracting scale of the county council for waste disposal services across the geography of Hertfordshire would avoid duplication of resources, cost and competition for the same regional end-treatment capacity in any new Unitary arrangement. To effectively implement services and strategies that provide the optimum financial and environmental outcomes for residents, it is important that there

[2] Detailed assumptions are provided within the financial modelling sections of this document.

is sufficient flexibility to establish an appropriate framework for waste disposal that aligns, rather than competes with, geographical strategies, constraints and context.

- It is therefore requested that the provisions of the 1985 Local Government Act that created the original Statutory Joint Waste Disposal Authorities be reinstated in order that more can be created on the same basis, and/or reinstate the provisions for the creation of Voluntary Joint Waste Authorities (collection and/or disposal), that were consulted on and introduced by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and additional waste-specific regulations, noting that these were repealed by the Deregulation Act 2015. This would provide choice to enable service delivery to best meet local need.

STRATEGIC VISION AND AMBITION

ABOUT HERTFORDSHIRE

Hertfordshire's strength lies in the diversity of its places. Our county brings together assets and identities that are distinctive and complementary: from historic market towns to new towns and garden cities, from creative industries to bioscience clusters, and from chalk streams to commuter corridors. They all work together to form a County with a strong civic identity, a varied and high-performing economy, and communities that are proud of where they live.

Future local government structures will celebrate the distinctiveness of Hertfordshire's places, while creating a framework for simpler, more accountable leadership. The following themes illustrate how local identity, heritage and economic strengths combine to shape the county and support our proposals for change.

HERITAGE AND HISTORIC TOWNS

Hertfordshire is rooted in history. St Albans, with its Roman ruins and abbey, is a city of national significance. Market towns such as Berkhamsted, Tring, Hertford, Hoddesdon and Hitchin have shaped local identity for centuries, each with strong civic traditions and historic landmarks, from castles to paper mills. Cultural assets such as Hatfield House, Knebworth House and the Frogmore Paper Trail connect communities to their heritage, while museums, abbeys and market squares remain centres of civic life.

NEW TOWNS AND GARDEN CITIES

Hertfordshire's pioneering role in planned development made its mark in the 20th century. Letchworth was the world's first Garden City, followed by Welwyn Garden City, combining housing, green space and community infrastructure. Stevenage was the UK's first new town and remains a symbol of post-war ambition. Today, these towns are being reshaped through ambitious regeneration programmes, new bus interchanges, station gateway projects and cycle networks. Hemel Garden Communities and the Gilston area, which forms part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town located to the east of the county, add a new chapter with thousands of homes planned as part of sustainable growth strategies.

INNOVATION AND INDUSTRY

Hertfordshire is at the forefront of science and technology. Stevenage is home to one of the largest life sciences campuses in Europe, with companies such as Airbus, MBDA, GSK and Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult anchoring the UK's biomedical and aerospace sectors. In addition, GSK is developing a new 28-acre life sciences hub in Ware. Maylands Business Park in Hemel Hempstead and the Herts IQ Enterprise Zone reinforce this industrial strength, while the A10 corridor is attracting new technology and data infrastructure, including Google's investment in data centres. The University of Hertfordshire and teaching hospitals provide the talent pipeline to sustain this innovation, linking education and research directly to local industry.

CREATIVE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

The county is also a hub for creativity. Hertsmere, home of Elstree Studios which hosts BBC and Sky, has become central to the UK's screen and film industries supported by a growing cluster of studios, suppliers and creative talent. Three Rivers District Council is home to Warner Bros Studios, the largest in Europe, and the world-famous Harry Potter Studio Tours on the shared

boundary with Watford. Planning permission has also just been given for new development at Langleybury to create a significant campus for support industries and new studio space.

Festivals, theatres and museums add to a vibrant cultural scene that combines local traditions with international reach. Diversity is celebrated and visible in community initiatives, cultural events and civic life, ensuring Hertfordshire remains a place where people feel a strong sense of belonging. In 2022, Watford was recognised as a 'rainbow town' by The Geographical Journal with its ethnic diversity increasing fourfold since 2001, fostering a welcoming and inclusive community.

NATURAL LANDSCAPES AND RURAL HERTFORDSHIRE

Beyond its towns, Hertfordshire is rich in natural assets. The Chilterns National Landscape and Ashridge Estate provide green space of national renown and significance, while the county's chalk streams are among some of the rarest habitats on the planet. Agricultural land and rural villages sustain a heritage of farming and food production and offer residents and visitors vital access to open landscapes. These natural features are part of Hertfordshire's identity and underpin its ambitions for sustainability, net zero and healthier communities.

CONNECTIVITY AND GROWTH CORRIDORS

Hertfordshire's location defines much of its character. With fast road and rail links to London via the M1, M25, A1, A10, Thameslink, Metropolitan Line, London Overground, West Coast Main Line and East Coast railway line, the county is closely integrated into the wider South East economy. It also sits on the Oxford-Cambridge-London innovation arc, with direct access to world-class research and global markets. Further major growth corridors are emerging, including Hemel Garden Communities and the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, where the UK Health Security Agency will be based just beyond East Hertfordshire's borders, as well as town centre renewal across Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City and public realm investment in Waltham Cross. These projects show how Hertfordshire is preparing for the future yet also focusing on retaining its local character.

DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

While the current two-tier system has served Hertfordshire for over fifty years, we recognise that the national context is changing and that direction of travel is towards reorganisation. We are proud of what we have achieved together, but we recognise that at times our existing structures can fragment service delivery and confuse residents.

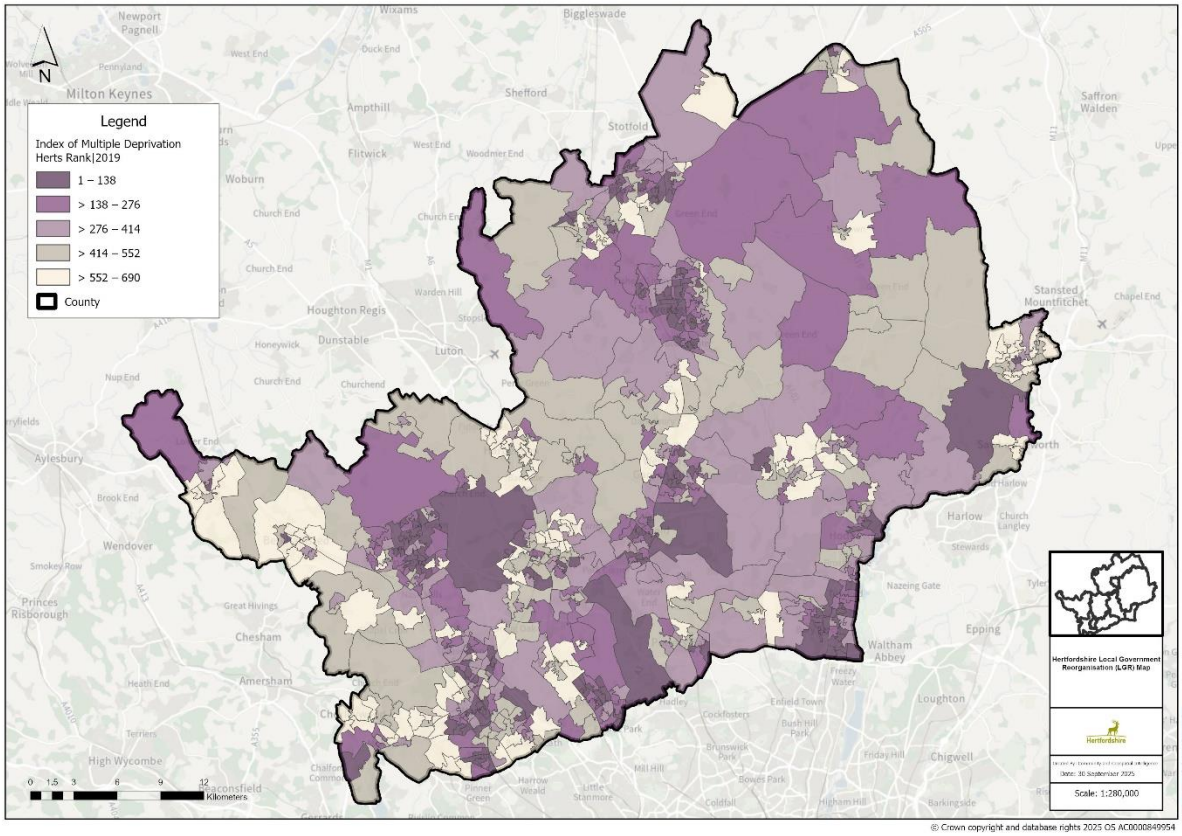
DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Hertfordshire has 1.2 million residents and is set to grow by 22% by 2045(internal projection), The bigger shift is that of our ageing population, with the 65+ age group set to grow by around 40% over the same period. At the same time, adopted and emerging local plans provide for around 120,000 new homes over the next 10–15 years, largely within urban areas that already accommodate almost 90% of people on one third of the county's land. This combination of a larger, older population alongside significant, town focused housing growth will increase demand for school places, Primary and Community Health, Adult Social Care, transport and utilities. It strengthens the case for public service reform and devolution to enable Hertfordshire to plan housing, infrastructure and care together at the right scale, align capital programmes, and invest earlier in prevention to manage long-term demand.

INEQUALITIES AND DEPRIVATION

Hertfordshire is a prosperous county on average, but the gaps within are stark. People in the most deprived areas die three to four years earlier and spend up to 18 additional years in poor health, compared with those in the least deprived. Deprivation is concentrated in specific neighbourhoods, with parts of Stevenage, Broxbourne, Hertsmere and Watford among the 10% most deprived nationally, a situation further compounded by recent cost-of-living pressures. Around 4,000 families, including 9,500 children, are affected by the benefit cap, leaving them on average £65 a week worse off than they would otherwise be if receiving Universal Credit.

MAP: DEPRIVATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE



These inequalities drive demand for local services: Councils collectively see more than 7,000 homelessness approaches a year, and 1,377 households (including 1,841 children) were living in temporary accommodation at the end of last year. Higher prevalence of long-term health conditions in deprived communities also adds pressure on Adult Social Care and NHS services. Tackling these entrenched inequalities requires stronger prevention, earlier intervention and more joined-up action across housing, health, skills and employment. Current fragmented governance makes this difficult to deliver at the scale required. Reorganisation creates the opportunity to simplify responsibilities, align investment with need, and target resources where they can have the greatest impact in reducing inequality.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES

Hertfordshire faces escalating climate risks: increased flooding, heatwaves in urban areas, water stress (local usage 15% above UK average), drought threatening agriculture, and wildfire

risk in heathlands. All councils in Hertfordshire are taking urgent action to reduce carbon emissions, with the County setting a 2030 carbon-neutral target. Meeting this ambition is challenging against a backdrop of rapid growth: adopted and emerging local plans allocate around 120,000 new homes over the next 10–15 years, while residents already drive 7.4 billion vehicle-miles annually across a network of 3,200 miles of roads.

These pressures demand a more coherent system of governance. Fragmentation between County, District and Borough councils makes it harder to align planning, transport, energy and nature recovery. Reorganisation presents opportunities to retrofit homes at scale, expand active and public transport, accelerate EV infrastructure, and protect and enhance biodiversity. Reorganisation provides a platform for joined-up leadership on net zero and sustainability, ensuring that environmental goals are embedded in housing, transport and economic planning, and that Hertfordshire's growth is managed in a way that supports both prosperity and climate resilience.

INCREASING STRAIN ON PUBLIC SERVICES

Organisations in Hertfordshire are in a relatively strong financial position in comparison to similar areas across the Country, with no Authorities under intervention or in receipt of exceptional financial support from the government and none of the serious debt issues that place serious constraints on reorganisation in other areas. Through collaboration and transformation, our partnership has delivered substantial savings and managed demand effectively (overall children in care rates are lower than England's, though need is uneven in places like Stevenage and parts of Broxbourne). Even so, rising costs, volume and complexity are stretching capacity:

- Requests for support to Adult Social Care in Hertfordshire have risen by 58% during the last decade in England, from 20,820 in 2015/16 to 32,795 in 2023/24.
- The number of referrals to children's social care in Hertfordshire have increased by 22% since 2019/20 from 5,377 to 6,536 in 2024/25.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation in Hertfordshire has increased by 25% over the past six years, from 1,157 at the start of FY 2019/20 to 1,450 at the start of FY 2025/26.
- The number of children and young people with a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has risen by 251% over the past decade in Hertfordshire compared to 166% nationally - from 3,682 in 2015 (the first comparable year after EHCPs were introduced) to 12,920 in January 2025 and over 15,000 in November 2025. At the same time, pupils with an identified special educational need or disability but without an EHCP in Hertfordshire schools has increased by 31% from 24,293 in 2015 to 31,966 in 2025.

These dynamics, driven in part by demographic change, demonstrate the need to build more resilience into the system: simpler, more integrated organisations with clearer accountability and devolved powers to shift investment into prevention, share scarce expertise, and manage risks effectively at both a strategic and local scale.

SIMPLIFICATION FOR RESIDENTS AND PARTNERS

Residents expect simplicity but are sometimes faced with overlapping responsibilities, duplicate contact points and varied experiences. Financial pressure, demand-led services, and complex governance structures have made this harder to sustain. Residents face a patchwork of responsibilities: waste collected by Districts, disposed of by the County; Housing run locally, but Children's Services run county-wide; meaning services are not always easy to navigate.

Key partners such as the NHS and police must also hold relationships with eleven different councils in the current system. Reorganisation offers a chance to reset governance, clarify accountability, give partners a clearer line of sight, and help Hertfordshire to speak with a louder voice on behalf of residents outside its boundaries.

OUR SHARED VISION

Hertfordshire is ambitious for its people and its places. With a population of 1.2 million and a dynamic economy worth nearly £50bn, we want every resident to reach their full potential and no one to be left behind.

As our communities grow and evolve, so too must the way we deliver public services. Advances in technology mean people are used to fast, personalised and easy-to-use services in other parts of their lives and they expect the same from public services. Public service reorganisation presents a once in a generation opportunity to rethink how services are delivered; a rare change to making them more connected, more responsive and more focused on what matters most to our residents, businesses and communities.

We want to build a system that supports people throughout their lives: one that gives children the best start; helps residents develop skills for life and live more sustainably; makes it easier to find work and housing; and supports people to live and age well in their local communities. To do this our services must align and work better together.

By transforming how public services are designed and delivered, we can better meet the needs of today while preparing for the challenges of tomorrow. That means unifying services around people and places, ensuring that services are integrated; focusing on resilience and prevention and using data and technology to deliver better outcomes and develop new models that wrap support around Hertfordshire's most vulnerable residents.

New unitary local government bodies for Hertfordshire will clarify accountability to residents, reduce duplication and generate financial savings that can be reinvested in local services.

WHAT DEVOLUTION AND A MAYORAL STRATEGIC AUTHORITY COULD UNLOCK FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

MHCLG Criterion 5: supporting devolution arrangements

This section describes the Hertfordshire Councils' ambition for devolution in the county. We recognise that devolution is achieved through a separate legislative process, and we have written to the Secretary of State in this regard. The references throughout this document are intended to signal our ambition and demonstrate how our strategic direction supports the government's potential opportunities for Hertfordshire.

Our ambition is to deliver devolution alongside Local Government Reorganisation to maximise benefits for residents and businesses in Hertfordshire and minimise disruption from reorganisation. This includes securing a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Hertfordshire at the earliest opportunity, launching in parallel to the new unitary authorities.

As a major economic engine for the UK, with a dynamic economy and a growing population in excess of 1.2 million, devolution gives us an important opportunity to take greater control of our future. The government's national devolution agenda is a chance for us to secure the powers and funding needed to address our specific challenges and build on our remarkable strengths.

Our economy is a powerhouse, generating a Gross Value Added (GVA) of £50bn - almost the same as Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire combined. Our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of over £40,500 would be among the highest of any Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) area in the country.

We are planning our devolution geography based on the County of Hertfordshire. We believe it is of sufficient scale to warrant devolution and would be larger than many existing and planned devolution arrangements. By forming an MSA for Hertfordshire, we can ensure that critical decisions about our economy, infrastructure, and public services are made here, closer to the communities we serve and therefore better for our residents.

MAYORAL AUTHORITY: A STRONGER, MORE COHESIVE STRUCTURE FOR THE COUNTY

A Mayoral Strategic Authority for Hertfordshire would help us to achieve:

- A stronger voice for Hertfordshire: a directly elected Mayor would sit on national bodies like the Council of Nations and Regions, advocating directly to the Prime Minister for our county's interests.
- Unified public services: the Mayor would assume strategic responsibilities of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Fire and Rescue Authority, creating services that are more efficient and coordinated.
- Integrated health and care: with representation on the Central East Integrated Care Board, the Mayor would be in a prime position to champion strategic alignment of health services with local government, designed around the needs of our communities.
- Economic growth: an MSA would manage this economic area as a single, strategic entity, potentially enabling us to leverage further investment from the private sector and deliver a joined-up Local Growth Plan.

This model would be underpinned by our plans for a streamlined local government structure of new Unitary Councils, ensuring services are both strategic and responsive to local communities.

A Mayoral Strategic Authority will help us go further and faster with:

Powering our world-class economy and investing in skills.	As we set out in more detail below, Hertfordshire is a unique economic powerhouse. An MSA would provide a single economic vision for the county. Building on the success of Hertfordshire's Local Enterprise Partnership, an MSA would have the devolved powers to direct investment to where it will have the greatest impact. With control over the Adult Skills Fund and a central role in the Local Skills Improvement Plan, we can ensure our workforce has the high-level skills needed for the jobs of the future, tackling skills gaps and supporting residents into better careers. This means aligning our excellent education providers directly with the needs of our innovative employers.

Building the right homes in the right places.	Our economic vibrancy creates intense pressure on housing, making it difficult for many local people to afford a home. With a housing affordability ratio of 10.15 (compared to the England average of 7.71), driven by a median house price of £449,950, strategic action is essential. An MSA provides the tools to tackle this head-on by: • Developing a county-wide Spatial Development Strategy, ensuring a more coherent and strategic approach to planning for new homes and employment sites. • Directing grant funding for housing and regeneration, allowing us to prioritise the delivery of genuinely affordable homes. • Using Compulsory Purchase Powers to unlock stalled sites and assemble land for key housing developments. This strategic oversight will build on our innovative work in developing Joint Strategic Plans in the county and ensure we go beyond simply building houses, to creating sustainable, well-connected communities.
Creating a modern, connected transport network.	Positioned at a national crossroads with the M1, A1(M), and M25 as well as national rail routes, Hertfordshire's transport network is vital to our economy but suffers from severe congestion. As the single Local Transport Authority, an MSA would have the power to manage this network strategically. This will enable us to create a truly integrated transport system – from east to west as well as north to south - linking rail, bus, and road travel more effectively as well as supporting active travel routes. Crucially, it will also allow us to accelerate the decarbonisation of our transport system, improving air quality and the health of our residents while meeting our climate goals.
A greener, healthier future for all.	Devolution offers a powerful opportunity to improve the quality of life for every resident. An MSA would take a leading role in tackling the climate crisis and enhancing our natural environment, delivering on our ambitions to be a net-zero county and implementing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Furthermore, an MSA can directly address deep-seated health inequalities. By focusing on the wider determinants of health, such as access to good jobs, quality housing, and a clean environment, the Mayor can champion a new, more ambitious approach. This integrated vision, combining economic, environmental, and social policy, is the key to ensuring that everyone in Hertfordshire can lead a long, healthy-, and prosperous life.

WHAT REORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT COULD UNLOCK FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

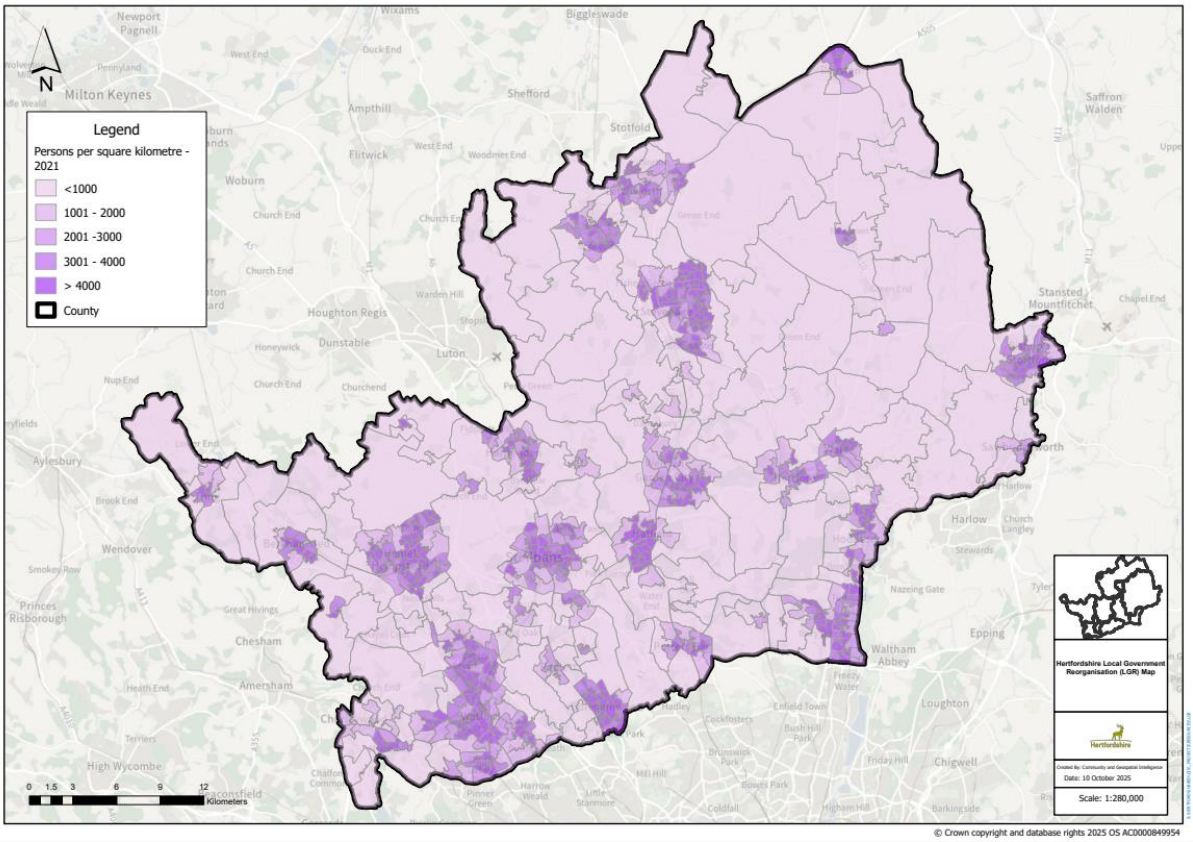
Our ambition for new unitary local government organisations in Hertfordshire extends far beyond simply being effective delivery partners for a Strategic Authority. The process of reorganising will be challenging, but it will also unleash huge energy and potential to accelerate delivery on behalf of our communities and place, and to transform and modernise local government institutions in Hertfordshire.

COMMUNITIES	PLACE	SERVICES
Empowered, connected and inclusive	Unlocking growth and opportunity	Integrated, efficient and people-centred

A STRONGER, SMARTER, MORE SUSTAINABLE HERTFORDSHIRE THROUGH DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

COMMUNITIES: EMPOWERED, CONNECTED AND INCLUSIVE

MAP: POPULATION DENSITY IN HERTFORDSHIRE



1.24m residents rising to 1.48[3]m by 2045	… of whom 20% aged under 15 and 18% over 65	28% of residents from an ethnic minority compared with 27% for England	490,000 households
1 city (St. Albans), 25 towns, 100s of villages and hamlets	124 town and parish councils	Over 400 places of worship and faith centres across the county	5,451 Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector organisations spending £856m within Hertfordshire

We want every resident to feel connected, valued and safe and for Hertfordshire to be a place that everyone is proud to call home.

Local government reorganisation brings a rare and important opportunity to reimagine the relationship between communities and local government, strengthening the connection with communities and delivering more effective public services. We are committed to building a county where every individual has the power to make a difference in tackling increasing challenges in society such as social cohesion and inequality.

Our vision is a thriving democracy where people shape their places and futures. We will build on what works, testing our approach with Town and Parish Councils and co-designing solutions with the voluntary and community sector.

Transparency and accountability will be at the heart of everything we do. We are committed to inclusive, open dialogue, reaching seldom heard voices and removing barriers to participation. We will invest in community capacity and build confidence, improving how we share information, creating opportunities for people to shape the decisions that affect their lives. Our communities will be empowered to connect, collaborate and flourish, supported by networks that share resources, ideas and assets.

Together, we will make Hertfordshire the place where community empowerment is not just policy, it is how we live, govern and build our shared future. Our approach creates practical mechanisms for individuals to exercise genuine power over the decisions that affect them, while building resilient communities capable of addressing complex challenges through collaborative action.

By creating inclusive, resilient and vibrant communities, supported by a thriving local business base, we will improve quality of life and sustainability outcomes for current residents and attract new people, skills and investment into our county.

We will work in partnership with residents, community groups, businesses and local leaders to co-design services and deliver lasting change. Our approach will be rooted in local identity, transparency and trust. We will also celebrate Hertfordshire's unique history and traditions, building civic pride and a strong sense of belonging.

[3] Internal projection based on delivery of new homes. ONS estimate is 1.32m based on July 2025 release.

CASE STUDY: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

In 2023 the Connecting Three Rivers Board, formerly the Local Strategic Partnership, agreed the new Community Strategy for the district. This includes creation of a donations platform to generate income for a community fund that is used to support priorities within the area. The income generated has been used to support community-based organisations actively supporting the strategic priorities, and this has strengthened the creation of a shared vision and strategic approach to the area. Examples of funding used include:

Electric Umbrella breaking down barriers between mainstream and SEND schools. This project brought together two mainstream primary schools and two SEND schools for a powerful, creative collaboration rooted in music, representation and connection. The relationships were central to the project's impact of fostering understanding, empathy and friendship between pupils through shared musical experiences.

9 Lives: running an upcycling workroom course for individuals with health and wellbeing issues and learning disabilities. Students learnt to sand furniture, paint, repair, stencil and upholster items, which were then sold in the charity upcycle shop. The confidence and skills gained create significant opportunities for the individuals to develop further connections and live independently.

CASE STUDY: CO-OPERATIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS MODEL

Built on three core principles: coordination of services, clear accountability, and community empowerment, Stevenage Borough Council's Co-operative Neighbourhood's model integrates multi-disciplinary teams across council services and embeds Ward Councillors in local governance.

The model's governance structure, featuring Strategic Boards, operational leads, and councillor involvement, ensures alignment with borough-wide priorities and responsiveness to local needs.

A key initiative involved revitalising a struggling community centre on the edge of the town Facing declining attendance and funding risk, the centre was transformed through collaborative action involving council teams, Elected Members, residents, and external partners. This included physical improvements, inclusive engagement, and sustainability measures such as climate-focused enhancements and volunteer-led place-making.

CASE STUDY: BROXBOURNE'S COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Originally created to tackle the impacts of Covid, the Community Partnership, a network of local organisations that support welfare of residents, has developed and strengthened over the last few years. The partnership is made up of around 150 people from 65 organisations with representation from Broxbourne Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Housing Associations, NHS Integrated Care Board, social prescribers from three Primary Care Networks, local school partnerships, DWP and VCS partners including Citizens Advice, MIND, Churches Together and foodbanks.

Coming together every fortnight, the partnership shares information about what is happening in Broxbourne, making connections and working collaboratively to resolve local issues. Once a quarter the meeting is led by the County Councils Children's Services, focusing in on early help to support children and young people. The partnership is able to work both strategically, identifying trends and gaps across Broxbourne and also connect on individual cases, collaborating to support residents in a holistic way.

Most organisations in the network are members of Frontline, a publicly available online database of local sources of support. Frontline is used to refer clients, with their consent, to receive support from other local partner organisations; referrals comply with GDPR regulations and progress, and results of the referral can be tracked. Since its inception, the partnership has seen a significant increase in joint working to meet needs of individuals, by using the Frontline referral tool or building on relationships within the partnership to agree joint support for individuals.

In addition, the partnership is able to identify where local needs are not being met. Recently, the partnership identified a shortfall in the availability of benefits advice. A source of cost-effective, reliable training was identified and publicised around the partnership, with colleagues from across different organisations now being trained to enhance capacity and knowledge to give benefits advice to residents in the borough.

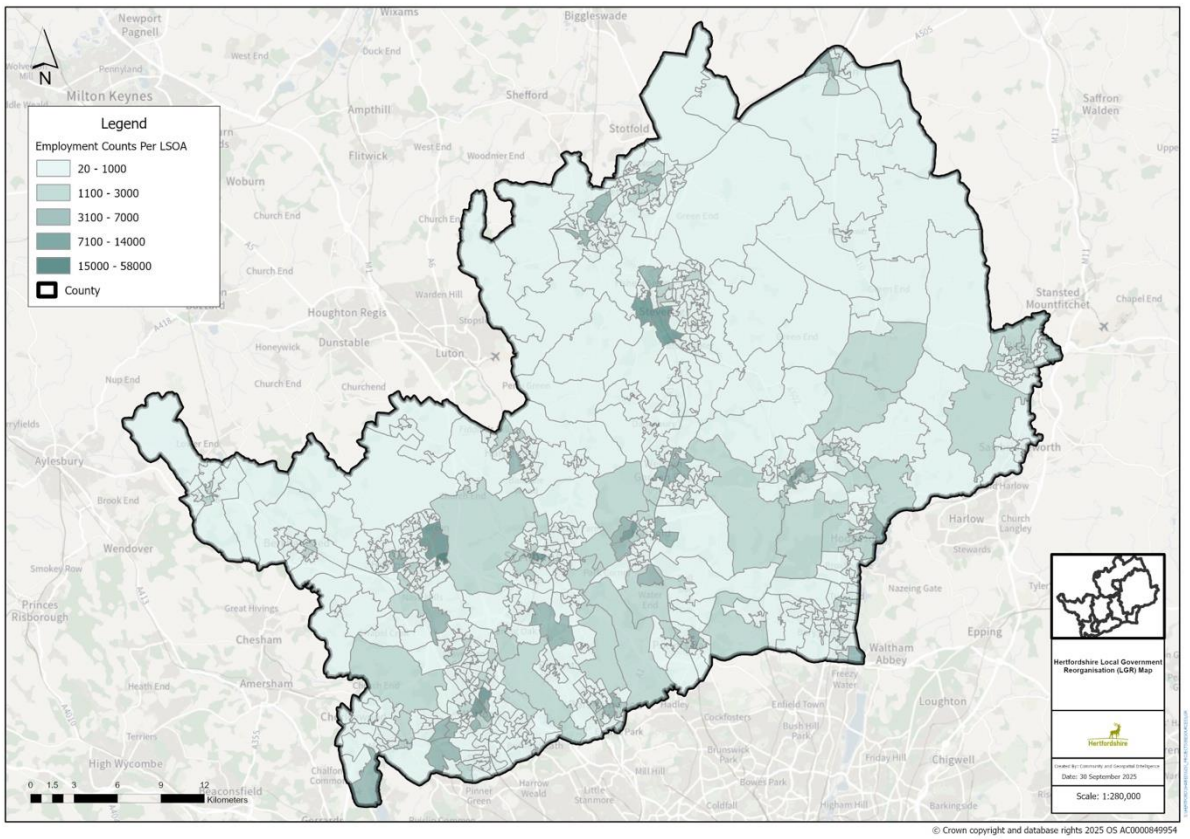
Our approach to empowering communities and protecting civic identity and heritage is set out in more detail on page 71 of this document.

OUR AMBITIONS FOR OUR communities

- **Democratic voice**: local Councillors will continue to play a vital role in representing communities, shaping services and holding decision makers to account. They will be enabled to play an expanded role within new Unitary Authorities.
- **Shared prosperity**: targeted investment and support for areas of deprivation, raising aspirations, especially among young people, and ensuring that growth is inclusive, with no communities left behind.
- **Community cohesion**: building cohesion by strengthening local identity, supporting a balanced mix of homes and jobs, and creating opportunities for people to come together through shared spaces, inclusive services and local events. By nurturing civic pride, social connection and a sense of belonging, we will help communities feel more united, resilient and confident in shaping their future.
- **Better quality of life**: improved access to public transport, leisure, high-quality and affordable homes, cultural and green spaces, actively promoting sustainability and climate resilience, delivering healthier homes, lower energy bills and thriving green spaces.
- **Shared decision making** putting the voice of the community at the centre of decision making and empowering residents and businesses to shape the services that affect them.
- **Stronger partnerships: w**orking closely with the voluntary and community sector to support grassroots initiatives, unlock local capacity-, and ensure services are responsive to the needs of all communities.

PLACE: UNLOCKING GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACROSS HERTFORDSHIRE

MAP: EMPLOYMENT DENSITY IN HERTFORDSHIRE



£46bn Gross Value Added – outperforming the East of England and UK average.	66,500 active businesses, including 40,000 in key UK growth sectors (life sciences, creative industries, defence and advanced manufacturing).	Nearly 5,000 businesses identified with high-growth potential.	4 international airports within an hour; strongly connected by road and rail to London and the OxCam Arc.
120,000 new homes allocated in adopted and emerging local plans over the next 10–15 years	Ambition for 100,000 new jobs linked to growth and regeneration programmes.	80.1% of the working aged population employed in either a full or part-time job, compared to 75.4% in England.	World-class life sciences, creative and screen, defence and aerospace, Agri-Tech and sustainable construction industries.

Hertfordshire is an economic powerhouse, generating nearly £50bn for the national economy and outpacing many major UK city regions. We also can demonstrate global capabilities across seven of the eight key sectors identified in the Industrial Strategy (IS-8), as evidenced by recent investment from Google, Airbus and Warner Bros., amongst others. Hertfordshire has 40,000 businesses in these sectors and nearly 5,000 with high growth potential. In the last quarter (April - June 2025), Hertfordshire Film Office created an estimated £6.5m economic impact –

higher than the annual average for many regions. Our sector strengths span cell and gene therapy, film and TV, precision engineering, AI and digital and space exploration, placing Hertfordshire at the heart of the UK's innovation economy.

Our economic strength is matched by the quality of our natural environment. Hertfordshire is home to one of the highest concentrations of chalk streams in the world - rare, ecologically rich rivers such as the Ver, Beane, Mimram and Lea that support unique wildlife and habitats. These globally significant natural assets, alongside the Chilterns National Landscape and our extensive green spaces, make Hertfordshire not only a place to do business, but a place where people want to live, raise families, and enjoy healthy, active lives. Protecting Hertfordshire's chalk rivers, green belt and landscapes will remain central to place identity, with natural capital recognised as critical infrastructure for climate resilience, health and wellbeing.

Strategically located between London and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, Hertfordshire offers unparalleled access to talent, investment and innovation - with half of the UK economy reachable within an hour and proximity to four international airports. The University of Hertfordshire and Royal Veterinary College are key drivers of research and skills development. Hertfordshire is home to world-class research centres, such as Rothamsted Research, advancing global agricultural science; - BRE, leading innovation in sustainable building and housing; and Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult, bringing cutting-edge therapies to market. Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter enterprise zone is providing 3 million ft^2 of sustainable commercial space, just 30 minutes from London.

The county is also modelling the future of sustainable development, with two new garden towns underway and plans to deliver 100,000 new homes and 100,000 new jobs over the next 15 - 20 years. Planned investment in the retrofitting of existing homes and buildings will also run alongside this new development, to improve energy efficiency, reduce emissions and support green jobs, ensuring that growth is both inclusive and environmentally responsible, and supports long-term community wellbeing. Our approach includes nature-based solutions that enhance climate resilience and protect our natural capital.

Investment in east-west connectivity, housing affordability, infrastructure improvements and water availability will unlock development and future growth. Focused on key transport corridors, this will create new opportunities for investment, housing, jobs and connectivity. The benefits will extend far beyond Hertfordshire, supporting regional and national prosperity while improving the everyday lives of our residents.

As we grow, we will also protect and enhance what makes Hertfordshire special, from our market towns and green spaces to our industrial heritage and strong community spirit. Our people feel proud of where they live, work and study and we want this to continue.

CASE STUDY: Autolus Case Study: Fast-Tracking Innovation in Stevenage

Stevenage is home to the UK's largest and the third largest cell and gene therapy cluster in the world, behind only Boston and San Francisco. It sits at the heart of the UK's Golden Triangle of life sciences – alongside London, Oxford, and Cambridge – and is a magnet for innovation, investment and talent.

Autolus is a leading biotech company developing advanced cell and gene therapies. When they chose Stevenage as the base for their manufacturing and research, they needed fast and flexible support to grow quickly. Stevenage Borough Council played a key role. They worked closely with Autolus and partners to speed up planning approvals and create a supportive environment for development. This meant Autolus could build and expand their facilities faster, helping them move from research to clinical production without delay.

The Council's proactive approach – alongside support from Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Futures (formerly LEP) – helped unlock investment and co-ordinate infrastructure thus enabling a high growth company to succeed and bring innovation into the town centre.

CASE STUDY: Space East: A Growing Hub for UK Space Innovation

Space East is the UK's newest and fastest-growing space cluster, based in the East of England. It brings together leaders from industry, academia, and government to unlock new opportunities in space technology and drive regional and national growth. At the heart of the cluster is Airbus, whose UK headquarters in Stevenage hosted the launch of the Community for Space Prosperity (CUSP). This initiative supports collaboration across the space ecosystem, including the Airbus Space Accelerator, which helps early-stage companies scale and connect with industry.

The University of Hertfordshire plays a key role in developing the talent pipeline, supported by a £100m investment in its new SPECTRA STEM building. The university works closely with industry to align education with workforce needs and contributes research in satellite communications, space law and sustainability. Hertfordshire Futures, alongside Airbus and North Herts College, also supports the STEM Discovery Centre – a £1m initiative inspires young people to pursue careers in space and engineering. With over 60 space-related companies in the region, Space East is now the third-largest contributor to the UK space economy. Its strength lies in the depth of its partnerships and its ability to connect research, industry and education. This ecosystem is helping deliver the UK's National Space Strategy – creating high-value jobs, attracting global investment and securing the UK's position as a leader in space-enabled technologies.

CASE STUDY: Hertfordshire's Healthy Placemaking Framework

Arising from the Hertfordshire Growth Board's 'Healthy and Safe Places for All' mission, the Hertfordshire Healthy Placemaking Framework (the 'Framework') guides the creation of healthier, safer, and more inclusive environments across the county. The framework was developed through extensive engagement with an office group from HCC, the districts and boroughs, the ICB, NHS and the voluntary sector. It embeds principles of health, wellbeing, and safety principles into planning policy – locally and strategically – ensuring that both new and existing communities support physical, mental and social health. The Framework is a key tool in improving health outcomes and tackling health inequalities, and enabling people to grow, live, move, connect, and thrive within the places they call home.

The Healthy Placemaking Framework provides guidance for Local Planning Authorities – and, in time, any Mayoral Strategic Authority – on how to embed health considerations in local plans and spatial development strategies. It sets out a joined-up and holistic approach to planning for and design of new housing developments and the regeneration of existing communities, providing a consistent approach for planning across Hertfordshire.

CASE STUDY: Delivery of 10,000 new homes and associated infrastructure

Located north of Harlow and across the River Stort in East Hertfordshire, the 'Gilston Area' will deliver 10,000 homes including 2,300 affordable homes and associated infrastructure across seven new villages. The development will benefit from over £1bn in new community infrastructure, such as schools, healthcare, and sports facilities, as well as job creation and improvements to transport links.

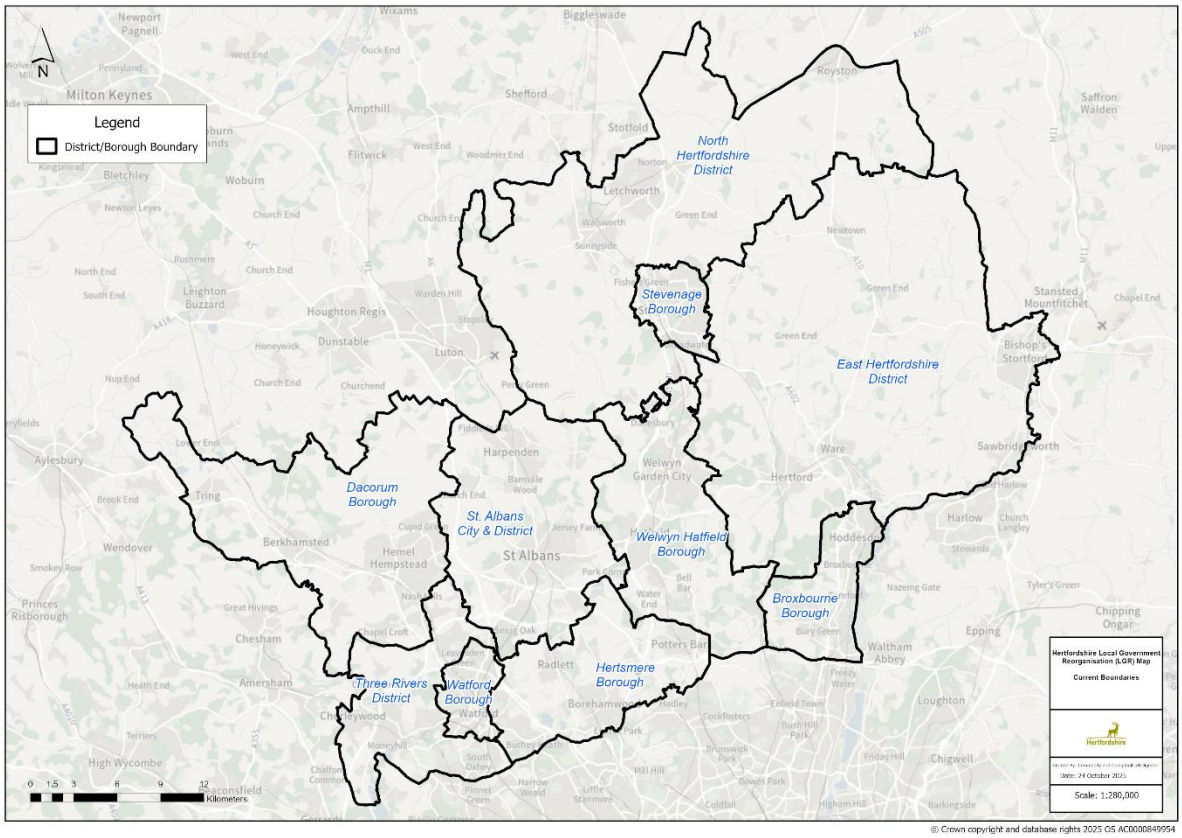
With outlined planning permission being given by East Herts Council in January 2025, delivery on new river crossings have started with work on the Central Stort Crossing.

The Gilston Area forms part of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) which was formally designated by the government in 2017. HGGT is a unique public sector partnership of five Local Authorities – East Herts District Council, Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council, Harlow District Council and Hertfordshire County Council, and collectively HGGT captures the New Town principles of bringing together the best of urban and rural, integrating green and open spaces with neighbourhoods and creating high-quality places that embrace and enable sustainable and healthy living.

OUR AMBITIONS FOR PLACE

- **Catalyst for growth**: position Hertfordshire as a powerhouse for innovation, green growth and sector excellence.
- **Accelerated housing delivery**: build quality, affordable and specialist homes, to reduce homelessness, ensure no child grows up in unsafe accommodation and adults can live independently in their own homes.
- **Sustainability**: improve east-west connectivity and promote active, low-carbon travel, making it easier to move around to access jobs and services. Embed sustainability into planning and growth, tackling climate risks, enhancing biodiversity and nature recovery, and supporting local delivery of net zero and resilience initiatives.
- **Infrastructure investment**: align housing and growth with schools, healthcare, policing and digital infrastructure supported by a streamlined, strategic planning process.
- **Integrated neighbourhood health and care services**: supporting the government's 10 Year Health Plan our vision is to deliver models of care that are preventative and better support those most in need.

MAP: HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITIES



1 County Council, 1 City and District Council, 4 Borough Councils, 5 District Councils.	Workforce of over 11,000 excluding schools (FTEs – March 2025) delivering services day to day	28,000 adults supported by adult social care (15,000 receiving long-term care). 5,876 children supported by children's social care (including 1,053 children looked after)	Estimated 120km^2 of public sector estate (7% of the county's land area).
520,000 tonnes of household waste managed annually, with recycling rates consistently above national average.	3,200 miles of roads, 116,000 streetlights, 179,000 gullies.	226,000 pupils in Hertfordshire schools; 15,000 children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan.	7,000+ approaches for help with homelessness each year; 1,377 households (including 1,841 children) living in temporary accommodation.

The current two-tier system has served Hertfordshire well for many years, but the time is right to consider how it can be strengthened for the future. At times, the overlapping responsibilities of our 11 organisations create friction when coordinating services around the varying needs of communities and places. Residents directly experience these overlapping responsibilities – housing managed locally, Children's Services county-wide, waste collected by Districts but disposed of by the County – leading to duplication, complexity and variable standards. Partners such as the NHS and police must engage across multiple footprints, slowing down joint planning and making it harder to deliver consistent outcomes.

Reorganisation gives us the chance to replace this patchwork with a simpler, more accountable model, simplify how public services are delivered, drive efficiency, reduce emissions and deliver better value for money through integrated, sustainable service models. New Unitary Authorities will provide a single point of responsibility for local services in the areas they serve, making them easier to navigate and more consistent across the county.

We will design services around people's lives, not organisational boundaries, and our workforce will help lead this transformation. This will include better coordination across services such as waste, health, supported living and housing to create cleaner, safer and more connected neighbourhoods. Services will be more responsive to local need, making them more joined up, locally relevant and focused on what matters most to residents and businesses.

OPERATIONAL BLUEPRINT FOR NEW UNITARY AUTHORITIES IN HERTFORDSHIRE

Professionals across Hertfordshire have worked together to develop a set of consistent design principles to inform the shape of new organisations. These are summarised below.

Leadership and governance 	• 234–327 Councillors with appropriate levels of electoral representation. • Leader and Cabinet model with proportionate regulatory and scrutiny arrangements. • Full statutory accountability and officers within each Authority. • Inter-UA collaboration and mutual aid arrangements.
Service delivery 	• Delivery and commissioning at Unitary level by default. • Shared/collaborative delivery where economies of scale are available without diluting accountability, or where markets are fragile. • HRAs and trading companies will be inherited 'as is' by new Authorities and reviewed over time.
Community empowerment 	• Strong locality/neighbourhood infrastructure. • Councillors empowered to plan expanded roles within new unitary authorities. • Strong partnership with Parish and Town councils in the areas they serve.
Workforce 	• c.-11,000 FTE staff transfer under TUPE into new UAs with a principle of minimal disruption to the front line. • Shared workforce planning and training in specialist and hard-to-recruit areas. • Agreement of shared values and leadership expectations and purposeful engagement with organisational culture.
Tech and data 	• Cybersecurity - will be integrated into the design of all systems and services. • Technology - prioritise scalability, resilience, and sustainability in all technology solutions. Where feasible, utilise open standards to minimise the risk of vendor lock-in and enable collaboration. Adopt a strategy that considers cloud first for the deployment and management of technological assets. • Business - IT will follow the respective new authority's strategy and service goals. Digital services will be co-designed with users and customer focussed,

	facilitating self-service options. Business needs will inform technology choices. Technology will enable joined up, responsive services that can work better together, avoiding silos. • Data - will be treated as a strategic, accurate, secure, and accessible asset to inform decision making. Data sharing between services will be enabled while maintaining security and privacy. Data sharing with other public sector organisations will be facilitated. Application - duplication of applications and the accumulation of technical debt will be avoided. Preference will be given to applications that demonstrate interoperability and reusability.
Assets and estates 	• Local service access points retained. • Planned rationalisation of civic offices/depots. • Partner co-location where it improves access and integration. • Use of public sector estate to deliver new housing. • Sequence disposals and regeneration opportunities against service needs and legal constraints (e.g. any HRA-linked assets) and market timing. • HRAs will cover a larger geographical area, giving opportunity for more social housing to be delivered by local government – building on existing partnerships with Homes England.
Commissioning, procurement and suppliers 	• Shared frameworks for fragile/specialist markets and high-value categories when collaboration adds value. • Joint contract mapping and supplier engagement to manage novation and ensure continuity.

CASE STUDY: CONNECT AND PREVENT – TRANSFORMING SERVICES TO SUPPORT COMMUNITIES

The Connect and Prevent programme by Hertfordshire County Council is a leading example of how strategic community empowerment across a mixed urban-rural context is delivering measurable improvements to enable residents to lead independent lives. It combines AI-driven insight, joined-up data, and community-led delivery.

Providing better support to our community carers was identified as the biggest opportunity to delay the need for long-term care. This programme has identified over 58,000 carers and, using predictive analytics with 67% precision is forecasting breakdown events and enabling proactive intervention to prevent this. Through its Carers Hub, it will deliver personalised support via holistic conversations, local outreach and follow-ups to enable carers to feel empowered and supported. This approach has so far led to a 25% measurable improvement in wellbeing and resilience for carers, with 75% receiving community-based support and only one in eight people requiring formal assessment. It is anticipated this approach will generate £1.2m/annum financial benefit.

CASE STUDY: BUILDING RETROFIT AND HEALTHY HOMES IN HERTFORDSHIRE

Hertfordshire has invested significantly in creating healthier, more sustainable homes through a coordinated programme of retrofit, energy, and housing initiatives. This work demonstrates

how local government, and partnerships can de-silo planning, housing and sustainability functions to deliver system-wide benefits. Key strands of this programme include:

- Local Area Retrofit Accelerator (LARA): piloting new delivery models and supporting residents to navigate the retrofit process.
- Hertfordshire Retrofit Strategy: providing a shared framework for Councils, housing providers and partners to scale up retrofit activity across the county.
- Hertfordshire Retrofit Guide for Residents: offering clear, accessible information to households on how to improve the energy performance of their homes.
- Solar Together Hertfordshire: enabling residents to install solar panels and battery storage at scale through group buying, reducing costs and carbon emissions.
- Healthy Homes Agenda: integrating retrofit and housing quality improvements to deliver warmer, safer, more affordable homes that support public health outcomes.
- Alongside delivery projects, Hertfordshire has invested in skills and cross-disciplinary training. Planning Officers have been trained in sustainability principles, while sustainability Officers have gained training in planning processes. This joint approach is helping to embed climate action into housing, planning, and health services, breaking down silos and building shared capacity across disciplines.

Impact so far:

- Thousands of residents supported to access solar PV, retrofit and energy improvements.
- Multimillion pounds of private investment leveraged into local low-carbon housing.
- Improved officer knowledge and collaboration across planning, housing, and sustainability.
- A framework in place to scale up retrofit and healthy homes delivery county-wide.
- This integrated approach shows how local government can lead on both the strategic vision and the practical delivery of healthy, low-carbon homes, demonstrating the importance of partnership working, resident engagement and skills development.

CASE STUDY: HATFIELD RISE, HATFIELD

Hatfield Rise is a £47m regeneration programme that has transformed the heart of South Hatfield from an area that had fallen into disrepair into a thriving, modern development. The area previously comprised a dated neighbourhood shopping parade, low quality public realm, a garage block and vacant industrial units.

The regeneration programme was delivered using private funding over three phases as part of a development agreement between Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Lovell Partnerships Ltd and was designed to ensure local businesses could continue to trade throughout the works.

The new development includes 146 new homes, with a mix of flats and houses, comprising affordable, shared ownership and privately owned units. Each apartment has a number of standout features including full height glazing to show off the spectacular views of the surrounding area from all floors as well as energy efficient design to reduce both utility costs and carbon emissions.

The new retail units have been retained by the Council and provides an income of circa £300K per annum. The majority of the units are occupied by local, independent businesses and they provide residents with a number of essential services including a post office, dentist,

pharmacy, convenience stores, butchers, plumbers, hairdressers, betting shop, takeaways. Terms have also been agreed with the NHS to provide a new GP surgery.

New public realm areas include a brand-new playground in the centre of the development, providing a safe, fun, and inclusive space for children to enjoy in the heart of the community. The new playground is designed not only as a space for play but also as a focal point for families and community members to meet, with seating and benches that offer a space to socialise and relax, while upgraded CCTV aids crime prevention and helps ensure that residents feel safe and secure. The public realm will be maintained to a high standard moving forward thanks to an estates charge made to the leasehold properties.

Existing bus routes have been maintained and improvements made to the local roadway to encourage walking and cycling.

The Council's focus on this area has gone beyond just the redevelopment of buildings and infrastructure. They have introduced a PSPO to fight antisocial behaviour and hold regular meetings with residents to ensure that their voices are heard and any concerns are addressed. This ongoing after care emphasises the Council's commitment to residents and local communities.

Historically, the previous Hill Top shopping parade was considered Hatfield's second town centre, being the biggest of the neighbourhood parades. The new development reinforces that view and it is a vibrant destination location which supports Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's ambitious plans to provide more quality new homes and facilities for local residents.

MANAGING TRANSITION

As a partnership we have been working at pace to plan for transitioning service to new unitary structures to balance the risk, cost and complexity of disruption against the long-term benefits of radical transformation. Page 84 of this document sets out our ambition for critical services and how we will ensure a safe and legal transition to the first day of new Authorities. Each of the three proposals that supports this document brings to life the vision for how services will evolve over time post-vesting.

OUR AMBITIONS FOR SERVICES

- **Efficient and accountable** – structures will minimise duplication and unnecessary complexity, delivering better value for money for taxpayers. Democratic responsibility for services must be clear and visible, ensuring accountability and transparency to residents.
- **Resident-first** – services will be simple to access, responsive and built around the needs of people and businesses.
- **Prevention-led** – investment will shift into early help and community capacity. We will act early to tackle root causes, rather than symptoms – reducing long-term demand and helping people to live more independently. Services will work with housing, the NHS, public health, education, policing, and community partners to tackle root causes, reduce demand for crisis services, and deliver more joined-up support.
- **Strategic and effective place-based partners** – we will act as strong local partners, investing in the right places with the right infrastructure to help communities thrive and enable neighbourhoods to shape their own future. We will work better together across Councils, the NHS, police, businesses and the voluntary sector to deliver better outcomes with neighbourhoods at the heart of our collaborative approach.

- **Empowering places to work** – staff will have the tools, autonomy and support to innovate, with career pathways and development opportunities that help attract and retain talent.
- **Culturally ambitious** – new organisations will foster a culture of collaboration, pride and local identity, celebrating diversity and encouraging continuous improvement.
- **Data- and technology-enabled** – evidence and digital tools will support proactive, personalised and efficient services.
- **Sustainability-led:** we will embed environmental sustainability and climate resilience into service design, delivery and governance.

CONCLUSION: A STRONGER, SMARTER, MORE SUSTAINABLE HERTFORDSHIRE

Through devolution and the creation of new Unitary Authorities, we have a once in a generation opportunity to build a new model of local government that is modern, forward looking and agile, accountable to communities and reflecting local identity.

This transformation will bring powers over housing, transport, skills and economic development closer to the people and places they affect. It will simplify how public services are delivered, strengthen local leadership, and unlock new opportunities for growth, inclusion and sustainability.

Hertfordshire is bold and ready for change. We are working with government to secure the powers, investment and long-term certainty our communities need. By speaking with a single, amplified voice and acting with shared purpose, we can build a system that works better for everyone, now and in the future.

Together, we will create a more responsive, efficient and sustainable future, delivering positive outcomes for our people, our places, and for generations to come.

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

MHCLG criterion 1: establishing a single tier of local government

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO DELIVER OUR SHARED VISION AND AMBITION?

Our shared ambition is to create simpler, more accountable and more sustainable local government that can deliver better outcomes for residents, strengthen our communities and support future devolution. That ambition is shared by all 11 Councils in Hertfordshire, but there are a range of views on the best structural model to deliver it effectively.

Through extensive joint work we have developed and tested three credible models for unitary local government in Hertfordshire, reflecting different balances of financial scale, efficiency and localism. This options appraisal sets out the evidence base we have developed together, highlighting the relative strengths, risks and trade-offs for each option. It provides government, partners and residents with a transparent account of the choices available, grounded in local data and analysis, and closely framed against the assessment criteria set out by MHCLG.

HOW HAVE WE IDENTIFIED OPTIONS?

Partners in Hertfordshire have been actively and collaboratively considering options for local government reorganisation over a number of years. Since 2020, several independent appraisals have been undertaken to test different structural models, assess financial resilience, and explore implications for service delivery and leadership of place. The current set of proposals builds on this substantial body of evidence and reflects the most up-to-date assessment of what Hertfordshire can unlock through reorganisation.

SYSTEMATIC IDENTIFICATION OF OPTIONS

Hertfordshire Leaders' Group and Chief Executives of each Authority have dedicated their regular meetings since the start of the year to identifying and shortlisting options for reorganisation, following a structured, inclusive, and evidence-led process. A comprehensive longlisting exercise was undertaken at the start of this year to identify all viable configurations for new Unitary Authorities using existing District and Borough boundaries as the starting point. This top-down analysis was complemented by engagement with individual Councils and a deeper dive into local evidence to identify any alternative configurations with a clear rationale that might not emerge through statistical modelling alone.

Building on the resulting longlist of options, the Hertfordshire Leaders Group has worked together to agree a final shortlist of three options for detailed appraisal and decision-making. These options were selected to enable comparative analysis of the relative strengths, weaknesses and trade-offs between different models. All Councils have contributed to this process and are committed to developing a shared understanding of the evidence, while recognising that different preferences remain at this stage for the best delivery model for our shared ambition.

Each option has been reviewed using a combination of local data, national benchmarks, and qualitative insight. The options are compared and evaluated in this document, and then individual detailed proposals for each of the options accompany this document.

WHY HERTFORDSHIRE HAS RULED OUT A SINGLE COUNTY UNITARY OPTION

Following the County Council elections in May 2025, the Leaders of all 11 Hertfordshire Councils jointly ruled out the option of a single Unitary Authority to cover the entire county. The shared rationale is that a single Authority governing approximately 1.2 million residents would

be too remote from communities across Hertfordshire's diverse and distinctive areas and that it would lack the local responsiveness and democratic accountability necessary to maintain high standards of local service and community engagement.

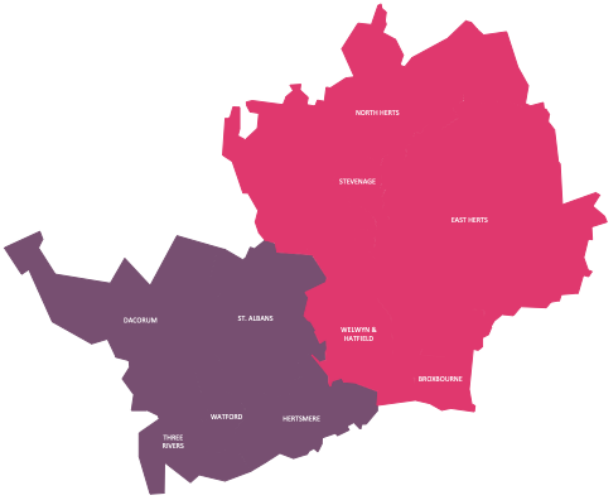
This position has now consolidated, given that we have more recently agreed to plan for a Mayoral Strategic authority on a Hertfordshire footprint. A 1:1 relationship between a Strategic Authority and a single Unitary local government body would not be a coherent model from the public, partners' or government's perspective.

MODIFICATION OF EXISTING BOUNDARIES

The legislation which enables Local Government Reorganisation requires that proposals submitted by local authorities, for consideration by the Secretary of State, must be based on existing district council boundaries. In cases where it is considered that there is a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification and changes to the boundaries are considered to be an improvement on the base proposal it is possible to request the Secretary of State to exercise their power to modify the base proposal to include the desired boundary changes.

In the following sections we set out three original proposals 2UA, 3UA and 4UA. The local authorities who support the 3UA and 4UA models consider that they would be significantly improved if their boundaries were altered and in accordance with the legislation, those local authorities have decided to request the Secretary of State to exercise their power to modify the 3UA and 4UA proposals to include the boundary changes. In summary, the required modifications are thought to be necessary for the primary reasons of aligning boundaries to reflect the realities of the place; to align administrative boundaries with established communities, to position local economic and social areas, and for the financial sustainability of new councils. A fuller explanation of the justification for these modifications this is set out within the accompanying individual proposals for these options.

OPTION A – TWO UNITARY AUTHORITIES FOR HERTFORDSHIRE



Note that the two Unitary proposal is based on District and Borough Council boundaries and does not include any requests for modifications to boundaries.

Please see accompanying notes on data sources.

GEOGRAPHY AND POPULATION

Local Authority	Geography (existing Districts and Boroughs)	Population (mid-2024)	Population (2045)	Anticipated no. of Councillors on Vesting Day
2 WEST	Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, Watford	625,622	722,000	117
2 EASTERN	Broxbourne, East Herts, North Herts, Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield	610,569	758,000	117

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Unitary option	Communities		Place and economy			Services (selected measures)			
	% share of population	% share of most deprived areas	% share of tax base	% Gross Value Added	% total children looked after	% total EHCPs	% households on LA housing waiting list	% new requests for adult social care support	% adults in long term care
2 WEST	51%	43%	52%	55%	47%	46%	27%	50%	51%
2 EASTERN	49%	57%	48%	45%	53%	54%	73%	50%	49%

COSTS AND SAVINGS FROM LGR

Unitary option	One-off implementation costs (£m)	Annual recurring saving by year 5 (£m)	Total cumulative savings from LGR in the first 5 years (£m)	Total cumulative savings from LGR in the first 10 years (£m)	Payback for LGR costs and savings in (financial year)
2 WEST	£85 – £102	£25 - £28	£40 - £57	£184 - £210	30/31 - 31/32
2 EASTERN		£25 - £27	£39 - £56	£182 - £208	30/31 - 31/32
Total		£50 - £55	£79 - £113	£366 - £418	30/31 - 31/32

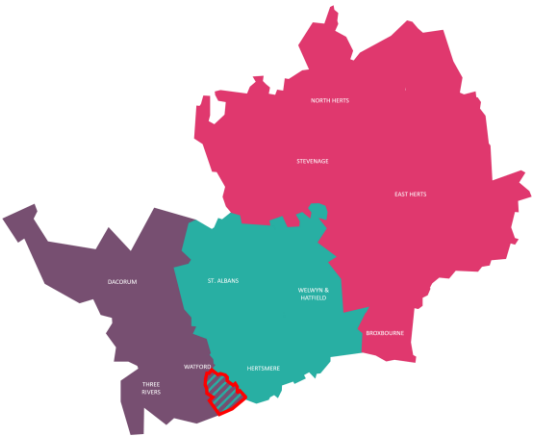
Note: ranges represent higher and lower cost scenarios – see Appendix A

OPTION B – THREE UNITARY AUTHORITIES FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Option B is built on a "base proposal" that reflects existing District and Borough boundaries. Supporters of this model wish to make a further request to the Secretary of State to use their powers to modify boundaries simultaneously to vesting day – see note in previous section.

BASE PROPOSAL

MODIFIED PROPOSAL



GEOGRAPHY

Unitary option	Base proposal (District and Borough boundaries as building blocks)	Modified proposal (Specific boundary changes requested)
3 WEST	Dacorum, Three Rivers, Watford	*Bushey North and Bushey South County Electoral Divisions, currently in Hertsmere BC, should be incorporated into the 3 West unitary authority.*
3 CENTRAL	Hertsmere, St Albans, Welwyn Hatfield	As above
3 EASTERN	Broxbourne, East Herts, North Herts, Stevenage	No change

POPULATION AND ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Local Authority	Population (mid-2024)	Population (2045)	Anticipated no. of Councillors on Vesting Day
BASE PROPOSAL			
3 WEST	364,398	424,000	66
3 CENTRAL	384,043	453,000	75
3 EASTERN	487,750	603,000	93
MODIFIED PROPOSAL			
3 WEST	392,247	463,000	72
3 CENTRAL	356,193	414,000	69
3 EASTERN	487,750	603,000	93
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF MODIFICATION			
3 WEST	27,849	39,000	+6
3 CENTRAL	-27,850	-39,000	-6
3 EASTERN	0	0	0

CONTEXTUAL DATA (SELECTED MEASURES)

Theme	Communities		Place & economy		Services (selected measures)				
Unitary option	% share of population	% share of most deprived areas	% share of tax base	% Gross Value Added	% total children looked after	% total EHCPs	% house-holds on LA housing waiting list	% new requests for adult social care support	% adults in long term care
BASE PROPOSAL									
3 WEST	29%	28%	29%	34%	30%	29%	21%	32%	32%
3 CENTRAL	31%	26%	32%	34%	30%	29%	25%	29%	29%
3 EASTERN	39%	46%	39%	32%	39%	43%	54%	40%	38%
MODIFIED PROPOSAL									
3 WEST	32%	29%	32%	36%	31%	31%	22%	32%	32%
3 CENTRAL	29%	25%	30%	32%	29%	26%	24%	29%	29%
3 EASTERN	39%	46%	39%	32%	39%	43%	54%	40%	38%
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF MODIFICATION									
3 WEST	3%	1%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%
3 CENTRAL	-2%	-1%	-2%	-2%	-1%	-3%	-1%	0%	0%
3 EASTERN	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

COSTS AND SAVINGS FROM LGR

Unitary option	One-off implementation costs (£m)	Annual recurring saving by year 5 (£m)	Total cumulative savings from LGR in the first 5 years (£m)	Total cumulative savings from LGR in the first 10 years (£m)	Payback for LGR costs and savings in (financial year)
BASE PROPOSAL					
3 WEST	£91 - £111	£9 - £11	(£7) - £9	£48 - £74	2032/33 - 2033/34
3 CENTRAL		£9 - £12	(£5) - £11	£52 - £78	2032/33 - 2033/34
3 EASTERN		£13 - £15	£6 - £22	£81 - £107	2031/32 – 2032/33
Total		£30 - £38	(£6) - £43	£181 - £258	2031/32 - 2033/34
MODIFIED PROPOSAL					
3 WEST	£91 - £111	£10 - £12	(£3) - £13	£58 - £83	2031/32 - 2033/34
3 CENTRAL		£8 - £10	(£9) - £7	£42 - £68	2032/33 - 2033/34
3 EASTERN		£13 - £15	£6 - £22	£81 - £107	2031/32 - 2032/33
Total		£30 - £38	(£6) - £43	£181 - £258	2031/32 - 2033/34
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF MODIFICATION					
3 WEST	No significant additional costs assumed	£1 - £1	£4 - £4	£10 - £9	-1yr – no change
3 CENTRAL		(£1) - (£2)	(£4) - (£4)	(£10) - (£10)	No change
3 EASTERN		No change	No change	No change	No change
Total		No change	No change	No change	No change

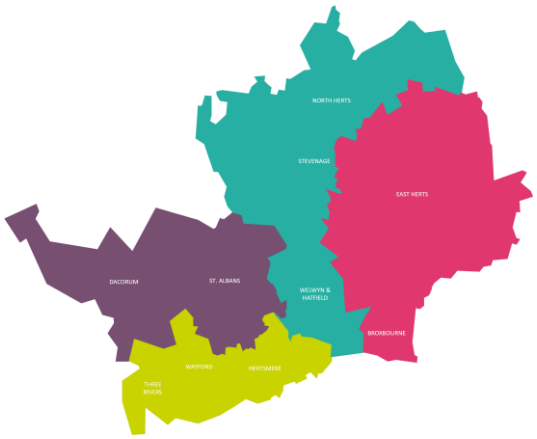
Note:

- **Ranges represent higher and lower cost scenarios** – see Appendix A
- **Cumulative savings** – negative numbers indicate a net cost position i.e. payback has not been achieved within specified timescale.

OPTION C – FOUR UNITARY AUTHORITIES FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Option C is built on a "base proposal" that reflects existing District and Borough boundaries. Supporters of this model wish to make a further request to the Secretary of State to use their powers to modify boundaries simultaneously to vesting day as indicated below – please see note preceding this section.

BASE PROPOSAL



MODIFIED PROPOSAL

GEOGRAPHY

Unitary option	Base proposal (District and Borough boundaries as building blocks)	Modified proposal (Specific boundary changes requested)
4 NORTH WEST	Dacorum, St Albans	*No change*
4 SOUTH WEST	Hertsmere, Three Rivers, Watford	*No change*
4 CENTRAL	North Herts, Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield	• *Royston Heath, Royston Palace, Royston Meridian, Ermine, Weston and Sandon, Arbury wards move from NHDC to the Eastern unitary authority.* • *Northaw and Cuffley Ward move from WHDC to the Eastern unitary.*
4 EAST	Broxbourne, East Herts	*As above*

POPULATION AND ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Unitary option	Population (mid-2024)	Population (2045)	Anticipated no. of Councillors on Vesting Day
BASE PROPOSAL			
4 NORTH WEST	312,432	351,000	84
4 SOUTH WEST	313,190	371,000	79
4 CENTRAL	351,794	429,000	100
4 EAST	258,775	328,000	64
MODIFIED PROPOSAL			
4 NORTH WEST	312,432	351,000	84
4 SOUTH WEST	313,190	371,000	79
4 CENTRAL	320,795	391,000	89
4 EAST	289,774	366,000	75
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF MODIFICATION			
4 NORTH WEST	0	0	0
4 SOUTH WEST	0	0	0
4 CENTRAL	-30,999	-38,000	-11
4 EAST	30,999	38,000	+11

CONTEXTUAL DATA (SELECTED MEASURES)

Theme	Communities		Place & economy		Services (selected measures)				
Unitary option	% share of population	% share of most deprived areas	% share of tax base	% Gross Value Added	% total children looked after	% total EHCPs	% households on LA housing waiting list	% new requests for adult social care support	% adults in long term care
BASE PROPOSAL									
4 N WEST	25%	19%	27%	23%	24%	23%	10%	25%	26%
4 S WEST	25%	25%	25%	32%	23%	24%	16%	25%	26%
4 CENTRAL	28%	35%	26%	29%	39%	32%	53%	28%	29%
4 EAST	21%	22%	22%	16%	14%	21%	21%	21%	19%
MODIFIED PROPOSAL									
4 N WEST	25%	19%	27%	23%	24%	23%	10%	25%	26%
4 S WEST	25%	25%	25%	32%	23%	24%	16%	25%	26%
4 CENTRAL	26%	35%	24%	26%	37%	29%	49%	28%	29%
4 EAST	24%	22%	24%	19%	16%	24%	24%	21%	19%
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF MODIFICATION									
4 N WEST	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4 S WEST	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4 CENTRAL	-2%	0%	-2%	-3%	-2%	-3%	-4%	0%	0%
4 EAST	3%	0%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	0%	0%

COSTS AND SAVINGS FROM LGR

Unitary option	One-off implementation costs (£m)	Annual recurring saving by year 5 (£m)	Total cumulative savings from LGR in the first 5 years (£m)	Total cumulative savings from LGR in the first 10 years (£m)	Payback for LGR costs and savings in (financial year)
BASE PROPOSAL					
4 N WEST	£97 -£120	£2 - £5	(£23) - (£5)	(£3) - £29	2033/34 - 2038/39
4 S WEST		£3 - £6	(£21) - (£3)	£3 - £34	2033/34 - 2037/38
4 CENTRAL		£5 - £8	(£16) - £3	£16 - £47	2032/33 - 2035/36
4 EASTERN		£1 - £4	(£29) - (£10)	(£17) - £14	2035/36 - unknown
Total		£11 - £23	(£89) - (£15)	(£1) - £124	2033/34 - 2038/39
MODIFIED PROPOSAL					
4 N WEST	£97 -£120	£2 - £5	(£23) - (£5)	(£3) - £29	2033/34 - 2038/39
4 S WEST		£3 - £6	(£21) - (£3)	£3 - £34	2033/34 - 2037/38
4 CENTRAL		£4 - £7	(£18) - £0	£10 - £41	2032/33 - 2036/37
4 EASTERN		£2 - £5	(£26) - (£8)	(£11) - £20	2034/35 - unknown
Total		£11 - £23	(£89) - (£15)	(£1) - £124	2033/34 - 2038/39
CHANGE AS A RESULT OF MODIFICATION					
4 N WEST	No significant additional costs assumed	No change	No change	No change	No change
4 S WEST		No change	No change	No change	No change
4 CENTRAL		(£1) – (£1)	(£2) – (£3)	(£6) – (£6)	No change - +1 yr
4 EASTERN		£1 - £1	£3 - £2	£6 - £6	-1yr – No change
Total		No change	No change	No change	No change

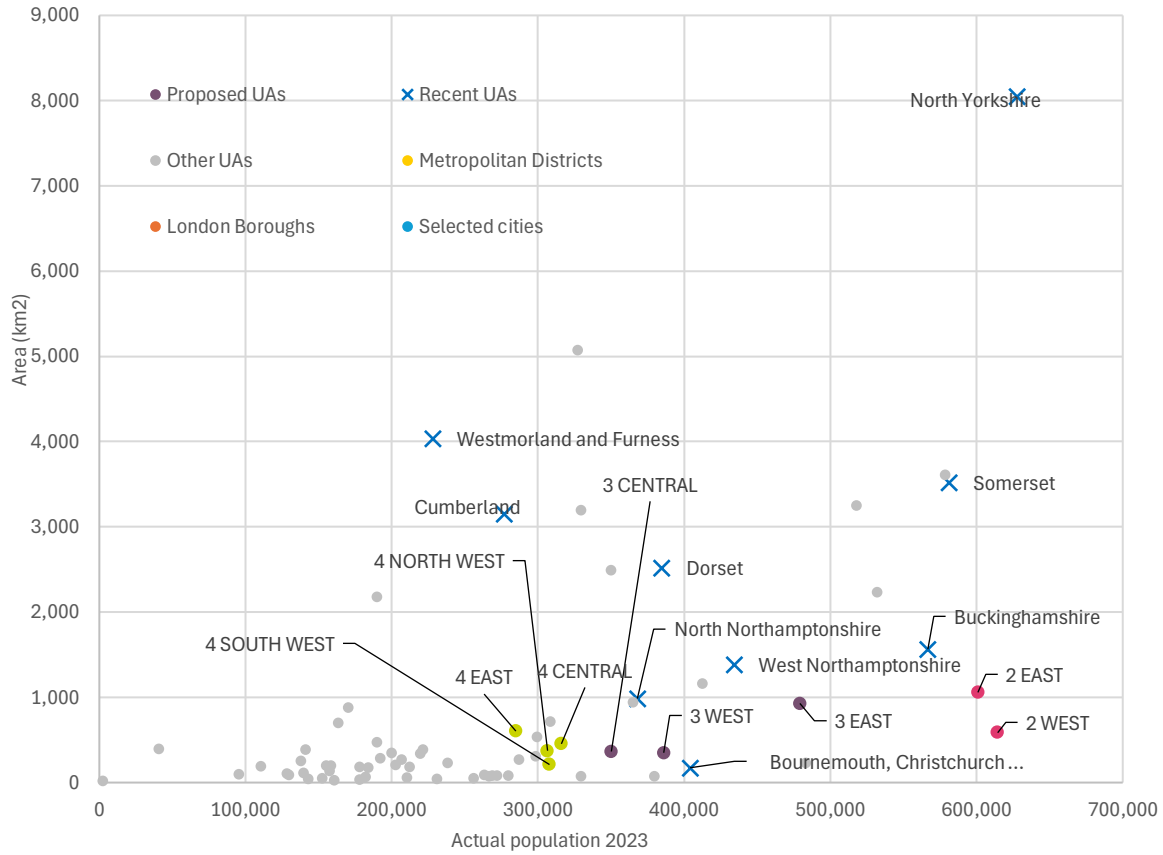
Note:

- **Ranges represent higher and lower cost scenarios** – see Appendix A

- **Cumulative savings** – negative numbers indicate a net cost position i.e. payback has not been achieved within specified timescale.
- **Payback year unknown** – payback occurs after the end of the model duration (2038/39)

COMPARING SCALE WITH RECENTLY CREATED UNITARY AUTHORITIES

GRAPH: POPULATION VS AREA FOR UNITARY OPTIONS COMPARED WITH RECENT NEW UNITARY AUTHORITIES



- **Option A** - two new unitary authorities would be amongst the largest non-metropolitan Authorities that exist today, with similar population sizes to Somerset and North Yorkshire but over a much more compact area on periphery of London.
- **Option B** - the West and Central Authorities within the modified three unitary proposal are of a similar scale to Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and North Northamptonshire, whereas the Eastern authority would be larger and of a similar scale to West Northamptonshire.
- **Option C** – all four Authorities will be of a similar size in the modified proposal and relatively small by comparison with recently created Unitary Authorities, although above average by comparison with all other pre-existing Unitary Authorities.

NOTES ON DATA SOURCE

GEOGRAPHY AND POPULATION

- **Population** – mid-year population estimates for England and Wales, ONS (2024) and HCC modelled figures for 2045 (see below).
- **Councillor numbers** – see Appendix B.

CONTEXTUAL DATA

- **Deprivation** – percentage share of the most deprived decile of LSOAs in Hertfordshire - English Indices of Deprivation, DLUHC (2019).
- **Tax base** – data collated from Hertfordshire Authorities.
- **GVA** – Gross Value Added across all industries - Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry, ONS (2023).
- **Services** – data collated from Hertfordshire Authorities.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- **Annual recurring saving by year 5** – the annual saving generated once all transitional costs have been incurred, all recurring costs have been phased in and all recurring benefits fully realised.
- **Cumulative savings** – the cumulative savings from LGR over time, net of one-off and recurring costs. A negative number means that up-front costs are still being 'paid off'.
- **Payback on LGR investment costs** – the year that cumulative savings become greater than cumulative costs (one-off and recurring).

POPULATION PROJECTIONS – TECHNICAL NOTE

A number of population projections are set out in this submission. below:

1. Internal projection: This projection takes into account ambitious plans across the County to significantly increase the rates of Net New Home Completions. It is based on published 5-year Housing and Land Strategies, where available, with an assumption that completion rates apply on a straight-line basis between 2024 and 2045.
2. Office for National Statistics (ONS) projection: This projection, published July-2025, is based on rolling forward trends in 'natural change' (rates of births and deaths) and net migration (both internal and international).

A summary of both projections is set out below:

Base proposal (without boundary changes):

	2 UNITARY		3 UNITARY			4 UNITARY				COUNTY
	WEST	EAST	WEST	CENTRAL	EAST	NORTH WEST	SOUTH WEST	CENTRAL	EAST	
2024 estimate (n.1)	625,622	610,569	364,398	384,043	487,750	312,432	313,190	351,794	258,775	1,236,191
2038 projection (n.2)										
Internal (n.3)	685,000	702,000	401,000	427,000	559,000	336,000	349,000	400,000	302,000	1,387,000
% vs. 2024	9%	15%	10%	11%	15%	8%	11%	14%	17%	12%
ONS (n.4)	643,000	642,000	373,000	408,000	505,000	322,000	322,000	372,000	271,000	1,286,000
% vs. 2024	3%	5%	2%	6%	4%	3%	3%	6%	5%	4%

2045 projection										
Internal (n.3)	722,000	758,000	424,000	453,000	603,000	351,000	371,000	429,000	328,000	1,479,000
% vs. 2024	15%	24%	16%	18%	24%	12%	18%	22%	27%	20%
ONS (n.4)	660,000	660,000	382,000	419,000	519,000	331,000	329,000	381,000	279,000	1,320,000
% vs. 2024	5%	8%	5%	9%	6%	6%	5%	8%	8%	7%

Modified proposal (with boundary changes):

	2 UNITARY		3 UNITARY			4 UNITARY				COUNTY
	WEST	EAST	WEST	CENTRAL	EAST	NORTH WEST	SOUTH WEST	CENTRAL	EAST	
2024 estimate (n.1)	625,622	610,569	392,247	356,193	487,750	312,432	313,190	320,795	289,774	1,236,191
2038 projection (n.2)										
Internal (n.3)	685,000	702,000	438,000	390,000	559,000	336,000	349,000	367,000	335,000	1,387,000
% vs. 2024	9%	15%	12%	9%	15%	8%	11%	14%	16%	12%
ONS (n.4)	643,000	642,000	407,000	374,000	505,000	322,000	322,000	336,000	307,000	1,286,000
% vs. 2024	3%	5%	4%	5%	4%	3%	3%	5%	6%	4%
2045 projection										
Internal (n.3)	722,000	758,000	463,000	414,000	603,000	351,000	371,000	391,000	366,000	1,479,000
% vs. 2024	15%	24%	18%	16%	24%	12%	18%	22%	26%	20%
ONS (n.4)	660,000	660,000	425,000	375,000	519,000	331,000	329,000	342,000	318,000	1,320,000
% vs. 2024	5%	8%	8%	5%	6%	6%	5%	7%	10%	7%

(n.1) ONS estimate for mid-2024; published Jul-2025

(n.2) Coterminous with MTFS

(n.3) Hertfordshire Local Authorities; based on projections of housing completions.

(n.4) ONS projection for mid-2028; published Jul-2025; based on 2022 population estimates.

EVALUATION OF OPTIONS AGAINST MHCLG CRITERIA

The purpose of this options appraisal is to provide all partners in Hertfordshire, and government, with a shared, objective and evidence-led comparison of the three shortlisted models for Unitary structures. The appraisal has been carried out against the criteria set out by MHCLG and is supported by a wide range of evidence as collaborative work across professional and technical leads within all 11 Hertfordshire Councils. The conclusions are agreed by all partners.

For clarity, the base and modified versions of the proposals are compliant with MHCLG criteria. This options appraisal focused on the modified proposals for the 3 and 4 unitary options as supporters of these believe they are superior in what they deliver as compared to the base proposals.

Further details for each model are provided in the accompanying proposals.

OPTIONS APPRAISAL – OVERVIEW

MHCLG criteria (summarised)	Option A – 2 Unitary Authorities	Option B – 3 Unitary Authorities	Option C – 4 Unitary Authorities
1. Sensible geography and economic area	BALANCED Aligns to existing planning and health partnership areas and uses current boundaries. Contains multiple economic areas.	BALANCED Has a more complex alignment to economic areas shaped by commuter patterns, sector clusters and strategic transport corridors.	BALANCED Aligns to (but subdivides) existing planning and health partnership areas. Requires two significant boundary changes.
2. Right size to generate efficiencies and absorb shocks	MORE ALIGNED Delivers organisations with larger financial scale, highest savings and fastest payback. Creates large authorities with populations above 500,000 on day one. All options will grow rapidly in line with ambitions for delivery of new homes.	BALANCED Delivers savings but still achieves organisations with enough scale to be resilient. Still creates authorities with large populations although comparable with some existing newer unitary authorities. All options will grow rapidly in line with ambitions for delivery of new homes.	LESS ALIGNED Delivers some savings and will require collaboration/support/sharing of resource to protect financial capacity. Creates smaller authorities although comparable with some existing UAs. All options will grow rapidly in line with ambitions for delivery of new homes.
3. Quality and sustainable services	MORE ALIGNED Single split of county services into east and west areas, requiring no realignment due to boundary review. Aligned to key partnership geographies. Services provided larger organisations will need flexibility to respond to local differences.	BALANCED More disaggregation creating higher risk and complexity than 2U. Requires a reset of some strategic partner collaboration geographies. Greater ease in differentiating services according to local needs and priorities within smaller areas.	BALANCED Highest disaggregation and associated risk but create two authorities within each established east and west area. Aligned as subsets of key partnership geographies. Smaller authorities can provide the greatest level of differentiation of services to reflect local need.
4. Meets local needs / local views	BALANCED Preferred by most strategic partners for simplicity, economies of scale, and alignment with existing partnership geographies. Residents had mixed views, with many recognising the potential for financial sustainability.	BALANCED Strategic partners and residents noted that the model could offer a balance between scale and connection to community. A number of residents commenting on this option said the proposed geography 'made sense'	BALANCED Mixed views, with strategic stakeholders concerned about fragmentation, while there was a plurality of support from business and VCS groups in some areas. Residents had mixed views. The main reason given by those expressing support was closeness to communities.
5. Supports devolution	BALANCED All options are capable of partnering effectively with a future Hertfordshire Strategic Authority.	BALANCED All options are capable of partnering effectively with a future Hertfordshire Strategic Authority.	BALANCED All options are capable of partnering effectively with a future Hertfordshire strategic authority. .
6. Stronger community engagement	LESS ALIGNED Risks being perceived as remote and needs strong locality working model but has greatest capacity to invest.	BALANCED Closer to residents but will still need strong locality working arrangements.	MORE ALIGNED Smallest areas: naturally closer to communities and potentially requiring less locality infrastructure.

OPTION A –

Two Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire

MHCLG criteria	Observations from review of evidence
Single tier of local government • Sensible economic area and geography • Robust analysis and evidence	• Each Authority is aligned to one of Hertfordshire's recognised planning and health partnership areas and transport corridors along the M1 and A1(M), although they cover more than one functional economic market area in each case. • Authorities are broadly balanced on population, tax base and economic strengths although the eastern area includes moderately higher deprivation and likely demand for key services, along with slightly lower taxbase. • This option uses existing District and Borough boundaries with no modification requested.
Right size to achieve efficiency and withstand shocks. • Guidance on population sizes • Generating efficiencies • Covering transition costs	• This option generates the highest level of savings (£366m - £418 over ten years) and will pay back on transition cost the fastest (within 2030-2032) without need for external support. New organisations will be of sufficient financial scale to absorb likely increases in demand and future financial shocks. • Each Authority would serve a population of over 600,000, growing to an estimated 720,000 to 760,000 residents by 2045. They would be amongst the largest non-metropolitan Unitary Authorities that exist today,
Quality and sustainable services • Improving services and avoiding 'unnecessary fragmentation' • Delivering reform • Managing impacts on 'crucial services'	• This model creates the lowest level of complexity in the transition of services currently delivered at county level, with critical services only needing to be split once alongside any retained shared arrangements. However, there is a degree of complexity in aggregating district services. • Each area aligns with one of Hertfordshire's two existing health and care partnerships, two acute hospitals, West Herts Hospitals NHS trust and North Hertfordshire NHS trust, and two operational areas for Hertfordshire Constabulary retaining simplicity and continuity in joint commissioning and service planning. • Financially, this model offers the greatest scope for reinvestment in service improvement and innovation, due to the higher level of projected savings. • There is a risk that the organisations would be perceived as remote from local communities, and additional investment would be needed in developing infrastructure for differentiating services according to the distinct needs of each locality.
Meets local needs and informs local views. • Collaboration between Councils • Local identity and heritage • Evidence of local engagement	• All 11 Councils in Hertfordshire have worked together to produce this submission as part of a single programme using a shared evidence base. We have engaged extensively with local stakeholders and the public, with a summary of views below. • Strategic partners and institutional stakeholders: Most overall support among strategic partners. Health bodies (ICB, NHS Trusts), large employers (e.g. Tarmac, Gascoyne Estates), and business networks generally favoured this model for its simplicity, alignment with existing east -west footprints, and reduced duplication. It was viewed as the most coherent option for cross-system collaboration and economic strategy. • Residents: This option had the second most expressions of support from residents. The main reasons given for support were the potential for efficiencies and financial sustainability. The main concerns expressed were that councils could be too large and remote. • All options will be capable of protecting, celebrating and enhancing local identity and heritage.
Supporting devolution arrangements • Sensible population ratios with an SA • Supportive timeline	• Two Authorities would form a compact and streamlined partnership with the Hertfordshire Strategic Authority. Two large, balanced Councils would each act as a clear delivery partner for county-wide priorities such as transport, skills and net zero. Shared east -west health, planning and police geographies offer strong alignment with likely Strategic Authority programmes. • With only two local partners alongside a Mayor, political diversity could be limited, and debate could risk becoming polarised along east -west lines. • The model is fully supportive of a smooth implementation timeline.
Stronger community engagement	• With each of the proposed Unitary Authorities serving around 600,000 residents, the new UAs would inevitably be perceived as more remote from residents and businesses and would require meaningful arrangements, effort and investment to ensure decisions remain close to

• Enabling strong community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	local communities and that services are visible, accessible and responsive. This could include joint working with Town and Parish Councils in the areas that they cover. • Larger Unitary Authorities would have greater internal capacity to support this kind of community engagement activity.

OPTION B –

Three Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire

MHCLG criteria	Observations from review of evidence
Single tier of local government • Sensible economic area and geography • Robust analysis and evidence	• This option creates three Unitary Authorities that are compliant with MHCLG criteria. • The remainder of this table reflects the base proposal, with details of the modified proposal including Bushey included in the 3 unitary sub-proposal • The three new Authorities would achieve a good balance of tax base, economic output, deprivation and demand proportionate to their resident population sizes. .
Right size to achieve efficiency and withstand shocks. • Guidance on population sizes • Generating efficiencies • Covering transition costs	• This option delivers £181m to £285m net savings over ten years and is likely to pay back on investment costs in 2031 and 2034. It offers lower economies of scale than the 2U model and increased costs from disaggregating county services three ways. • Modelling indicates that this option remains financially viable over the medium term, with efficiencies likely able to offset growth in demand for services and with sufficient capacity to absorb shocks. • Each of the proposed Authorities falls below the 500,000 population guiding principle set out in the White Paper and are comparable in scale with several recently established Unitary Councils. Population sizes are estimated to grow to between 410,000 and 600,000 by 2045, in line with anticipated housing growth, place identity and the principle that an MSA should have a population of 1.5m,
Quality and sustainable services • Improving services and avoiding 'unnecessary fragmentation' • Delivering reform • Managing impacts on 'crucial services'	• County services would be split three ways alongside any shared service delivery arrangements. This introduces greater complexity during the transition, particularly in areas such as Adult and Children's Social Care, SEND and Highways. • The model aligns with the PCN footprints, which will support the delivery of the NHS 10-year plan. However, none of the three proposed Authorities aligns fully with existing health and care partnership areas or Hertfordshire Constabulary operational footprints, meaning that a reset will be required for collaborative arrangements. However, the Chief Constable has indicated he will change structures post LGR if required. • Despite being large Authorities, they would be perceived as closer to communities than the two Unitary option and would be more able to easily differentiate services according to the different needs of each area.
Meets local needs and informs local views. • Collaboration between councils • Local identity and heritage • Evidence of local engagement	• All 11 Councils in Hertfordshire have worked together to produce this submission as part of a single programme and using a shared evidence base. We have engaged extensively with local stakeholders and the public, with a summary of views below. • Strategic partners: This option attracted limited explicit backing. A few organisations (e.g. Community Action Dacorum, some housing associations) mentioned it positively, describing it as a "balanced" model that reflected existing community linkages. Most public-sector partners were either neutral or inclined toward two Unitaries for operational simplicity. • Residents: While this option received fewer expressions of support than either 2 or 4 unitaries, it was the option viewed most positively for its proposed geographic footprint, with comments that it 'made sense.' Other residents expressed support for the model as a middle ground, large enough for efficiencies but not too remote. • All options will be capable of protecting, celebrating and enhancing local identity and heritage.
Supporting devolution arrangements • Sensible population ratios with a SA • Supportive timeline	• This option would broaden local democratic representation within a strategic authority while keeping the structure manageable. Three unitary leaders alongside a mayor would create a balanced and plural cabinet, avoiding concentration of power or excessive fragmentation and encouraging consensus-building and cross-party working. • Our understanding is that the request for limited boundary adjustment (involving Bushey) is unlikely to present a major timeline risk, although further discussions with government are required to confirm this.
Stronger community engagement • Enabling strong community engagement and	• With populations between 360,000 and 490,000, the three-unitary model brings councils somewhat closer to residents than the two-unitary alternative, while still retaining capacity to invest in community engagement. • This option would still need to invest in infrastructure for locality engagement and empowerment and would have the financial scale and capacity to do so.

neighbourhood empowerment	

OPTION C –

Four Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire

MHCLG criteria	Observations from review of evidence
Single tier of local government • Sensible economic area and geography • Robust analysis and evidence	• This option creates four new Unitary Authorities, each based on groupings of existing district boundaries, with boundary changes requested to balance population sizes and demand. For further information about requested boundary modifications see proposal for 4UA. The proposed Authorities are designed to reflect local settlement patterns, with two falling within the county's current health and policing operational areas. • The modified areas achieve an even balance of population sizes and tax base, but a disproportionate concentration of demand for key services within the 'central' Unitary Authority.
Right size to achieve efficiency and withstand shocks. • Guidance on population sizes • Generating efficiencies • Covering transition costs	• All four proposed Authorities fall below the 500,000 population guiding principle set out in the White Paper, with each serving between 290,000 and 320,000 people, although they would be larger than average compared with existing Unitary Authorities. By 2045, populations are estimated to grow to between 350,000 and 390,000, in line with ambition for delivery of new homes. • This option delivers lower net savings of up to £124m over ten years, but only just pays back within a ten-year period in the higher cost scenario. This reflects reduced economies of scale and higher costs associated with disaggregating countywide services four ways. • The uneven financial scale and concentrations of demand in this model mean that the central Authority in particular is unlikely to be viable without further redistribution of funding, noting that our analysis does not currently include any future impacts from the Fair Funding Review and the model does not provide a central assessment of transformation, efficiency or additional growth.
Quality and sustainable services • Improving services and avoiding 'unnecessary fragmentation' • Delivering reform • Managing impacts on 'crucial services'	• Four smaller Unitary Authorities will be able to offer more differentiated services to the areas they cover according to the specific needs of residents and businesses. • Smaller Authorities may have less capacity to manage complex demand or high-cost placements independently. Alternative delivery models such as shared service or collaborative models are likely to be required to preserve scale and stability in key services. Supporters of this model argue that smaller Authorities can be more agile and responsive in responding to demand locally and proactively. • This model involves the greatest level of disaggregation of county services, including four separate statutory functions for Adults and Children's Social Care. • Each of the existing police, health and care partnership footprints would contain two Unitary Authorities, avoiding cross-boundary working but potentially requiring partners to duplicate their existing partnership arrangements.
Meets local needs and informs local views. • Collaboration between councils • Local identity and heritage • Evidence of local engagement	• All 11 Councils in Hertfordshire have worked together to produce this submission as part of a single programme and using a shared evidence base. We have engaged extensively with local stakeholders and the public, with a summary of views below. • Strategic partners: This option had the least support amongst strategic partners, particularly public sector partners who mostly favoured larger councils. Some partners (e.g. Lee Valley Park Authority) expressed support, and there was support from some local civic and community organisations who favoured it for a stronger local focus. • Residents: This option received the highest number of positive comments from residents. Reasons given were primarily around valuing local representation and community identity. Supporters argued smaller Councils would be more accountable and 'closer to the people', even if less efficient. • All options will be capable of protecting, celebrating and enhancing local identity and heritage.
Supporting devolution arrangements • Sensible population ratios with an SA • Supportive timeline	• Four smaller Unitary Councils would sit within the Hertfordshire Strategic Authority, maximising political plurality but creating a more complex interface for strategic coordination by comparison to the other two models. • The Mayor would work with four leaders representing distinct and recognisable communities. This enhances legitimacy and local accountability but makes decision-making more deliberative. Achieving consensus could be slower and would require clear constitutional frameworks for voting, resource allocation and scrutiny to prevent duplication or gridlock.

	• The need for boundary review (e.g. Royston, Northaw and Cuffley) introduces greater complexity into the proposal and the support of government would be required to deliver this model of reorganisation to the most ambitious timelines. See Appendix E for more information on this request.
Stronger community engagement • Enabling strong community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment	• This model brings principal Councils significantly closer to communities than the 2U or 3U alternatives. Smaller Authorities are less likely to need to invest in extensive locality working arrangements and can enter into more flexible and responsive local partnerships within their own footprints. • Although tighter financial constraints are expected, smaller Unitary Authorities may have more flexibility to pilot innovative approaches to neighbourhood involvement, including relating to prevention and managing demand.

EFFICIENCY AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

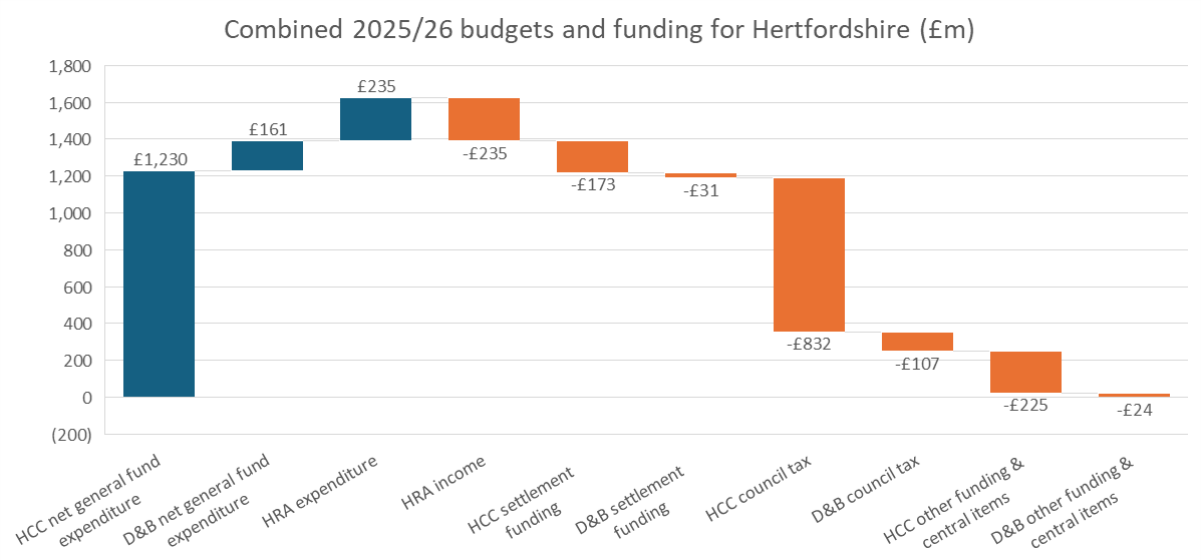
MHCLG criterion 2: scale, efficiency, capacity

HERTFORDSHIRE'S STARTING POSITION

Hertfordshire councils are in a better and more sustainable financial position than in many other areas with a consistent track record of good financial management, delivering savings, growing income through efficiency and innovation and of providing value for money. Unlike many other areas undergoing reorganisation, none of the eleven authorities in Hertfordshire is in receipt of exceptional financial support, under government intervention or requiring additional support linked to debt or capital practices.

However, Hertfordshire authorities do share the key challenges facing the local government sector of increasing demand and costs of providing local services rising at a faster rate than their incomes.

GRAPH: COMBINED 2025/26 BUDGET FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

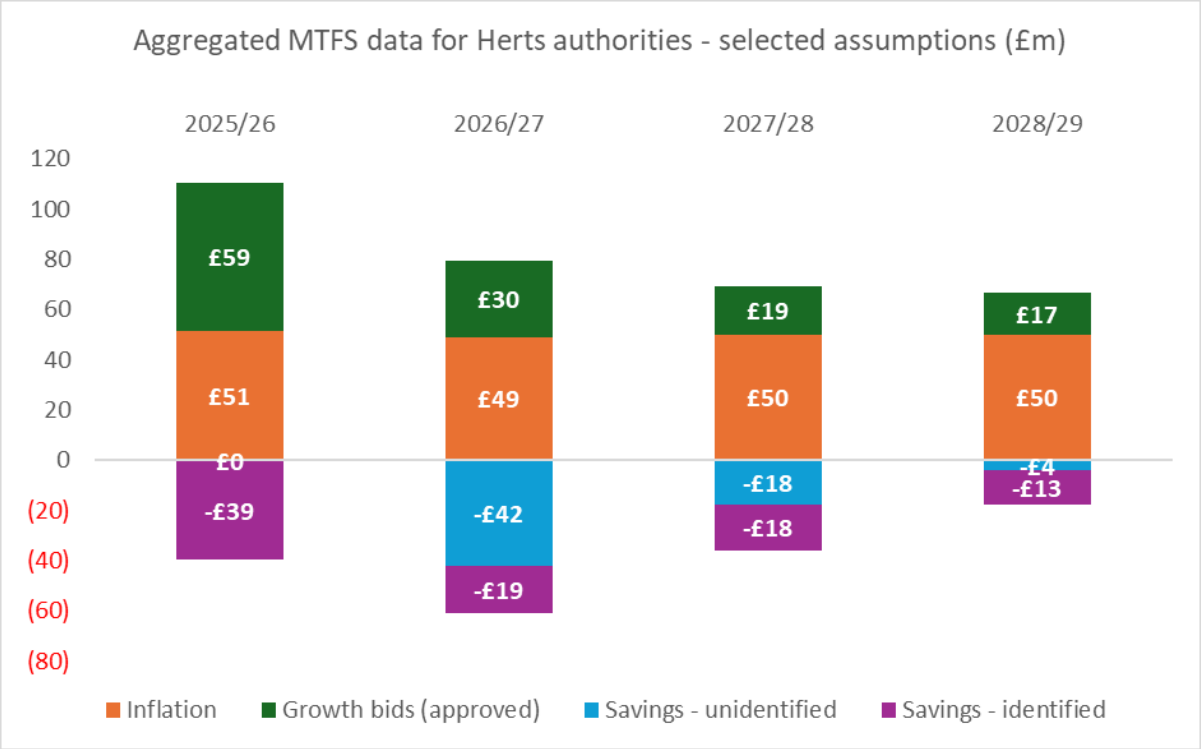


£1.4billion combined net revenue budget	£1.2billion net budget for HCC	£0.16bn combined net budget for Districts and Boroughs	£0.24bn in four Housing Revenue Accounts

MEDIUM-TERM POSITION PRIOR TO VESTING DAY

Our preferred implementation timeline is that new authorities are vested on 1 April 2028. We have aggregated medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) information for all Herts authorities to show the growth assumptions (including inflation) and savings requirements pre vesting day.

GRAPH: SELECTED MTFS ASSUMPTIONS PRE-VESTING DAY



To meet their statutory responsibilities for setting balanced budgets prior to LGR, £154m net savings will need to be delivered across Hertfordshire over the period to 2028/29. To date £90m of savings have been identified leaving a shortfall of £64m.

All councils are committed to deliver these savings required to achieve a balanced opening position for the new authorities in 2028/29, recognising the risk that if this is not achieved new unitary authorities will suffer from a more challenging opening position.

COLLABORATING TO ASSESS THE FINANCIAL IMPACTS OF LGR

The financial case and modelling approach has been developed collaboratively with Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) from all eleven councils with an external consultancy to develop a shared financial model and set of assumptions.

- All of our options have been developed using a single financial model developed as part of a collaborative process.
- All modelling assumptions, including higher and lower cost ranges in two key areas (detailed below) have been accepted by all CFOs and chief executives.

IMPORTANT CAVEATS AND LIMITATIONS

Model accuracy and reliability

Financial models have been prepared using information available and considered reliable at the time of preparation. This includes council budgets, performance and demand data alongside input from each of the Hertfordshire LGR programme workstreams and benchmarking information from other LGR cases. Best endeavours have been made to apply reasonable assumptions, data sources and analysis in the development of assumptions and estimates within the financial model, but these remain subject to high levels of inevitable uncertainty in key areas due to the inherent limitations of available information at this stage prior to the decision and shadow authorities being formed.

Throughout this process, a prudent approach has been applied to avoid potential overstatement of estimated benefits or understatement of estimated costs. Consideration has also been given to materiality, focusing on the assumptions and financial factors most likely to have a significant impact on the overall outcomes of the model.

The modelling assumptions detailed in appendix A, including higher and lower cost ranges in two key areas (detailed below) have been accepted by all CFOs and chief executives.

Future impact of Fair Funding Review

The potential impacts of the Fair Funding Review (FFR) have not been reflected in the financial model. The model also assumes no business rates growth or increases in core government grant funding beyond 2027/28.

Although CFOs conducted extensive due diligence and engaged a third-party organisation to assess likely effects, the findings were unreliable due to conflicting data and government indications that modelling assumptions will change before FFR is finalised. Initial analysis based on current assumptions suggests FFR will likely reduce overall revenue funding and alter its distribution across Hertfordshire over the medium term, potentially affecting the sustainability of future unitary authorities. Hertfordshire County Council have included £50M FFR savings prior to 2028/29.

Council Tax

For the purposes of the financial model, Council Tax increases are assumed to be at 4.99% (2.99% Council Tax + 2% adult social care precept) as per the current referendum limits and in line with the MHCLG approach to funding projections. The model assumes that the District & Borough element of Council Tax will be harmonised at a weighted average and implemented in 2028/29 in line with creation of new authorities. The taxbase is assumed to continue to grow at a rate that is consistent with the current 2025/26 to 2027/28 medium-term period.

In practice within their shadow year, new authorities will need to decide how to harmonise Council Tax across their areas and there are different options as to how this can be done. Future annual raises in Council Tax will then be a decision for new authorities themselves.

Uncertainties and unexpected shocks

Whilst prudent assumptions have been identified and accepted in all cases, the viability of all future unitary authorities will be subject to additional risks and uncertainties, including:

- The significant savings planned in the 25/26 to 27/28 period (pre-vesting day) is not delivered in full, contributing to a more challenging opening position for new authorities.
- Inflation or demand increases at a higher rate than is assumed in our modelling.
- There is any slippage in delivering the anticipated benefits from LGR.

- Further unanticipated local, national or international events causing economic or financial shocks.

Additional key financial risks and issues are included at the end of this section, and in more detail within appendix A.

SCOPE OF FINANCIAL MODEL

The financial case has been modelled from a 2025/26 baseline to 2028/29 as assumed year one for new authorities, then over a further 10-year period from vesting day in line with best practice recommended by CIPFA. The financial model combines three key sets of assumptions and calculations for each unitary authority option:

Medium-term assumptions	**(Dis)Aggregation assumptions**	**LGR impact assumptions**
The net budget requirement for each authority, the resources (including council tax, fees and charges and government grant) available to each area and how these will change over the next ten years.	An assessment of how the HCC and District and Borough budgets would be recombined into specific geographical areas, based on relevant local factors and taking account of potential boundary review for unitary authorities.	Costs and savings from LGR - LGR is an "invest to save" activity, this element estimates the costs of delivering LGR and the savings it delivers.
All assumptions are the same for all options	**All assumptions are the same for all options**	All but two assumptions are the same for all models – a range has been implemented in two key areas (see below).

USE OF RANGES FOR LGR IMPACT ASSUMPTIONS

Assumption area	**Upper end of the range**	**Lower end of the range**
Recurring costs from duplication of social care management teams within new authorities	A high scenario was created by the DASS and DCS undertaking an analysis of current management posts down to Head of Service level within the existing county structures to identify which posts are necessary in each council given the TOM approach. Some services within this have been assumed to be shared for the purposes of the modelling. It is assumed that all other front-line roles / costs below Head of Service level are split across the new authorities without duplication.	A low scenario was created by benchmarking the costs of social care management in existing unitary authorities that are of comparable scale to potential unitary authorities for Hertfordshire, using publicly available information. Further detail on the methodology used and limitations are included in appendix A.
One-off costs from disaggregation of HCC ICT estate and ongoing running costs	The high and low scenarios reflect the complexity and uncertainty in relation to future ERP/Finance and HR provision. The range of costs account for the solution/provider landscape, the options relating to the scale of migration and integration activity and the existing highly customised platforms and processes.	

Further detail on assumptions and the rationale for these is included in appendix A.

KEY FINDINGS

The following pages show these assumptions combined to estimate the likely medium-term position of future unitary authorities, focusing on:

- Position in year one (2028/29)
- Budget position after the first five years
- 10-year performance relative to the two-tier baseline

We then consider the specific impacts of LGR and associated costs and savings as a key component of the medium-term position.

Year one – 2028/29

The baseline for the financial modelling is the 2025/26 balanced budget for each individual authority, rolled forward to match existing medium-term financial plans for 2026/27 and 2027/28, leading to a start point for 2028/29 based on a common set of key assumptions agreed by CFOs. Budgets balance in overall terms at start of 2028/29 but opening deficits and surpluses exist as illustrated in the graph and table below.

For the reasons noted above, this illustration of the starting point does not reflect the potential redistribution impact of the Fair Funding Review. It also excludes Housing Revenue Accounts and additional costs and benefits from LGR, which are set out in the next section.

GRAPH: YEAR ONE BUDGETS

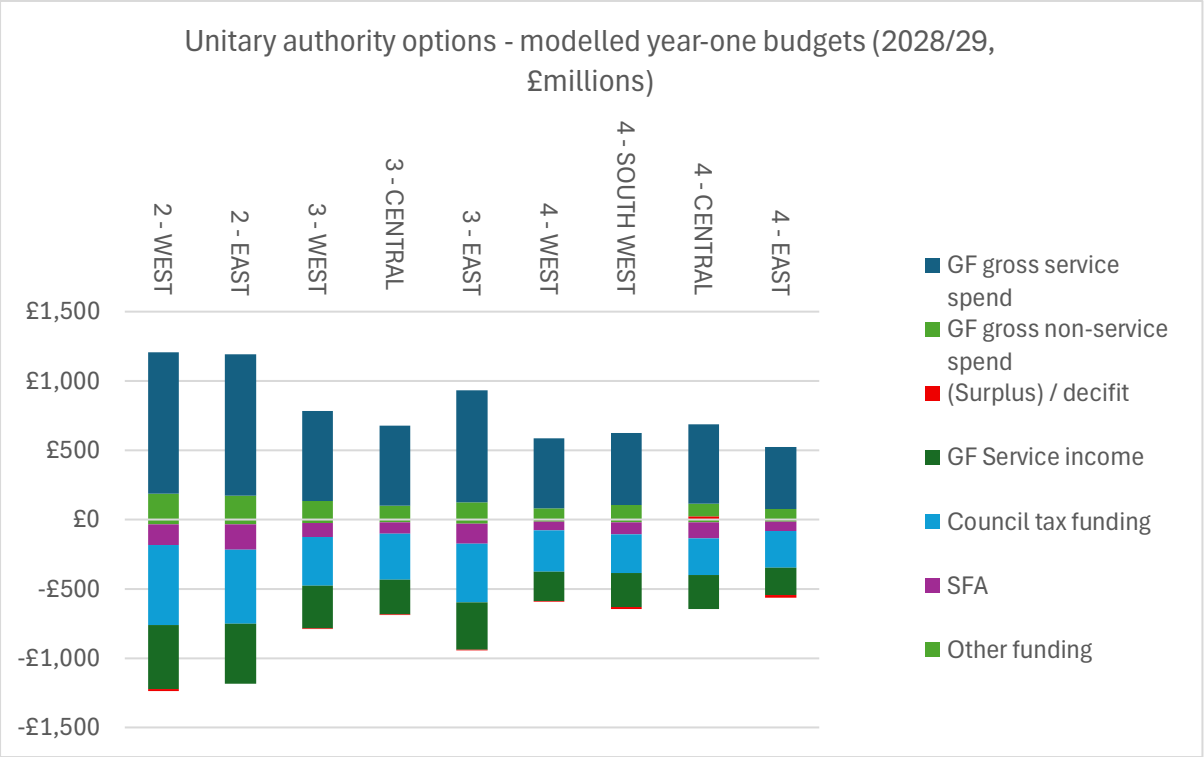


TABLE: YEAR ONE BUDGETS

	Net GF budget (£m)		Funding (£m)				(Surplus) / deficit
	GF gross service spend	GF gross non-service spend	GF Service income	Council tax funding	SFA	Other funding	
2 – WEST	1,019	188	(460)	(576)	(148)	(37)	(14)
2 – EAST	1,019	169	(437)	(531)	(184)	(34)	2
2 – TOTAL	2,039	357	(898)	(1,107)	(332)	(72)	(13)
3 – WEST	653	132	(308)	(352)	(103)	(24)	(1)
3 - CENTRAL	580	99	(250)	(329)	(85)	(19)	(4)
3 – EAST	805	126	(339)	(426)	(144)	(29)	(8)
3 – TOTAL	2,039	357	(898)	(1,107)	(332)	(72)	(13)
4 – WEST	503	82	(214)	(294)	(64)	(16)	(3)
4 - SOUTHWEST	516	106	(246)	(282)	(84)	(21)	(11)
4 – CENTRAL	573	94	(244)	(267)	(116)	(18)	22
4 – EAST	447	75	(194)	(264)	(68)	(17)	(20)
4 - TOTAL	2,039	357	(898)	(1,107)	(332)	(72)	(13)

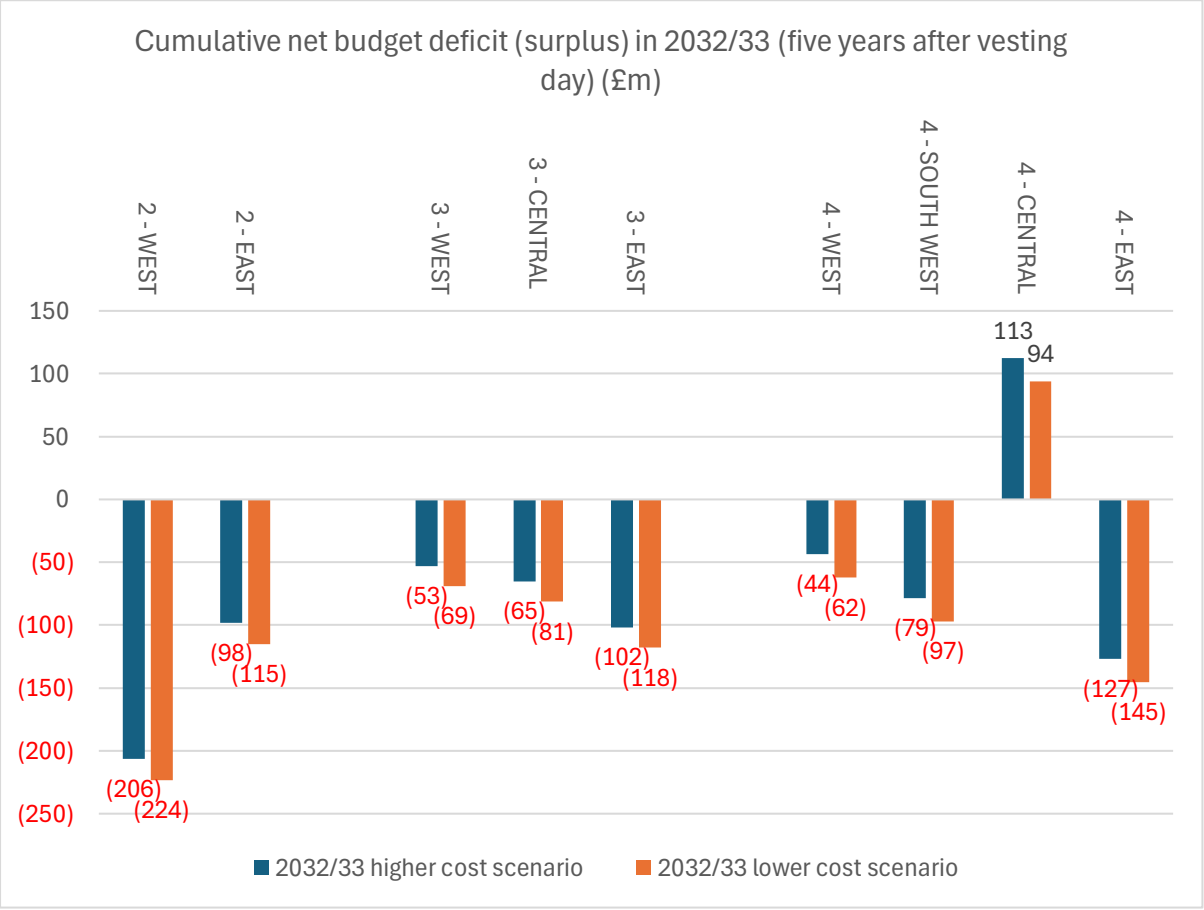
FIVE YEARS: MEDIUM-TERM POSITION FOR UNITARY AUTHORITY OPTIONS

From 2028/29 onwards (i.e. post-LGR), the baseline forecast is rolled forward using a set of annual indices developed and agreed by Hertfordshire CFOs for the 10-year period to 2037/38 (as detailed in the financial appendix). Estimates of inflation for pay and non-pay costs have been developed and applied differently to each main area of expenditure, linked to historical trends and known forecasts where possible. No additional contingency is built into these assumptions for unexpected shocks, any marked increase in the national rate of inflation, or any failure for authorities to deliver the required medium-term savings in full prior to vesting day for new authorities. To this baseline forecast we then apply:

- **Disaggregation and aggregation assumptions** reflecting underlying local differences between tax bases and budgets and how these drive different starting points for the alternative unitary footprints under consideration (the position for 2028/29 is show in the section above).
- **LGR assumptions** to estimate the costs and savings arising from LGR (as detailed in the next section) at the level of individual unitary authority options.

The combined effect of these assumptions, assuming a balanced budget starting point and the incremental savings delivered smoothly from LGR, is a recurring annual surplus for most authorities with total funding growing slightly faster than net budget requirement. The cumulative budget deficit / surplus is used below as a proxy measure for the overall financial performance of unitary options within the first five years.

GRAPH: BUDGET POSITION AFTER THE FIRST FIVE YEARS



This graph combines all baseline modelling assumptions including inflation, assumed council tax increases, assumed MTFS savings and the impacts of LGR to show the cumulative net budget position for each unitary authority after the first five years of LGR.

The set of baseline assumptions that we have used indicate that, to different extents, almost all unitary authorities will be in a surplus position after this period.

To the extent that options that generate surpluses using our baseline set of assumptions, these indicate a level of resilience for future authorities in the event that our baseline assumptions prove to be optimistic, or further unexpected shocks occur. Please note the further commentary on this under "important caveats and limitations" set out at the start of this chapter. Further sensitivities have been modelled to test this.

VIABILITY OF OPTION 4 CENTRAL

Option 4 CENTRAL would have 26% of Hertfordshire's population but 35% of Hertfordshire's most deprived decile of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). It also has a disproportionate level of demand for the most cost-intensive services, as identified in the earlier options appraisal chapter.

On current assumptions 4 CENTRAL would begin with a £22m budget deficit driven primarily by a combination of high demand for cost-intensive services which is not balanced by the ability of the area to raise revenue locally alongside the likely level of grant funding. With the additional implementation costs of LGR loaded on top, the net savings delivered by LGR for this authority, alongside assumed council tax raises, would not be sufficient to overcome this challenging opening position within the medium-term, and 4 CENTRAL would be unviable without further redistribution of funding. The proposal for the four unitary model explores what some of these interventions could be.

As noted above:

- This analysis does not estimate the impact of the fair funding review, which may change the distribution and quantum of resource in Hertfordshire and may affect the viability of future unitary authorities. On the hypothesis that FFR moves resources towards more deprived areas, the funding position for 4 CENTRAL may also improve relative to these assumptions.
- This area is also likely to experience significant business rate growth that is not fully reflected in our modelling, which would also support a more positive position over time. In 2025/26 there are £3.27m of expected gains in this area alone.
- In our model, other costs (such as debt financing costs) are allocated to areas based on their overall pro-rata spend, whereas these types of costs may be distributed differently in reality.

TEN YEARS: LONGER-TERM BENEFITS FROM UNITARY MODELS

Over the longer-term, the uncertainties referred to in the previous section are compounded. To test the likely long-term resilience of new unitary models we have applied our baseline and LGR assumptions over the full ten-year period (post-vesting day) of the model.

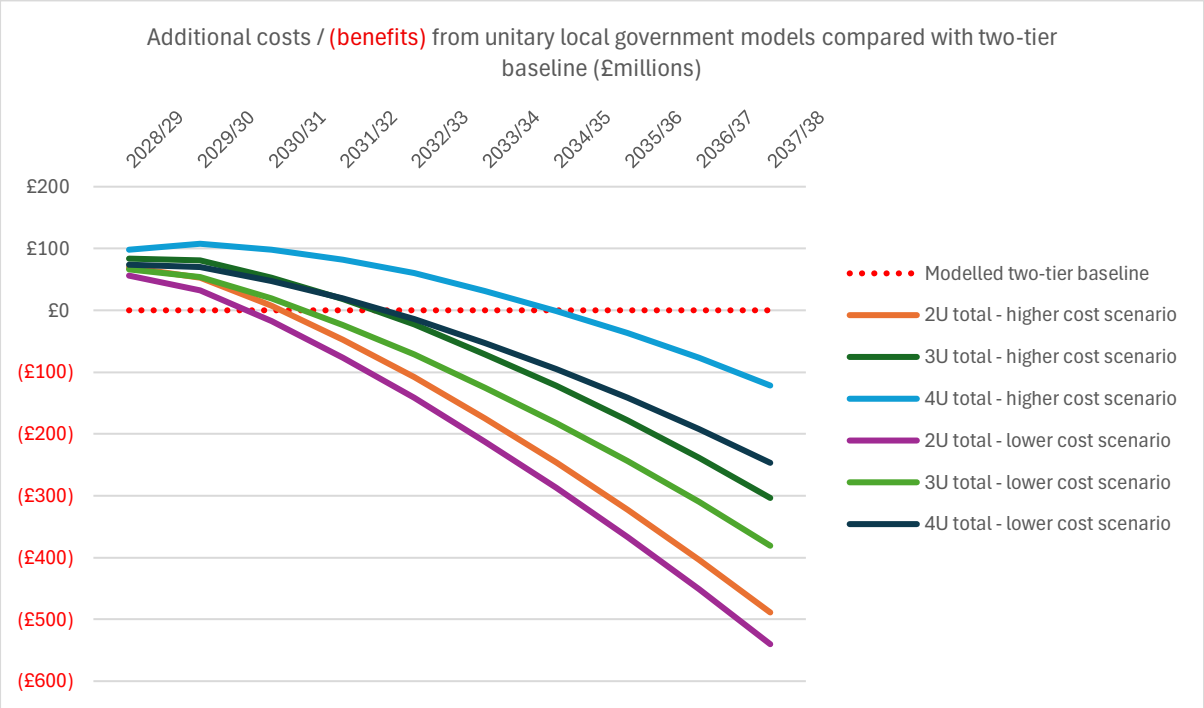
Relative to the two-tier baseline:

- Additional costs are created through the up-front investment required to deliver LGR and recurring additional costs of duplication in some areas (for example having multiple management teams for social care services).
- Additional benefits are created through the compounding effect of new authorities raising more revenue locally (if they choose to do so) through applying the 2% adult social care precept on a wider basis, in addition to the savings arising from LGR.

The key conclusions are:

- In overall terms and to different extents, all proposed options will eventually result in local government in Hertfordshire being "better off" than it would be in the existing system of local government as a result of delivering local government reorganisation.
- However, the totals for each option mask the distributional differences shown in the previous section, where some individual options may be unviable without further redistribution of funding, which is explored in the proposal for four unitary authorities.

GRAPH: 10-YEAR BENEFITS COMPARED WITH THE TWO-TIER BASELINE



This graph shows the cumulative difference from the two-tier baseline that is delivered by different LGR models. The modelled two-tier baseline is shown as zero, and the estimated costs (or benefits) of LGR are shown as increases or (decreases) from that baseline.

- 2 unitary option – outperforms the two-tier system between 2030/31 and 2031/32, which 2-3 years after LGR.
- 3 unitary option – outperforms the two-tier system between 2031/32 and 2032/33, which is 3-4 years after LGR.

- 4 unitary option – outperforms the two-tier system between 2032/33 and 2034/35, which is 4-6 years after LGR.

DIRECT IMPACTS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

This section focuses specifically on the direct costs and savings caused by local government reorganisation, as distinct from our baseline assumptions on areas like inflation and council tax, and budget aggregation / disaggregation, all of which are reflected in the section above.

IMPACTS OF LGR VERSUS TRANSFORMATION BY FUTURE AUTHORITIES

We have made a clear distinction between benefits achieved as a direct result of LGR, such as removal of duplicate roles, services and systems, versus benefits resulting from additional transformation that could be delivered by future authorities. There are two reasons for this:

- Firstly, decisions on additional transformation will be taken by future authorities themselves.
- Secondly, there are reasonable differences of opinion within our partnership on which of the proposed models is likely to be "more transformational".

As a result, our shared financial model does not estimate any additional financial benefits arising from transformation, although each of the individual proposals provides further information on opportunities relevant to each option.

HOW ARE LGR COSTS AND BENEFITS ASSESSED?

A detailed analysis of all transition costs and savings are attached as Appendix A.

LGR recurring annual savings

Savings in the financial model have been categorised into three key areas:

- **Staffing** - estimated savings in relation to the implementation of LGR predicated on consolidation and subsequent efficiencies resulting in a reduced capacity requirement.
- **Direct Costs** – estimated savings in relation to increased economies of scale and optimised use of resources.
- **Democratic and governance reorganisation** – estimated savings in relation to costs of elections, members allowances and staffing in relation to democratic services as result of fewer authorities in existence.

LGR recurring annual costs

LGR recurring annual costs have been split into two distinct categories:

- **Additional costs of scale** – these are recurring costs in relation to the anticipated additional resource requirement to service local democratic arrangements and support locality working and engagement because of aggregation.
- **Diseconomies of scale** - covers recurring costs created because of disaggregation in relation to HCC social care services and Information Technology (IT) estate.

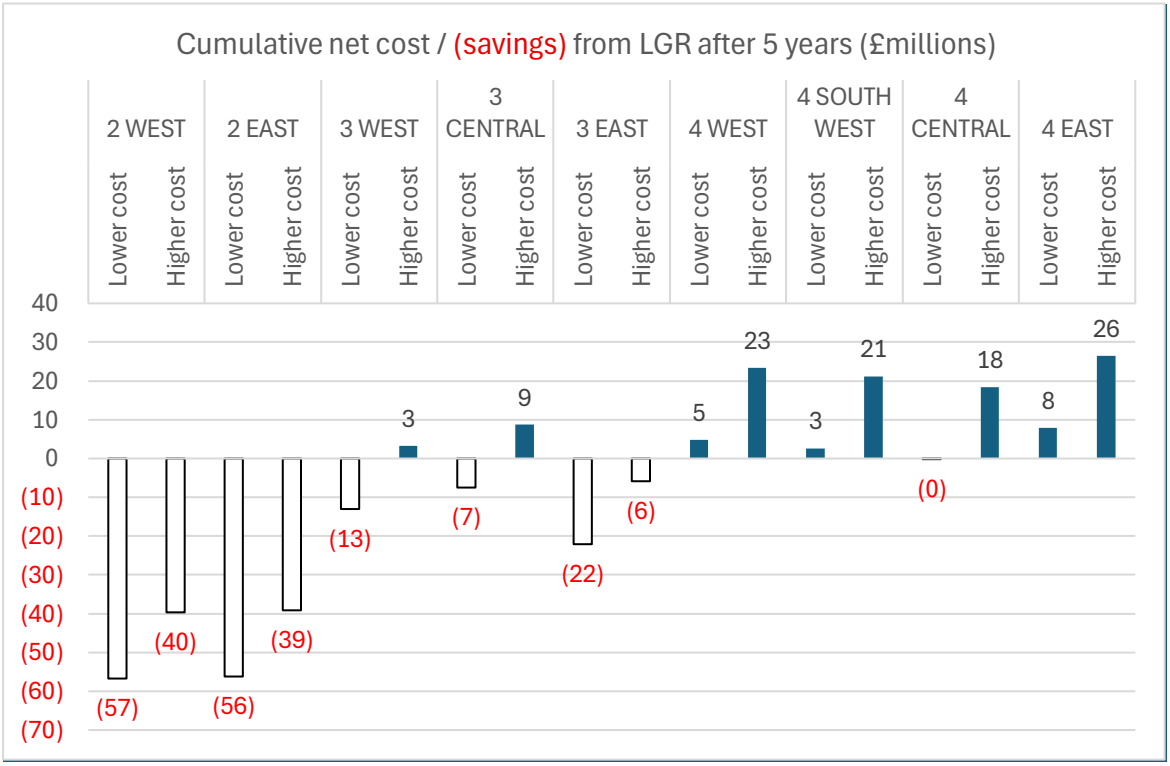
LGR one-off costs

- These are the estimated one-off costs that are incurred to support the creation of the new authorities.
- These primarily relate to the costs of IT, programme management, specialist advice and support and redundancy costs.
- A detailed analysis of all transition costs and savings are attached as Appendix A

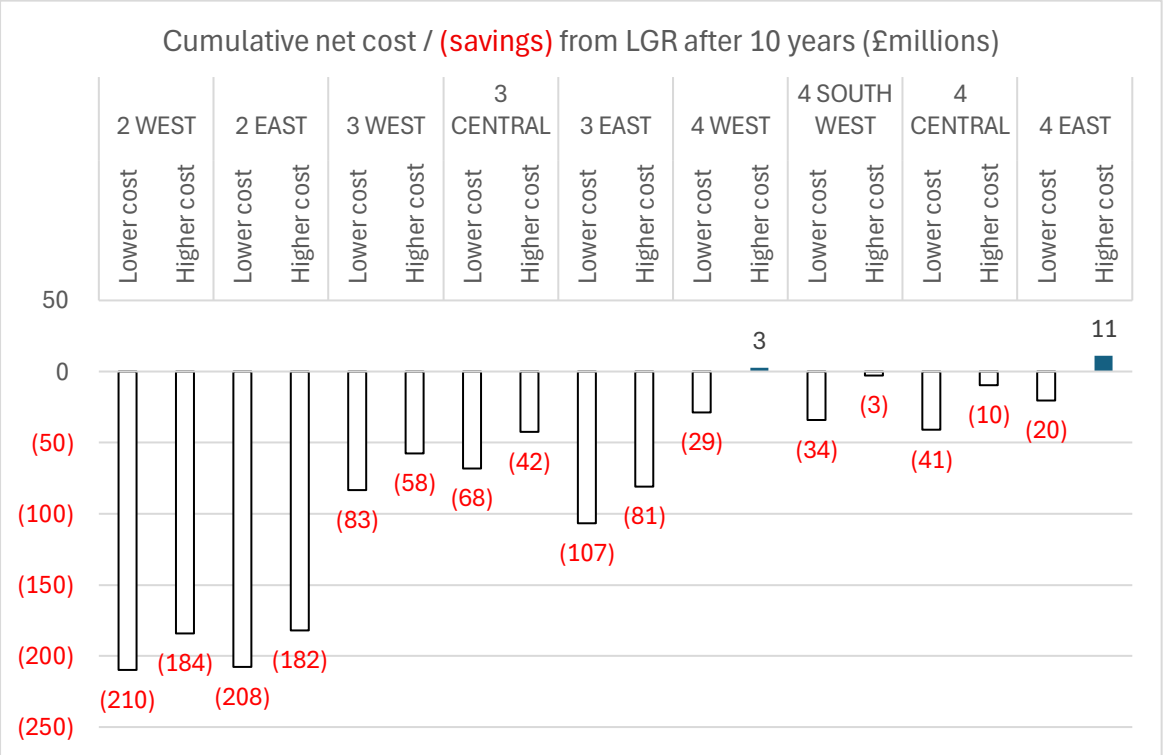
For each unitary proposal a higher cost and lower cost scenario has been developed which reflects different approaches and assumptions in relation to costs of IT and the disaggregation of the social care, as outlined earlier in this section.

The following two graphs show the cumulative delivery of net savings (i.e. adding up all one-off and recurring costs and all savings across multiple years) across five and ten years.

GRAPH: CUMULATIVE SAVINGS FROM LGR OVER 5 YEARS



GRAPH: CUMULATIVE SAVINGS FROM LGR OVER 10 YEARS



Note – negative numbers indicate that payback has been achieved and net cumulative savings are being delivered. Positive numbers indicate that payback has not yet been achieved.

For two unitary authority option:

- Annual recurring savings of £50-£55m (shared between two authorities) will be achieved by year five, once one-off costs have been met.
- After the first five years, total cumulative savings for the two authorities will be in the range of £79-113m.
- After ten years, total cumulative savings will reach £366-418m.

For the three unitary authority option:

- Annual recurring savings of £30-38m will be achieved by year five, shared between three authorities.
- After the first five years, this option would still have £6m of up-front costs to pay off in the higher-cost scenario but would have saved a total of £43m in the lower-cost scenario.
- After the first ten years, total cumulative savings would reach £181-258m, shared between three authorities.

For the four unitary authority option:

- Annual recurring costs by year 5 would be in the range of £11m - £23m, shared between four authorities.
- After the first five years this option would have between £89m and £15m of up-front investment costs still to pay off.
- After the first ten years, this option would save £124m in the lower-cost scenario or would only just be approaching the point of payback in the higher-cost scenario with £1m of investment costs remaining to be "paid off".

Option	Payback period	Annual recurring saving by year 5		Cumulative savings from LGR in the first 5 years		Cumulative savings from LGR in the first 10 years	
		Overall	Individual authorities	Overall	Individual authorities	Overall	Individual authorities
2U	3 - 4 yrs (30/31 - 31/32)	£50m - £55m	£25m - £28m	£79m - £113m	£39m - £57m	£366m - £418m	£182m - £210m
3U	4 - 6 yrs (31/32 - 33/34)	£30m - £38m	£8m - £15m	(£6m) - £43m	(£9m) - £22m	£181m - £258m	£42m - £107m
4U	6 - 11 yrs (33/34 -38/39)	£11m - £23m	£2m - £7m	(£89m) – (£15m)	(£26m) - £0m	(£1m) - £124m	(£11m) - £41m

These financial projections of transition costs, net savings and payback periods are sensitive to modelling assumptions and risk assessments. The full range of assumptions that relate to this overall summary are attached as Appendix A.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS \ KEY MODELLING ASSUMPTIONS

STRATEGIC AUTHORITY

Some existing costs and budgets will transfer to the Strategic Authority such as the Fire service. These have not been included in the financial model at this stage due to the complexities of splitting out budgets and resource. No additional running costs have been assumed for the Strategic Authority within the financial model.

EXISTING MTFS SAVINGS

Prior to vesting day, the existing authorities in Hertfordshire will continue to deliver planned MTFS savings. It is acknowledged that these savings could potentially duplicate or reduce the estimated savings in the financial case.

If the savings assumed to be achieved by vesting day are not delivered, this would reduce the projected baseline position and may require the new authorities to identify additional savings beyond those expected from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

MTFS FORECASTS

The financial models assumes that cost increases – especially in Social Care and SEND, are lower in the years after LGR than in the years preceding it. Council tax increases are also assumed at the 4.99% (2.99% council tax + 2% adult social care precept) level every year in line with government assumptions on funding.

SHARED SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS

Hertfordshire has a track record of successful shared services. It has been assumed for the purposes of the financial case that shared service arrangements will be in place where long-term contractual commitments exist for county wide capabilities including Highways and Waste disposal. Without these, there is a risk that additional costs associated with disaggregation will significantly increase.

SAVINGS

While a prudent approach to savings has been adopted, it is not yet possible to fully determine which savings are cashable and which may be non-cashable—for example, where expenditure is funded by ring-fenced grants. Therefore, although expenditure may be reduced in some cases, there could be limitations on how those savings can be used.

DISAGGREGATION

There is limited recent evidence of unitarisation involving the disaggregation of county-level services at a scale equivalent to Hertfordshire, making it challenging to accurately estimate associated costs. As a result, the financial model's cost projections for IT and social care disaggregation carry a significant risk of variation, either upwards or downwards.

DSG DEFICIT / HIGH NEEDS BLOCK

The High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant funds education for children with SEND, including special schools, independent placements, and additional support in mainstream settings.

Rising demand for SEND provision has led many councils to overspend, as grant funding has not kept pace with costs. The government's 'statutory override' allows councils to exclude these deficits from their accounts, but the financial shortfall remains. The override has been extended to March 2028 while longer-term reforms are developed.

The County Council forecasts a cumulative DSG deficit of £255 million by March 2028, with annual overspends expected to continue at a rate of £130-£160m annually. The outcome of national reforms will be critical to the financial sustainability of all three structural options. Any remaining HNB deficit would need to be divided between the new authorities, creating a risk

that unless there is significant change in either DSG funding formula, an increase in the overall DSG settlement, Gov fund the deficits, or reform to the SEND system, then there will be a significant cumulative deficit by March 2028, and this would almost certainly be unfunded due to it being bigger than unitary reserves.

PAY HARMONISATION

No assumptions have been made in relation to pay harmonisation within the financial model although noting that any pay harmonisation could affect costs in the future.

BORROWING

If alternative funding sources are insufficient to cover transition costs, borrowing may be required. Borrowing costs have not been included in the financial model at this stage and could reduce projected savings and the baseline funding available.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

Housing Revenue Accounts sit outside of General Fund revenue expenditure. Although the four HRAs in Hertfordshire receive support services / cost of democracy from the General Fund the impact on HRAs for one-off, on-going costs and savings has not been included within the financial business case.

It is important to note that the HRA entails significant costs and scale that will require further consideration as the chosen option becomes clearer.

	Housing Stock	**Total Costs (£m)**
3 WEST configuration		
Dacorum	10,061	59,033
3 EASTERN configuration		
Stevenage	7.911	37,209
3 CENTRAL configuration		
St Albans	4,899	17,538
Welwyn Hatfield	8,847	48,588
Total	**13,746**	**66,126**
2 WEST / 4 NORTH WEST unitary configuration		
Dacorum	10,061	59,033
St Albans	4,899	17,538
Total	**14,960**	**76,571**
2 EASTERN/ 4 CENTRAL configuration		
Stevenage	**7,911**	**37,209**
Welwyn Hatfield	8,847	48,588
Total	**16,758**	**85,797**

ASSETS DISAGGREGATION

This has not been accounted for within the financial model but this poses risks at a later stage in terms of ensuring the transfer of assets and their corresponding revenue streams and or

liabilities does not inadvertently worsen the financial position and sustainability of the new authorities. Disposal of surplus assets may help to defray the costs of reorganisation.

PRE-EXISTING SHARED SERVICES

Whilst some shared services are already in existence across for example Internal Audit, Fraud, Procurement and Building Control, across Hertfordshire, these may no longer align geographically with the new authority boundaries. This may pose additional costs in relation to disaggregating shared systems or contracts that are no longer aligned geographically, potential duplication of effort or investment if new, separate services are required, and loss of economies of scale once shared arrangements end. Alternatively, these could also be widened to align with new geographies, to create greater economies of scale.

However, in other cases existing shared services will not require disaggregation and there may be opportunities to expand these and create greater economies of scale.

COMPANIES AND OTHER ENTITIES

Where these exist, they may cause additional complexity in aggregating and disaggregating balance sheets and asset valuation or else amending governance and ownership arrangements. As a result, additional specialist support may be required. This is assumed to be covered by the existing allocation of specialist support within the one-off costs.

SHADOW AUTHORITY COSTS

It has been assumed that the costs of the shadow authority can be covered by existing budgets and the contingency allocated to the one-off costs where required. These are unlikely to have a material impact on the financial assessment of alternative unitary options being considered, nor on their ongoing financial sustainability.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

MHCLG criterion 4: collaboration and local engagement

APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

Hertfordshire's 11 Councils undertook a coordinated programme of engagement to inform the development of future options for local government. The purpose was to listen and learn – to understand residents' priorities, gather insights from our partners, and test the principles that should guide reorganisation, rather than to promote any specific structural model.

Starting in July 2025, engagement activity combined targeted discussions with strategic partners, followed by a wider public survey in September 2025. Across the county, participants included senior representatives from health, education, police/emergency services, housing, business, and the voluntary sector, who took part in one-to-one meetings and small roundtables convened by Councils. These sessions provided opportunities to explore how reorganisation could support stronger collaboration, improve outcomes and ensure local government is responsive to the needs of Hertfordshire's communities.

Alongside this work, a county-wide engagement exercise involved targeted roundtables with key stakeholders, and engagement events for residents, to learn about LGR and share their views through a mix of in-person and online activities. 37 local events were held across Hertfordshire, supported by an online survey, coordinated communications, and local promotion through Council and community networks.

The approach emphasised clarity, consistency and inclusion. All 11 Councils worked together to provide balanced information and accessible opportunities for people to take part. The focus was on building understanding, encouraging informed debate, and developing an evidence base grounded in residents' and partners' real experiences of local services and governance, and understanding their aspirations for the future of local governance.

By the end of the engagement period, around 7,600 people had engaged with the survey (4,906 completed the survey in full, with partial feedback still collected) alongside 37 engagement events, which included targeted stakeholder roundtables, public engagement events, and a briefing for MPs. This is comparable to other areas, like Greater Essex, which has a larger population and received 4,070 responses on their survey. Every Council – Broxbourne, Dacorum, East Hertfordshire, Hertsmere, North Herts, St Albans, Stevenage, Three Rivers, Watford, Welwyn Hatfield, and Hertfordshire County Council – hosted engagement events, ensuring perspectives were gathered from across the county, as well as staff and Councillors being encouraged to provide feedback through relevant communication channels.

This process has established a strong foundation for future collaboration and coproduction. It reflects a shared commitment across Hertfordshire's Councils to shape reorganisation through open dialogue, which is rooted in local identity and focused on creating simpler, more joined-up, and accountable local government.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with strategic stakeholders across Hertfordshire provided valuable insight into how LGR could best support improved outcomes for residents, communities and businesses. The purpose was to listen to partners who play a direct role in local delivery, understand their priorities, and identify both the opportunities and the risks that reorganisation might create.

Participants included senior representatives from health and care organisations, education and skills providers, emergency services, business and employer networks, housing associations, voluntary and community groups, and regional and delivery partners. Their contributions helped

to shape early thinking about how new governance arrangements could strengthen collaboration and align services around people and places.

BREADTH OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

Engagement activity also drew on a wide range of institutional and civic partners, including:

- Members of Parliament: all 12 MPs were invited to an online briefing; 10 MPs, or their representatives, attended.
- Health and care: Hertfordshire & West Essex Integrated Care Board, NHS Trust Executives, and Adult Social Care Providers.
- Education and skills: University of Hertfordshire, Step2Skills, local colleges, local schools and education leaders.
- Police and community safety: emergency services, community safety partnerships and other local agencies.
- Voluntary and community sector: Resolve, Citizens Advice, community groups, charities, and a range of local associations and panels.
- Business and economy: Chambers of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts, major employers and investors, including Gascoyne Estates and Tarmac, and sector representatives from film, creative industries and life sciences.
- Other partners: housing associations such as B3Living and Hightown Housing Association, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, and service delivery contractors, including Everyone Active and Veolia.

TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

Town and Parish Councils were recognised as an essential part of local democracy and a key link between communities and principal Councils. To ensure their voices were fully represented, a Parish and Town Council Task and Finish Group was established under the Community Empowerment workstream. This group brought together Officers from County and District Councils alongside Clerks representing the full range of Town and Parish Councils across Hertfordshire.

- Its remit was to develop practical options for how the future structure of local government could work more effectively with Parish and Town Councils and to act as a consultative forum for emerging neighbourhood engagement proposals. This collaborative approach reflected a shared commitment to localism and to ensuring that Smaller Councils are genuine partners in shaping LGR.
- The group produced a set of recommendations that are being considered as part of ongoing design work. These included:
- Establishing clear governance frameworks and partnership charters.
- Enhancing communication and information-sharing through named contacts within new Unitary Councils.
- Setting out transparent arrangements for asset transfers and service agreements.
- Supporting capacity-building and shared service models, particularly for smaller Councils.
- Enabling flexibility for Parishes ready to deliver additional services.
- Protecting local identity and community connection.
- Engagement also took place with Parishes directly by the District/Borough Councils, where applicable, during the wider engagement process.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK AND INSIGHTS

PROTECTING LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS AND PLACE-BASED DELIVERY

Stakeholders consistently highlighted the importance of maintaining the strong local partnerships that underpin early intervention, community trust, and effective service delivery. There was a clear view that larger Councils must retain a local presence and embed place-based working within new structures.

MINIMISING DISRUPTION TO WHAT WORKS

Many partners expressed support in principle for reorganisation, provided that it builds on existing strengths. They pointed to successful joint commissioning, co-location, and integrated service models that should be preserved and scaled, rather than replaced.

SIMPLIFYING PATHWAYS AND IMPROVING ACCESS

Partners described the current landscape as fragmented and difficult for residents to navigate. Reorganisation was viewed as an opportunity to create more consistent, outcome-focused service journeys through clearer triage routes, shared referral systems and streamlined governance.

MAINTAINING LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND VISIBILITY

Respondents stressed the importance of visible, accessible local government and clarity over who is responsible for decisions and delivery.

SCALING WHAT WORKS THROUGH INNOVATION AND INTEGRATION

Many organisations encouraged Councils to expand on tested models such as local hubs, shared digital platforms, and outcome-based commissioning. Digital integration, in particular, was highlighted as key to delivering both efficiency and responsiveness.

INCLUSIVE AND PHASED TRANSITION PLANNING

There was consensus that successful reorganisation depends on early, inclusive planning. Stakeholders emphasised the need to protect voluntary sector roles, ensure funding continuity, and phase transition activity to allow time for systems and relationships to embed.

ILLUSTRATIVE STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

"Tarmac believes that the move to a single tier of local government, as has happened in many other places, is a positive move that reduces complexity." ***- Tarmac***

"We welcome the opportunity to work with a wider network of partners as a result of local government reorganisation and are enthusiastic about the potential for increased collaboration and shared learning." ***- Resolve representative***

"The present two-tier system has stymied strategic vision across Hertfordshire. The lack of a coherent strategic vision means the county risks losing its competitive position when compared to other counties and regions." ***- Gascoyne Estates representative***

"More consistency and standardisation across housing, employment and community assets such as leisure services. Working at scale doesn't negate the local. Opportunity for NHS to develop our offer as part of our ongoing reforms." – NHS Foundation Trust representative

"There is also potential for more unified and efficient service delivery, as well as opportunities to take on community asset management and develop new digital services." – Community Action Dacorum

WIDER ENGAGEMENT

Resident engagement used a mix of in-person and digital methods to maximise reach and participation with the process. Local Authorities organised public events across Hertfordshire, creating opportunities for residents to learn about LGR through an informative PowerPoint, ask questions, share views in a face-to-face setting and fill in the survey in person. These events were promoted across various channels and numerous graphics were used to promote each event.

The online survey was launched and promoted through social media, email, posters and Council staff communication channels, to ensure a broad audience. A coordinated press release further amplified awareness. Together, these activities extended the conversation and ensured the voices of local people from across Hertfordshire were heard.

Some additional targeted engagement was also undertaken, including feedback received from the annual meeting of Hertfordshire Parish, Town and Community Councils and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), as well as focus groups conducted by HCC with a Citizens Panel and Youth Council, and a Youth Panel conducted by Watford. Several stock-holding Councils also undertook tailored engagement with housing tenants, which will continue through the planning and implementation process, including in the development of future management models.

It was positive to see the engagement from residents and key stakeholders in Hertfordshire, with residents making up 89% of respondents to the online survey. It was also encouraging to see that 5% were staff members, and the remainder consisted of Councillors, businesses, charities, community groups or other organisations. The respondent profile was skewed towards an older demographic, with 54% aged 55 or over, however, this was expected from a poll on this topic. 19% of respondents reported having a disability or a long-term illness or health condition, demonstrating that perspectives from people with health challenges were captured in the survey.

Awareness of LGR was also high amongst participants: 83% had heard about it, and 2/3 (67%) said they understood it at least a little. Although this result will be skewed due to more engaged residents completing the survey, it is encouraging that the poll reached 17% of people who had never heard of LGR, showing residents who had no prior knowledge of LGR were also captured through extensive promotion of the survey.

RESIDENTS' FEEDBACK AND INSIGHTS

The residents' survey and local engagement events provided valuable insight into public attitudes towards Local Government Reorganisation. While views were mixed, residents engaged thoughtfully with the principles of change, identifying clear priorities for local services, accountability, representation and hopes for greater value, accountability, and coordination.

Overall, the views expressed by residents present a clear and consistent picture. People want local government that delivers the basics well, spends public money wisely, and makes it easy to understand who is responsible for what. They see real opportunity in more joined-up

services, clearer accountability, and better coordination across the county, provided this does not come at the expense of local connection or community identity. These insights provide a strong foundation for shaping the next phase of work, ensuring that any future proposals reflect residents' priorities and the values they most associate with effective local government.

DAY-TO-DAY SERVICES DOMINATE PUBLIC PRIORITIES

Residents were primarily concerned with the core local services they interact with most frequently. The top priorities identified were:

- Infrastructure: local road repairs, pavement and footpath maintenance, streetlighting (57%)
- Waste and recycling services (46%)
- Parks and green spaces (42%)

Comments repeatedly referenced potholes, waste collection, and visible maintenance as the benchmarks by which Council performance is judged.

MIXED EXPECTATIONS ON IMPACT – CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM OVERALL

Views were divided on the likely outcomes of LGR. A plurality (45%) anticipated improvements in services and value for money, compared with 42% who expected a negative impact and 13% who predicted no change. The tone of open responses reflected cautious optimism: residents recognised the potential for simplification and efficiency but remained alert to risks around disruption or reduced local connection.

EFFICIENCY, CLARITY, AND VALUE FOR MONEY

Many residents viewed reorganisation as an opportunity to cut duplication and simplify local government.

"Clarity that one council is responsible for everything rather than buck-passing between tiers." ***– Three Rivers resident***

"less overlap on service provision, more local responsiveness on services that were previously on a county wide level" – District Council staff member.

"easier to know who to contact for each service." – North Herts resident

Common themes included calls for eliminating duplication, better use of council taxes, and more joined up services. Financial efficiency featured heavily, with residents expecting tangible savings, improved coordination and better use of resources.

STRATEGIC COORDINATION AND PLANNING VALUED

Respondents identified strong potential benefits from improved coordination and long-term planning. The most frequently selected expected benefits were:

- More joined-up services (55%)
- More coordinated strategic planning and infrastructure decisions (43%)
- Better quality services for residents (41%)
- Clearer understanding of who is responsible for what (40%)

Residents linked these benefits to joined-up approaches to transport, housing and infrastructure, with repeated references to the need for more joined-up thinking between departments and a single point of contact.

DIVERGENT VIEWS ON COUNCIL STRUCTURE – NO CONSENSUS MODEL

There was no clear consensus on a preferred structure. While survey responses showed a slight plurality for four Unitary Councils, the two- and three-unitary models also received significant support.

Each option attracted backing for distinct reasons:

- Two-unitary model: favoured for efficiency, scale and strategic coordination; viewed as simple and cost-effective.
- Three-unitary model: seen by some as offering a balanced approach, avoiding both excessive scale and over-fragmentation. Attracted positive comments on the geography.
- Four-unitary model: preferred by those emphasising local identity and representation, with smaller councils viewed as closer and more accountable to communities.

These perspectives contrasted with stakeholder engagement, where the two-unitary option received the greatest number of supportive or cautiously favourable comments.

CONCERNS ABOUT COST, CONNECTION, AND REPRESENTATION

While many residents saw opportunities in LGR, 57% were concerned that Councils could become less connected to their communities. Other frequently cited concerns included:

- Cost of reorganisation (53%)
- Loss of local representation (52%)
- Loss of services (52%)
- Impact on Council Tax (47%)

PROTECTING COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND LOCAL VOICE

A recurring theme was the need to safeguard community identity and ensure that local voices remain heard. Some respondents opposed reorganisation outright on this basis, while others proposed measures such as stronger roles for Parish and Town Councils and clearer communication on how local identity would be protected.

COMMUNICATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND TRUST

Residents consistently linked good governance with clear communication and transparency. Many expressed a desire for a system where they know who is responsible, how decisions are made, and how to contact their Council. Better communication was one of the most common phrases in open responses, reflecting expectations of openness between Councils and with residents themselves.

HOW FEEDBACK WILL SHAPE OUR APPROACH

The insights gathered through this engagement will directly inform the next phase of work on Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire. Residents and partners have helped to define the key tests for success, highlighting what must be protected and what must change.

1. Focusing on outcomes, not structures
Engagement confirmed that what matters most to residents and partners is the quality and accessibility of local services, rather than the specific form of Council boundaries. Future work will therefore continue to emphasise improved outcomes, such as better coordination, stronger accountability, and value for money, as the measure of success.

2. Protecting what already works
Stakeholders were clear that effective local partnerships, particularly those supporting vulnerable residents, must not be disrupted. This feedback underpins a commitment to maintain local delivery relationships and build any future design around tested, place-based models, to protect what works, and improve what doesn't.

3. Strengthening local identity and community voice
Concerns about local connection and representation have reinforced the importance of subsidiarity – ensuring decisions are made as close as possible to the communities they affect. Parish and Town Councils and other community partners will have a role in shaping future engagement structures.

4. Prioritising transparency and communication
Residents and organisations repeatedly emphasised the need for clear communication about roles, responsibilities and accountability. Future engagement will adopt this principle, with open reporting and accessible information about how feedback continues to inform development.

5. Embedding co-production and collaboration
The engagement programme has built a foundation for joint working between the 11 Councils and their partners. As proposals evolve, ongoing collaboration will ensure that reorganisation is designed with – not just for – residents, businesses and institutions across Hertfordshire.

Together, these commitments form a clear framework for the next stage of the process. The approach to Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire will remain evidence-led, inclusive, and grounded in the voices of the people and organisations who make the county work.

CONCLUSION

The depth and quality of insights offered by stakeholders and residents reflect the value of the approach taken – deliberate, collaborative and grounded in open dialogue. By prioritising informed discussion at an early stage, all 11 Councils created space for partners and communities to engage seriously with the principles and practicalities of reorganisation.

Feedback gathered shows broad alignment on several key points. Stakeholders value the strong partnerships and place-based working that currently underpin service delivery and are clear that reorganisation must protect what already works. There is also consensus around the opportunities to simplify pathways, enhance integration and modernise services through digital innovation and co-location. These views offer a compelling case for LGR that is not just structural, but outcome led.

While preferences varied on the number and geography of future Councils, it was clear that success will depend as much on delivery as design. Stakeholders and residents alike want a system that preserves local insight, creates efficiencies and unlocks long-term strategic benefits. Across sectors, there was both realism about the risks and a strong willingness to continue engaging in shaping how change is delivered.

Taken together, this feedback provides a robust and balanced evidence base for the next stage of work. It shows that across Hertfordshire there is shared commitment to improving local services, strengthening local accountability and building a model of local government that reflects both the county's diversity and its shared ambitions for the future.

LOCALISM AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AT THE HEART OF HERTFORDSHIRE'S TRANSFORMATION

MHCLG criterion 6: community empowerment

OUR AMBITION FOR COMMUNITIES: EMPOWERED, CONNECTED AND INCLUSIVE

Our goal is for all Hertfordshire residents to feel connected, valued and safe. Local government reorganisation provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine and renew relationships between local government and residents, to innovate new approaches to participatory decision-making, expanded community governance and direct resident involvement in the matters that are most important to them. By strengthening connections with communities, we will deliver more effective and responsive public services that reflect local priorities.

We are committed to empowering every person to make a real difference, where communities can actively shape solutions to Hertfordshire's most pressing challenges, including strengthening cohesion and improving quality of life. We aim to reorganise local government to strengthen communities and promote empowerment throughout all levels of governance.

Hertfordshire's unique characteristics position us perfectly for this transformation. Our strategic assets include:

GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY

With 88% urban and 12% rural population, we can develop empowerment models across different community types. Our polycentric settlement pattern, with distinct town identities and rural areas, provides natural boundaries for neighbourhood governance, and whilst our strong commuter economy connects local communities to wider economic opportunities.

ECONOMIC STRENGTHS

With specialisms in life sciences, creative industries, defence and advanced manufacturing, a £50 bn GVA economy and strategic location between London and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, our communities are uniquely placed to shape and benefit from inclusive growth. Despite this economic success, notable pockets of deprivation underscore the importance of equal access to opportunity and inclusive growth that benefits everybody.

DEMOCRATIC INFRASTRUCTURE

We start from a position of strength. Our 124 Town and Parish Councils provide an established foundation for local democracy, whilst significant unparished areas create opportunities for democratic innovation. The £856.4m Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector represents a sophisticated civil society, ready for enhanced partnership working.

CIVIC IDENTITY

Our strong civic identity lays firm foundations for the future. This sense of community pride and belonging creates opportunity to further enhance local engagement and participation. Research consistently finds that communities with a strong sense of local identity benefit from

higher levels of social capital, greater economic resilience and improved health outcomes[4]. Various reports from the UK Parliament and Local Government Association confirm that strong identification with one's local community leads to increased civic activity and higher trust in local institutions[5]. Conversely, findings from the *Local Trust: Left Behind* research[6]. reveal that communities with weak civic identities and poor social infrastructure face significantly worse outcomes in employment, health and overall wellbeing.

Place-based identity plays a critical role in attracting investment and talent. According to Centre for Cities research, it is the ability of places to attract and grow innovative, cutting-edge businesses that influences wider prosperity[7]. Areas with distinctive local identities tend to perform better economically, as they are more appealing to businesses, investors and skilled professionals.

PARTNERSHIP READINESS

Mature strategic partnerships already exist across health, business, education, voluntary community and faith organisations. In many areas, co-locating councils with partners has improved access to services and enhanced strategic collaboration. These partnerships offer diversity of thought and experience, promote innovation and enable sharing of resources and expertise. The maturity of relationships allows for honest conversations around risks and opportunities. These partnerships will complement and strengthen the new unitary arrangements, and their proven outcomes provide a blueprint for our future model.

Case study: One Watford Place Board

The One Watford Place Board demonstrates mature cross-sector collaboration in action. Uniting senior leaders from health, housing, education, emergency services, business and the voluntary sector, the Board operates through voluntary collaboration to deliver a bold vision for Watford's future by 2040. At its heart lies a co-created commitment: that a child born today will grow up in a welcoming, vibrant town championing healthier, greener living. The Board's seven missions empower residents and businesses to shape their community whilst celebrating Watford's caring, optimistic character. Its influence extends beyond governance—the 'Watford Actually' place brand, embedded across partner communications, has reshaped the town's identity, attracting investment, talent and visitors, whilst demonstrating how strategic alignment can amplify civic ambition.

---

[4] Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) & Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). (2022). *Rapid evidence review of community initiatives*. This review synthesizes over 100 pieces of evidence to explore how community infrastructure and social capital contribute to wellbeing, resilience, and economic outcomes. It was commissioned to inform government policy on community-led initiatives and value-for-money interventions

[5] Local Government Association (LGA). 2025. *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: LGA policy summary*. This publication advocates for place-based approaches to public services, arguing that local identity and trust in communities are essential for effective service delivery and economic resilience.

[6] Local Trust and Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (2019). *Left Behind? Understanding Communities on the Edge*. Available at: https://localtrust.org.uk/insights/research/left-behind-understanding-communities-on-the-edge/

[7] Centre for Cities, *Cities Outlook 2025*. This annual report provides a comprehensive health check of urban Britain's economic performance.

PROTECTING CIVIC HERITAGE THROUGH REORGANISATION

Hertfordshire's boroughs are defined by a rich civic heritage, rooted in centuries-old Royal Charters and Letters Patent that confer unique constitutional status and democratic identity.

These traditions are far more than symbolic; they embody the enduring civic character of our communities. This legacy is preserved through ceremonial practices, historic regalia, Mayoral offices and Rolls of Honorary Freedom, all of which serve as tangible links between present-day residents and their democratic inheritance.

Civic regalia, historic buildings and traditional ceremonies are not only cultural assets, but they are also vital expressions of local identity and pride. Protecting these elements through Charter Trustees ensures that any future reorganisation strengthens, rather than diminishes, the cultural foundations of civic engagement and democratic continuity.

BOROUGH STATUS AND CIVIC HERITAGE

Broxbourne Borough Council holds Borough status, granted by Royal Charter in 1974, with a ceremonial Mayor and Deputy Mayor maintaining strong community connections.

Dacorum Borough Council, formed in 1974, proudly carries the name of the ancient Hundred of Dacorum, a medieval administrative division that unites the historic towns of Hemel Hempstead (granted Municipal Borough status in 1898), Berkhamsted and Tring.

Hertsmere Borough Council achieved Borough status by Royal Charter on 15 April 1977, recognising its importance as a distinct community with a ceremonial Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Stevenage Borough Council received Borough status on 1 April 1974, honouring both its new town heritage and historic roots dating back to King Edward I's 13th-century charter granting market rights to the Manor of Stevenage.

Watford Borough Council traces its market rights back to the 12th century, formally confirmed by King James I in 1609 with exclusive control over market activities. King George V elevated Watford to Borough status by Letters Patent on 18 October 1922, cementing its civic importance.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's Borough status was only gained relatively recently in comparison to the other Boroughs. A Privy Council order was issued on 15 November 2005 and entitled the Borough to appoint a Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

St Albans City and District Council exemplifies this legacy, with its Mayoralty and market rights granted in 1553, elevated to full City status in 1877, and extended borough-wide in 1974. This marks nearly five centuries of continuous civic governance, reflecting the fundamental democratic identity that continues to shape local leadership and public life.

Case study: Royal Charters and letters patent

St Albans Charter Market demonstrates how historic civic identity continues to shape contemporary community life. Founded in 860AD to generate income for the Abbey, the market became Crown property during the dissolution of the monasteries before Edward VI granted both market rights and Borough status to local merchants through letters patent in 1553. Nearly five centuries later, St Albans Charter Market remains at the heart of the bustling city, winning Best Large Outdoor Market in Britain at the 2024 Great British Markets Awards. Judges praised its commitment to supporting new traders, modernising infrastructure and active collaboration with local partners – demonstrating how centuries of

civic governance translate into vibrant, responsive community assets that have the required agility to adapt whilst maintaining deep-rooted identity.

PROTECTING CIVIC IDENTITY

Local government reorganisation presents a unique opportunity, not merely to preserve civic heritage, but to strengthen it for generations to come. We are committed to ensuring that every community's distinctive civic identity, earned through centuries of history and service, remains vibrant, relevant and empowering in our new unitary structure.

St Albans City and District Council are undertaking a Community Governance Review to seek resident feedback on establishing a Town Council to receive City status. In other areas, the establishment of Charter Trustees provides a robust mechanism to uphold these traditions. Both approaches ensure the transfer from Borough Councils to bodies that maintain legal continuity of all historic and ceremonial functions of the new Unitary Authorities from Vesting Day.

Dacorum Borough Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Watford Borough Council and Welwyn Hatfield Council propose Charter Trustees, comprising Elected Councillors with deep local knowledge, to carry forward the ceremonial authority of predecessor Councils. Our proposal to government therefore requests that Charter Trustees be established by order of the Secretary of State under Section 7 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 for these areas.

This approach provides both immediate protection during the transitional period and flexibility for future Unitary Councils to evolve, whilst still maintaining the civic character and identity that defines our communities.

Broxbourne and Hertsmere are still considering their position at the time of preparing this proposal.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Building on our rich network and existing success, we are driven by an ambition to achieve even more through our Five-point Strategic Plan:

ENHANCED DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

We are committed to strengthening local democracy by creating more opportunities for residents to shape the decisions that affect their lives. Our approach will ensure that all voices are heard, especially those from marginalised communities, young people, ethnic minorities and those facing socioeconomic disadvantage. We will build on existing forms of civic participation, such as resident assemblies and participatory budgeting, to ensure communities have a meaningful role in setting priorities and deciding how resources are used.

PREVENTION-FOCUSED, INTEGRATED PUBLIC SERVICES

We will equip communities with the necessary data and tools to identify and address issues before they escalate and require costly crisis interventions. Technology will support better outcomes, whilst integrated teams across health, housing, skills, the voluntary sector and social services will respond holistically to complex needs. Local insight will drive innovation that formal services might miss, particularly for culturally specific or place-based challenges.

Case study: Healthy Homes

The Hertfordshire Healthy Homes programme showcases the power of cross-sector collaboration addressing health-related risks of poor housing and fuel poverty. Developed with

all ten District and Borough Councils, Hertfordshire County Council, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Care Board, the programme has established a county-wide response to housing-related health inequalities. It has successfully established a damp and mould referral pathway, which streamlines identification of needs and access to support from all sectors and a fuel poverty map identifying hotspots for targeted intervention has also been created. We launched the first Healthy Homes webpage providing resources for residents and professionals and the first year of the free *Healthier Homes for Healthier Lives* training upskilled 226 professionals.

Building on these achievements, training continues and ten further *Healthy Homes for Healthier Lives* sessions are scheduled for autumn and winter 2025/26 aiming to train at least 400 professionals. GP referral pathways are being updated and work to embed and improve integration across the public and voluntary support sector continues. These continued efforts reflect the programme's ongoing commitment to improving housing conditions and tackling health inequalities through sustained, strategic partnership working.

ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

We will harness the strengths, resources and passions in our communities to drive positive change and build solutions that reflect aspirations. We will have a catalysing role, focusing on enabling our communities to work together to make the changes that matter most.

Community empowerment will also drive environmental sustainability through initiatives such as biodiversity enhancement, climate adaptation projects and codesign of low-carbon infrastructure. This will help ensure that environmental action is inclusive, locally driven and firmly rooted in civic pride.

REDUCED HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND ENHANCED WELLBEING

We will tackle the social determinants of health – housing quality, economic opportunity, social connection and environmental factors – to improve outcomes. We will support residents to become health advocates and peer supporters, using social spaces, green environments and community activities to promote mental and physical wellbeing. Finally, we will also prioritise areas with poorer health outcomes, building confidence to improve individual outcomes and support system-wide challenges, such as workforce stability in care services.

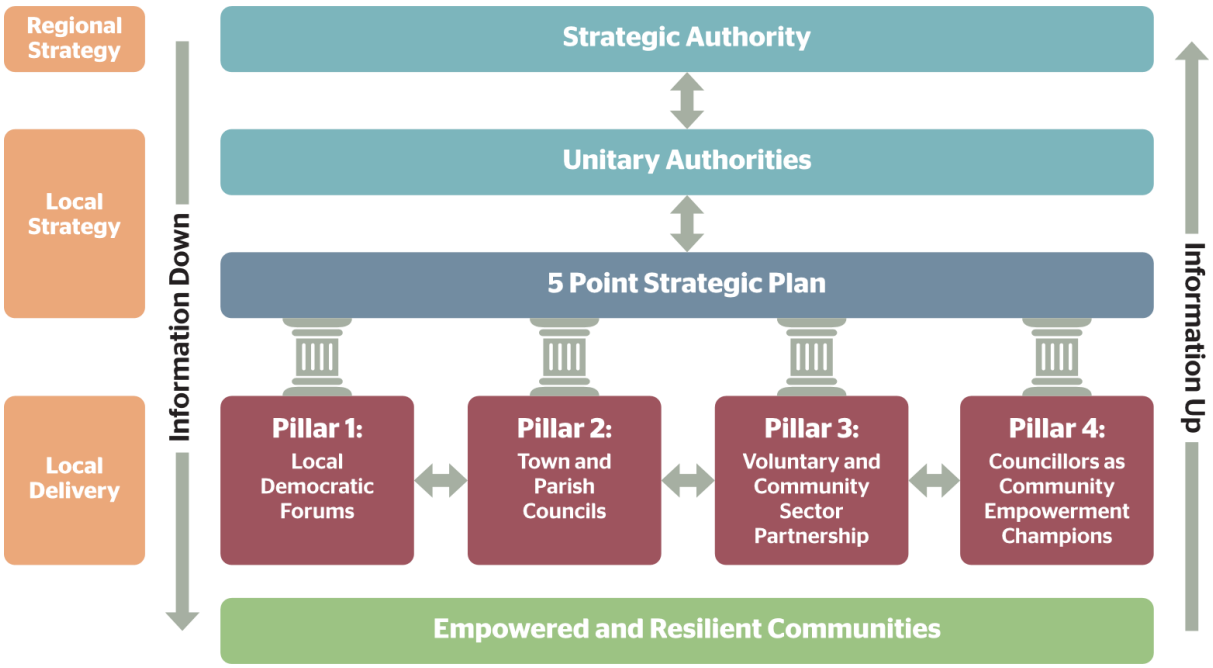
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND LOCAL PROSPERITY

We will champion local businesses, social enterprises and cooperatives that create jobs and retain economic value within the community. Community-led businesses and social enterprises will be empowered to address local needs and generate sustainable income. Our employment support will be tailored to match local opportunities with residents' aspirations. Financial literacy and long-term economic resilience will be strengthened and supported through community-led initiatives.

DELIVERING OUR AMBITION: FOUR PILLARS OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

To bring this vision to life, our approach is built around four connected pillars that support communities at every level. The three sub-proposals provide further information on the choices available for community engagement in each different approach. In principle, these pillars work together to ensure the plan is delivered in a joined-up way, with local voices helping shape local

decisions. They will build stronger local leadership, encourage participation and support communities to take action together. Every neighbourhood can speak up, work together and access the tools and support needed to shape its own future.



PILLAR 1: LOCAL DEMOCRATIC FORUMS

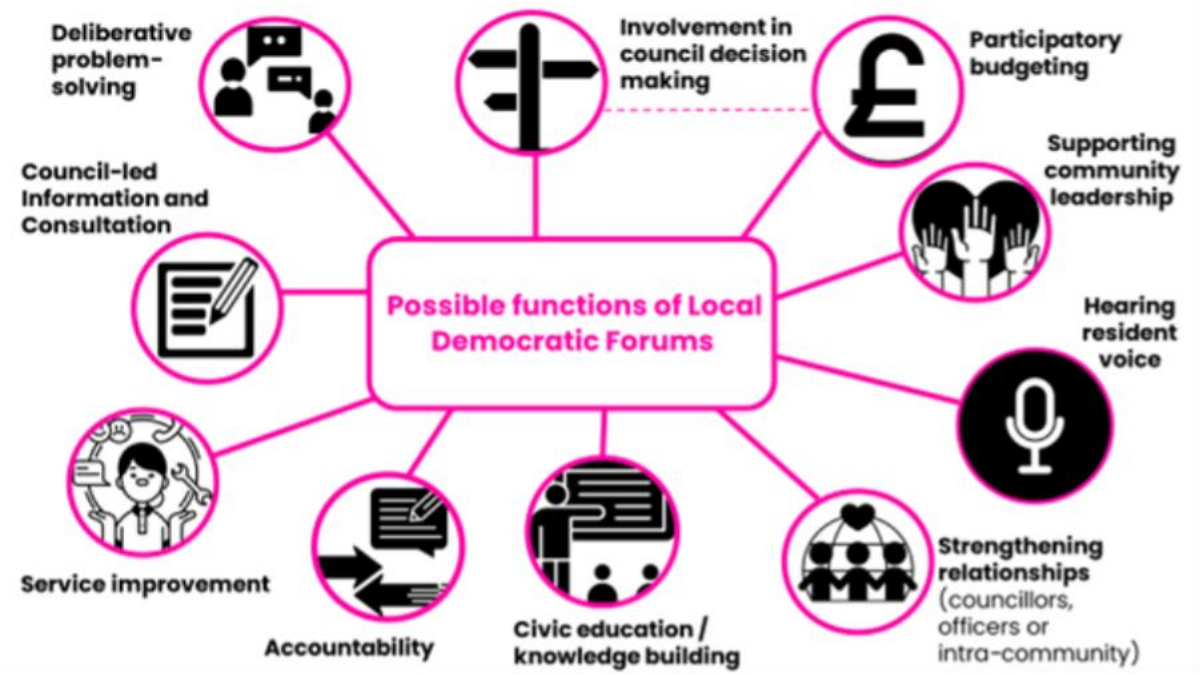
Drawing on practices from Hertfordshire and other areas, local democratic forums may serve to enhance community involvement in decision-making on local matters. The approach evolves from the traditional area committees and allows communities to influence Council and public sector service delivery. Together with Town and Parish Councils, these forums are designed to structure community engagement within local governance and services. Forums may include members from relevant public sector organisations, such as health, the police, local business leaders, as well as the VCFSE. The approach is intended to support neighbourhood governance and increase democratic participation across communities.

These forums will operate within the framework established by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, which sets out a new legal basis for neighbourhood governance and community empowerment across England.

The forums will use integrated data to identify and address emerging issues early, aligning with the bill's emphasis on locally driven decision making and public service reform.

They will ensure inclusive representation from voluntary and community organisations, public sector partners and local business and education networks, reflecting the government's commitment to strengthening local accountability. Through structured, cross-sector collaboration, the forums will empower communities to lead on decisions that affect their areas.

Under the new legislation the forums will also be able to manage budgets and services delegated by Unitary Authorities, aligning with the ambition to formalise neighbourhood governance and devolve authority closer to residents. New Local have identified several functions local democratic forums can perform.



Due to its polycentric geography, there is no universal solution for Hertfordshire. Our approach recognises that communities differ fundamentally in their characteristics, needs and existing democratic infrastructure. A framework appropriate for a historic market town with an active Parish Council will differ from what works in an unparished suburban area, or a rural cluster of small villages. This flexibility is not a weakness, but a strength. It acknowledges the reality that effective community empowerment cannot be imposed through uniformed structures but must emerge from authentic engagement with the specific character and aspiration of each individual area.

Our transition work will identify common elements that should apply across all local democratic forums whilst also creating space for local adaptation and innovation.

PILLAR 2: TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

INTRODUCTION AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Hertfordshire's civic landscape is enriched by a diverse range of Town and Parish Councils. Each local Council offers a unique blend of local knowledge, adaptability and community connections, bringing value to the people and places they serve. Where they exist, these local Councils are embedded within Hertfordshire's communities, providing direct insight into local priorities and needs.

The government has confirmed that reorganisation will not alter the structure or functions of existing Town and Parish Councils. This continuity means that local Councils will remain part of Hertfordshire's governance framework.

The extent of Town and Parish Council coverage, and their influence differs significantly across the county. In areas where they are well established, these local Councils have the potential to support and contribute to emerging governance arrangements.

HERTFORDSHIRE'S CONTEXT

Hertfordshire's 124 Town and Parish Councils form one element of local democracy. Covering 85% of the county's land, but serving under half its population, they collectively raise £20.7m in precept for 2025/26.

The distribution varies considerably: whilst some districts are fully parished, others are only partially parished, and some, such as Watford and Stevenage, have no Town or Parish Councils at all, highlighting the diversity in local governance structures. Councils range in scale from those serving just 79 residents to Bishop's Stortford Town Council with over 31,000, allowing tailored local approaches that reflect strong community identities.

These local Councils deliver a range of services, from allotments and public conveniences to events and markets. They also provide community representation, support local projects with grants and manage assets, such as community buildings and street lighting, all contributing to local life in their areas. Engaging with Town and Parish Councils supports our commitment to community empowerment, recognising them as one of several ways to ensure our communities are engaged and our neighbourhoods empowered.

Case study: Kimpton Parish Council

Kimpton Parish Council exemplifies how local Councils foster connection, wellbeing and pride. Serving the village for nearly 120 years, the Council actively maintains local areas whilst also taking care to preserve rural character. Through volunteer dedication, the Council supports regular community events. The hand-delivered Welcome Pack – a decade-long partnership with Kimpton Parish Church – helps newcomers settle in and helps build and reflect strong village ties. The Council's purchase and maintenance of 56 public benches across public land and rights of way demonstrates thoughtful enhancement of everyday life for residents and visitors. This proactive approach, grounded in deep understanding of community needs, makes Kimpton not just a place to live, but a place to truly belong.

CODESIGNING OUR APPROACH

We have taken a structured approach to engaging with Town and Parish Councils, establishing a task and finish group with local Council Clerks to consider the opportunities reorganisation offers Hertfordshire. This has resulted in a series of recommendations, designed to support effective local governance and robust community engagement.

Theme	Recommendation
Governance	New Unitary Authorities may wish to adopt charters or frameworks to provide a foundation for collaboration and transparency with Town and Parish Councils. These frameworks would establish clear roles and shared objectives. Where devolution is being considered, Unitary Authorities would, in accordance with best practice, seek assurance on governance arrangements, including evidence of qualified staff, a strong electoral mandate and comprehensive training programmes for both Members and Officers.
Decision-making	As part of the Unitary Authorities' commitment to community empowerment, they would explore mechanisms to ensure that Town and

Theme	Recommendation
	Parish Councils can be appropriately involved in decision-making processes that affect their communities, particularly where services or assets may be devolved in future.
Communication	Protocols for information sharing and designation of key contacts within each Authority to enhance communication, transparency and responsiveness with Town and Parish Councils.
Asset transfers	If asset transfers to Town and Parish Councils are pursued, ensure a transparent approach supported by clear service agreements to guarantee continuity and accountability in service provision. Unitary Authorities should seek financial assurance through detailed business cases, adequate precept levels for ongoing service delivery and robust risk management arrangements.
Capacity and shared services	Where appropriate, invest in capacity building, particularly focusing on technology, systems and the development of relevant skills, to enable local Councils to work more effectively with Unitary Authorities in collaborative arrangements for mutual benefit.
Service delivery and devolved assets	Where devolution to Town and Parish Councils is being considered, explore flexible models of service delivery, ensuring that any devolved responsibilities are matched by adequate funding and resources. The new Unitary Authorities would seek appropriate assurance, such as a demonstrable track record of successfully managing existing responsibilities, clear service continuity plans and a commitment to quality standards that deliver genuine value for money and improved outcomes for local residents.

We will consider these recommendations and refine our approach during transition, but it will be for the new Unitary Authorities to implement changes as part of their community empowerment plans. They will also determine whether to conduct community governance reviews under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

PILLAR 3: VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Hertfordshire's voluntary and community sector (VCFSE) is a vital force in shaping an inclusive and empowered county. From established charities to grassroots groups, these organisations bring support, connection and creativity in responding to community needs. We are committed to unlocking the full potential of their skills, knowledge and lived experience, creating the conditions for every organisation to thrive and contribute to Hertfordshire's shared future.

Strategic engagement with public sector partners, alongside key representatives from the VCFSE has been central to shaping our proposals for local governance and community empowerment. All partners involved share a unified ambition to support and expand the capacity and influence of the voluntary and community sector. There is a strong consensus that delivering services at the neighbourhood level, in ways that empower and actively engage community members, will deliver better outcomes.

This collective commitment is grounded in the belief that by strengthening the voluntary and community sector, partners can build more resilient, connected and empowered communities. By focusing on neighbourhood-level service delivery and placing emphasis on empowerment

and active community participation, the approach aims to ensure that services are not only effective but also aligned with the unique needs and aspirations of local residents.

Partners are committed to reinforcing the role of the voluntary and community sector, recognising the crucial role it plays in driving positive social change within local communities. The central aim through the process of reorganisation of local government is to harness the sector's resources, skills and established community connections to secure improved outcomes for residents. By leveraging the unique strengths of voluntary and community organisations, partners seek to ensure that future service delivery is both impactful and tailored to the specific needs of each area.

To maintain effectiveness, there is a clear focus on preserving local expertise and sustaining the trust that communities have placed in these organisations. As new frameworks and approaches are developed, they will be carefully constructed to build on existing partnerships and proven services. This ensures that service delivery continues to be efficient, responsive and closely aligned with the priorities of local people.

Case study: VCFSE Alliance

Hertfordshire is home to the VCFSE Alliance, made up of a range of organisations across Herts and West Essex and funded through the ICB. This established group coordinates, improves and shares the wealth of experience and expertise within the health, care and wellbeing sector. Steering group representatives often form part of other partnership structures to ensure communication and opportunities flow between and within these structures.

CODESIGNING OUR APPROACH

Our engagement with the VCFSE has resulted in a series of recommendations for the new Unitary Authorities, which are designed to support effective local governance and robust community engagement.

Theme	Recommendation
Strengthening and resourcing partnerships	To enable success, new Unitary Authorities should invest in the capacity of the VCFSE sector and existing partnerships, ensuring new governance arrangements build on current successful networks. Provide practical support including training opportunities and dedicated liaison roles.
Clarifying roles and accountability	Clarity and guidance on roles, responsibilities and decision-making powers from the new Authorities, to avoid confusion and overlap. Establish transparent frameworks for accountability and reporting.
Embedding prevention and co-production	Make prevention and coproduction fundamental to all locality governance plans, with defined milestones and success measures. Encourage the sharing of best practices and learning across localities, including the VCS and public services.
Maintaining local knowledge and expertise	Map and value existing relationships and expertise at the neighbourhood level. Ensure these assets are preserved during reorganisation through robust transition plans that minimise disruption and support continuity.
Monitoring impact and adapting	During reorganisation establish mechanisms for regular feedback and evaluation, enabling the approach to be refined based on what works well. Engage communities in reviewing progress and shaping future developments.

We will review these recommendations and refine our strategy during transition. The new Unitary Authorities will be responsible for implementing changes in their community empowerment plans. With support from the new Unitary Authorities the VCFSE sector will have stable funding and long-term planning support, helping organisations in the future achieve greater impact in support of our communities.

PILLAR 4: COUNCILLORS – BEYOND REPRESENTATION TO TRANSFORMATION

Elected Members are the foundation of local democracy. With local government reform, there is a significant opportunity for Councillors to champion change, build capacity and empower residents to shape their own futures. Their deep local knowledge and ability to facilitate local problem solving will be instrumental in enabling communities to influence decision making and connect with wider opportunities.

Hertfordshire's Councillors will:

Role	Description
Community engagement and facilitation	Spend time in neighbourhoods attending events, hosting conversations and creating dialogue opportunities. They will convene diverse voices to identify priorities, facilitate discussions and support communities to develop their own solutions, whilst building relationships with residents, organisations and schools.
Leadership within local democratic forums	Ensure community voices are present in structured governance, work collaboratively with partners to address challenges and help communities understand decision-making processes, whilst holding services accountable for delivering local priorities.
Managing resources for community impact	Manage delegated budgets for local projects, work with neighbourhood teams to align Council resources with community priorities and make transparent decisions about funding, whilst being honest about constraints and trade-offs.
Building bridges and enabling collaboration	Connect communities with the resources, expertise and networks they need. Link residents with opportunities, help groups access support, facilitate partnerships and translate community needs into policy priorities whilst explaining strategic decisions in accessible terms.
Prevention and early intervention	Work with neighbourhood teams to identify emerging issues before escalation. Support community-led prevention initiatives, ensure data informs early action and champion investment in preventative approaches that build resilience, rather than simply managing crises.
Advocacy and accountability	Advocate for communities within strategic governance, challenge decisions that overlook local needs and champion investment. Maintain transparency about deliverability, explain difficult decisions honestly and ensure communities can hold Councillors and services to account.
Supporting skills and capacity development	Nurture community leadership by helping residents develop skills in organising, advocacy, project management and governance. Support community groups, encourage young people's engagement and build pathways for residents to progress to leadership roles.

The new Unitary Authorities will support and enable all Councillors to play critical roles in enabling communities to do things for themselves, sharing power and celebrating community achievements. This will support communities to be more resilient and connected.

OUR TRANSITION COMMITMENT: FROM VISION TO OPERATIONAL REALITY

OUR COMMITMENT TO DELIVERY

Transforming community empowerment from vision to reality requires structured transition work that establishes the foundations for effective local democratic forums. Between 2026 and 2028, we will develop the frameworks, funding mechanisms, capacity-building programmes, and accountability systems that enable our four pillars to deliver meaningful change from Vesting Day.

Notwithstanding that decisions will be taken by the new Unitary Authorities, we are proposing that during 2026 – 27, we will work with our key partners and communities to define forum boundaries and governance models, map services suitable for local management; develop business cases for sustainable funding, including a Community Investment Fund; design training and support programmes; and establish data and evaluation frameworks. In 2027 – 28, we will roll out Councillor training and test approaches with pilot areas to refine our model before wider implementation.

This transition work will be shaped by working groups, bringing together Councillors, Parish representatives, VCFSE leaders and residents. Regular community consultation through multiple channels will ensure broader input beyond these working groups. Pilots will test what works in practice, generating learning that improves the county-wide model.

By committing to this approach, we ensure that in April 2028 our approach to community empowerment has clarity of purpose, genuine authority, skilled people and robust accountability – delivering empowerment residents can see and experience from day one.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Hertfordshire's approach represents a practical evolution of democracy – placing genuine power in community hands yet also maintaining accountability. This creates the right conditions for transformation, where community members become co-creators of their local environment, developing skills, connections, capacity and agency that improve both individual and collective outcomes. Communities build resilience, celebrate identity and address challenges through collaborative action, supported by professional expertise and adequate resources.

Critically, public services shift from deficit-based intervention to asset-based partnership, improving outcomes and reducing long-term costs through prevention and community ownership.

Councillors, along with Town and Parish Councils, play a vital role in helping communities realise their ambitions. Alongside them, the voluntary and community sector offers independent, agile support – responding quickly to emerging needs and building trust through deep community connections that encourage participation and amplify the voices of those who might otherwise go unheard.

Local democratic forums provide the innovation needed to connect Unitary Authorities with hyper-local democracy, supporting government reorganisation and community empowerment in a practical and inclusive way.

This is not just local government reorganisation. It is democratic renewal that puts residents at the heart of the decisions that affect their lives, building the foundation for thriving, self-determining communities.

QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE SERVICES

MHCLG criterion 3: quality, sustainable services

THE STARTING POINT

Hertfordshire's 11 councils deliver a very wide range of services day to day - from social care, housing and planning, to environmental health, waste, leisure, culture, transport, and support functions such as finance and governance. Each organisation has naturally developed its own mix of structures, systems and partnerships to meet local needs. This diversity is one of Hertfordshire's strengths, but it also means services have evolved in different ways, with varied policies, contracts and delivery models. To develop our proposal and increase our readiness to deliver local government reorganisation in practice, all Councils have worked together to make sense of this landscape. We have created a single 'service catalogue' and shared datasets around existing demand, delivery models and performance levels. Using this common framework, professional leads across all Councils have identified key risks, issues and opportunities associated with re-shaping services, drawing on learning from other areas that have undergone reorganisation and disaggregation of services previously provided at County Council scale. For each major service area, partners have worked together to describe:

- What needs to be in place on Vesting Day to ensure continuity and compliance.
- Where there are opportunities for collaboration, sharing or alternative delivery models.
- How services could evolve over time to improve outcomes and efficiency.

Through this collaborative approach we have built a robust baseline position, enabling us to set out our proposals with confidence and make a fast start on delivering reorganisation in practice. We are clear on what work we can undertake prior to a decision from the Secretary of State, and we are ready to step up delivery in practice once a decision on a preferred option is made.

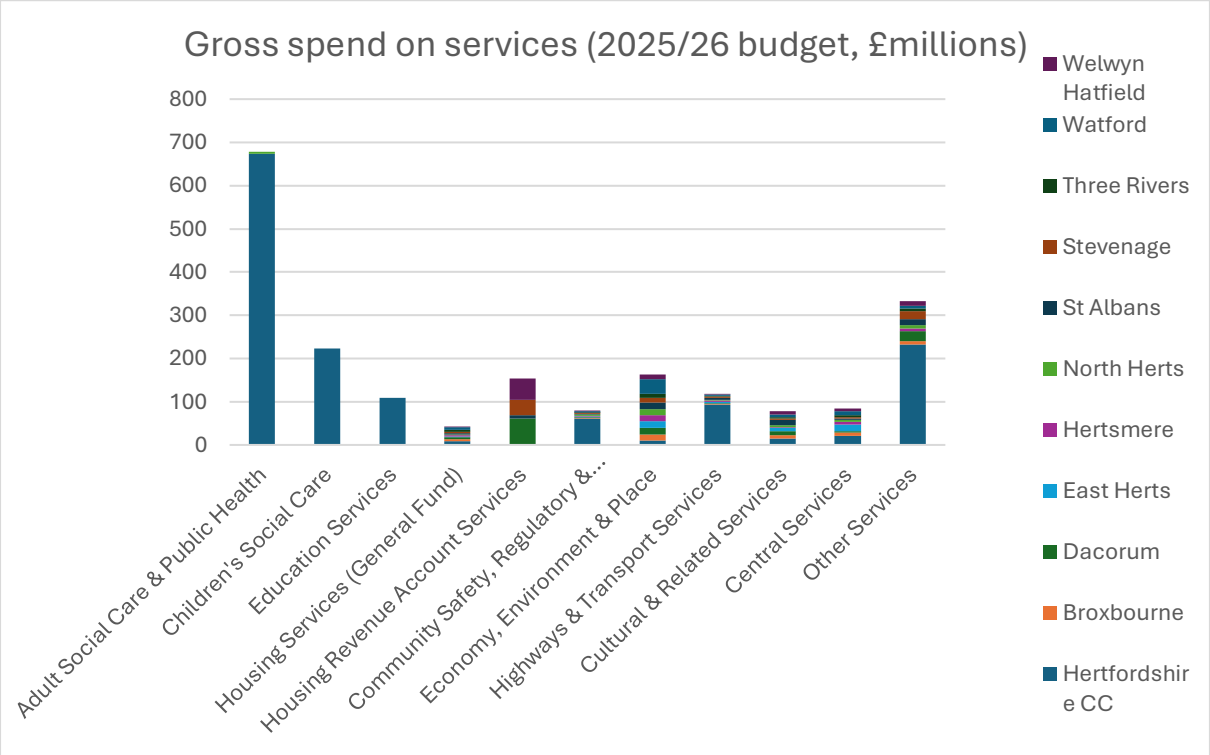
DELIVERING OUR AMBITION FOR COMMUNITIES AND SERVICES

Earlier in this document we set out our shared ambition for services that are integrated, efficient and people-centred, simple to access, focused on prevention, and designed around the needs of residents and communities. The service design process has been the mechanism for turning that ambition into practical plans and moving swiftly into delivery in practice.

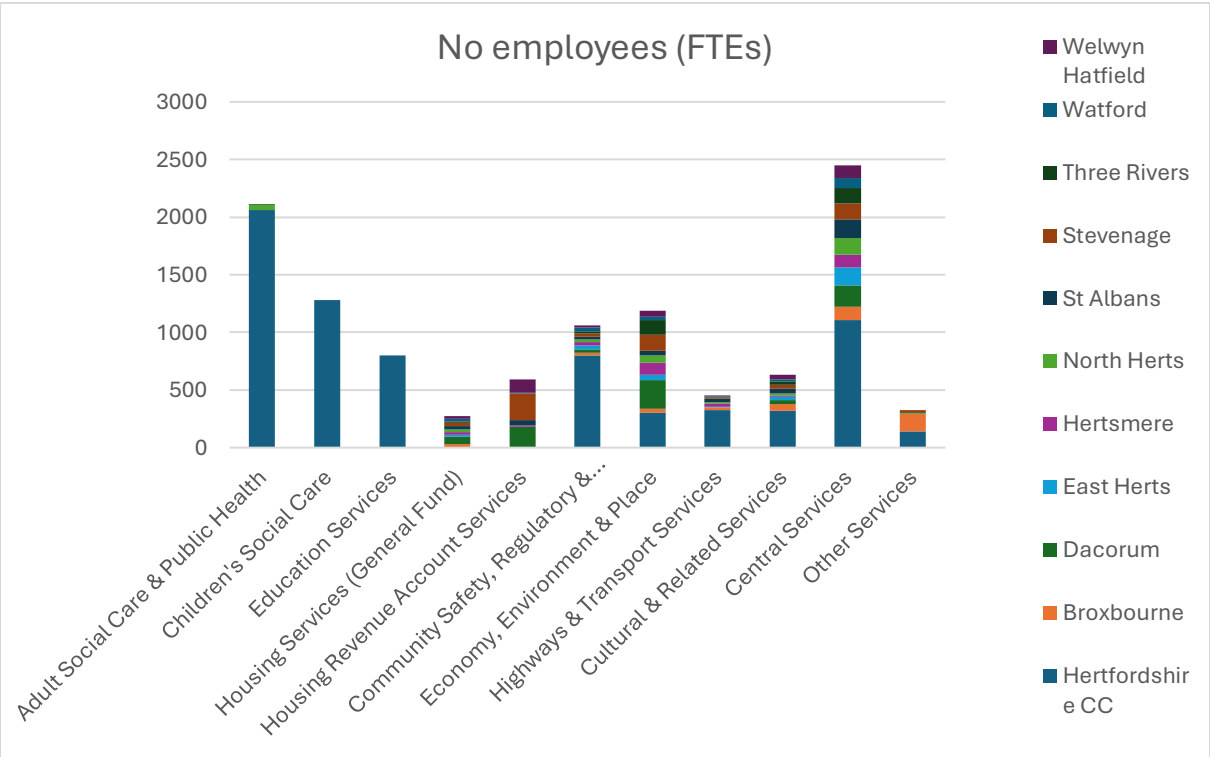
Through joint work across all 11 councils, we have brought together professional leads, managers and specialists to start the process of determining how existing services could be reshaped within new Unitary Authorities and begin preparing for the complex work involved.

This has included mapping how statutory functions would transfer safely, identifying opportunities to integrate related services, and testing alternative delivery models that could help to manage the risks, cost and complexity of transition or improve quality and resilience.

GROSS SERVICE EXPENDITURE (2025/2026 BUDGET)



WORKFORCE - FULL TIME EQUIVALENTS (APRIL 2024)



CRITICAL ENABLING FUNCTIONS

We have convened groups of professional leads from across all eleven councils to examine the systems and infrastructure that will enable safe transition and long-term improvement. These critical enablers—workforce, assets and property, digital and technology, and contracts and suppliers—are summarised below.

Enabler	Our starting point	Transformational opportunities for new authorities
Workforce	Around 11,000 FTE staff (excluding schools) employed across 11 Councils under separate pay, grading and policy frameworks. TUPE and HR systems vary; cultures and structures differ between county and district tiers. Recruitment pressures in key professions (social care, planning, procurement, ICT).	• Establish a shared workforce vision and consistent people policies across new Councils. • Work towards alignment of HR and payroll systems. • Invest in leadership, digital skills and workforce wellbeing. • Consider collaborative approaches to recruitment, retention and organisational development. • Design a new inclusive Workforce Strategy to ensure we have the right skills aligning talent with business objectives.
Assets and property	11 Councils hold substantial and varied estates portfolios, including investment properties, 22 civic offices, 32 waste depots/transfer centres, 31 leisure centres and 181 car parks. Asset records and information systems are inconsistent with some duplication and under-utilisation across sites.	• Rationalise and modernise the estate to improve efficiency and service access. • Ensure accurate shared data on our collective asset base. • Consolidate office accommodation and co-locate frontline services. • Embed sustainability and net-zero standards in asset management.
Digital and technology	Councils operate multiple legacy systems, with duplication in case management, CRM, finance and HR platforms. Across the 11 organisations c.1300 applications are currently used. There are varying levels of cloud adoption and digital maturity; separate cybersecurity and network arrangements.	• Implementation of single CRM and case management systems to streamline all customer interactions and provide seamless access to services. • Integration of finance, HR, and procurement systems featuring real-time reporting to inform strategic decisions. • Development of a unified data platform equipped with advanced analytics and AI capabilities to support ongoing improvement initiatives. • Utilisation of AI and automation to enhance productivity and support service delivery • Adoption of a cloud-first infrastructure designed to ensure scalability, security, and environmental sustainability. • Incorporation of digital inclusion principles into service design, ensuring equitable access for all customers. • Enhancement of workforce digital skills through collaborative tools and agile delivery models. • Establishment of governance structures comprising digital leadership roles and cross-functional transformation boards.
Contracts and suppliers	c.400 live £1m+ contracts worth more than £1bn collectively, managed under differing rules and cycles. Fragmented procurement and limited aggregation of spend. Overlaps in facilities management, IT and professional services contracts, many expiring around 2027–28.	• Map and rationalise contracts ahead of transition. • Develop a unified Procurement Strategy and contract management framework. • Increase use of joint frameworks to secure better value and consistency. • Embed social value, sustainability and local supply-chain priorities. • Modernise procurement processes through e-systems and spend analytics.

MANAGING TRANSITION AND DISAGGREGATION FOR CRITICAL SERVICES

Transition to new Unitary Councils will be the largest public sector organisational change programme undertaken in Hertfordshire since 1972. It will be challenging to deliver and will require sustained effort and investment from a very large group of professionals.

Our shared goal is to deliver a transition to new authorities in a way that ensures continuity of vital services, safeguards residents and staff and creates the conditions for longer-term transformation.

The 11 councils have worked together to begin detailed planning for service areas identified by MHCLG as bringing the highest risk, cost and complexity in disaggregation:

- Adult Social Care
- Children's Social Care
- SEND and education
- Housing and homelessness
- Transportation and highways (not specified as a high-risk service by MHCLG but added to the list at the request of the 11 leaders).

These areas reflect approximately 50% of the collective budgeted expenditure of Hertfordshire authorities in 2025/26 and around 40% of the workforce; but they are also likely to cause the most significant financial risks to future authorities.

Whilst recognising that key decisions will be made by future Unitary Authorities in shadow form, for each of these critical areas, cross-council professional teams have developed initial transition blueprints describing how we foresee a day one position for new authorities in a way that manages risk, minimises disruption and ensures continuity for users of services. These have been informed by lessons from other areas that have undergone LGR, and specifically disaggregation of services provided at county scale, but have also been shaped by the professional and technical judgement of experienced leaders across the partnership.

TRANSITION BLUEPRINTS FOR CRITICAL SERVICES

These plans recognise that while reorganisation brings opportunities to simplify and integrate, it also carries risk. The disaggregation of county-wide services, the aggregation of District and Borough functions, and the need to migrate data, systems and contracts all create complexity. Transition costs will need to be carefully managed and phased to avoid disruption to frontline delivery.

The following sections detail our transition blueprints for each area. The blueprints for day one are illustrative planning tools, developed to show what safe and legal service delivery could look like at the point of vesting. They are not final operating models. Their purpose is to minimise risk during transition, provide assurance that statutory functions can continue without interruption, and create a stable platform for new Councils to review and evolve services once established.

Each of the day-one blueprints has been developed to a common set of principles that ensure consistency, safety and flexibility across all critical service areas.

Shared or collaborative delivery on a transitional basis	Where it is not practical or cost-effective to disaggregate specialist or county-wide functions immediately, Councils are anticipating shared or collaborative service arrangements at least on a transitional basis. These will provide resilience through transition while allowing future

	Authorities to review and decide their long-term operating models once stable.
Statutory separation and clear accountability at the level of new Unitary Authorities	Every new Unitary Authority must be able to discharge its own statutory duties from Vesting Day. The blueprints therefore set out the minimum structures, roles and systems required for safe and legal operation within each authority, ensuring clarity of accountability and responsibility.
Maintenance and integration of local provision	At the same time, continuity for residents and staff is paramount. Services that already operate on District or neighbourhood footprints will remain locally delivered, with an intention to integrate with housing, health and community partners to preserve existing relationships and local knowledge.

Further due diligence will be required on these proposals as detailed design progresses during our transition phase. As that work continues, specific arrangements may change to reflect emerging evidence, local priorities and national guidance, while the underlying principles of safety, continuity and service improvement will remain constant.

NOTE ON TECHNOLOGY, SYSTEMS AND TRANSFORMATION

The technology and systems design principles set out in the "ambition" chapter for the new unitary authorities are intended to guide a comprehensive transformation; however, it is important to recognise that the critical actions such as ensuring operational continuity, legal compliance, and baseline cybersecurity will be prioritised for vesting day, the broader transformation, subject to funded business cases, will be phased over time.

The service blueprints that follow, set out clear and ambitious direction for future technology and systems integration which will be achieved over time building on the strong technological foundations set in place for a safe and legal vesting day.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Adult Social Care services in Hertfordshire have a budgeted gross expenditure of £679m for 2025/26 and directly employ over 2,100 people, as well as relying on and part funding a much larger care provider external workforce. There were almost 34,000 new requests for support in 2024/25, a significant 20% rise from pre-COVID levels. Nearly 14,000 Needs Assessments for Adults were completed together with a further 2,500 new Carers Needs Assessments. Over 27,800 adults were supported with services in 2024/25 with 15,210 of those adults receiving long-term care. 8,800 safeguarding concerns were received with 2300 progressing to formal enquiry. 10,300 financial assessments were carried out. Demand is rising with demographic change.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE: WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE THROUGH LGR

Our ambition for Adult Social Care, through LGR reorganisation, is to place people at the heart of care, ensuring that every individual is supported to live a safe, healthy and independent life with genuine choice and control over the care and support they receive.

We aim to build on a preventative, place-based care model that is proactive, personalised and firmly based in the strengths of our local communities.

We will achieve this through stronger integration and partnership with health, housing, voluntary and community services, and supported by excellent practice and robust quality assurance.

New unitary structures will allow Adult Social Care, Housing, Public Health and Community Wellbeing to be managed within one organisation for the first time. The two key opportunities are:

- **Stronger prevention and early help models**, using data and community insight to identify and support people before crisis.
- **Closer alignment of housing and care**, ensuring that supported housing, adaptations and homelessness prevention are planned jointly with social care and public health teams.

Under all options, each new Authority will deliver its own statutory Adult Social Care functions, ensuring compliance with the Care Act, with clear political and officer leadership within each organisation.

We anticipate that at least on a transitional basis new authorities will coordinate and share some elements of service provision on day one through an “alliance model” as described below. To begin with, the purpose of this alliance model will be as a shared vehicle for managing the risks, costs and complexity of disaggregation, with the model subject to progressive review by new authorities over time, with services eventually evolving to a steady state in different ways depending upon the unitary model ultimately selected and the decisions of the new authorities themselves.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE – DAY ONE BLUEPRINT

ADULT SOCIAL CARE – MANAGING TRANSITION

Operational planning for Adult Social Care will be phased in three stages:

- During the **shadow period**, councils will prepare the groundwork – confirming statutory roles, mapping systems and determining how these will be delivered on day one, creating the shared service models and cataloguing contracts. Workforce instability is a key risk, and it will be vital to support teams with early information about the changes they can expect to minimise the risk of loss of staff. Stakeholders including people who draw on care and support services, care providers and VCSFE partners will need to be engaged.
- On **day one**, the priority is to be safe and legal: governance and safeguarding structures will be live, people who need care and support or information and advice will be able to contact us, and we will be able to take and progress referrals. Case management and payment systems will be functioning, and staff and provider contracts transferred under clear accountability.
- Over the **longer term**, the new Authorities will use this stable platform to consolidate systems, harmonise or differentiate policies, and embed integrated, prevention-led models of care with partners.

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
Leadership and governance	• Appoint statutory Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and Principal Social Worker for each future Authority. • Establish a joint Adults Transition Board with ICB, HPFT and co-production and provider representation. • Map existing safeguarding, quality assurance and decision-making frameworks.	• Each new Authority has a functioning leadership team, DASS and governance structure in place. • Local Safeguarding Adults Boards re-constituted and operational on a shared basis as a transitional arrangement. • Clear scheme of delegation and accountability for Care Act duties.

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
	• Determine shared functions and define governance arrangements for these • Begin workforce engagement and communications.	• Shared framework and Care Act operational practice standards maintained across Hertfordshire. • Shared functions operational.
Workforce	• Complete workforce profiling (roles, grades, skills, retirement and turnover risk). • Identify critical posts and interim capacity requirements. • TUPE mapping and consultation. • Early confirmation to staff of which organisation they will work for as far as possible. • Staff communications and well-being support.	• All staff transferred under TUPE with business-as-usual rotas. • Line management and HR systems operational. • Continuity plans in place for key teams (e.g. hospital discharge, safeguarding). • Clear signposting for staff and residents on service contacts.
Systems and data	• Catalogue all systems (case management, finance, payments, BI). • Define cloning/hosting approach to minimise disruption. • Establish GDPR-compliant data-sharing agreements between new Authorities. • Test data migration pathways for provider payments.	• Continuity of operational case management and finance systems for each Authority. • Functioning 'front door' and advice portals. • Tested payment mechanisms for care providers and direct payments. • Shared reporting to ensure statutory returns continue. • Statutory returns and reporting continue without break.
Contracts and commissioning	• Map and review all care contracts, frameworks and SLAs. • Identify contracts due for renewal near Vesting Day and agree continuity plan. • Engage providers on transitional arrangements.	• All contracts novated or extended to ensure continuity of care. • Central register of providers and spend in place. • Business-as-usual commissioning and payments maintained. • Joint escalation process for market or safeguarding issues.
Finance and charging	• Model service budgets and apportion funding to new Authority footprints. • Review and align charging and financial-assessment policies. • Set up interim finance processes and controls. • Understand and define approach for Ordinary Residence.	• Live budget and accounting structures in place. • Tested processes for provider payments, client contributions and debt management. • Consistent charging policy applied to all residents.
Operations and service delivery	• Define operating model for information, advice, assessment, reablement, safeguarding and community teams. • Confirm pathways with ICBs for hospital discharge and prevention hubs. • Map local offices and estate dependencies.	• Each Authority has an operational 'front door' for advice, assessment and safeguarding. • Core services – assessment, reviews, safeguarding, brokerage, direct care services (day Services and Supported Living), finance teams – fully staffed and functioning.

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
		• Business continuity plans activated.
People, Provider and market engagement	• People who can draw on care and support services have the opportunity to understand any impact of LGR to how we communicate with them or are assured that they will not experience any change. • Communicate regularly with co-production groups, providers and care associations. • Confirm financial assurance and contact routes during transition. • Establish shared quality-monitoring process across new UAs.	• People continue to access ACS support with no disruption. • Providers have single, clear points of contact. • Market oversight and quality assurance processes functioning. • Joint risk management arrangements across Authorities and ICBs.

LONGER-TERM DIRECTION

Once safe and legal operation is achieved, each new Authority will have the space to review and refine its Adult Social Care arrangements as it moves towards a steady state. Whilst design and delivery model may vary in the individual sub-proposals for the 2, 3 and 4 unitary options, there are several common priorities are already emerging.

Over the longer term, Authorities are expected to:

- **Consolidate systems and processes**, moving from interim hosting arrangements to their own preferred case management, finance and business intelligence platforms.
- **Develop integrated support with housing and health**, aligning Adult Social Care more closely with housing, public health, alongside community partners to create multidisciplinary neighbourhood teams focused on prevention and wellbeing.
- **Strengthen joint commissioning and market management**, working with Integrated Care Boards to shape a sustainable, diverse provider market and expand community-based options for care and support.
- **Review workforce and practice models** in ways that best support their own staff and enable effective recruitment and retention of professionals.
- **Embed prevention and technology**, scaling initiatives such as telecare, digital monitoring and the Connect and Prevent programme to reduce demand for long-term care.
- **Review and differentiate policies**, including charging, eligibility and direct payment arrangements, to ensure relevance, fairness and transparency for residents across each new Authority.

FOCUS ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Public Health is a statutory responsibility of upper-tier and Unitary Authorities. It will therefore transfer to the new Councils on Vesting Day, together with the Public Health Grant and associated contracts. To inform this, the Director of Public Health (DPH) has led an options appraisal setting out how statutory and specialist functions could be configured across the new Authorities.

Four broad models have been tested:

- **Option 1 – Disaggregated:** each Unitary Council has its own Public Health team and Director of Public Health.
- **Option 2 – Shared/hosted:** a single county-wide Public Health team led by one DPH, hosted by a unitary authority and accountable to all.
- **Option 3 – Hybrid (single DPH):** Deputy DsPH embedded in each council, reporting to a single DPH, with shared specialist functions.
- **Option 4 – Hybrid (separate DsPH):** separate DsPH in each Council supported by a joint specialist service.

Each model has been evaluated for its ability to:

- Maintain statutory compliance and national professional standards.
- Sustain specialist capacity and training functions.
- Align with local leadership, place-based prevention and health inequality priorities.
- Secure efficient commissioning and equitable service coverage.

This exercise has concluded that:

- Options 1 and 4 (disaggregated or separate DsPH) are most suitable for a two-unitary model but would be costly and hard to staff if there were 3–4 Councils.
- Options 2 and 3 (shared or hybrid models) are more viable for 3–4 unitary structures, because they preserve specialist capacity and reduce duplication.
- The DPH sees integration with related services (such as Housing, Environmental Health, Community Safety) as beneficial under any model.
- A final recommendation will depend on which LGR structure government selects and how the Public Health Grant is handled.

Further work will continue through the transition period to refine governance and funding arrangements once a preferred local government structure is confirmed. The assessment will inform the 'safe and legal' day-one plan and longer-term integration of Public Health with related services such as Housing, Community Safety and Environmental Health.

Case study: Herts Careline

Herts Careline is a longstanding service area of North Herts Council, proudly celebrated its 40th anniversary in July 2022. Renowned for its award-winning assistive technology and telecare solutions, Careline empowers individuals both locally and nationwide to live independently with confidence. Since 2014, Careline has partnered with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to deliver an extensive suite of services including community alarms, GPS pendants for outdoor safety, advanced telecare for complex needs, and automated welfare calls. These offerings currently support over 16,000 people.

Each year, Careline responds to more than 7,400 medical emergencies, alongside thousands of calls addressing physical and mental health concerns, safeguarding, domestic violence, care breakdowns, housing repairs, out-of-hours support, and homelessness. By collaborating with HCC and organisations such as The British Red Cross, a first responder service, Careline makes a meaningful difference to health and social care across Hertfordshire. The latest customer satisfaction survey reflects this impact, with 100% of respondents feeling reassured and 99% willing to recommend Careline to a friend.

Case study: Hertsmere Cancer Screening Uptake Project

Hertsmere's award nominated Cancer Screening Uptake Project brought together local Primary Care Networks and wider system partners to collectively target the health inequalities in cancer screening uptake and diagnosis which was very low. With funding from Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health team, the project tackled the low rates of breast, cervical and prostate cancer screening. Hertsmere has the lowest rates in Hertfordshire and a lower uptake than the England average.

The project adopted the principles behind the NHS's Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, bringing together the wider system to build a culture of collaboration, pride and the time and space needed within the partnership to problem solve, build relationships and trust between primary care, other system partners and our local communities.

The project identified patients who have not responded to screening invites and those with increased cancer risk. Proactively contacting these patients has allowed the team to fully address any concerns that the individual might have, whilst also offering the option of booking in for an appointment while on the call. This approach builds on the vaccination tracing work during the pandemic and has been extremely well received by both partners and patients.

Increase in screening rates has been seen across all parts of the project, with

- The cervical screening rate for the borough increasing from 63.45% to 76.16%, since March 2023. The project has booked over 3000 cervical screening appointments.
- The breast cancer screening rate increasing from 63.62% to 75%, with over 450 appointments booked. Outcome data shows that 2% of women who took up screening after contact with our project, received an 'other than normal' result and of these 11% have received a breast cancer diagnosis. These women may not have been experiencing symptoms but contact with our project has meant that they have been able to access treatment at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The prostate cancer screening rate increasing from 18.5% to 66.22% for Black men over 45 who are at a greater risk of developing prostate cancer. Outcome data shows that 17% of men who engaged with this strand of the project have been referred to hospital for further investigation and of these 26% have received a prostate cancer diagnosis. It's important to note that these men were not experiencing any symptoms and therefore have been able to access treatment earlier, a potentially life-saving measure.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES: SOCIAL CARE, SEND AND EDUCATION

CONTEXT

Children's Services in Hertfordshire have a budgeted gross expenditure of £335m for 2025/26 and employ around 2,100 full-time equivalent staff.

Within this, Children's Social Care services budgeted gross expenditure of £223m with 1,280 full-time equivalent staff. These services span safeguarding, statutory assessments, support for looked-after children, fostering and adoption, and youth justice. Demand pressures are increasing, particularly in relation to complex needs, out-of-area placements, and growth in Education, Health and Care Plans. While Hertfordshire overall has relatively low numbers of children in care compared with England as a whole, need is unevenly distributed – with higher demand concentrated in areas such as Stevenage, Watford and Hatfield.

Education and SEND services in Hertfordshire have budgeted gross expenditure of £109m, and around 800 full-time equivalent staff. The services oversee a school population of around 226,000 pupils. Demand for specialist support has risen sharply: there were 14,473 children and young people supported with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) by July 2025, with annual growth between 12% – 15%. Meeting the ongoing increases in requests for EHC Needs Assessment is challenging and, although performance is above comparators and national performance, 56% were completed within the statutory 20-week period in 2024. Demand for SEND provision is growing, complex and misaligned with current capacity creating an unsustainable system: there are 3,114 special school places currently in Hertfordshire including the 10% of additional places created in the last academic year. Work continues to manage and mitigate these pressures through programmes to increase provision capacity, recognising that current demand outstrips potential capacity. Pressures on the High Needs Block continue, with a forecast spend of £263m in 2025/26, £52m above available funding and increasing the overall cumulative DSG deficit to c£80m. Home-to-school transport costs are also a major Authority budget driver, supporting more than 3,100 pupils at a total annual cost of nearly £40m.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES: WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE THROUGH LGR

Our ambition for **Children's Social Care** through reorganisation is to create safe, stable systems with clear local accountability and sufficient scale to invest in prevention and early help so that more children stay safely cared for by their families. The aim is to support more children and families earlier, reducing escalation to statutory intervention. For children who need to be in our care and care leavers, our ambition as corporate parents is to ensure they have homes and trusted relationships that offer love, care, protection and stability. The aim is that children in care and care leavers receive the help they need to address experiences of adversity and trauma and develop the foundations for a healthy, happy life.

Integrating Children's Social Care more closely with housing, health and community services supports these prevention and corporate parenting ambitions and aligns with our wider goals of tackling health inequalities, supporting family resilience, and ensuring every child has the best start in life.

At the same time, our ambition for **Education and SEND through** reorganisation is to build a more inclusive system that identifies and meets need earlier, reduces reliance on out-of-area placements, and ensures children with SEND can thrive in local schools and communities. The goal is to strengthen place-based support, integrate better with health and social care, and provide parents with simpler, more transparent processes. We also aim to grow local specialist provision, modernise systems and case management, and maintain Hertfordshire's strong track record in traded school support.

Reorganisation provides a chance to reset relationships between education, social care and health partners around new localities that reflect natural communities and school catchments. This will enable:

- **Integrated early-help and family hub models**, combining youth, education and community services in multidisciplinary teams.
- **A single accountability framework for safeguarding and SEND**, into the new unitary authorities.

- **More coherent engagement with schools**, especially through locality-based SEND and inclusion partnerships that strengthen early identification and reduce reliance on out-of-area placements.
- **Improve coordination of home-to-school transport, admissions and SEND provision**, supporting inclusion and improving efficiency.

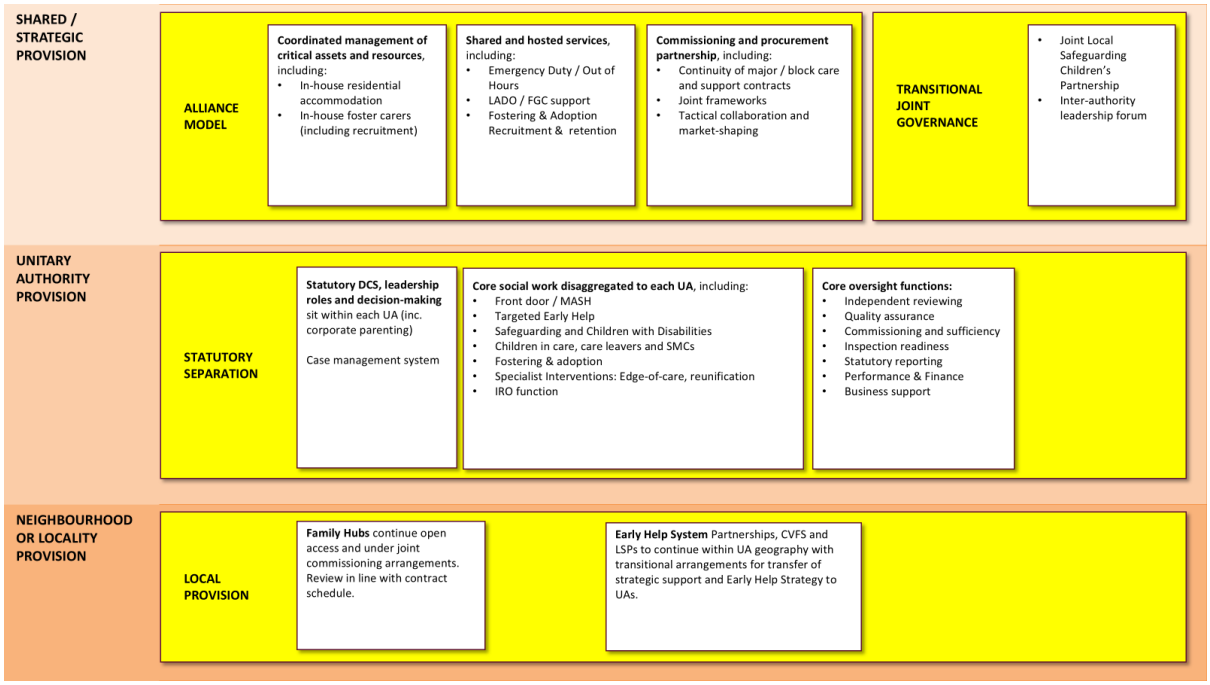
Reorganisation will not in itself resolve financial pressures in education and SEND, but it offers the opportunity to align policy, simplify access, and design services around families and communities.

Under all options, each new Authority will deliver its own statutory Children's Social Care functions, led by a Director of Children's Services and supported by local safeguarding and corporate parenting arrangements.

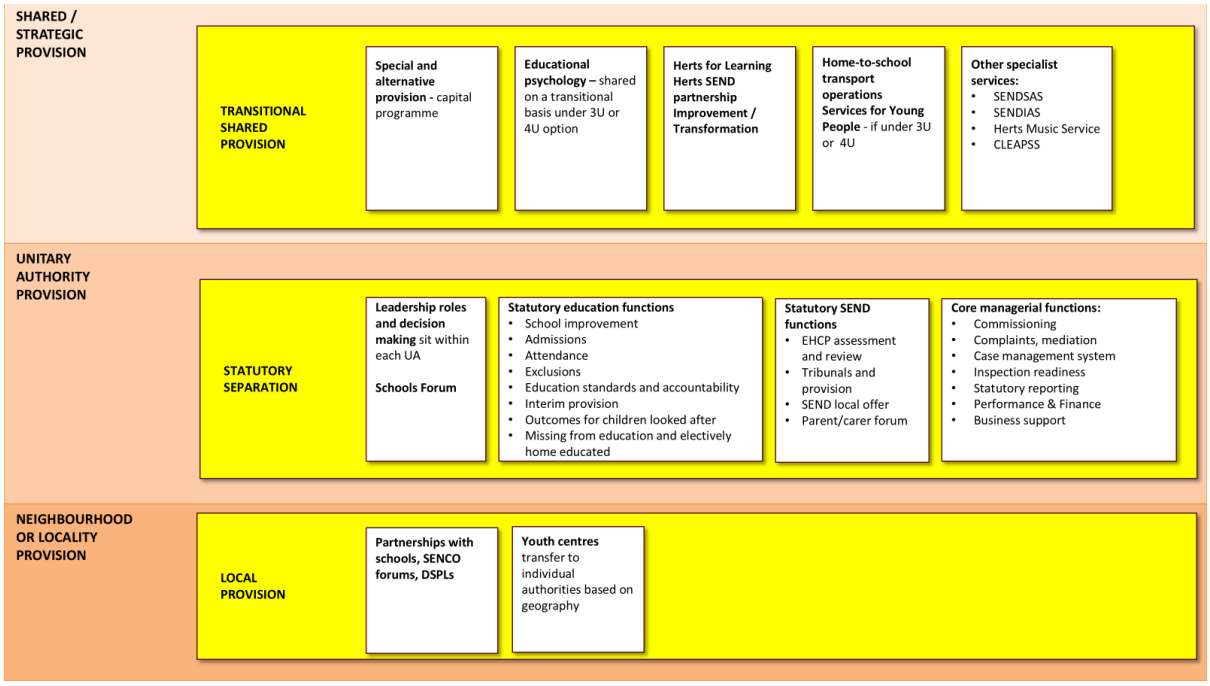
We anticipate that at least on a transitional basis new authorities will coordinate and share some elements of service provision on day one through an “alliance model” as described below. To begin with, the purpose of this alliance model will be as a shared vehicle for managing the risks, costs and complexity of disaggregation, with the model subject to ongoing review by new authorities over time, and services eventually differentiating to a steady state in different ways depending upon the unitary model selected and the decisions of the new authorities themselves.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES – DAY ONE BLUEPRINT

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE



SEND AND EDUCATION



CHILDREN'S SERVICES – MANAGING TRANSITION

Operational planning for Children's Services is being phased in three stages:

- During the **shadow period**, Councils will prepare the groundwork – confirming statutory roles, mapping systems, cataloguing contracts and engaging the workforce.

- On **day one**, the priority is to be safe and legal: governance and safeguarding structures will be live, case management and payment systems functioning, and staff and providers transferred under clear accountability.
- Over the **longer-term**, the new Authorities will decide how to use this stable platform to review and either maintain shared provision, or else differentiate systems, policies, and practice models.

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
Leadership and governance	• Appoint statutory Director of Children's Services (DCS) and supporting senior management for each future Authority. • Establish joint Children's Services Transition Board with ICB, schools and police representation. • Map existing governance for safeguarding, corporate parenting, and SEND improvement to avoid gaps. • Draft new Terms of Reference for Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Youth Justice Boards.	• Each new Authority has a functioning DCS, statutory roles and capable senior leadership team in place. • Corporate parenting and safeguarding boards reconstituted in transitional shared form and operational. • Clear decision-making and accountability for statutory Children and Education Act duties. • Single reporting lines and localised arrangements for performance and inspection readiness.
Workforce and culture	• Undertake workforce profiling by team and role in order to allocate core social work to new areas. • Identify and mitigate risks in relation to critical roles and hard-to-recruit areas (e.g. social workers, educational psychologists). • Agree TUPE and ring-fencing arrangements. • Develop staff briefings and wellbeing support. • Create joint training and induction plans for new leaders and front-line teams.	• All staff transferred safely with continuity of supervision and management. • Caseload allocations stabilised and held intact during the transition. • HR and payroll systems live and staff communications channels operational. • New Authorities continue core practice model (e.g. Family Safeguarding).
Systems and data	• Identify and develop transition plans for all critical case management and line-of-business systems (Liquidlogic, EHM, EYES) and education platforms in partnership with suppliers. • Agree data sharing protocols with ICB and police.	• Continuity of case management and education systems for each authority with tested access and reporting. • Statutory returns and Ofsted reporting capabilities in place. • Provider payments and SEND funding processed accurately
Contracts and commissioning	• Map and review all contracts (fostering, residential, SEND transport, therapy services). • Engage providers and regional frameworks on transition plans. • Identify contracts needing novation or extension near Vesting Day and develop strategies in collaboration with suppliers. • Assess market capacity and risk of cost inflation and develop market management approach through alliance model.	• All active contracts novated or extended; payment systems tested. • Shared procurement arrangements for high-cost placements and adoption services in place. • Single market oversight and provider escalation routes operational.
Finance and resources	• Apportion Children's Services budgets and High Needs Block funding by agreed formula.	• Budgets live within each new authority's finance system. • Payment mechanisms for providers, schools and care leavers operational.

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
	• Review and align grants and school funding streams. • Set up interim financial controls and reporting.	• Consistent financial delegations and controls in place.
Operations and service delivery	• Define differentiated operating model for front door, MASH, Early Help and Family Hub networks for each UA. • Map SEND assessment and EHCP workflows. • Confirm continuity plans for Youth Justice and Virtual School functions.	• Each Authority has a live front door for referrals and safeguarding concerns. • Statutory services – assessment, children in care, SEND and Early Help – fully operational. • Family Hubs and commissioned Early Help services functioning under transition agreements.
Partnerships and market relationships	• Maintain joint working arrangements with health, police and schools through the transition and put in place transitional joint governance. • Engage schools on future locality governance and SEND planning.	• ICB and police partnership arrangements continue seamlessly. • School engagement structures in place within each Authority (e.g. education partnership boards). • Clear communication with voluntary sector and providers on service continuity.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES: LONGER-TERM TRANSFORMATION

Once stable day-one arrangements are in place, each new Authority will have the opportunity to progressively review, and re-shape shared and localised services over time.

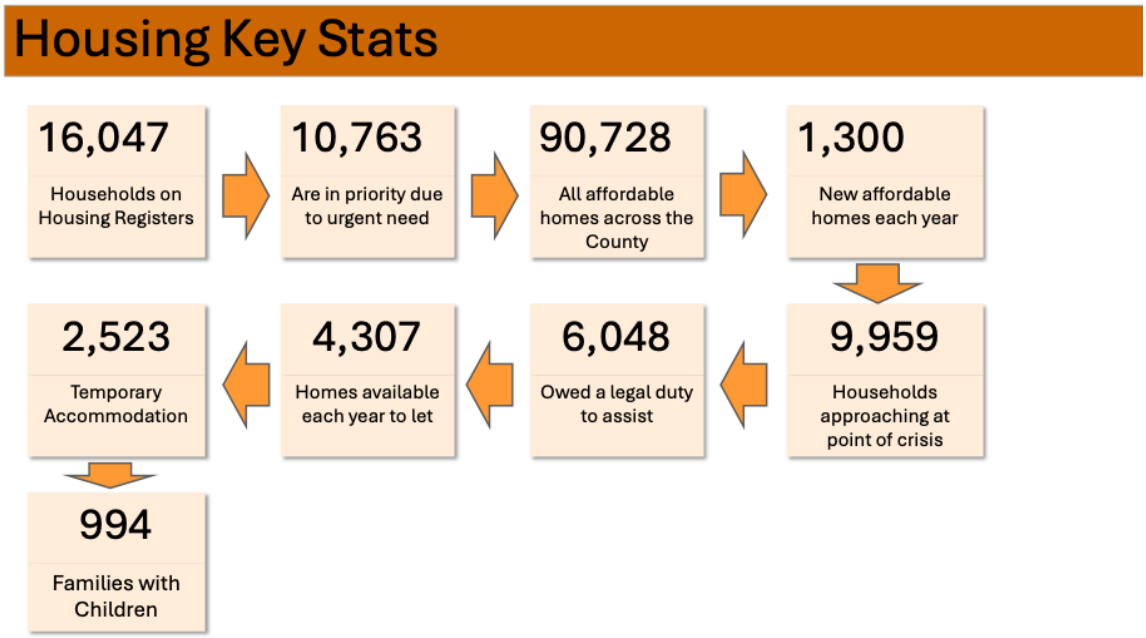
Over the transformation period, new Councils can be expected to:

- **Embed a locality-based model of support.** Family Hubs, Early Help teams, SEND services and youth provision are expected to operate as integrated neighbourhood networks, aligned with hosing services, schools, Primary Care and community partners. Local teams will share data and intelligence to identify need earlier and provide joined-up help to families. Co-located locality teams will focus on the wider determinants of health, tackling inequalities and supporting children with complex needs.
- **Re-set the relationship with schools and education settings.** Education and SEND services will work with redefined clusters of schools to codesign inclusive practices, build local sufficiency of specialist places, and ensure children with additional needs can thrive in mainstream settings wherever possible. The Virtual School will continue to champion the attainment and wellbeing of children in care across the new Authorities.
- **Strengthen prevention and Early Help pathways.** Using a 'whole-family' approach, new Councils will build on the existing track record of Early Help access through Family Hubs, community outreach and digital tools. This will continue to reduce escalation to statutory intervention and allow investment to shift from crisis management to prevention.
- **Stabilise and diversify placement provision.** Through joint commissioning and regional collaboration, Authorities will expand local residential, fostering and supported-lodgings options, reducing reliance on external and distant placements and improving continuity for children.
- **Continue the SEND improvement journey.** Building on progress since the 2023 inspection, Councils will implement the SEND Strategy with consistent standards, streamlined processes for EHCP assessment, and transparent co-production with families.

- **Invest in workforce capacity and culture.** Differentiated People Strategies will underpin professional development, recruitment and retention within each new authority. Leaders will build a confident, learning culture where practitioners are empowered, supported and connected across disciplines.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Housing Services provided through the General Fund relate to the provision of statutory and mandatory services that enable some of the most vulnerable members of our communities to access safe, secure and habitable accommodation. In Hertfordshire this means working with more than 150 partners to coordinate, plan, deliver and monitor a range of services, support and provision. Each year, around 4,200 vulnerable households are provided with new homes. Alongside this, over 18,000 households remain on Housing Registers, requiring ongoing assessment, monitoring and support to ensure that those in greatest need are prioritised for the new homes that become available. More than 7,000 households approach the council each year at a point of homeless and crisis – a number that continues to rise. Councils have a duty to assist more than 90% of these cases. At the end of last year, 1,377 vulnerable households were living in temporary accommodation, including 1,841 children.



The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced account for the management and development of social housing that a Council may own. Within Hertfordshire specifically, Dacorum, St Albans, Stevenage and Welwyn Hatfield have this provision and together they provide more than 32,000 homes to approximately 65,000 people. This brings a total annual income of £215m but carries debts of £1.13 bn.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES – WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE THROUGH LGR

Our ambition for housing and homelessness through reorganisation, is to deliver a consistent, prevention-first approach across Hertfordshire. New Unitary Authorities will be able to

strengthen links between Housing, Social Care and Public Health, reduce variation in local policies, and better manage demand pressures.

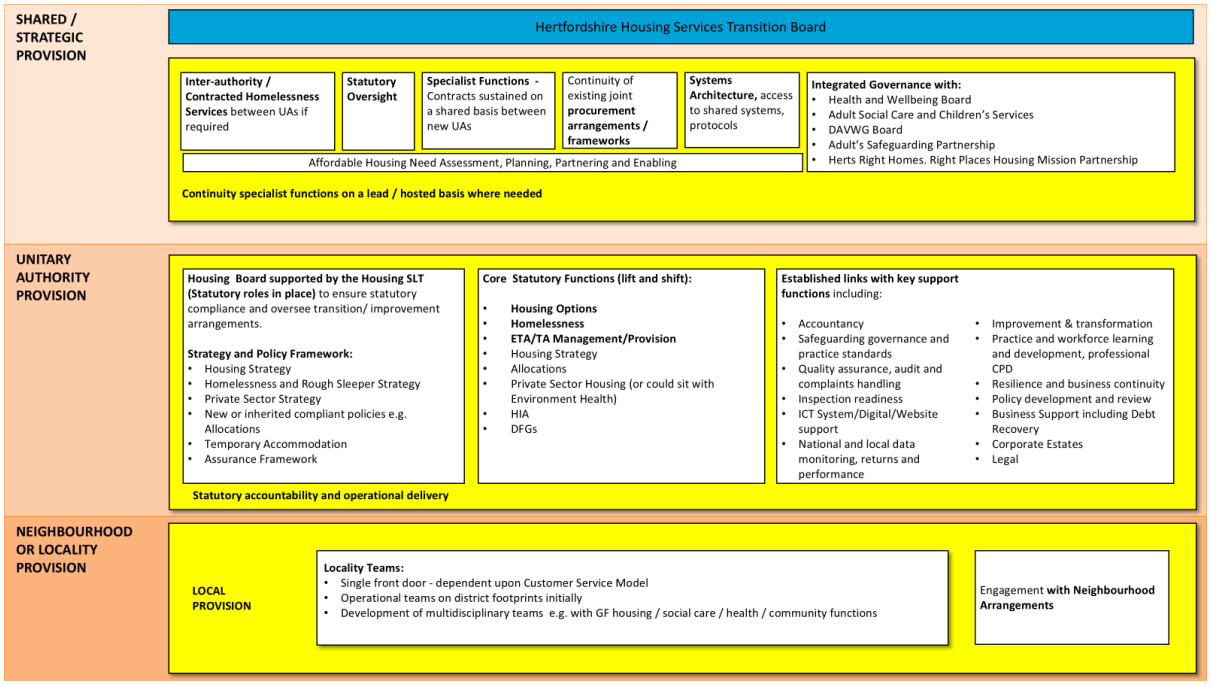
The goal is to prevent homelessness earlier, make better use of temporary accommodation, sustain and support all households and achieve this through our partnerships with the private rented sector, Housing Associations and the voluntary sector, whilst aligning our Housing Strategy more closely with growth, planning and regeneration.

Stronger joint commissioning, procurement and development of temporary accommodation (TA) and other housing, combined with place-based housing and wellbeing services, will improve outcomes for families and reduce costs.

At present, homelessness, temporary accommodation and private sector regulation sit with Districts and the County oversees Adult Social Care and Public Health. Unitary Councils will be able to join them up, achieving:

- **Prevention-led, multi-agency housing support**, aligning housing options, welfare advice and social care.
- **Consistent homelessness and allocations policies** across wider areas, reducing inequity and cross-boundary competition for temporary accommodation.
- **Unified commissioning of supported and specialist housing**, ensuring provision matches care and health needs.
- **Integrated landlord services for HRA councils**, combining tenancy management, repairs and community wellbeing in a single accountable structure.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES – DAY ONE BLUEPRINT



HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES – HOW WE INTEND TO DELIVER TRANSITION

New Unitary Authorities must be legally ready to deliver housing and homelessness services from Vesting Day, this includes:

- Ensuring compliance with regulatory standards and requirements, including statutory reporting.
- Establishing robust governance structures and statutory leadership to oversee Part 7 homelessness duties, allocations, enforcement, and temporary accommodation.
- Avoiding premature fragmentation of complex statutory functions before new local delivery models are fully designed and operational.

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
Leadership and governance	• Appoint Senior Housing Lead within each future UA. • Create Housing Transition Board with representation from ASC, Public Health and the VCS. • Map statutory duties (Housing Act 1996 Parts 6 and 7, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) and identify inter-dependencies with Social Care and Community Safety.	• Statutory accountability and leadership in place. • Housing Board and Senior Officer oversight established. • Clear governance for allocations, homelessness and private-sector enforcement.
Workforce	• Profile staff and caseloads across all ten districts. • Identify roles to transfer under TUPE and confirm interim structures. • Joint workforce briefings and training on new policies.	• All staff transferred safely. • Contact points for housing options and homelessness queries live in each UA. • Continuity of rotas and case ownership for open homelessness cases.
Systems and data	• Catalogue IT systems (e.g. Jigsaw, Locata, Civica). • Agree approach for shared hosting to avoid service disruption. • Data-sharing protocols for cross-boundary placements.	• Continuity of case-management systems with tested data and payments functions. • Case management and statutory return capabilities maintained.
Policies and processes	• Compare and align allocations, TA and private-sector enforcement policies. • Prepare interim standard operating procedures for Officers.	• Compliant homelessness and allocations policies in place. • Consistent approach to duty assessment and TA placement decisions.
Contracts and partnerships	• Map temporary accommodation and support contracts. • Engage providers on continuity arrangements and payment processes.	• All TA and support contracts novated or extended. • Provider payments and void management continuing seamlessly.
Integration with social care and health	• Align planning with ASC and Public Health on prevention and move-on pathways. • Identify opportunities for joint assessment and commissioning.	• Operational links between housing, ASC and Public Health in place (e.g. hospital discharge and supported housing pathways).

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES – LONGER-TERM TRANSFORMATION

As new Unitary Authorities move beyond transition, they will implement a medium-term integration plan to consolidate and modernise housing and homelessness services. This plan

will focus on achieving consistency, strengthening partnerships, and embedding prevention as the organising principle of future delivery.

As part of this medium-term integration plan there will be a need to:

- **Agree a transitional operating model** with appropriate oversight to manage continuity while enabling local adaptation and improvement.
- **Align allocations, homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment policies** within each new Authority, creating a fair, transparent and consistent offer for residents.
- **Improve data sharing** to identify cross-border demand, inform targeted joint commissioning, and assess opportunities to rationalise services and assets.

In parallel, longer-term transformation will:

- **Integrate housing, social care and public health** functions to deliver prevention-first approaches, reducing crisis homelessness and supporting independence.
- **Create a single homelessness prevention system**, combining welfare advice, private-rented access, and targeted support within one coordinated pathway.
- **Strengthen strategic housing leadership**, aligning housing strategy with local plans, growth and infrastructure programmes.
- **Consolidate temporary accommodation and supported housing procurement**, achieving better value and improved outcomes through joint commissioning.
- **Invest in digital tools and analytics** to monitor trends, predict demand and target resources more effectively.
- **Work with voluntary, faith and community partners** to build local capacity, expand early intervention and strengthen place-based responses.

FOCUS ON HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SERVICES

Four District Councils in Hertfordshire currently operate Housing Revenue Accounts (HRAs): **Dacorum**, **St Albans**, **Stevenage** and **Welwyn Hatfield**. Together they manage more than **32,000 homes**, providing affordable rented housing to around **65,000 residents**. The combined annual HRA income is approximately **£215m**, supporting ongoing investment in stock management, repairs, tenant services and new-build development.

The collective debt across these accounts is around **£1.13bn**, with each council maintaining its own business plan, borrowing strategy and reserves to meet regulatory requirements.

Regulatory context

Under national regulations, each stock-holding Authority must maintain a **ring-fenced HRA**, ensuring that income and expenditure on council housing are accounted for separately from the General Fund. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) oversees compliance, consumer standards, and inspection every four years.

Following reorganisation, **each new stock-holding Unitary Council** will automatically become a registered provider of social housing in its own right. The RSH will not recognise predecessor Councils, meaning new registrations, governance frameworks and compliance systems must be in place from day one.

Transitional and day one arrangements

During the shadow period, Councils will:

- Confirm which of the new Unitary Authorities will inherit housing stock and therefore operate HRAs.
- Review existing **business plans, borrowing and reserves** to identify the baseline financial position and any need for debt restructuring.
- Establish an **HRA Transition Board** including housing, finance and tenant representatives to oversee readiness.
- Support the Hertfordshire Shadow Authorities to appoint Chief Housing Officers who will be tasked with making preparations for the safe transition of housing services to the new unitary authorities.
- Map key contracts (repairs, maintenance, compliance, housing management) and plan for novation or extension.
- Begin engagement with tenants to explain governance changes and continuity of service.

On Vesting Day:

- Each new stock-holding Authority will hold a unified HRA covering all inherited housing assets and liabilities.
- All active landlord and compliance functions – tenancy management, rent collection, repairs, and safety checks – will continue under a '**lift-and-shift' operating model** to guarantee safety and regulatory compliance.
- Existing policies (rent setting, tenant engagement, complaints) will remain in force until reviewed and harmonised post-vesting.
- Business-critical IT systems for housing management and finance will be live and tested.
- Early assurance reporting will be provided to the Regulator confirming that governance, financial viability and health-and-safety requirements are met.

Longer-term direction

- Once the new HRAs are stabilised, authorities will develop unified **30-year business plans** aligned to corporate priorities and local housing strategies. The focus will be on:
- Modernising landlord services and digitalising repairs, tenancy and engagement functions.
- Achieving full regulatory compliance under the new Consumer Standards and Building Safety Regulator regime.
- Expanding **affordable and specialist housing delivery** through new-build, acquisition and partnership schemes.
- Aligning HRA investment with the wider regeneration and net-zero programmes of each Authority.
- Taking opportunities created by having a larger footprint to work in.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

Hertfordshire manages a highway network of around 3,200 miles of roads, alongside 116,000 streetlights and 179,000 gullies. Traffic volumes are among the highest in the East of England, with 7.4 billion vehicle-miles driven on Hertfordshire's roads in 2024. The Council spends around £120m annually on highways maintenance and transport operations, supported by a directly employed workforce and extensive contracted services. Hertfordshire's Bus Service Improvement Plan has resulted in a 3 million increase in residents travelling by bus since 2023, with data from the DfT showing 23.3 million passenger trips annually. Home-to-school transport now accounts for £39m of annual spend.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION – WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

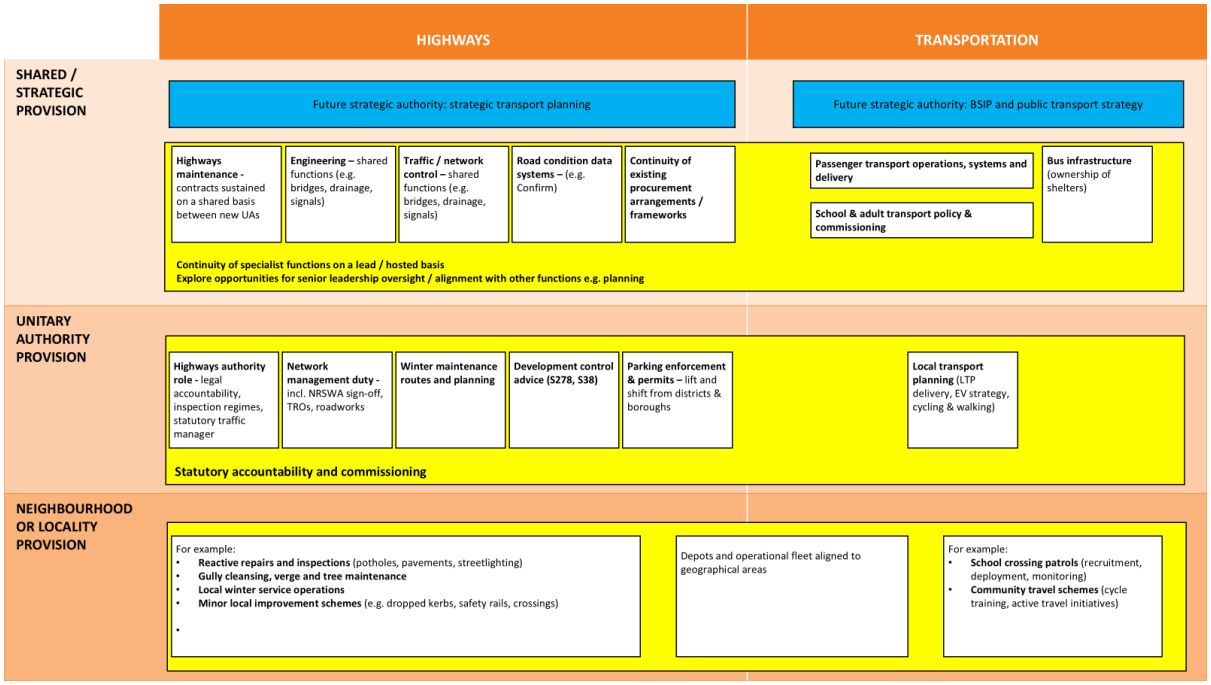
Our ambition for Transport and Highways through reorganisation is to create a safe, reliable and sustainable network that is better aligned to local priorities. New Unitary Authorities will have the opportunity to bring transport decisions closer to communities, strengthen accountability and embed innovation.

Key ambitions include; reducing congestion and improving road safety; delivering on climate and net-zero goals through active travel and electric vehicle infrastructure; modernising asset management and maintenance with digital tools; and reshaping bus services through Enhanced Partnerships and demand-responsive transport.

Reorganisation will remove long-standing fragmentation between County-level highways and District-level planning. This opens up opportunities to:

- **Integrate transport planning with local growth and regeneration**, enabling housing, infrastructure and active-travel schemes to be designed together.
- **Align highways maintenance, parking and enforcement under one Authority**, simplifying customer contact and improving local responsiveness.
- **Create a consistent approach to climate, EV and modal-shift programmes**, linking to the emerging Strategic Authority for large-scale transport planning.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION – DAY ONE BLUEPRINT



HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION – HOW WE WILL MANAGE TRANSITION

Operational component	Key activities during transition period	Day one milestones
Leadership and governance	• Appoint a lead Director for Highways and Transport in each future Unitary Authority. • Establish a single Transition Board with representatives from Engineering, Transport, and Planning. • Map statutory functions of the existing County Council as Highway Authority and confirm which elements (e.g. strategic transport planning) may move to a future Strategic Authority.	• Each new Authority formally designated as Highway Authority under the Highways Act 1980. • Statutory responsibilities for network management, inspections and enforcement transferred safely. • Continuity of senior leadership, delegated powers and emergency response arrangements.
Workforce and operations	• Map current operational teams, depots and contractor arrangements. • TUPE planning for staff in County, District and Borough Authorities, currently working in highways and transport related roles• • Confirm which depot assets transfer to each new Authority.	• To ensure operational continuity the highways contractor workforce remains as a shared service. • Local operational depots active and equipped. • Emergency call-out and winter-maintenance teams in place.
Contracts and assets	• Catalogue all contracts (term maintenance, professional services, transport operations). • Identify renewal points clustered and options for joint reprocurement. • • Review ownership of plant, fleet and depots.	• Existing contracts and frameworks novated or extended to ensure service continuity. • Appropriate asset and contract management capabilities and data in place.
Systems and data	• Audit Confirm and related road-condition and inspection systems.	• Operational systems for asset inspection, fault reporting and permitting live in each Authority.

	• Develop approach for shared hosting to minimise disruption.	• Data flows for network management and performance reporting functioning.
Passenger transport and school travel	• Map responsibilities for home-to-school transport, SEN transport and local bus operations. • Engage bus operators and community-transport providers.	• All statutory transport services operating with tested payment and scheduling systems. • Transitional arrangements for shared commissioning with the Strategic Authority for BSIP delivery.
Integration with place and planning	• Identify interfaces with Planning, Housing growth and Climate teams. • Prepare protocols for handling Section 278/38 agreements and planning consultations.	• Local development control and transport-planning functions aligned; continued coordination with Planning and Housing teams.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION - LONGER-TERM DIRECTION

In the longer term, new Unitary Councils will have the opportunity to modernise how transport and infrastructure are planned, funded and maintained. The direction of travel will vary by geography, but key priorities are expected to include:

- **Integrated planning of transport, housing and growth**, linking major developments with active-travel, EV and public-transport investment.
- **Stronger local accountability**, enabling residents to influence local highways priorities and capital programmes directly through Elected Members.
- **Shared procurement and specialist services**, such as traffic control, bridge and drainage engineering, and intelligent transport systems, to maintain resilience and value for money.
- **Digital transformation**, using asset-management data and predictive analytics to improve efficiency and target maintenance.
- **Decarbonisation and modal shift**, expanding active-travel infrastructure, EV charging, and demand-responsive transport to meet local net-zero targets.
- **Alignment with the future Strategic Authority**, which will lead county-wide transport strategy, the Bus Service Improvement Plan and major capital programmes.

OTHER SERVICES

The five critical services detailed above reflect approximately 50% of the collective budgeted expenditure of Hertfordshire authorities in 2025/26 and around 40% of the workforce, but do not fully reflect the wide variety of other services provided by all 11 organisations, with partners, that underpin community wellbeing, economic growth, environmental quality and civic life. Many of these are already delivered collaboratively through shared services, joint committees and county-wide partnerships.

Through our collaborative review of service provision, Councils have reviewed this wider portfolio using a single service catalogue to map current delivery, identify dependencies and consider future governance. The shared ambition is to preserve what works, transfer statutory functions safely, and use reorganisation to simplify structures and strengthen collaboration. In

some areas, responsibilities are expected to align with a future Strategic Authority, ensuring coherence on county-wide or regional issues such as infrastructure, climate, and waste.

Service area	**What it includes**	**Existing examples of shared or collaborative delivery**
Community Safety, Regulatory and Public Protection	Environmental Health, Licensing, Trading Standards, Community Safety partnerships, Emergency Planning, Resilience, Building Control.	• *Herts Building Control* (shared between several districts). • *Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum* for emergency planning.
Economy, Environment and Place	Planning and Development Control, North and East Herts Shared Service, Waste Collection and Disposal, Street Cleansing, Economic Development, Environmental Management, Sustainability and Climate Change.	• *Hertfordshire Waste Partnership* coordinating waste policy. • *Hertfordshire Growth Board* linking economic development and infrastructure planning. • *Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP)* aligning local climate action.
Culture and Related Services	Museums, libraries, leisure and sports facilities, parks, cultural events, tourism and heritage.	• *Creative Hertfordshire* network. • Joint leisure-management contracts such as *Everyone Active* and *Herts Sports Partnership*.
Central and Enabling Services	Finance, HR, ICT, legal, democratic services, procurement, audit, fraud, communications, customer contact.	• *Herts Legal* shared legal service between Hertfordshire and Stevenage. • *SIAS* (Shared Internal Audit Service). • *SAFS* (Shared Anti-Fraud Service). • *Hertfordshire Public Sector Network* providing shared ICT infrastructure.
Public Health and Wellbeing	Health improvement, prevention and protection programmes, drug and alcohol services, Healthy Hubs, community wellbeing initiatives.	• *Healthy Hubs Hertfordshire* partnership model. • *Herts Sports Partnership* promoting physical activity.

All of these service areas will be worked through systematically as part of our forthcoming transition programme, as set out within the next chapter. For each area, Councils will:

- Document existing arrangements and contractual commitments.
- Engage professional leads and staff to identify dependencies and opportunities.
- Assess where collaboration or shared delivery already adds value and where existing arrangements can be built on.
- Consider whether future delivery is best organised at local, shared or strategic scale, guided by statutory duties, cost, and the needs of residents.

In all of this work, a critical guiding principle will be to ensure that the professionals leading services and those closest to the front line have a guiding voice in determining how our services will evolve for the benefit of residents.

This process will ensure that no service is overlooked, that existing collaboration is preserved where it works, and that new Unitary Authorities inherit a complete, safe and well-understood operating model.

The readiness plans outlined here form the operational foundation for implementation. The final chapter sets out how the partnership will manage transition, governance and programme delivery to ensure these blueprints are realised on Vesting Day.

CASE STUDY: Dacorum's strategy and advocacy on domestic abuse and violence against women and girls

Dacorum Borough Council are currently working to achieve accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance: a framework that is nationally recognised as the 'gold standard' of Housing domestic abuse response. The framework is based on a victim-centre approach that prioritises seeking opportunities to empower and encourage participation and collaboration with those who have lived experience of domestic abuse.

Dacorum work collaboratively with the local Community Safety Partnership and Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse and VAWG Partnership to deliver engagement and awareness raising activity across the borough to increase visibility of the services. This includes hosting events in local libraries and engaging with residents and tenants during other engagement events such as Housing Open Days, and community events like the Grovehill Community Day.

Dacorum's domestic abuse policies were developed in collaboration with victims and survivors of domestic abuse. This included, during the 16 Days of Activism 2024, arranging a 'Feelings of safety' walkabout and invited local women to attend. Attendees welcomed the opportunity and were candid in providing suggestions and feedback.

Based on this engagement Dacorum Borough Council have;

Increased security camera presence in the areas identified; Secured funding to set up 'Safe Community Spaces' in Dacorum:

Safe Community Spaces will be provided by local businesses where visitors can seek refuge and contact emergency or support services.

Providers will be given domestic abuse and VAWG training and hold up-to-date information about the support services that are available in the local area. Presence at broader Council engagement events – Providing access to specialist domestic abuse services at our events has created increased opportunities for disclosure and support. As a result of this presence at Housing Open Days, we have been able to provide risk assessment and support for two victims that were at that time, at high risk of harm.

CASE STUDY: HERTFORDSHIRE MENTAL HEALTH, LEARNING DISABILITY AND NEURODIVERSITY HEALTH AND CARE PARTNERSHIP

The Hertfordshire Mental Health, Learning Disability and Neurodiversity Health and Care Partnership is our inclusive partnership established to improve the lives of people with mental

illness, people with learning disabilities and neurodivergent. It convenes statutory and non-statutory organisations, including NHS, local government and the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VSCFSE) sectors.

The partnership builds on 16 years of integrated working between local government and the NHS and ensures that services and support for these residents are joined up, effective and commissioned effectively.

Recognising the specific needs of this cohort, the partnership will work with the new Unitary Authorities to continue to coordinate and deliver activity across Hertfordshire to meet their needs.

SUSTAINABILITY

MHCLG criterion 3: quality, sustainable services

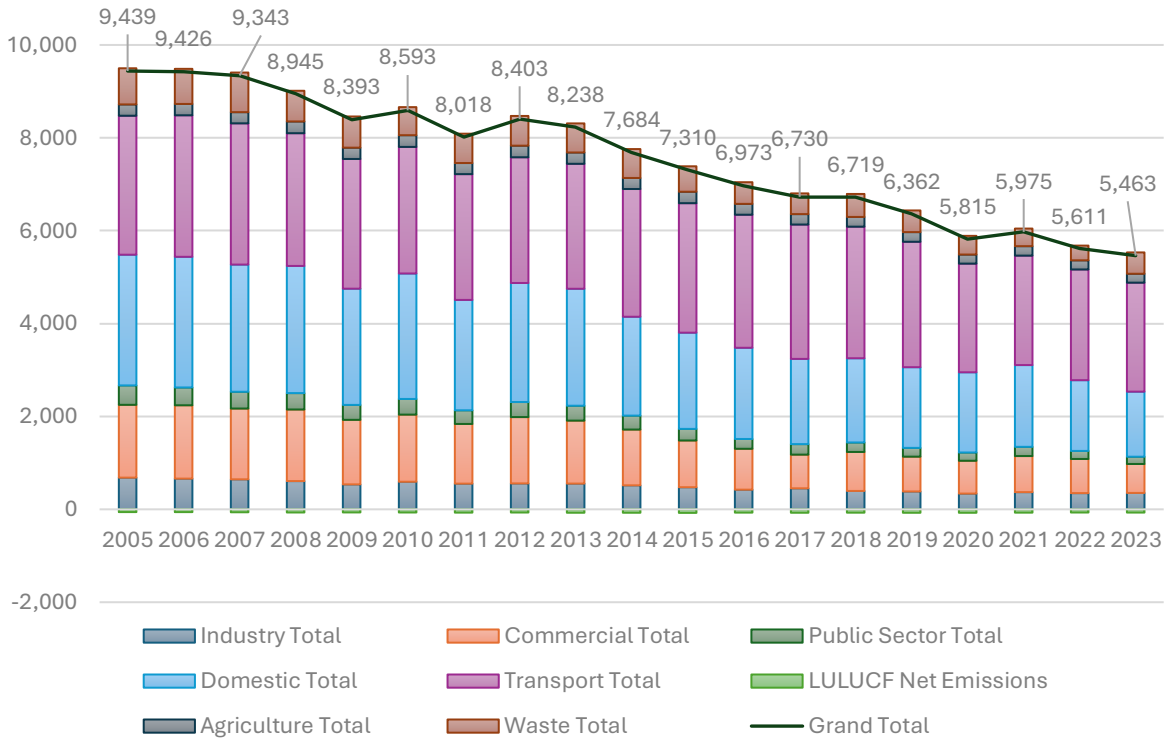
A DEFINING MOMENT FOR HERTFORDSHIRE'S FUTURE

This is a defining moment for Hertfordshire to reimagine how we live, move, build and grow. By embedding sustainability into local government functions and decisions, we can create a county that is resilient, inclusive and regenerative, a place where prosperity and environmental wellbeing can advance together. This reorganisation creates the conditions for transformative change. Every community could benefit from cleaner air, greener neighbourhoods and stronger local economies.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AS CATALYST

All Hertfordshire Councils have declared climate emergencies and have collaborated effectively to make progress. However, the two-tier structure has created challenges in coordinating action at the scale and pace required Reorganisation can remove duplication across Councils, better integrate planning and delivery, and enable more strategic investment. This creates the opportunity for sustainability to develop as a shared endeavour, with each Authority accountable to its communities, while benefiting from coordinated support.

The county's emissions graph shows strong progress, but we need accelerated action.



Hertfordshire's territorial greenhouse gas emissions estimate 2005 – 2023 (kt CO_2e).

Building on these foundations, and working with unified metrics across fewer Authorities, will enable Hertfordshire to act more decisively and achieve the step change needed to meet climate, nature and green growth targets.

ENABLING SUSTAINABILITY AT SCALE

Environment and climate change are areas of competence for the Strategic Authority, putting sustainability on a firmer footing. The Strategic Authority will provide regional leadership, co-developing a climate strategy for Hertfordshire, managing strategic natural capital, coordinating major infrastructure decarbonisation, aligning data and monitoring, and securing strategic funding.

Understanding that Unitary Authorities will determine their own approach, reorganisation brings opportunities to deliver sustainability interventions tailored to distinctive geographies, economies and communities. The single-tier structure eliminates coordination challenges, integrating planning, housing, transport, economic development, waste and environmental services.

CASE STUDY: Established collaborative foundations – Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP)

Formed in 2020, HCCSP is jointly funded by Hertfordshire's 11 Local Authorities and Hertfordshire Futures. It delivers exceptional value: securing consultancy support, funding for Retrofit Strategy delivery and has delivered savings per Council through shared training. Key achievements include Solar Together (£17m investment, 29,900 tonnes CO_2e savings),

biodiversity baseline work, Healthy Homes integration, and transport decarbonisation alignment. A Gold Award winner at the 2025 iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards, HCCSP demonstrates what aligned governance can achieve and is a vital part of our shared future.

DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH

Embedding sustainability represents a strategic economic opportunity. Our life sciences sector can pioneer sustainable biotech; our creative industries can lead low-carbon production; and local data centres can boost energy efficiency. Advanced manufacturing in Hertfordshire can adopt circular economy principles, while our universities and colleges support green skills development. This focus on sustainable development also improves health outcomes, reducing public service pressure through energy-efficient homes, active travel, green spaces, cleaner air and urban greening.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Building on strong foundations, we can deliver sustainable growth through our six-point strategic plan:

NET-ZERO HOUSING AND RETROFIT AT SCALE

The domestic built environment emits 35% of the county's CO_2e emissions with the opportunity to implement a 'retrofit-first, green new-build second' approach as standard practice.

CASE STUDY: Retrofit Hubs

A pilot in Three Rivers supported 24 homeowners to install 53 energy-efficiency measures in 18 months. The hub provided tailored advice, grant navigation, vetted contractors and ensured quality assurance for all income levels. Savings vary by measure type, from £70/year for floor insulation to £580/year for boiler upgrades. This award-winning model will be scaled countywide by 2028, with every Unitary Authority able to operate a Retrofit Hub, providing a consistent, trusted service.

For new developments, Unitary Authorities can set energy standards above national minimums, requiring renewable energy, battery storage, sustainable drainage, biodiversity net gain and active travel access from the outset.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT AND ACTIVE TRAVEL

With transport accounting for 36% of emissions, measures that the Unitary Authorities could take include; expanding cycle lanes and walking routes; enhancing bus services and demand-responsive transport; integrating ticketing; electrifying fleets; managing car use through parking policies and EV charging infrastructure; and reducing car dependency in planning.

The Strategic Authority will coordinate strategic corridor investment; lead national rail engagement; develop behaviour change programmes delivered at unitary level; and monitor modal shift progress.

CLEAN ENERGY AND DECARBONISATION

Unitary Authorities will have the ability to develop Local Area Energy Plans; accelerate renewable energy through streamlined planning and community schemes; and address fuel poverty through targeted retrofit and advice services.

The Strategic Authority will coordinate county-scale energy planning; lead county-wide grant funding bids; engage network operators; procure renewable energy for public estates; and develop heat network frameworks.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

The Strategic Authority will lead development of a countywide adaptation plan, providing a blueprint for integrating climate resilience into infrastructure and policy. Unitary Authorities can audit and manage operational preparedness collaboratively, through shared approaches, protecting people and infrastructure.

Sustainable drainage, catchment-scale water planning and chalk river protection will address flooding, water stress and ecosystem health.

NATURE RECOVERY AND BIODIVERSITY

Unitary Authorities could prioritise enhancing biodiversity through rigorous biodiversity net gain; managing public land for nature; supporting nature-friendly farming; prioritising urban greening and improving rights of way access.

The Strategic Authority will lead the Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Partnership, coordinate environmental partnerships and develop project pipelines.

CASE STUDY: Chalk River Restoration

85% of the world's chalk streams are in southern England, making Hertfordshire's chalk rivers, the Ver, Chess, Beane, Lea, Mimram and Colne, which support unique wildlife, some of the rarest ecosystems in the world. But decades of over-abstraction and degradation have left reaches running dry. Local Authorities, water companies and community groups have delivered transformative results: abstraction reduction has restored year-round flow in the river Ver; habitat restoration in the river Chess has increased brown trout populations; and improved water quality in the river Beane saw the return of water voles in 2022, after being extinct from the area since the 1980s. These globally important ecosystems will be enhanced through reorganisation, enabling strategic, catchment-wide coordination for funding bids, and facilitating strategic prioritisation.

GREEN JOBS AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

With forecast housing and employment growth, the green transition must create inclusive opportunities. Unitary Authorities can enable development of green-skills pathways; support transition from carbon-intensive sectors; link employment support with retrofit and renewable programmes; and ensure youth access to green sectors. The Strategic Authority will coordinate skills planning, engage employers and secure funding.

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Reorganisation enables aligned procurement policies, using economies of scale to embed sustainability into contracts and supply chains. Adoption of circular economy models helps

reduce waste and retain value at a local level. Coordinated approaches improve standards, signal unified markets which both drives innovation and creates leverage for competitive prices. It also gives suppliers a consistent set of requirements that they can invest in to meet.

DELIVERING OUR AMBITION: COORDINATED GOVERNANCE

Our approach is built around clear responsibilities across governance levels. Strategic coordination by the Strategic Authority and place-based delivery by Unitary Authorities work in harmony, ensuring sustainability moves from ambition to action.

COMMUNITY-LED SUSTAINABILITY

CASE STUDY: St Albans Greener Together

Building on behaviour-change research and Innovate UK funding, this community-focused campaign brought residents together to co-create solutions, including: The Green House community eco-hub; the Share St Albans library of things; community panels on energy and rewilding; business support through the Net Zero Fund; and a sustainability festival. The project engaged hundreds of residents across multiple touchpoints. This model will be scaled countywide through Unitary Community Sustainability Forums using shared toolkits, training and national funding, with the Strategic Authority coordinating the sharing of best practice. Environmental action will be co-created with communities, not delivered to them.

Community sustainability forums will be able to link to Local Democratic Forums, ensuring sustainability is woven into community governance from day one. Trusted local messengers, voluntary networks and Town and Parish Councils are ideally positioned to engage residents, shape behaviour change and ensure fairness of access.

CODESIGNING OUR APPROACH

Strategic engagement with HCCSP partners has underscored the ambition to embed environmental action and empower communities. These partners will continue to inform delivery through recommendations across key themes:

- **Mainstreaming sustainability:** sustainability embedded in all Council functions through training, impact assessments and dedicated officers with environmental considerations integrated across services.
- **Empowering community-led action:** Community Sustainability Forums to link to Local Democratic Forums, scaling successful models countywide. Partnerships with the voluntary sector and local Councils will ensure broad reach.
- **Treating nature as infrastructure:** nature can be systematically planned and funded. Each Council will be able to develop Nature Recovery Plans, enforce biodiversity net gain, and prioritise urban greening in deprived areas.
- **Scaling retrofit and tackling fuel poverty:** Retrofit Hubs are planned to operate in every Authority by 2028, targeting 10,000 homes by 2030 and prioritising fuel-poor households.
- **Creating alternatives to car dependency:** protected cycle lanes, improved bus services, and demand-responsive transport are all key opportunities for delivery. EV charging points will be rolled out with campaigns supporting modal shift.
- **Building green skills and opportunities:** a Green Skills Partnership could support workers and create apprenticeships in retrofit, renewables and nature recovery. Social

value in procurement will support local jobs, and a Youth Green Jobs Programme could link education with green employers.

- **Ensuring transparency and accountability:** a unified carbon accounting system would enable annual public reporting and an open data portal for shared learning.
- **Prioritising climate justice:** climate risk mapping could guide targeted interventions for vulnerable communities. Urban greening and active travel could be prioritised in deprived areas, integrated with Public Health.

OUR TRANSITION COMMITMENT

HCCSP is well placed to work as strategic convenor, supporting the transition to vesting structures. It is committed to facilitating the development of a Climate Change Strategy, grounded in community needs, to defining success metrics, building carbon literacy and establishing data-sharing protocols. This strategy will provide the golden thread of sustainability woven through all services from day one of the new Authorities.

Having a Climate Change Strategy ready will position Unitary Authorities and the Strategic Authority to maximise inward investment, delivering significant projects at scale and supporting housing and growth targets.

TIMELINE AND GOVERNANCE

During 2026–27, it is envisaged that we will identify the priority projects central to reorganisation projects that span transition, pilot projects and future projects enabled by reorganisation.

During transition, we are planning to develop thematic working groups, pilot communities of practice and a single shared evidence base integrating carbon, nature and resilience metrics. This ensures sustainability governance is fully operational from Vesting Day, enabling other teams to focus on statutory duties.

CONCLUSION

The joining together of Hertfordshire's geography, growth pressures and climate risks through reorganisation makes the county ideal for integrated sustainability. This restructure of local government will create the scale, capacity and integration essential for ambitious delivery through our six-point strategic plan, led by the new Unitary Authorities, whilst the Strategic Authority will ensure coherence, without constraining innovation.

By fully embedding sustainability, we will demonstrate that environmental ambition and economic growth are mutually reinforcing, and that place-based delivery and county-wide coordination can work in harmony.

Through strategic coordination and place-based delivery, sustainability will move from ambition to action, delivering cleaner air, greener neighbourhoods, stronger local economies and resilient communities. The tools at our disposal, including unified strategic planning, integrated service delivery, concentrated capacity and enhanced funding leverage, will enable Hertfordshire to lead nationally on environmental action at scale and pace, delivering for our communities, economy and environment, and for generations to come.

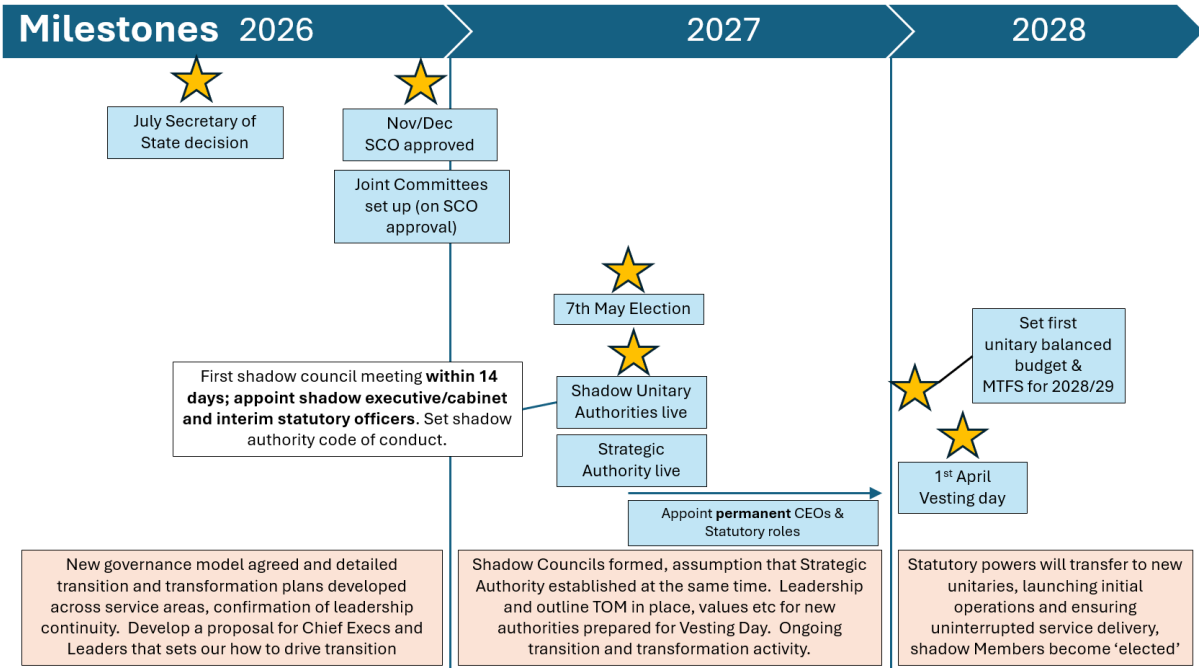
IMPLEMENTATION

A detailed implementation plan to secure Vesting Day will be critical to safeguarding statutory service delivery and laying the foundations for ambitious future transformation.

We are carefully considering the governance arrangements, as well as the programme planning required to deliver a successful transition by Vesting Day. This is underpinned by our commitment to minimise disruption to service delivery. While we recognise the new Councils will need to take their own decisions about the pace and scale of change, the plans set out here provide a clear indication of our commitment to accelerate implementation and lay the foundations for future benefits.

TIMELINE

We envisage the programme will take place in line with the milestones for the decision by MHCLG, subsequent establishment of Shadow Authorities, and then establishment of a Strategic Authority and Vesting Day itself on 1st April 2028, as set out below.



PHASING

We anticipate delivering the new Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire through three phases of activity. The Preparation Phase will ensure a smooth step up of activity into the Transition Phase in early 2026.

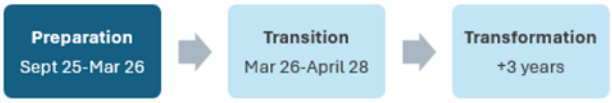
Transition will incorporate opportunities to improve where possible, but this will not get in the way of developing safe and legal new Councils that are able to deliver good business-as-usual services. It will also manage the impact of the decision on which option to implement and the introduction of shadow authorities.

After Vesting Day some Transition Phase activities will continue to integrate services and teams and more wide-reaching Transformation Phase steps will be mobilised.

Preparation (Sept 25–Mar 26)	Transition (Mar 26–April 28)	Transformation (+3 years)
During this stage, we will continue to engage widely with	Successful transition to the future Authorities will be	We will review and optimise our services, so that we realise the

our communities and partners, establish robust programme management and set up a Transition governance structure in order to progress implementation quickly and confidently.	critical to protecting Hertfordshire's most vulnerable residents, safeguarding statutory service delivery and laying the foundations for ambitious future transformation. We will establish governance, skills, processes and workstreams to ensure leadership, teams and infrastructure are in place, before formal go live.	full benefits of transformation, to modernise our approach and improve outcomes for our residents.

PREPARATION PHASE

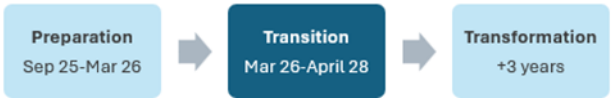


Based on learnings from other Local Authorities that have gone through LGR, we are of the view that starting the Preparation Phase work as soon as possible is key to success and as such this phase is already underway. We are focusing on getting the right programme structure, teams and resourcing and ensuring appropriate governance is in place to enable efficient decision making. This phase lays the foundations for a successful Transition Phase by establishing clarity, building readiness and ensuring that the programme is positioned to 'hit the ground running' from early 2026.

KEY ACTIVITIES IN THE PREPARATION PHASE:

- Agree programme governance and delivery approach for transition (including phasing, decision making, etc.).
- Scope transition resourcing, capability and funding requirements and own decisions to recruit expertise.
- Develop transition staff / stakeholder strategy supporting engagement and change readiness.
- Complete risk and organisational readiness assessments.
- Develop transition data strategy and approach.
- Identify initial workstream transition priorities to support more detailed delivery planning.
- Agree programme roles and responsibilities and appoint to those positions.

TRANSITION PHASE



The anticipated Transition Phase approach is to deliver new Unitary Councils through a number of key workstreams which are likely to include Finance, Workforce, Legal and Governance, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement. These will be refined during the Preparation Phase to ensure the structure is optimal and aligned to delivery). This phase will also require us to adapt to the decision about which option is being taken forward and managing the shift to shadow authorities.

Critically, we will be required to work to a shared set of values and principles through the Transition Phase with strong leadership, clear and effective decision making, careful planning, investment in capacity, and with an emphasis on proactive change management. We will retain a strong focus on day-one activities to mitigate the risk of cost and time overrun and negative impact on service delivery. Our suggested principles for a successful transition to the new model are shown below, though these will be refined over the coming months.

PRINCIPLES FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

- A shared commitment to work together to deliver a successful transition to a new Unitary Council model, regardless of the final decision from MHCLG.
- A recognition that we will be working in an ambiguous environment until the final decision from MHCLG is received the Transition Implementation Plan will be refined over time to enable resources to be deployed flexibly. Agreement that transition will need to be a shared priority and will require the skills, experience, and dedication from colleagues across all Councils in order to succeed.
- Agreement that there is distinction between Transition Phase and post-Vesting Day activities, enabling focused delivery during the transition process while preparing for longer-term transformation with the new Council's leadership (i.e. safe and legal focus).
- A shared responsibility to maintain service continuity and public confidence, ensuring that residents and communities continue to receive high-quality services throughout the transition.
- An understanding that some transition activity may require detailed discussion and different perspectives will be heard to support final decision making.

TRANSITION PHASE PRIORITIES

As part of the Preparation Phase the 11 Councils have collectively identified a set of pre-vesting day priority areas. These will be subject to further analysis and discussion but provide an indication of the early activity within the Transition Phase. These include;

1. Where possible, aligning policies and processes to ease the transition across service areas pre-vesting day.
2. Establishing a shared vision and set of values for the workforce, to effectively support staff through transition.
3. Where possible, aligning technology and data, establishing shared data and analytics protocols across organisations and with other public services.

4. Establishing a shared approach to customer experience, emphasising the importance of the day one interface with customers.

TRANSITION PHASE GOVERNANCE

We will approach the transition to new Unitary Councils with clear, decisive leadership, disciplined programme management, and a strong focus on collaboration and risk management. Our implementation programme is supported by a governance framework that ensures strategic direction, coordinated operations, and effective delivery at every stage of the transition.

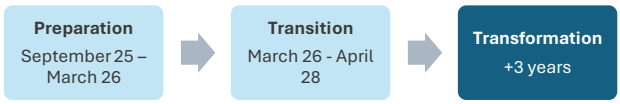
Options being considered include a Member-led Board at the top of the governance structure, with representatives from each Authority, ensuring political leadership and inclusive decision making throughout. This would mirror the collaborative foundation laid during the development of the business case, could provide collective political challenge, direction and assurance on the programme's overall objectives.

We note that whilst we need decisive leadership and representation from across all existing Authorities to begin the process of transition, we are guardians of this process to the point at which Shadow Authorities are established and take up the decision-making powers on the future of these new Authorities.

We are also considering a central Programme Management Office (PMO) to lead the delivery, working alongside dedicated workstreams to develop a detailed transition implementation plan. The PMO would also be responsible for ensuring that the overall progress is met on the agreed timescale, as set out in the plan.

Finally, we are considering a Programme Board made up of all Chief Executives, to oversee the work of the PMO as well as provide strategic direction and manage cross-organisational risks. The Programme Board would also oversee and agree the resources required to deliver the implementation plan.

TRANSFORMATION PHASE



Whilst the Transformation Phase will follow Vesting Day of the new Unitary Authorities and will ultimately be designed by the new administrations, the benefits of unitarisation and transformation opportunities to improve services and outcomes for residents across Hertfordshire are already being identified. Reorganisation presents the opportunity to take the best of what we already do across Hertfordshire's 11 Councils and learn from our peers across the country to rethink how we work with system partners and with communities to transform the way we work and deliver services. As detailed throughout our submission, professionals and communities have shared their ideas on how reorganisation can drive transformation. This includes opportunities; to align and integrate key functions to deliver place-based preventative services that help people live healthy, happy and independent lives; design our cultural and community offers in a way that drives community wellbeing, economic growth and strengthens local identity; and develop modern, digital-first support services, reducing duplication, unlocking shared value, and improving efficiency.

These are ambitious areas for transformation, and we will work with the Shadow Authorities to take a pragmatic approach to developing their plans for transformation post-vesting day, recognising that priorities will need to be identified.

KEY RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

A full and detailed risk assessment has been undertaken and is being reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis as work is planned and delivered. Strategic transition risks have been summarised as follows:

Risk	Mitigation
Stakeholder support: The proposals have an impact on staff, leaders, residents, partners and other stakeholders. If these stakeholders are not effectively informed and engaged in the transition and transformation process, then the new Authorities may lack support and be hindered in their ambition.	We have a strong commitment to widen engagement across our communities, workforce, partners and other stakeholders throughout the transition process. We will establish a detailed Communications Strategy to keep all stakeholders informed and involved as we plan, design and implement changes.
Effective leadership: if there is a lack of clarity and efficiency on the leadership and decision-making arrangements during the transition process, this may delay implementation activities, increase costs and prevent effective oversight.	We will move swiftly to establish a transition structure, capacity and decision-making process to oversee and direct the implementation stage. Early appointment of Interim Chief Executives, statutory roles and senior teams to the UAs will provide clear leadership and allow for new organisation cultures and values to be developed.
Service continuity: the existing Authorities deliver many vital services, often to vulnerable people. If transition and transformation do not minimise disruption, it may prevent the effective delivery of services and harm public confidence in the new Authorities.	We aim to minimise disruption to service delivery by early and ongoing engagement with staff and the community. We will focus on critical day-one requirements, ensuring the technology and systems required for a smooth transition are maintained to minimise impact and reduce risk. To help maintain focus on the delivery of this significant programme, alongside the delivery of business as usual services, Transformation will be delivered after Vesting Day
Complexity and pace of change: lessons learnt from other similar programmes show that it is critical to start early, plan effectively and demonstrate strong leadership. Failure to do so will lead to time delays, cost overrun and an impact on service quality.	Our proposal establishes clear foundations for us to accelerate into transition as soon as the full proposal is submitted in readiness for the Secretary of State decision. We will establish robust programme management arrangements, informed by our existing good practice, to deliver in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

Risk	Mitigation
Workforce capacity and morale: the proposal will lead to significant changes for people across the existing organisations. While we believe the future offers significant opportunities, we recognise that if change is not managed effectively and the workforce not sufficiently engaged – this may damage staff morale, disrupt services and limit retention of the relevant skills and roles for the new organisation.	The workforce across all existing organisations will be kept informed and engaged in future designs where possible through a dedicated Workforce workstream. While recognising our differences, it is critical that all our people contribute to shaping the purpose, identity and culture of the new organisation. While some uncertainty for staff is unavoidable, the dedicated workstream will ensure all concerns and issues are proactively addressed.
Financial Risk: changes in the financial context either through wider economic changes, or specific changes in areas such as council tax base or transition costs result in the cost of LGR being higher than planned.	We will continue to track the local and national factors that will impact the cost of LGR on a regular basis. This will inform programme decision making an enable us to adjust plans, wherever possible, to mitigate financial risks.

APPENDIX A – FINANCIAL MODELLING ASSUMPTIONS

OVERALL APPROACH

The financial case and modelling approach has been developed collaboratively with s151 statutory officers (Chief Financial Officers) from HCC and all Districts and Boroughs with an external consultancy to develop a shared financial model and set of assumptions.

These have been prepared using information available and considered reliable at the time of preparation. This includes Council budgets, performance and demand data, alongside input from each of the Hertfordshire LGR workstreams and benchmarking information from other LGR cases. Best endeavours have been made to apply reasonable assumptions, data sources, and analysis in the development of assumptions and estimates within the financial model, but these remain subject to high levels of inevitable uncertainty in key areas due to the inherent limitations of available information at this stage prior to the decision and shadow authorities being formed.

Throughout this process, a prudent approach has been applied to avoid potential overstatement of estimated benefits or understatement of estimated costs. Consideration has also been given to materiality, focusing on the assumptions and financial factors most likely to have a significant impact on the overall outcomes of the model.

The modelling assumptions detailed below have been accepted by all eleven organisations, including the use of ranges in key areas.

The financial model considers three key areas for each unitary authority option:

- Medium-term financial assumptions-the net budget requirement for each authority, the resources (including council tax, fees and charges and government grant) available to each area and how these will change over the next ten years.
- Budget aggregation and disaggregation - an assessment of how the HCC budget would be split into specific geographical areas, recognising local demand and tax base, and how district and borough budgets would be aggregated “up” to new unitary footprints, taking account of areas in which boundaries have been reviewed.
- Costs and savings from LGR - LGR is designed to be an “invest to save” activity, this element estimates the costs of delivering LGR and the savings it delivers. It excludes transformational savings and costs that may arise because of LGR, except in relation to managing social care cost pressures, as these are deemed to be a decision for the new authorities.

The financial case has been modelled over a 10-year period from vesting day in line with best practice recommended by CIPFA. However, it is recognised that costs will be incurred pre-vesting day but for the purposes of the model and ensuring the full cost of LGR is being considered within the payback period these are assumed to be incurred post vesting day. Two scenarios have been modelled for two key areas of costs, one-off IT disaggregation costs and ongoing social care management costs resulting from disaggregation. The financial model has been applied to higher and lower end.’ costs in relation to IT and social care.

FUNDING

FAIR FUNDING REVIEW (FFR)

A consultation has been conducted on the proposed approach to reforming local authority funding through the Local Government Finance Settlement starting in 2026–27. This covers key

areas that may impact the financial case, including funding allocations for local authorities and long-term plans for business rates retention.

The potential impacts of the Fair Funding Review (FFR) have not been reflected in the financial model. The model also assumes no business rates growth or increases in core government grant funding beyond 2027/28.

Although CFOs conducted extensive due diligence and engaged a third-party organisation to assess likely effects, the findings were unreliable due to conflicting data and government indications that modelling assumptions will change before FFR is finalised. Initial analysis based on current assumptions suggests FFR will likely reduce overall revenue funding and alter its distribution across Hertfordshire over the medium term, potentially affecting the sustainability of future unitary authorities.

LOCAL TAXATION

For the purposes of the financial model, Council Tax increases are assumed to be at 4.99% (2.99% Council Tax + 2% adult social care precept) as per the current referendum limits and in line with the MHCLG approach to funding projections. The model assumes that the District & Borough element of Council Tax will be harmonised at a weighted average and implemented in 2028/29 in line with creation of new authorities. The taxbase is assumed to continue to grow at a rate that is consistent with the current 2025/26 to 2027/28 medium-term period.

In practice within their shadow year, new authorities will need to decide how to harmonise Council Tax across their areas and there are different options as to how this can be done. National rules apply to these options, including remaining within the 2.99% CTAX + 2% ASC referendum limit for the area in line with government assumptions for increases which link into the overall funding position.

UNCERTAINTIES AND UNEXPECTED SHOCKS

Whilst prudent assumptions have been identified and accepted in all cases, the viability of all future unitary authorities will be subject to additional risks and uncertainties, including:

- The significant savings planned in the 25/26 to 27/28 period (pre-vesting day) are not delivered in full, contributing to a more challenging opening position for new authorities.
- Inflation or demand increases at a higher rate than is assumed in our modelling.
- There is any slippage in delivering the anticipated benefits from LGR.
- Further unanticipated local, national or international events causing economic or financial shocks.
-

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS

APPROACH

The baseline for the financial modelling is the 2025/26 balanced budget for each individual authority, rolled forward to match existing medium-term financial plans for 2026/27 and 2027/28, leading to a start point for 2028/29 on a common set of key assumptions. Budgets balance in overall terms at start of 2028/29 but opening deficits and surpluses exist.

From 2028/29 onwards (i.e. post-LGR), the baseline forecast is driven by a set of annual growth indices (detailed below).

The following key assumptions were made in relation to the baseline:

- 2025/26 original budget data was taken from each authority and split by individual service areas and then further by:
- Employee costs, direct costs (non-staffing) and income for each authority
- Expenditure outside service area including for example but not limited to capital financing, housing benefit payments
- Funding split by streams e.g. Business rates, grants and Council Tax

This has then been scaled for the first three years based on three sets of scaling factors defined for each authority to cover:

- Net budget.
- Council Tax; and
- all other funding sources

These are used to scale the 25/26 budget data to make the future MTFS values so that the total net budget in the financial model matches the total in the original 2025/26 MTFS for each authority

Proportions of various service areas remain same for first three years – service areas are scaled in proportion

POST LGR BASELINE ASSUMPTIONS

The assumptions below drive the baseline forecast post LGR from 2028/29

Item	Assumptions	
Pay inflation	2.00%	Based on current government targets and consistent with existing MTFS assumptions across authorities.
Non pay inflation	2.00%	Based on current government targets and consistent with existing MTFS assumptions across authorities.
Service Income	2.00%	Based on current government targets and consistent with existing MTFS assumptions across authorities.
Council Tax	4.99%	Based on current maximum allowable Council Tax increases as set by MHCLG
Tax base growth	0.80%	Based on the weighted average growth across each of the existing authorities
ASC - direct costs only	4.00%	Lower than existing MTFS assumptions and recent trends - assumes further transformation savings (over next 4 years gross cost pressures average 8% per annum and transformation savings will reduce that to nearer 6%) and tapering down of cost increases over decade post LGR
CSC - direct costs only	5.00%	Lower than existing MTFS assumptions and recent trends - assumes further transformation savings and tapering down of cost increases over decade post LGR
Education - direct costs only	3.00%	Lower than existing MTFS assumptions and recent trends - assumes further transformation savings and tapering down of cost increases over decade post LGR
SEN home to school transport - direct costs only	3.00%	Lower than existing MTFS assumptions and recent trends - assumes further transformation savings and tapering down of cost increases over decade post LGR
Waste Disposal - direct costs only	3.00%	Consistent with existing MTFS assumptions across authorities.
Highways - direct costs only	2.00%	Based on current government targets and consistent with existing MTFS assumptions

Capital financing	4.20%	Based on current HCC MTFS assumptions

BUDGET AGGREGATION AND DISAGGREGATION

CFOs have accepted methodologies (for financial modelling purposes) for disaggregating the HCC budget and funding (and aggregating D&B budgets) to specific geographical areas and adjusting this for boundary review variants where required.

HCC undertook an exercise to disaggregate its 2025/26 budget to specific geographical areas using metrics that reflect underlying patterns of activity and demand across the County.

Further apportionments were then undertaken to reflect unitary options involving boundary reviews. These affect the individual proposed new authorities but not the overall quantum of costs and savings for each option.

COSTS AND SAVINGS FROM LGR

LGR RECURRING ANNUAL SAVINGS

When modelling, a clear distinction between benefits directly resulting from LGR, such as removal of duplicate roles, services and systems, versus benefits resulting from additional transformation that could be delivered by future authorities**.** There are two reasons for this:

- Firstly, decisions on additional transformation will be taken by future authorities themselves.
- Secondly, there are reasonable differences of opinion within our partnership on which of the proposed models is likely to be “more transformational”.

As a result, our shared financial model does not estimate any additional financial benefits arising from transformation, although each of the individual proposals provides further information on opportunities relevant to each option.

Savings have been categorised into three key areas:

- Staffing - estimated savings in relation to the implementation of LGR predicated on consolidation and subsequent efficiencies resulting in a reduced capacity requirement.
- Direct Costs – estimated savings in relation to increased economies of scale and optimised use of resources.
- Democratic and governance reorganisation – estimated savings in relation to costs of elections, members allowances and staffing in relation to democratic services as result of fewer authorities in existence.

The staffing and direct cost savings are net i.e. there will be some increases in costs from disaggregation/duplication – but these will be offset by wider savings from consolidation and efficiency.

Income from fees and charges is excluded from the estimated savings, with no assumptions about future changes. However, harmonising fees and charges across existing services where there are differences could affect income levels either increasing or decreasing, though this will be decided by future authorities and so is not included at this stage.

All authorities within Hertfordshire will continue to deliver Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings between now and vesting day, and savings accepted within this financial model will be in addition to these. It should be noted this may impact the ability of the new unitary

authorities to realise the estimated savings within the financial model as where savings are made in advance of vesting day there may be potential duplication.

STAFFING

Staffing savings in relation to the implementation of LGR are predicated on efficiencies through consolidation and therefore a reduced capacity requirement. Staffing has been split into three key areas (excluding HRA staffing):

- Statutory Officers,
- Tiers 1-3 (excluding statutory officers) and
- General fund - all other staff.

The General Fund employee costs budgets 2025/26 for each of the authorities were used to inform and calculate benefits and costs. These have been scaled using the growth assumptions to 2028/29 to reflect the estimated staffing levels and budgets at this time. A percentage reduction has then been applied to the estimated employee budget as at 2028/29 for each of the areas detailed varied for the different options.

The following key assumptions have been made:

Item	Assumptions	
Statutory Officers - 2U	81.3%	Statutory officers are defined as those legally mandated roles responsible for ensuring proper governance, legal compliance, and financial integrity within a local authority. The officers included for the purposes of the financial model are: Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) Monitoring Officer S151 Officer (Chief Financial Officer) Statutory officer savings are derived from an estimated percentage reduction of officers required in the new unitary authorities because of fewer authorities existing under LGR. The percentage reduction is taken from the Pixel model[1] and has been benchmarked against other LGR business cases and existing unitary authorities of a similar size. Within the model percentage reductions decrease the greater the number of unitary authorities to reflect the reduced opportunities for consolidation and a greater capacity requirement as a result. These are prudent estimates based upon reasonableness, achievability and high-level application
Statutory Officers - 3U	71.9%	
Statutory Officers - 4U	62.5%	
Tier 1 - 3 (excl stat officers) - 2U	49.1%	Tiers 1-3 have been taken to be the current leadership and senior management for each authority. Statutory officers have been excluded to prevent any duplication of potential savings. Tiers 1-3 savings are derived from an estimated percentage reduction of officers required in the new unitary authorities because of fewer authorities existing under LGR. The percentage reduction is taken from the Pixel model and has been benchmarked against other LGR business cases and existing unitary authorities of a similar size. Within the model percentage reductions decrease the greater the number of unitary authorities to reflect the reduced opportunities for consolidation and a greater capacity requirement as a result.
Tier 1 - 3 (excl stat officers) - 3U	42.2%	
Tier 1 - 3 (excl stat officers) - 4U	38.3%	

		These are prudent estimates based upon reasonableness, achievability and high-level application
Other general fund staff costs - 2U	2.90%	Statutory officers and Tiers 1-3 are excluded from these calculations.
Other general fund staff costs - 3U	2.20%	All other staff savings are derived from an estimated percentage reduction of officers required in the new unitary authorities resulting from consolidation of services through LGR. The percentage reduction is taken from the Pixel model and benchmarked against other LGR business cases. Within the model, percentage reductions decrease the greater the number of unitary authorities to reflect the reduced opportunities for consolidation as a result. It should be noted that the percentage reduction is recognised as being low and is likely to be of a higher level as there will be significant consolidation of services particularly the back office and across corporate functions. This, however, has been left at a prudent lower level to reflect that for example in the back office there will be significant consolidation but there will also potentially be additional resource requirements in relation to disaggregating services such as social care. These disaggregation costs that have not been specifically included or estimated at this time due to the complexities of estimating the requirements before detailed service design has been undertaken. These are prudent estimates based upon reasonableness, achievability and high-level application
Other general fund staff costs - 4U	1.40%	

DIRECT COSTS

These savings are expected to arise from economies of scale and optimised resource use through LGR, including eliminating duplicate contracts and consolidating office space resulting in reduced property costs.

An efficiency percentage has been applied to the non-staffing baseline for 2028/29, scaled from the 2025/26 direct costs budgets. To avoid overstating potential savings, a contingency percentage reduction has also been applied.

Item	Assumptions	
Direct Cost - 2U (D&Bs)	3.00%	*District and Boroughs* Overall, a percentage reduction has been applied through benchmarking of other cases to the total estimated budgeted District and Borough Direct Costs in 2028/29. Percentage reduction is applied against the estimated total Direct Costs in 2028/29 less a 10% reduction contingency to the baseline to prevent overstating of the potential saving. The 10% contingency reduction is derived from a prudent and reasonable estimate, supported by benchmarking against other LGR cases. It is assumed that savings for a 4 unitary model will be half of those for a 2 unitary and in the middle of both for 3 Unitary Authorities
Direct Cost - 3U (D&Bs)	2.25%	
Direct Cost - 4U (D&Bs)	1.50%	

		reflecting a decreasing saving with a greater number of unitary authorities through reducing economies of scale. These are prudent estimates based upon reasonableness, achievability and high-level application
Direct Cost - 2U (HCC)	1.38%	*HCC* Overall percentage reduction has been applied through benchmarking of other cases to relevant service Costs in 2028/29 Percentage reductions are deemed to be less for the County as it is assumed that many of the Direct Cost benefits from LGR will result from consolidation of District and Borough services although there will be some efficiency from services such as waste where functions are currently split across HCC and the District and Boroughs and from benefits of having housing and Adult social care within the same organisation Percentage applied against the estimated total Direct Costs 2028/29 less a 10% reduction contingency to the baseline to prevent overstating of the potential saving. The 10% contingency reduction is derived from a prudent and reasonable estimate, supported by benchmarking against other LGR cases. It is assumed that savings for a 4 unitary model will be half of those for a 2 unitary and in the middle of both for 3 Unitary Authorities reflecting a decreasing saving with a greater number of Unitary Authorities These are prudent estimates based upon reasonableness, achievability and high-level application
Direct Cost - 3U (HCC)	1.04%	
Direct Cost - 4U (HCC)	0.69%	

DEMOCRATIC AND GOVERNANCE REORGANISATION

Savings derived for Democratic and Governance assume a reduction in costs of elections, Members' allowances and staffing in relation to democratic services due to fewer authorities being in existence.

Item	Assumptions	
Democratic and governance - 2U	£4.743m	A percentage reduction has been applied to the democratic budget across the District and Boroughs using Pixel assumptions. The Pixel model assumptions are based on other LGR cases as a percentage reduction, these are: 2U - 40% 3U - 30% 4U - 20% A validation exercise was undertaken by CFOs to ensure the reasonableness of the Pixel figures. This included reviewing input from the Democratic workstream and calculation of estimated costs and savings. Following this exercise, it was deemed that the figures were representative of the estimated savings anticipated.
Democratic and governance - 3U	£3.557m	
Democratic and governance - 4U	£2.371m	

PHASING

Each individual LGR recurring saving has been phased over the years according to the expected timing of when they will be realised or incurred.

Phasing in profiles	FY 2028/29	FY 2029/30	FY 2030/31	FY 2031/32	FY 2032/33
Statutory officers	60%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Tiers 1 -3 staffing	30%	60%	100%	100%	100%
Other general fund staff	30%	60%	100%	100%	100%
Direct costs	20%	40%	80%	90%	100%
Democratic and governance reorganisation	30%	60%	100%	100%	100%

Phasing in profiles	Assumptions
Statutory officers	It is assumed that 60% of statutory officer posts will be reduced in Year 1 to reflect the revised capacity requirements of the new authorities and fewer in existence. However, some capacity will need to be maintained in Year 1 to accommodate a safe transition and the closing of the previous authorities.
Tiers 1 -3 staffing	It is assumed that 30% of Tiers 1 -3 officer posts will be reduced in Year 1 to reflect the revised capacity requirements of the new authorities and fewer in existence. However, capacity will need to be maintained in Year 1 to accommodate a safe transition and the closing of the previous authorities. Remaining consolidation of services and posts will take place over Years 1 and 2 to further reflect the revised capacity requirements.
Other general fund staff	It is assumed that 30% of other general fund staff posts will be reduced in Year 1 to reflect the revised capacity requirements of the new authorities and fewer in existence. However, capacity will need to be maintained in Year 1 to accommodate a safe transition, and consolidation of services and posts will take place over Years 1 and 2 to further reflect the revised capacity requirements.
Direct costs	Direct costs have been phased over a 5-year period to reflect some immediate savings will be able to be achieved through, for example cessation of duplicated third-party contracts and spend, but it will take longer to drive out savings from service restructuring through consolidation and for example property maintenance and running costs due to reducing office space. Some savings will also depend on end dates of existing contracts.
Democratic and governance reorganisation	It is assumed the creation of new authorities and election of new councillors will require a smaller reduction in democratic resources in the first 2 years until a steady state is reached. Therefore, savings have been phased to maintain capacity in Year 1.

LGR RECURRING ANNUAL COSTS

LGR recurring annual costs have been split into two distinct categories:

- Additional costs of scale – these are recurring costs in relation to the anticipated additional resource requirement to service local democratic arrangements and support locality working and engagement because of aggregation.
- Diseconomies of scale - cover recurring costs created because of disaggregation in relation to social care and Information Technology

Additional Leadership and Management capacity required because of disaggregation are accounted for within the differing savings and staffing level reductions for Statutory Officers and Tiers 1 -3.

Additional back-office staff capacity requirements because of disaggregation are accounted for within the reduced staffing reductions against the general fund staff for each of the unitary options as it is not possible to accurately estimate the resource requirements at this stage prior to detailed service design.

There is limited recent evidence of unitarisation involving the disaggregation of county-level services at as scale equivalent to Hertfordshire, making it challenging to accurately estimate associated costs. As a result, the financial model's cost projections for IT and social care disaggregation carry a significant risk of variation, either upwards or downwards and as a result a higher and lower end range has been modelled.

Item	Assumptions		
Additional Costs of Scale - 2U	£1.000m		These are recurring costs in relation to the anticipated additional resource requirement to service local democratic arrangements and support locality working and engagement because of aggregation. These assumptions have been taken from the Pixel model and are based on other LGR cases. Additional benchmarking has been undertaken of recently released LGR cases. No costs are assumed for the 4U option as it is assumed there are no additional resource requirements in relation to locality working.
Additional Costs of Scale - 3U	£0.400m		
Additional Costs of Scale - 4U	£0.000m		
Diseconomies of Scale - 2U	High	£6.405m	**IT** The high and low scenarios reflect the complexity and uncertainty in relation to future ERP/Finance and HR provision. The range of costs account for the solution/provider landscape, the options relating to the scale of migration and integration activity and the existing highly customised platforms and processes. No savings in ongoing costs outside of IT have been assumed to arise from the adoption of a single ERP. It should be noted that it will be the decision of the shadow authority to determine and decide the approach to and procurement of IT systems and services (subject to transition planning requiring decisions to be made prior to this) and therefore these costs are highly likely to change. The additional running costs are in relation to Social Care systems and ERP / Finance and HR systems. All other running costs are assumed to be accounted for within current budgets. Ongoing running costs of the social care systems are assumed to be the same for each the high and low scenario as there are assumed to be no differences in approach. **Social Care Management Staffing costs**
	Low	£2.966m	
Diseconomies of Scale - 3U	High	£12.600m	
	Low	£6.956m	
Diseconomies of Scale - 4U	High	£18.255m	
	Low	£8.079m	

Two scenarios (high and low) have been modelled to reflect the complexities and difficulties of estimating additional costs in relation to staffing because of disaggregation at this stage prior to detailed service design.

A high scenario was created by the DASS and DCS undertaking an analysis of current management posts down to Head of Service level within the existing county structures to identify which posts are necessary in each council given the TOM approach. Some services within this have been assumed to be shared for the purposes of the modelling.

It is assumed that all other front-line roles / costs below Head of Service level are split across the new authorities without duplication. Using current county pay grades.

A low scenario was created by benchmarking the costs of social care management in other existing unitary authorities that are of comparable scale to potential unitary authorities for Hertfordshire, using publicly available information.

As this was based on publicly available data, HCC have noted the following caveats.

Comparator Quality and Sample Size
The analysis uses a relatively small sample, which may limit its ability to fully reflect variations in management costs across different authorities. Some comparators have Ofsted ratings below "Good," which might suggest a relationship between cost levels and service quality.

Structural Assumptions and Scope Differences
The cost modelling may not fully capture Hertfordshire's investment in integrated partnership models. These differences in approach could affect the accuracy of cost and complexity estimates.

Data Reliability and Regional Relevance
There are some variations in the data, such as salary differentials. Additionally, the analysis does not fully account for regional factors like cost of living, population demographics, and geographic differences, which are important when comparing similar-sized authorities with different local circumstances.

PHASING

Each of the recurring annual costs for both the additional costs of scale and diseconomies of scale have been phased by year, based on when it is anticipated these would be incurred.

Phasing in profiles	FY 2028/29	FY 2029/30	FY 2030/31	FY 2031/32	FY 2032/33
Additional costs of scale	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Diseconomies of scale	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Phasing in profiles	Assumptions				
Additional costs of scale	These are assumed to be fully incurred from vesting day to support the successful implementation of new locality and democratic working arrangements.				
Diseconomies of scale	These are assumed to be fully incurred from vesting day as systems will be required to be in place from this day to enable effective running and administration of the new authorities.				

LGR ONE OFF COSTS

These are the estimated one-off costs that are incurred to support the creation of the new authorities. These are split into three distinct areas:

- IT Disaggregation – costs related to the process of separating and dividing existing IT systems, infrastructure, data, and services that were previously shared or centralised as well as the implementation of new systems and processes where duplication is required.
- IT Consolidation - process of combining and consolidating existing IT systems, infrastructures, and services from predecessor councils into a single, unified IT environment for the new authority.
- Transition costs – these are one-off, short-term costs incurred to move from the existing council structures to the new authorities.

IT COSTS

Item	Assumptions		
IT Disaggregation Costs - 2U	High	£32.940m	Two scenarios have been modelled for IT disaggregation (high and low) to reflect the complexities and uncertainties of estimating disaggregation costs at this stage.
	Low	£17.540m	
IT Disaggregation Costs - 3U	High	£43.540m	It should be noted that it will be the decision of the shadow authority to determine and decide the approach to and procurement of IT systems and services (subject to transition planning requiring decisions to be made prior to this) and therefore these costs are highly likely to change.
	Low	£25.290m	
IT Disaggregation Costs - 4U	High	£54.240m	Both the high and low scenarios assume disaggregation costs will be incurred in relation to social care case management systems. Each new authority will require access to a case management system from vesting day; this could be either through an existing or new system. The estimated cost included covers the potential duplication of the existing systems and the migration and configuration required. These costs increase the greater the number of authorities. Each new authority will need access to an HR and Finance system. This can take two forms which is to implement separate systems or to implement what is known as an ERP which is effectively a combined and integrated HR and Finance system. The range of costs account for the solution/provider landscape, the options relating to the scale of migration and integration activity and the existing highly customised platforms and processes.
	Low	£33.040m	

		An external company was commissioned to review the initial estimated costs provided in relation to the implementation of an ERP system. As a result, costs were amended to reflect feedback and validation provided. Other potential disaggregation costs in relation to IT include: Disaggregation of existing server hardware Repackaging of existing HCC applications to make available across the new unitary authorities Migration of existing WAN infrastructure sites across HCC and all District and Boroughs Migration of records management systems Replication and disaggregation of other systems across the new authorities.
IT Consolidation Costs - 2U IT Consolidation Costs - 3U IT Consolidation Costs - 4U	£17.000m £17.000m £17.000m	The following key IT consolidation costs have been included within the financial model; these are assumed to remain the same regardless of the option chosen: Estimated technology costs for establishing network infrastructure, Alignment of the baseline for cyber security and incident response, Alignment of Microsoft agreements, single landing page for public websites, Email & communication (including telephony) set up, finance and payroll systems, CRM Estimated resources /skills required for transition activities. No assumptions have been made on vendor price increases because of reorganisation both locally and nationally.

GENERAL

<table>
<tr><th>Item</th><th colspan="2">Assumptions</th></tr>
<tr><td>Programme Management</td><td>£15.000m</td><td>These cover the programme management costs required in the setting up coordinated planning, governance, delivery, and control of all the activities required to implement structural changes in creating new unitary authorities.

Based on resource requirements provided by the Transition workstream, it is estimated this will require the following programme resource:
<table>
<tr><th>Role</th><th>FTE</th></tr>
<tr><td>Programme Director</td><td>20</td></tr>
<tr><td>Senior Project Managers</td><td>13</td></tr>
<tr><td>PMO Lead</td><td>14</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project Officers</td><td>10</td></tr>
<tr><td>Programme SME Leads</td><td>17</td></tr>
<tr><td>Functional Leads</td><td>15</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project Managers</td><td>12</td></tr>
<tr><td>Change Managers</td><td>12</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

		<table><tr><td>Analysts</td><td>12</td></tr><tr><td>Operating Model Leads</td><td>14</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>72</td></tr></table> A 15% reduction has been applied to the overall cost of the estimated resources which is assumed to reflect use of current internal resources and capacity across all authorities. Each unitary option is currently assumed to incur the same costs, as the number of authorities will not influence the resource required as it would be run as an overall programme. These have been reviewed in line with other business cases and the Pixel model and accepted as a reasonable prudent high-level assumption.
Contract novation / renegotiation	£4.000m	These one-off costs cover the legal, commissioning and procurement costs of novating and renegotiating contracts because of LGR. These are taken from the Pixel model and benchmarked against other LGR business cases and has been accepted as a reasonable and prudent high-level assumption.
Communications and Rebranding	£1.200m	These costs are expenditure incurred by councils to manage public, stakeholder, and staff communications and to develop and implement the visual identity, branding, and messaging for the new unitary authorities. This is an estimated figure taken from the Pixel model and benchmarked against other LGR business cases and has been accepted as a reasonable and prudent high-level assumption.
Estates & Facilities - reconfiguration	£2.500m	These costs refer to the one-off or transitional expenses associated with changing, consolidating, or adapting the property and accommodation portfolio of existing councils as part of reorganisation and the new unitary authorities. This is an estimated figure taken from the Pixel model and benchmarked against other LGR business cases and has been accepted as a reasonable and prudent high-level assumption.
Relocation	£1.700m	These costs refer to the reasonable and necessary expenses paid to employees who are required to move their home or place of work as a direct result of LGR. This is an estimated figure taken from the Pixel model and benchmarked against other LGR business cases and has been accepted as a reasonable and prudent high-level assumption.
Specialist support and advice	£5.000m	These include activities related to but not limited to: Closedown activities - dissolving what will be the former authorities including completing final accounts, external audit, plus legal and other costs. Creation of a new council - covering legal costs and development of new constitutions. Audit - covering specialist support and assurance for detailed design. This is an estimated figure taken from the Pixel model and benchmarked against other LGR business cases and has been accepted as a reasonable and prudent high-level assumption.

Redundancy Costs	2U	£13.080m	Estimated redundancy costs per FTE have been calculated for: Tiers 1-3 (including Statutory officers) Other General Fund staff These are based on a weighted average redundancy cost across the existing authorities adjusted to take into account a 5% vacancy factor (reducing the total) and the addition of a 20% increase on this total to account for pension strain. These have then been applied against the resulting average FTE reduction calculated as part of the staffing savings detailed above.
	3U	£10.072m	
	4U	£8.046m	
Contingency	10%		It has been considered prudent to include a contingency for transition costs due to the estimated nature of the costs and to account for unexpected costs arising. This has been included at 10% for each of the scenarios modelled to reflect the significant amount of one-off costs already included and benchmarking of other LGR business cases. A lower contingency of 5% has been applied to the high IT disaggregation costs due to high amount already included.

DISTRIBUTION PROFILES

Phasing in profiles	FY 2028/29	FY 2029/30	FY 2030/31	FY 2031/32	FY 2032/33
IT Disaggregation Costs - 2U	58.49%	17.06%	9.68%	7.38%	7.38%
IT Disaggregation Costs - 3U	58.49%	17.06%	9.68%	7.38%	7.38%
IT Disaggregation Costs - 4U	58.49%	17.06%	9.68%	7.38%	7.38%
IT Consolidation Costs - 2U	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
IT Consolidation Costs - 3U	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
IT Consolidation Costs - 4U	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Programme Management	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Contract novation / renegotiation	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Communications and Rebranding	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Estates & Facilities - reconfiguration	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Relocation	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Specialist support and advice	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Redundancy Costs	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
Contingency	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Phasing in profiles	Assumptions
IT Disaggregation Costs - 2U	These costs have been phased over a 5-year period to reflect when they are likely to occur and be realised.
IT Disaggregation Costs - 3U	These costs have been phased over a 5-year period to reflect when they are likely to occur and be realised.
IT Disaggregation Costs - 4U	These costs have been phased over a 5-year period to reflect when they are likely to occur and be realised.
IT Consolidation Costs - 2U	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.
IT Consolidation Costs - 3U	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.
IT Consolidation Costs - 4U	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre and post vesting day.
Programme Management	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre and post vesting day.
Contract novation / renegotiation	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.
Communications and Rebranding	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.
Estates & Facilities - reconfiguration	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.
Relocation	These costs are assumed to be over the first two years of the new authorities being in place
Specialist support and advice	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.
Redundancy Costs	It is assumed that redundancy costs will follow the phasing of staffing savings
Contingency	These costs are assumed to be incurred fully in year 1 for the purposes of the financial model although it is recognised that costs may be incurred pre- and post-venting day.

COMPARATORS AND BENCHMARKING

Other LGR business cases used as comparators and benchmarks include those undertaken in Surrey, West Sussex, Essex, East Sussex, Hampshire, North Yorkshire and Cumbria. It should be noted, however, that these areas do not always share the same population size, geography, or demographic characteristics as Hertfordshire. Accordingly, while reliance has not been placed upon these examples, they have been used as a reasonableness test to help inform and validate the assumptions within this business case. Every effort has been made to ensure that comparisons are drawn from the most relevant and comparable examples available.

SPECIFIC FINANCIAL RISKS AND ISSUES

Strategic Authority – some existing costs and budgets will transfer to the Strategic Authority such as the Fire service. These have not been included in the financial model at this stage due to the complexities of splitting out budgets and resource. No additional running costs have been assumed for the Strategic Authority within the financial model.

Existing MTFS savings – If the savings assumed to be achieved by vesting day are not delivered, this would reduce the projected baseline position and may require the new authorities to identify additional savings beyond those expected from LGR.

It should also be noted that, while annual savings are included in the MTFS up to 2027/28, no non-LGR savings (to address underlying funding gaps) have been incorporated into the financial model.

Savings – while a prudent approach to savings has been adopted, it is not yet possible to fully determine which savings are cashable and which may be non-cashable—for example, where expenditure is funded by ring-fenced grants. Therefore, although expenditure may be reduced in some cases, there could be limitations on how those savings can be used.

MTFS forecasts – as outlined earlier the financial models assume that cost increases – especially in Social Care and SEND, are lower in the years after LGR than in the years preceding it. Council tax increases are also assumed at the 4.99% (2.99% council tax + 2% adult social care precept) every year in line with government assumptions on funding.

Shared service arrangements – Hertfordshire has a track record of successful shared services. It has been assumed for the purposes of the financial case that shared service arrangements will continue where long-term countywide contracts exist, such as for Highways and Waste Disposal. Without these arrangements, the additional costs linked to disaggregation could rise significantly.

DSG Deficit /HNB – the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant funds education for children with SEND, including special schools, independent placements, and additional support in mainstream settings.

Rising demand for SEND provision has led many councils to overspend, as grant funding has not kept pace with costs. The government's 'statutory override' allows councils to exclude these deficits from their accounts, but the financial shortfall remains. The override has been extended to March 2028 while longer-term reforms are developed.

The County Council forecasts a cumulative DSG deficit of £255 million by March 2028, with annual overspends expected to continue. The outcome of national reforms will be critical to the financial sustainability of all three structural options. Any remaining HNB deficit would need to be divided between the new authority or authorities, creating a risk that an unfunded deficit could be transferred.

Pay Harmonisation – no assumptions have been made in relation to pay harmonisation within the financial model although noting that any pay harmonisation could result in significantly increased costs.

Borrowing – If alternative funding sources are insufficient to cover transition costs, borrowing may be required. Borrowing costs have not been included in the financial model at this stage and could reduce projected savings and the baseline funding available.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – the HRA sits outside of General Fund revenue expenditure. Although the four HRA's in Hertfordshire receive support services / cost of democracy from the General Fund the impact on HRA's for one off, on-going costs and savings has not been included within the financial business case.

It is important to note that the HRA entails significant costs and scale that will require further consideration as the chosen option becomes clearer.

	Housing Stock	Total Costs (£m)
3 CENTRAL configuration		
St Albans	4,899	17,538
Welwyn Hatfield	8,847	48,588
Total	**13,746**	**66,126**
2 WEST / 4 NORTH WEST unitary configuration		
Dacorum	10,061	59,033
St Albans	4,899	17,538
Total	**14,960**	**76,571**
2 EASTERN/ 4 CENTRAL configuration		
Stevenage	**7,911**	**37,209**
Welwyn Hatfield	8,847	48,588
Total	**16,758**	**85,797**

Assets disaggregation – has not been accounted for within the financial model but this potentially poses risks at a later stage in terms of ensuring the transfer of assets and their corresponding revenue streams and or liabilities does not inadvertently worsen the financial position and sustainability of the new authorities. Disposal of surplus assets may help to defray the costs of reorganisation.

Shared services – whilst some shared services are already in existence across for example Audit, Fraud, Procurement and Building Control, across Hertfordshire, these may no longer align geographically with the new authority boundaries. This may pose additional costs in relation to:

- Disaggregating shared systems or contracts that are no longer aligned geographically.
- Potential duplication of effort or investment if new, separate services are required.
- Loss of economies of scale once shared arrangements end.

However, in other cases existing shared services will not require disaggregation and there may be opportunities to expand these and create greater economies of scale.

Companies and other entities – where they exist this may cause additional complexity in aggregating and disaggregating balance sheets and asset valuation or else amending governance and ownership arrangements. As a result, additional specialist support may be required. This is assumed to be covered by the existing allocation of specialist support within the one-off costs.

Shadow authority costs – it has been assumed that the costs of the shadow authority can be covered by existing budgets and one-off costs and the contingency where required. These are unlikely to have a material impact on the financial assessment of alternative unitary options being considered, nor on their ongoing financial sustainability.

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

Regardless of the option chosen, implementing the new authorities will involve significant costs. The programme will likely need to operate on an 'invest to save' basis, with funding secured either from within the councils or through government support. All potential local funding sources to support this investment will be reviewed and considered. However,

outcomes from the Fair Funding Review could further restrict these sources — for example, by limiting the use of reserves or the ability to generate capital receipts.

This risk requires careful management to cover transition costs without compromising service delivery or financial stability. While multiple funding options are available, their impacts have not yet been included in the financial model.

Savings – savings generated through the programme can be used to help fund the costs, acknowledging that there is a time lag between expenditure and savings.

Reserves – council's hold a range of specific and general reserves. Although many are earmarked for specific commitments, a review may reveal opportunities to release or reallocate some—either temporarily or permanently—to support the investment requirement.

Capital Receipts - due to LGR, office space requirements are expected to decrease, potentially generating capital receipts. These funds could help cover transition costs; however, they have not yet been estimated because it is currently too complex to predict which buildings might be sold.

Capital Directives – these are provisions that allow the Government to authorise councils to classify certain revenue expenditures as capital (long-term investment) spending. This classification enables councils to use capital funds, such as those from capital receipts, or to borrow,

[1] This model was created by Pixel Financial management to help estimate the savings and costs in relation to Local Government Reorganisation in 2028-29

APPENDIX B – MODELLING ASSUMPTIONS USED FOR COUNCILLOR NUMBERS

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED COUNCILLOR NUMBERS FOR THE PROPOSED MODELS

2UA	3UA BASE	3UA MODIFIED	4UA BASE	4UA
2 WEST – 117	3 WEST - 66	3 WEST - 72	4 NORTH WEST - 84	4 NORTH WEST – 84
2 EASTERN- 117	3 CENTRAL – 75	3 CENTRAL – 69	4 SOUTH WEST - 79	4 SOUTH WEST – 79
	3 EAT - 93	3 EASTERN- 93	4 CENTRAL – 100	4 CENTRAL – 89
			4 EASTERN– 64	4 EASTERN– 75

INTRODUCTION

To develop the set of proposed councillor numbers for the models described in Hertfordshire's LGR submission, colleagues from across our legal and democratic services, have come together to develop a methodology for modelling these numbers.

The methodology was based on guidance set out by The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), alongside professional judgement of the requirements each of the three models described would need to be effectively run and serviced.

Our methodology for proposing these councillor numbers is described below. Our approach for each model has flexed based on the requirements of the new Unitary Authority model being proposed. While the 117 councillor representation number for the 2UA model exceeds the LGBCE guidance, we believe we have set out a strong and compelling case, for this as an interim measure pending a full LGBCE review that will be commissioned shortly after vesting of the two authorities. We are open to other options if the Secretary of State deems this necessary.

The assessment below has focused on the modified proposals for ease of reference but has been reviewed with the base proposals. The base proposals would result in changes to the ratios noted in the report but do not materially change any of the assessments and conclusions made.

METHODOLOGY

LGBCE issued guidance in February 2025 for local authorities going through LGR and described local government *'as diverse as the communities it services, providing services, leadership and representation tailored to the characteristics and needs of individual areas. Our aim in an electoral review, is to recommend electoral arrangements, including a council size, which is right for the local authority in question.*

The guidance further states "While we have no set limits, our view is that an extremely strong and compelling case would be needed for an authority made up of more than 100 members or less than 30 members: too many members and the structure potentially becomes unwieldy and accountability is diluted; too few and the authority may not be able to fully discharge its functions and effectively represent local communities.

Therefore, whilst LGBCE gave guiding principles for setting the councillor numbers for new unitary authorities, it did not prescribe a given formula or methodology for determining the number of councillors required.

It is also predicated on these options being the proposed interim arrangements in recognition that an LGBCE review will automatically follow the vesting of the new Unitary Authorities.

LGBCE gave three core areas that should be considered when determining councillor numbers for a new Unitary footprint.

1) **Strategic leadership:**
   - How many councillors are needed to give strategic leadership and direction to the authority in the long-term?
   - How many councillors will be needed to manage the business of the council and take decisions effectively?
   - How will decision making, delegation and the governance of service provision be delivered?
   - What are the plans for devolution of powers down to the parish tier?

2) **Accountability:**
   - How many councillors are needed to scrutinise council decisions?
   - How many councillors are needed to support the regulatory functions of the authority, such as planning and licencing?
   - How many councillors are needed for representation on outside bodies and partnerships?

3) **Community leadership:**
   - How many councillors are needed to represent and engage with local people and communities?
   - How will casework be handled and what support will be in place to help councillors fulfil this role?

The LGBCE guidance also includes additional areas to considered, including wider local and national policy context; local geography, demographic and community characteristics and understanding of the Councillor's roles and responsibilities within the local area. In addition, the guidance goes into detail about the factors that are relevant to the number of councillors. These include considerations around the governance arrangements of the council, committee numbers, arrangements for scrutinising the council and the number of parish councils and external bodies with which it expects the Councillors to engage. In addition, it recommends consideration of the ratio of electors to councillors. This guidance, along with the technical guidance included within the LGBCE documentation was reviewed and considered as part of this process.[8]

APPLYING THE LGBCE GUIDANCE TO HERTFORDSHIRE LGR

Our approach for applying this guidance to the Hertfordshire proposals, was as follows;

1) We designed the base governance structure of the proposed unitary models.
   - It was agreed that the number of committees and panels would remain consistent whether there are 2, 3 or 4 Unitary Authorities established.
   - Area Committees will increase in number where there are fewer, larger unitary authorities.
   - Differences will occur where a greater number of committees are required to cover a larger geographical area for regulatory matters, which will need to be split into Area Committees, as well as dealing with local representation such as Area Boards and other agreed structures.
2) We reviewed the changes that the new configurations will cause on the role of the councillor, including;
   - The new structures will include both County and District functions with wider geographical areas and increased population and electorate, changing the role and remit of the councillors.

[8] The Local Government Boundary Commission for England, *LGR guidance note* (2025), https://www.lgbce.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/lgbce_lgr_guidance_note_21052025_1_0.pdf

- Ratio of electors to councillors will significantly increase for the councillors in the new Unitary Authorities

3) We conducted a benchmarking exercise (table C) against recently created unitary councils, to illustrate the fairly broad range of councillor numbers established and to understand how these increase as the electorate they represent increases. We took an average ratio for 4,016 electors per councillor from this benchmarking exercise and used it as a reference point for our analysis.
4) We agreed the building blocks that would be used for the basis of electoral areas. LGBCE advised using the existing division or borough ward boundaries to simplify the process. We assessed options using existing County Council division boundaries and District/Borough ward boundaries (table A).
5) Considered the existing number of councillors across the existing 11 councils;
   - The total number of Cllrs is 517 which equates to: 439 District Cllrs and 78 County Cllrs
   - The number of electors is 895,832 which equates to: - 2,040 per district/borough Cllr and 11,485 per County Cllr.
6) Consulted on our approach at meaningful intervals with Hertfordshire Leaders Group and Chief Executive's Coordinating Group to share options, analysis and outputs. The proposed councillor numbers for each of the three models have been agreed by these two groups.

MODELLED SCENARIOS

We modelled the following scenarios for the 2UA and the modified 3UA and 4UA models.

Scenario 1: 2 councillors per County division

Scenario 2: 3 councillors per County division

Scenario 3: 1 councillor per borough / district ward

Scenario 4: 2 councillors per borough / district ward

Scenario 5: Using district/borough wards and reducing all multi-councillor wards by 1 councillor e.g. a three-councillor ward becomes a two-councillor ward, a two-councillor ward becomes a one-councillor, but one councillor wards stay as they are.

Table A – Cllr numbers from each modelled scenario

		Scenario 1 - 2x cllrs per County division			Scenario 2 - 3x cllrs per County division			Scenario 3 - 1x cllr per ward			Scenario 4 - 2x cllr per ward			Scenario 5 - 2 and 3-cllr wards reduced by 1 cllr				
Option	Electors	No. divisions	No. cllrs	Ratio	No. divisions	No. cllrs	Ratio	No. wards	No. cllrs	Ratio	No. wards	No. cllrs	Ratio	1-member district wards	2-member district wards	3-member district wards	No. Cllrs	Ratio
2b.1	443,148	39	78	5,681	39	117	3,788	90	90	4,924	90	180	2,462	13	26	51	141	3,143
2b.2	452,684	39	78	5,804	39	117	3,869	86	86	5,264	86	172	2,632	6	25	55	141	3,211
2b TOTAL	895,832	78	156	5,743	78	234	3,828	176	176	5,090	176	352	2,545	19	51	106	282	3,177
3g.1	259,713	22	44	5,903	22	66	3,935	50	50	5,194	50	100	2,597	5	14	31	81	3,206
3g.2	358,738	31	62	5,786	31	93	3,857	74	74	4,848	74	148	2,424	13	26	35	109	3,291
3g.3	277,381	25	50	5,548	25	75	3,698	52	52	5,334	52	104	2,667	1	11	40	92	3,015
3g TOTAL	895,832	78	156	5,743	78	234	3,828	176	176	5,090	176	352	2,545	19	51	106	282	3,177
3j.1	236,198	21	42	5,624	21	63	3,749	42	42	5,624	42	84	2,812	0	9	33	75	3,149
3j.2	286,134	25	50	5,723	25	75	3,815	64	64	4,471	64	128	2,235	13	26	25	89	3,215
3j.3	373,500	32	64	5,836	32	96	3,891	70	70	5,336	70	140	2,668	6	16	48	118	3,165
3g TOTAL	895,832	78	156	5,743	78	234	3,828	176	176	5,090	176	352	2,545	19	51	106	282	3,177
4a.1	189,109	16	32	5,910	16	48	3,940	36	36	5,253	36	72	2,627	8	12	16	52	3,637
4a.2	228,865	20	40	5,722	20	60	3,814	45	45	5,086	45	90	2,543	6	16	23	68	3,366
4a.3	223,819	19	38	5,890	19	57	3,927	41	41	5,459	41	82	2,730	0	9	32	73	3,066
4a.4	254,039	23	46	5,523	23	69	3,682	54	54	4,704	54	108	2,352	5	14	35	89	2,854
4a TOTAL	895,832	78	156	5,743	78	234	3,828	176	176	5,090	176	352	2,545	19	51	106	282	3,177

Table B – Assessment of pros and cons for each scenario modelled.

Scenario	Pros	Cons
Scenario 1: 2 councillors per County division	• All 3 options are within LGBCE 30-100 guidance for a UA. • Consistent/simple structure using existing boundaries. • 2 Councillor divisions give a good balance to manage constituency work.	• Ratio for elector/councillor are high at between c5,600-5,900. • The number of councillors particularly for the 3 & 4 proposals is low for running council business.

Scenario 2: 3 councillors per County division	• 3 & 4 UA models are within LGBCE 30-100 guidance, but 2 UA goes above to 117 per UA - this could be positive for transition to have more councillors noting that numbers will likely be reduced on review. • Consistent/simple structure using existing boundaries. • Lowers the elector/councillor ratio to between c3,600-3,900, which would be positive for local representation. • Number of councillors for running the unitary is improved compared to 2 councillor version.	• 117 councillors per UA for the two unitary models is quite high and would very likely be reduced by LGBCE on review. • However, note Buckinghamshire started at 147 and was then reduced to 97 so there is precedent for starting higher for the transition period. • If 117 was deemed too high, consider reverting to 2 councillor division for 2 unitary proposal and 3 councillor division for options 3 & 4.
Scenario 3: 1 councillor per borough / district ward	• All 4 options are within LGBCE 30-100 guidance. • Consistent/simple structure using existing boundaries. • Wards would more closely reflect local identities as they have been assessed through district reviews	• Numbers of councillors in 3 and 4 unitary options are low. • Because some districts have lower numbers of wards, distribution of councillors would be unbalanced. • Elector/Councillor ratios are relatively high 4,400-5,600
Scenario 4: 2 councillors per borough / district ward	• Wards would be more closely reflect local identities as they have been assessed through district reviews. • Consistent/simple structure using existing boundaries. • Elector/Councillor ratio is low at between c2,300-2800	• All 4 options have at least one of the unitary authorities above LGBCE 30-100 guidance. • Councillor numbers in the 2 and 3 unitary options are high, although it is more balanced in the 4 unitary options with only one being above the 100 Councillor LGBCE guidance.
Scenario 5: Using district/borough wards and reducing all multi-councillor wards by 1 councillor	• Consistent/simple structure using existing boundaries. • Wards would more closely reflect local identities as they have been assessed through district reviews. • Allows a better geographical balance of councillors. • Councillor/elector ratio is improved at between c2,800-3,600	• The 2 unitary option has 141 councillors, and a case would need to be made to justify this number similar to the 3 member per division in the County division option. • 3 UA option include at least one authority above LGBCE 30-100 guidance, although the 4 unitary option is within the LGBCE guidance

It was agreed that the preferred option for the 2UA and 3 UA model was to use existing County Divisions with 3 councillors per division (scenario 2 above). In respect of the 4UA it was agreed to use existing District/Boundary wards as the base model utilising scenario 5 above. However, the ward-by-ward analysis of the 4UA (scenario 5 model) highlighted high variations of electorate to councillor ratios in some wards. Further modelling was carried out to reduce those ratios by adding back in councillors to most 2 members wards where they had been previously removed.

The agreed numbers for each unitary proposals are set out at the top of this appendix.

Based on the options above, we did further analysis, testing;

1) **Ratio of Electors to Cllr**

As table C shows, the 9 most recent new unitary councils had a broad range of Cllr numbers from 46-110 and the Cllr numbers tend to increase in line with the elector numbers. The elector Cllr ratio ranges from

2718 – 5373 (N.b. 2718 is an outlier and most are significantly higher). The average for elector/Cllr ratio is 4016.

The role of the councillor will change significantly with the new structure covering both County and District functions with wider geographical areas and increased population and electorate. Inevitably, this will mean that the ratio of electors to councillors will increase for Councillors in the new Unitary Authorities and as such these have been assessed in the light of other recently created Unitary Authorities so that officers and Councillors can visualise the ratios for different options, as shown in table A.

Table C – Most recent new unitary councils

Council	Created	No of Wards	No of Councillors	Population	Population/ward	Population/ Councillor
BCP	2019	33	76	301183	9127	3963
Dorset	2019	52	82	295195	5677	3600
Buckinghamshire	2020	49	97	410789	8383	4235
North Northamptons	2021	31	78	261970	8451	3359
West Northamptons	2021	35	76	299118	8546	3936
Cumberland	2023	46	46	216592	4709	4709
Westmorland and Furness	2023	33	65	176693	5354	2718
North Yorkshire	2023	90	90	483576	5373	5373
Somerset	2023	55	110	446703	8122	4061
Overall	-	-	-	-	**6820**	**4016**

2) **Ratio of Cllrs to Committees**

The base governance structure, for each unitary will have more elements than the two-tier councils due to the merger of most functions into single unitary councils. As between the 2, 3 and 4 UA models it is envisaged that there would be a similar number of committees but there may be a marginal increase in the number of Area Committees required by fewer larger unitary authorities which cover a larger area and population.

The same may be the case in respect of regulatory committees such as planning and licencing required to cover a larger geographical area for regulatory matters, but this could be covered by committees with a wider geographical coverage coupled with broader delegation to officers.

Governance structures should be designed to ensure that the committee seat ratio to the number of available councillors is appropriate to ensure that councillors are able to discharge their duties, including committee attendance, constituent case work and engagement, effectively.

Based on analysis of the likely committees that each unitary authorities will need, exclusive of Local Community/Strategic Partnerships Boards, it is estimated that the unitary options under consideration will have the following numbers of committee seats:

Two unitary authority - 171 committee seats.

Three unitary – 167 committee seats

Four unitary – 154 committee seats

Table D - Ratio of Councillor to Committee Seats

Unitary option	Scenario option	Councillor Number	Ratio (Committee seat/Cllr)
2 WEST	County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division	117	1.46
2 EASTERN	County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division	117	1.46
MODIFIED 3 WEST	County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division	72	2.3
MODIFIED 3 CENTRAL	County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division	69	2.4
MODIFIED 3 EAST	County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division	93	1.8
MODIFIED 4 NORTH WEST	District / Borough wards, minus 1 Cllr (from wards with 2 or 3 existing Cllrs.)	84	1.83
MODIFIED 4 SOUTH WEST	District / Borough wards, minus 1 Cllr (from wards with 2 or 3 existing Cllrs.)	79	1.94
MODIFIED 4 CENTRAL	District / Borough wards, minus 1 Cllr (from wards with 2 or 3 existing Cllrs.)	89	1.73
MODIFIED 4 EAST	District / Borough wards, minus 1 Cllr (from wards with 2 or 3 existing Cllrs.)	75	2.05

It is acknowledged that the role of the councillor in the new unitary authorities will change as functions are combined and they have a larger electorate to represent, but for the purposes of comparison, we have benchmarked against all eleven Hertfordshire authorities which together, have an average committee seat to Councillor ratio of 1.76.

It will be noted that under the two unitary model (3 Cllr per division), the ratio is improved when compared against existing Hertfordshire authorities, but this is due to the relatively high councillor numbers under that option (117 Cllrs). This could benefit earlier transition planning and may well be reduced following the initial electoral review. Modelling for three and four unitary increases the ratio from the average currently across Hertfordshire but is arguably proportionate to the new functions and populations of those authorities.

In addition to the committee membership and political meetings, there are circa 250 outside bodies across Hertfordshire for which there will be some requirement for councillors to engage and attend. There are also 112 Town/Parish Councils across Hertfordshire, many unitary authority councillors are likely to be dual-hatted members, but even if they are not, unitary authority councillors will frequently attend Town/Parish Council meetings. The additional workload from outside bodies and Town/Parish Councils also needs to be considered when finalising councillor numbers to ensure that councillors have sufficient capacity to carry-out their roles effectively.

AGREEING PROPOSED CLLR NUMBERS FOR THE PROPOSED MODELS

The team assessed the proposals for 2UA, 3UA and 4UA in table F, against the LCGBE criteria and are confident that each of the proposals does adhere to the guidance whilst acknowledging that a full electoral review carried out post vesting day will mean that further changes will likely be required.

These were reviewed and agreed by Hertfordshire's Leaders Group and the Chief Executive Leaders Group

Table F. Summarising the observations of the chosen Cllr numbers, as against the LGBCE Core Factors

Unitary Option	Strategic Leadership	Accountability	Community Leadership
2UA (County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division)	117 councillors will provide a large pool of councillors which will help to ensure that there is a balance of experience to help set the strategic direction for the council. There will be enough councillors to carry out the business of the council and a high number during the initial transition period will assist.	The committee seat per councillor ratio at 1.46 is lower than the current average in Hertfordshire of 1.76 so committee workload will be manageable and allow councillors to effectively carry out their scrutiny and regulatory functions. A lower ratio will allow more capacity for councillors to work on outside bodies and other roles such as town and parish councils.	The 2UA model returns 117 councillors per unitary. Whilst this is above LGBCE guidance, it keeps the elector to councillor ratio c,3800 reasonable and enables councillors to effectively carry out their representative roles. 3 member wards also allow sharing of representation and improved resilience.
3UA (County divisions – 3 Cllrs per division)	Councillor numbers proposed are 72, 69 and 93. This should be sufficient to set the strategic leadership for the council and carry out the day-to-day business of the council.	Committee seat ratio is 2.2 on average between the three UAs which is higher than current Hertfordshire average but proportionate to the change in functions covered.	All councillor numbers remain under the 100 guidance. Councillor/elector ratios average c3800 which is appropriate for local representation.
4UA District / Borough wards minus 1 Cllr (from wards with 2 or 3 existing Cllrs.)	As a result of the manual adjustments, the councillor numbers proposed are 84,79,89 and 75. The councillor numbers proposed should be sufficient to set the strategic leadership for the council and carry out the day-to-day business of the council.	The committee seat ratio is improved (1.8) compared to the 3UA model and with a lower electorate to represent this should make committee attendance for scrutiny and regulatory functions manageable.	All councillor numbers remain under the 100 guidance. Councillor/elector ratios average c2,700 is lower, but this will only help local representation and time to spend on outside bodies and other roles.

FOOTNOTE: BIRD'S ESTATE

Watford and Hertsmere Councils have been in discussion about the appropriate location of the Bird's Estate on the border of the two councils in a three unitary model. It is noted here that this is not included in this submission, but should be considered post-LGR.

APPENDIX C – EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

See Separate Document

APPENDIX D – SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

Local government reorganisation in Hertfordshire presents a unique opportunity to reshape public services and governance for a more sustainable future. As the county embarks on this significant transition, it is vital to ensure that environmental, social, and economic sustainability are embedded at every stage.

This assessment evaluates the potential impacts of LGR across ten key sustainability criteria, using a structured framework informed by local data, best practice, and stakeholder engagement. The findings highlight substantial opportunities to enhance sustainability governance, delivery, and outcomes, with benefits outweighing risks in most areas. Where risks are identified, particularly during the transition period, targeted mitigation measures are proposed.

This document is designed to support informed decisions and the implementation of effective strategies. It includes a summary table, detailed analysis, and clear recommendations to guide Hertfordshire towards a resilient and sustainable future.

Climate adaptation and resilience	Benefits outweigh risks	Enhanced strategic capacity for climate risk assessment and adaptation planning. Improved coordination of emergency planning and incident response Single-tier accountability enabling integrated infrastructure investment. Greater scale and resources for accessing national climate adaptation funding. Ability to align adaptation planning with development and transport strategies.	Potential loss of local climate risk knowledge during transition Risk of adaptation planning being deprioritised during implementation	Conduct comprehensive climate risk mapping and vulnerability assessments. Embed adaptation planning in strategic risk assessments. Establish joint financial mechanisms and reserves. Develop cross-authority learning on adaptation approaches. Link adaptation planning to statutory duties
Community awareness and behaviour change	Benefits outweigh risks	Unified sustainability messaging improving clarity and impact. Greater scale enabling investment in communications and engagement. Consistency in approaches to waste reduction and energy efficiency Enhanced capacity for targeted campaigns	Potential disruption to ongoing campaigns Risk that unified messaging lacks local resonance. Possibility that dissenting voices are amplified	Develop aligned messaging framework during transition. Ensure consistent language with local adaptation. Invest in segmented communications. Establish protocols for community feedback. Maintain focus on trusted local messengers
Community engagement and empowerment	Finely balanced	Strategic coherence enabling alignment with county-wide priorities. Greater resources for engagement and participatory approaches Potential for enhanced support to community initiatives	Perceived or actual distance between communities and decision-makers Loss of established relationships and community trust Reduction in responsiveness to hyperlocal initiatives Confusion about authority engagement during transition	Conduct audit of key community contacts and relationships. Systematically transfer relationship information Establish neighbourhood-level engagement mechanisms.

		Opportunity to develop sophisticated engagement infrastructure		Maintain dedicated community sustainability officers. Invest in community capacity building. Provide clear information about new structures. Establish community advisory groups
Data, monitoring, and accountability	Benefits outweigh risks	Unified key performance indicators and data systems enabling consistent measurement across county. Enhanced capacity for sophisticated data analysis, modelling, and evidence-based decision-making Improved transparency and accountability through consistent reporting frameworks Greater ability to track progress, identify what works, and adapt approaches based on evidence. Economies of scale in data infrastructure investment and specialist expertise	Potential loss of legacy data or inconsistent baselining if not systematically managed Risk of gaps in time-series data during transition affecting ability to track trends Possibility of incompatible data systems requiring costly integration Temporary reduction in data quality or availability during transition	Develop shared data platforms and standards during transition, ensuring compatibility with existing systems. Conduct systematic data audits mapping all existing sustainability datasets, baselines, and time-series. Establish clear protocols for data transfer, ensuring no loss of historical information. Agree consistent baseline approaches for new authorities whilst maintaining continuity with previous data where possible. Invest in data infrastructure and specialist capacity. Publish transparent methodologies and ensure data is accessible to communities, businesses, and researchers. Establish independent sustainability monitoring and reporting arrangements
Biodiversity and natural capital	Benefits outweigh risks	Aligned implementation of Local Nature Recovery Strategy ensuring coherent, landscape-scale approach. Consistent application of Biodiversity Net Gain across all development, removing current inconsistencies. Single-tier responsibility enabling integrated management of planning, highways, public estate, and natural capital. Strategic Authority coordination of county-wide ecological networks and priority habitats Clearer messaging to landowners, farmers, and developers about expectations and support Greater capacity for ecological expertise, monitoring, and enforcement	Potential loss of local ecological knowledge and site-specific understanding during transition Risk of established conservation partnerships and volunteer networks being disrupted Temporary reduction in capacity or focus on nature recovery during implementation period	Use LNRS development to embed consistent approaches whilst capturing local ecological knowledge. Develop shared ecological data platforms building on existing biodiversity baseline work. Conduct systematic mapping of conservation partnerships, volunteer networks, and key relationships. Ensure ecology specialists and conservation teams maintained during transition with clear responsibilities. Establish biodiversity indicators and targets from day one, with transparent monitoring and reporting. Invest in community engagement on nature recovery, ensuring local communities remain active partners
Green growth and employment	Benefits outweigh risks	Enhanced capacity for strategic planning of green skills pipelines aligned with economic development.	Risk that green skills planning not sufficiently connected to economic development in new structures.	Align green skills planning with economic development and retrofit strategies from day one.

		Greater scale enabling significant investment in retrofit, renewable energy, and sustainable transport programmes creating local jobs. Consistent messaging to businesses about sustainability expectations, support, and opportunities Single tier planning and economic development enabling clearer links between growth sectors and skills provision. Strategic Authority coordination with universities, colleges, and employers on county-wide skills strategy Potential to position Hertfordshire as attractive location for green businesses and investment	Potential that early focus on reorganisation delays green growth initiatives. Possibility that green job creation concentrated in some areas rather than distributed equitably	Clarify economic development responsibilities and ensure sustainability embedded throughout Establish clear mechanisms linking strategic employment support, skills provision, and major sustainability programmes. Monitor green job creation geographically to ensure inclusive distribution. Engage businesses, training providers, and employment support organisations early in transition. Maintain momentum on key programmes (retrofit, EV infrastructure, renewable energy) during transition
Sustainable consumption and circular economy	Benefits outweigh risks	Unified sustainable procurement policies, standards, and contracts across authorities Greater purchasing power enabling influence over supply chains and leverage for sustainability requirements. Consistent recycling and waste reduction approaches creating clearer messages to residents and businesses. Enhanced capacity for circular economy initiatives including repair, reuse, and sharing scheme. Potential for bulk procurement of sustainable products and services reducing costs	Risk of disruption to existing sustainable procurement relationships and contracts during transition Potential that lowest-cost procurement takes precedence over sustainability in early period. Possibility that successful local circular economy initiatives lost in larger structures.	Apply learning from regional sustainable procurement research to set standards across authorities from day one. Engage suppliers early about transition, emphasising continuity of sustainability expectations. Conduct audit of existing sustainable procurement practices, contracts, and supplier relationships. Establish sustainability criteria in all procurement from outset, with clear weighting and evaluation. Develop social value frameworks ensuring local economic benefit and environmental standards. Support community sector circular economy initiatives through grants, space, and partnerships
Built environment and energy	Benefits outweigh risks	Aligned housing, planning, and energy strategies enabling integrated approaches to net-zero development. Single-tier planning removing two-tier conflicts and delays in delivering sustainable development. Strategic coordination of energy infrastructure including renewable generation, heat networks, and EV charging Greater capacity for area-based retrofit programmes and innovative financing models	Potential disruption to ongoing retrofit schemes, energy projects, and development during transition Risk of inconsistent application of sustainability standards across former district areas during early implementation Possibility that housing delivery pressures override sustainability requirements	Conduct comprehensive audit and benchmarking of current approaches, schemes, and standards during transition. Maintain momentum on key retrofit and energy programmes, using them as demonstration projects for new approaches. Trial Retrofit One Stop Shop model to test integrated service delivery and maintain programme continuity. Establish robust sustainability standards for new development from day one,

		Enhanced ability to influence development quality through unified planning and housing functions. Potential to establish exemplar net-zero housing standards across all new development		with clear monitoring and enforcement. Ensure planning and housing teams have sustainability expertise and capacity. Develop Local Area Energy Plans providing strategic frameworks for investment decisions. Link retrofit programmes to fuel poverty reduction and decent homes standards, strengthening delivery case
Statutory duties and prioritisation	Finely balanced	Single-tier accountability creating clarity about sustainability responsibilities. Opportunity to embed sustainability across all statutory functions rather than treating as separate agenda. Potential for sustainability to become core to service delivery, not optional extra. Greater strategic capacity enabling both statutory compliance and ambitious sustainability action	Risk that unitary authorities prioritise immediate statutory duties over longer-term sustainability transformation, particularly during early implementation period. Potential for sustainability initiatives to be seen as "nice to have" rather than essential. Possibility of sustainability capacity and budgets being reduced if seen as non-statutory Danger that performance management focuses on statutory indicators rather than sustainability outcomes	Embed sustainability in all statutory duty delivery from day one, not as separate workstream. Link sustainability programmes to statutory requirements wherever possible. Maintain and build on successful programmes during transition, acknowledging inevitable "settling in" period but demonstrating continuity and commitment. Establish clear sustainability targets, indicators, and reporting from outset, ensuring accountability. Ensure sustainability expertise represented in senior leadership and embedded across all service areas. Develop business cases demonstrating how sustainability investment supports statutory duty delivery and reduces long-term costs. Engage elected members on sustainability priorities and secure political commitment
Transport and mobility	Benefits outweigh risks	Single-tier responsibility for spatial planning, transport planning, and development enabling genuinely integrated approaches. Clear accountability for active travel infrastructure, EV charging, public transport, and highways Strategic Authority coordination of strategic corridors and engagement with national rail network Enhanced capacity for transport modelling, behaviour change programmes, and investment in sustainable alternatives. Removal of two-tier conflicts that currently	Potential disruption to Local Transport Plan development and delivery during transition Risk of established relationships with transport operators and stakeholders being disrupted Possibility that car-focused approaches dominate if sustainable transport not prioritised	Prioritise aligned spatial planning and transport stakeholder engagement during transition to maintain momentum. Ensure continuity of Local Transport Plan development with clear sustainability ambitions. Conduct audit of transport programmes, partnerships, and commitments, ensuring systematic handover. Establish sustainable transport targets and monitoring from day one. Invest in active travel and public transport infrastructure early, demonstrating commitment and building public confidence.

		hamper delivery of ambitious sustainable transport programmes. Greater ability to link transport planning with housing, employment, and education, reducing need to travel		Engage transport operators, community transport providers, and advocacy groups throughout transition. Link transport planning with major development sites, ensuring sustainable access designed from outset. Develop cross-authority learning on what works in sustainable transport delivery

CONCLUSION

This assessment demonstrates that local government reorganisation presents significant opportunities to enhance sustainability governance and delivery across Hertfordshire, with benefits substantially outweighing risks for eight of ten criteria assessed. The two finely-balanced criteria—community engagement and statutory duties—require particular attention to mitigation measures but do not undermine the overall positive assessment.

The assessment reveals a transformative opportunity to embed sustainability at the heart of public service delivery. Across environmental, social, and economic dimensions, the analysis demonstrates that the move to a single-tier authority can unlock significant benefits, ranging from enhanced climate resilience and unified data systems to strategic green growth and integrated transport planning. For eight out of ten criteria, the advantages of reorganisation clearly outweigh the risks, provided that transition is managed proactively and mitigation measures are robustly implemented.

However, the assessment also highlights the value of proactive focus in two finely balanced areas: community engagement and statutory duties. The risk of diminished local responsiveness and the potential for sustainability to be deprioritised during statutory compliance must be addressed through targeted actions, such as maintaining dedicated community officers, embedding sustainability in statutory functions, and ensuring transparent reporting and accountability.

A successful transition will depend on clear communication, continuity of key programmes, and the preservation of local knowledge and relationships. Strategic investment in data infrastructure, ecological expertise, and green skills will be essential to realise the full potential of reorganisation. Furthermore, the creation of advisory groups, segmented communications, and inclusive engagement mechanisms will help maintain public trust and empower communities.

Hertfordshire stands at a pivotal moment. By embracing the opportunities presented and committing to sustained leadership in sustainability, the county can set a benchmark for integrated, resilient, and equitable local governance. The recommendations outlined in this assessment provide a roadmap for maximising positive impacts, mitigating risks, and ensuring that sustainability remains a core priority throughout and beyond the reorganisation process.

Local Government Engagement Feedback Report Appendix - Data

The below appendix includes the data and feedback collected from key stakeholder events and resident engagement survey responses.

The following questions were asked to strategic stakeholders:

1. Which local government services are a priority for you?
2. What is working well in Hertfordshire in terms of local government structures?
3. What most needs improvement in Hertfordshire?
4. What partnerships or collaborations are working well that must be preserved or scaled up?
5. What opportunities do you see arising from this change?
6. What innovations or changes would you like to see in how services are delivered?
7. What concerns or risks do you see with Local Government Reorganisation?
8. Do you have a specific recommendation with regard to reorganisation?

The following questions were asked in the widely distributed survey:

1. What are you responding as (resident of Hertfordshire, member of staff etc.)?
2. What council area do you live in?
3. If you work for a council, which one do you work for?
4. How much do you know about the Government's plans to make changes to local councils, called Local Government Reorganisation?
5. Which of these services are most important to you (infrastructure, waste services etc.)?
6. How much do you know about the Government's plans to make changes to local councils, called Local Government Reorganisation?
7. Do you have a view on which option of 2, 3, or 4 new councils, you would prefer and what are your reasons?
8. What overall impact, if any, do you think would come from councils in Hertfordshire being joined with other neighbouring councils, in regard to services and value for money?
9. What potential benefits of this reorganisation would be most important to you?
10. What opportunities and improvements would you like to see come from Local Government Reorganisation?
11. What concerns you the most when thinking about Local Government Reorganisation?
12. Would you like us to keep you informed about progress?
13. Do you have any additional comments?
14. What is your gender?
15. What is your age group?
16. What is your ethnic group?
17. Do you consider yourself to have a disability, long-term illness, or health condition?

Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Data

For reference, the organisations engaged included (but were not limited to):

Ashbourne Insurance (Broxbourne)	B3Living	BIDs/Partnership
Bishops Stortford Town Council	Box Moor Trust	Buntingford Chamber of Commerce
Buntingford Town Council	Citizens Advice (multiple districts)	Community Action Dacorum
Community Alliance Broxbourne & East Herts	DENS	East & North Herts NHS Trust
Everyone Active (leisure contractor)	Gascoyne Estates	Hertford Regional College
Hertford Town Council	Hertfordshire & West Essex ICB	Hertfordshire Futures (LEP)
Herts Care Providers Association	Herts Community NHS Trust	Herts Partnership (Mental Health) Trust
Hightown Housing Association	Hitchin BID	Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
Letchworth Heritage Foundation	Love Hoddesdon BID	North Herts and Stevenage CVS
North Herts College	Oaklands College	Oxygen Studios (Hertsmere)
Sawbridgeworth Town Council	Sunnyside Rural Trust	VCFSE Alliance
Ware Town Council	Watford & West Herts Chamber/Businesses	Watford Cultural Leaders Group
Welwyn Garden City	West Herts College	

Q1. Which local government services are a priority for you?

Stakeholders highlighted a wide range of service priorities, with the most commonly cited themes being **housing, social care, public health**, and **community services**. Priorities varied across different areas and sectors.

Other Notable Mentions

- **Policing and public safety**

- **Leisure**
- **Road maintenance / Highways**
- **Education**

While other local priorities such as services to help businesses grow, community safety, environmental health, and education were noted, the overwhelming emphasis was on the continuity and expansion of core front-line services that address need at individual, family, and neighbourhood levels.

Stakeholders highlighted a broad but consistent set of service priorities, with housing, social care, and public health emerging as the most frequently cited themes. These priorities reflect both the strategic role of county-wide systems and the operational significance of borough-level partnerships. Voluntary sector organisations, including various Citizens Advice stakeholders, gave detailed breakdowns of service areas most critical to their client base. DENS highlighted housing, food, and basic financial support as essential services that "must not be compromised or fragmented." They emphasised the importance of coordinated referrals and long-standing relationships with borough councils. Health stakeholders and housing providers reinforced the centrality of safeguarding, adult care, and planning.

Alignment was evident around the importance of housing-linked services, not only as a function of shelter, but also as a lever for wider wellbeing, including mental health and family cohesion. Stakeholders called for stronger integration between service domains and for greater consistency in delivery and access. This theme was pronounced in the feedback from service delivery partners who work across organisational boundaries.

Q2. What is working well in Hertfordshire in terms of local government structures?

Stakeholders offered reflections on the current system, highlighting strong relationships, clear delineation of responsibilities, and well-established collaborative structures. Many responses showed stakeholders reflecting positively on their relationship with their District/borough council.

Collaboration and Governance Mechanisms
Stakeholders repeatedly referred to strong joint working between councils. Citizens Advice, businesses, and public sector partners referenced forums like the Hertfordshire Leaders' Group, the Hertfordshire Growth Board, and various cross-council working groups as examples of embedded and effective collaboration. These structures were described by Citizens Advice Broxbourne as enabling "unified strategies and pooled expertise," particularly across areas like economic development, planning, and devolution proposals.

Further Education leaders also underlined the importance of relationships at the County Council level, with one principal remarking, "It is hard to imagine Hertfordshire without the County Council" and stressing the value of economic development leadership at this level. Stakeholders valued HCC's ability to operate while maintaining relationships with sectors spanning the entire county footprint.

Relationships and Local Accessibility
Relationships at the district level were seen as a major strength. Many respondents, particularly from the voluntary and community sector, described district councils as accessible, responsive, and willing to collaborate. This was evident in places like St Albans, Dacorum, Broxbourne and Three Rivers, where stakeholders pointed to co-designed initiatives, practical partnerships, and mutual trust. Local offices, familiar points of contact, and continuity of officer relationships were all cited as factors underpinning strong joint work.

Strategic Economic Focus and Business Engagement
Local government was widely credited with playing a proactive role in shaping the local economy. Initiatives like the Business Pledge and regeneration partnerships were seen as evidence of meaningful collaboration. Watford Chamber of Commerce noted that "these touchpoints ensure local business voices are heard and considered." Hertfordshire-wide structures such as Hertfordshire Futures were recognised as offering a business-led but council-supported focus on long-term growth.

Effective Service Delivery and Joint Planning
Core services were described as effective including waste collection, social care, education, and health partnerships. In Dacorum and Broxbourne, for example, refuse and recycling were praised as *"efficient"* and *"reliable"* by respective stakeholders. The alignment of local government and health boundaries was also noted as enabling better coordination of services, particularly in the Health and Care Partnerships.

Analysis
Stakeholders described Hertfordshire's local government structures positively, underpinned by a combination of clear roles, trusted relationships, and embedded governance.

Critically, much of what is working well was attributed not just to structure but to culture - officers and elected members across Hertfordshire were described as willing to work with partners, take a pragmatic approach, and form trusting relationships. These working relationships are helping to maintain service continuity, foster innovation (especially in social care and place-based initiatives), and build a foundation for reform as structural changes proceed.

While not without areas for improvement, stakeholders largely viewed the existing frameworks as a strong platform from which to evolve. Whether through collaboration with the business community, targeted local delivery, or coordination across complex systems like health and housing, the structures in place are supporting effective, trusted local government in Hertfordshire.

Q3. What most needs improvement in Hertfordshire?

Key areas identified for improvement were referral processes and service integration, housing supply, access to services, and infrastructure and coordination.

Joined up Working and Referral Pathways

Several stakeholders flagged the need for stronger integration between services. Sunnyside Rural Trust emphasised the gap between adult social care and social enterprise, calling for *"better integration."* At a Hertsmere roundtable, attendees noted *"differences between district and county levels"* in transport coordination. Communities' 1st echoed this, warning that *"fragmentation between tiers causes confusion… [and] conflicting priorities,"* and pushed for greater consistency and equity in commissioning.

Housing Supply and Affordability

Multiple stakeholders raised concerns about housing access. The Watford Chamber described *"a pressing need for more affordable housing,"* alongside the need for flexible commercial space; Box Moor Trust also stressed that *"more affordable housing options are needed"*. These views reflect a broader concern that current local housing strategies fall short of meeting demand.

Digital Inclusion and Online Access

Digital exclusion emerged as a concern. Welwyn Garden City BID said that *"a more user-friendly system"* is needed, particularly for older residents without online access. Citizens Advice Broxbourne echoed this, warning that services had *"moved online without parallel support for clients lacking digital skills or devices,"* and proposed a joined-up inclusion programme via libraries, hubs, and drop-ins.

Transport and Service Accessibility

Multiple stakeholders highlighted the need for improved transport links, particularly east to west. At the HCC Business Forum, Richard Ward stated, *"Transport infrastructure, particularly east to west"* requires improvement. The St Albans District Chamber of Commerce also flagged the lack of east/west connectivity in particular. During a panel for Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, it was said that *"There is a need for better connectivity between towns… to improve accessibility and reduce travel barriers for residents."*

Other Issues Noted

- **Road maintenance**
- **Bureaucracy**
- **Access to social care for complex cases**

Analysis

While stakeholders recognised many strengths in current service structures, they also identified clear areas for improvement. Stakeholder feedback highlights fragmentation between county and district responsibilities and need for more joined up and coherent service delivery across Hertfordshire. Housing remains a major pressure point, with repeated calls for more affordable options and better alignment with social care and public health provision. Transport was also flagged, with a lack of connectivity between towns and east to west, creating barriers to accessing services, especially in rural and peripheral areas. Stakeholders also criticised bureaucratic inefficiencies, citing overly complex processes around community assets and SEND transport.

Taken together, the feedback suggests that while core services are generally viewed positively, there is appetite for improvements in access, consistency, and collaboration, particularly at the operational interface between councils and communities, and an appetite for streamlined systems that prioritise fairness, reduce duplication, and enable faster, more accessible support for residents.

Q4. What partnerships or collaborations are working well that must be preserved or scaled up?

Stakeholders consistently highlighted the value of local partnerships, especially between councils and the voluntary or health sectors. These relationships were often described as critical to maintaining service delivery, local knowledge, and community trust.

Borough and District Council Relationships

Strong local partnerships were repeatedly praised. Sunnyside Rural Trust described the working relationship between Watford, Three Rivers, and Dacorum as *"particularly effective,"* with *"natural links and shared approaches that benefit service delivery."* A Herts and West Essex ICS stakeholder reinforced this point, citing *"strong place-based partnerships with good engagement from District and Borough Councils"* as critical to achieving neighbourhood health goals. Meanwhile, Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult emphasised that

local government had supported high-growth businesses, noting that *"local start-ups… have thrived with local government contributing to success."* Everyone Active, a Three Rivers DC stakeholder, highlighted *"strong leisure partnerships across seven of the local councils"* and advocated for these to continue.

County-wide Relationships

County-wide partnerships were also highlighted, with health and care leaders at HCC's Health and Care Providers roundtable citing *"good work at scale / county-wide on things like the Better Care Fund Board"* and warning against losing the benefits of this coordinated approach. Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust stakeholder said at the HCC roundtable that there was a *"risk that we are unable to hang on to what works, and successful partnerships are undone by structural changes."*

Voluntary and community Partnerships

There was praise for the strength and value of voluntary sector relationships with local councils, noting their impact on trust, service delivery, and community engagement. Citizens Advice St Albans District mentioned the strong relationships with St Albans City and District Council, and Community Action Dacorum (CAD) praised its strong ties with both Dacorum Borough Council and county adult social care, noting these relationships *"foster trust"* and enable the voluntary sector to contribute to *"service delivery and policy discussions."* A stakeholder from HCC added that *"lots of community leaders are already linked in with parish and town councils,"* so they should be part of the strategic picture. Watford Town Centre BID reflected positively on its multi-agency collaborations, stating that there was benefit from partnerships that *"bring together different skills, perspectives, and resources"* to deliver.

Education and Community Engagement Links

North Herts College said they had *"spent time building good relationships with Stevenage Borough Council,"* calling it *"a good example of partnership working."* They warned that LGR must not *"scupper existing strategies and development plans."*

Analysis

Stakeholders were clear that the success of services across Hertfordshire depends on maintaining and scaling the partnerships that already work. Various sector organisations emphasised their strong relationships with borough councils. There was a consensus that these partnerships are built on trust, responsiveness, and local knowledge, and that they would be difficult to replicate quickly under a new structure if disrupted. Several stakeholders also flagged more formalised partnerships, such as those under the Hertfordshire Growth Board and business improvement districts (BIDs), as valuable mechanisms that blend strategic alignment with local adaptability. Beyond organisational links, several stakeholders identified joint commissioning, co-location of services, and shared use of community assets as practical aspects of partnership. Views shared included that reorganisation should not start from scratch but must take care to retain the partnerships that already deliver outcomes for residents.

Q5. What opportunities do you see arising from this change?

Responses to this saw stakeholders often balancing potential benefits with risks. Key themes included streamlined service delivery, opportunities for growth and scale, and enhanced cross-area collaboration.

Streamlining and Efficiency

Many stakeholders viewed reorganisation as a route to more coherent and joined up public services. DENS described it as *"a chance to unify and align services and funding streams,*

reducing duplication", stating that services should be *"better linked with adult social care and public health,"* due to the complex, multi-agency needs of clients. At a meeting in North Herts, stakeholders stressed the opportunity of services becoming *"preventative rather than reactive, due to being able to pool resources."* The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority pointed to "streamlined planning processes," while an ICB representative noted the potential for *"working more effectively with available resources"* and co-located delivery models. A Business stakeholder in Watford also welcomed the idea of *"quicker decision-making politically."*

Improved Use of Data and Digital Opportunities

Stakeholders also hoped for a smarter, more data-driven approach. B3Living wanted greater emphasis on *"using data to drive understanding"* and *"working on outcomes."* One NHS Trust representative hoped for *"more / better shared data,"* and an HCC business stakeholder noted opportunities in *"detailed cost modelling"* and *"using data to identify efficiencies."*

Digital transformation was also highlighted. At a Welwyn panel, residents wanted "improved use of digital tools and communication" to enhance sustainability and service tracking. Welwyn Garden City BID saw value *in "smarter town centre management using real-time data (e.g., footfall, parking usage)"* to shape decisions and enhance the visitor experience.

Inward Investment and Wider Strategic Planning

In North Herts, there was optimism about *"creatively"* regenerating towns and unlocking *"local regeneration opportunities."* In Watford, stakeholders said the town's *"proximity to London"* meant cross-border growth and population trends must be actively considered.

Other Opportunities Noted

- **Expanded Reach and Growth for the Voluntary Sector**
- **Enhanced Community Empowerment and Local Models**

Analysis

Stakeholders identified a range of opportunities arising from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). These were generally pragmatic and focused on service design, delivery, prevention instead of reaction and system integration, rather than structural reform alone. The most consistently cited opportunity was the chance to streamline services, reduce duplication, and create more coherent referral and casework pathways. It was noted that these benefits would only be realised through thoughtful implementation and sustained local partnership. Central among the opportunities was the potential to streamline services and integrate delivery across housing, health, and social care, particularly for residents with complex or overlapping needs.

Looking ahead, some stakeholders saw the reorganisation as a catalyst for economic renewal and local empowerment. While some views were cautious, there was an aspiration that if reorganisation is shaped well, it could create a more connected, responsive and forward-looking local government for Hertfordshire.

Q6. What innovations or changes would you like to see in how services are delivered?

Stakeholders proposed a wide range of innovations, often focused on digital transformation, co-location, community involvement, and streamlined access. The voluntary sector made the most detailed contributions.

Digital Access and Integrated Systems

Digital transformation was again a strong theme across stakeholder input. Community Action Dacorum proposed *"shared service platforms"* and *"online social meeting opportunities."* *"Streamlining of portals for residents to use"* was also noted at a North Herts roundtable, with a comment that the current system is *"too many and probably confusing."* At a Welwyn panel, participants saw potential in *"a single, user-friendly digital platform"* to support housing and council services. Watford stakeholders suggested *"greater use of digital tools and real-time data,"* while one St Albans respondent said changes could *"release the investment needed"* to deliver better digital services at scale.

Co-location and Shared Delivery Hubs

Some stakeholders backed physically aligning services and systems to improve delivery. DENS advocated for *"shared data protocols and systems,"* citing INFORM CRM from the homelessness sector. A North Herts roundtable supported aligning *"front and back end of services,"* currently split across tiers. In East Herts, co-location was suggested for benefits systems, noting that *"revs and bens being in one place will be more accessible."*

Simplification and Standardisation

Several stakeholders sought clarity and consistency in the system. A Three Rivers stakeholder from the MoD said they wanted *"a simpler system – confusing if you don't work in the council."* At an HCC education roundtable, it was noted that *"working with fewer councils would be more straightforward."* At the HCC Health roundtable, a stakeholder called for *"more consistency and standardisation across housing, employment and community assets such as leisure services."*

Analysis

Stakeholders proposed a wide-ranging and at times detailed set of innovations they would like to see in future service delivery, regardless of governance structure. Stakeholders saw the proposed reorganisation as a chance to introduce more integrated, responsive, and community-led models of delivery. Across the board, there was interest in using digital innovation to streamline access and unlock real-time coordination between services. Some envisioned a unified *"front door"* model, underpinned by shared platforms and data protocols that reduce duplication and support proactive outreach. This was particularly important to voluntary organisations working with vulnerable residents.

Q7. What concerns or risks do you see with Local Government Reorganisation?

Concerns covered loss of local accountability, disruption to services and financial strain.

Loss of Local Accountability and Knowledge

Some stakeholders stated that reorganisation could erode local insight and relationships. B3Living questioned whether the *"loss of personal relationships and hyper-local knowledge"* would reduce service effectiveness. Everyone Active in Watford echoed this, warning of the *"loss of local inputs",* and Watford BID raised fears that local distinctiveness might be diluted as decision-making becomes *"more centralised or less connected."* A Dacorum Public Service stakeholder similarly expressed concern that larger structures might result in *"risk of losing local community connection and decision-making as structures become larger and more distant."*

Service Disruption During Transition

Transition periods were seen as a risk. A stakeholder from LSH Investment Management warned of a *"pause in decision making/investment"* during restructuring and stakeholders in

North Herts warned against a *"period of inertia."* Sunnyside Rural Trust stressed the danger of *"potential disruption to adult social care services… which could negatively affect vulnerable people."* Citizens Advice services, including from St Albans and Broxbourne likewise cautioned that *"reorganisation demands significant officer time for governance, IT integration and policy harmonisation, diverting capacity away from casework."*

Financial Strain and Unexpected Costs

Some stakeholders questioned whether LGR would deliver long-term savings. A Dacorum stakeholder said, *"promised savings… may be short-lived,"* and expressed concern that there could be *"rapidly increasing council tax bills"* for town councils. Three Rivers stakeholders worried that the focus would shift *"on cost savings and not on services."* Broxbourne stakeholder B3Living questioned whether savings would *"be fed back into the new authorities or… reduced by the government."*

Analysis

Stakeholders raised concerns about reorganisation, with common themes including the potential loss of local insight, disruption to services during transition and financial uncertainty. Many stressed the importance of preserving local insight and relationships, noting that these could be harder to maintain within larger structures. The transition period was seen as a time of potential disruption, with risks of paused investment, diverted officer capacity, and short-term challenges for services such as adult social care. While not seen as insurmountable, these issues were flagged as areas requiring clear planning and coordination.

There were also questions around whether financial savings would be realised in practice, with concerns that cost reductions could come at the expense of service quality or lead to higher pressures on town and parish councils. Looking ahead, many stressed the need to support collaboration across any new boundaries, with early relationship-building and coordination seen as key to maintaining effective local services.

Q8. Do you have a specific recommendation with regards to reorganisation?

Stakeholders were invited to make specific recommendations in relation to Hertfordshire's proposed Local Government Reorganisation. While plenty of respondents declined to express a view, others provided direct preferences between the potential models for reorganisation, including two-unitary, three-unitary, or four-unitary structures, or reflected on specific design and delivery principles that any model should accommodate.

Resident Engagement Data

1. Are you responding as a

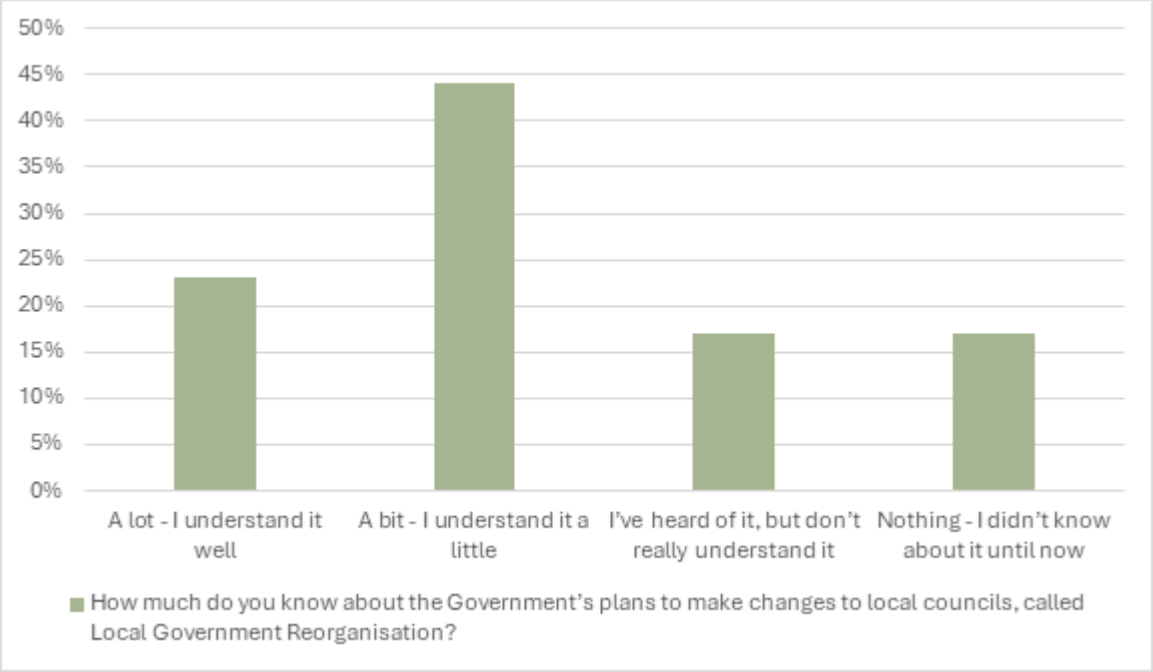
Responding as	Respondents (By number)	Respondents (By percentage)
Resident in Hertfordshire	6342	89%
Member of staff for district, borough or county council within Hertfordshire	357	5%
Councillor (District/Borough)	57	>1%
Member of staff for a town or parish council within Hertfordshire	53	>1%
Charity	53	>1%
Councillor (Parish)	40	>1%
Community group	29	>1%
Voluntary organisation	24	>1%
Other public body	221	>1%
Micro business (0–9 employees)	20	>1%
Councillor (Town)	17	>1%
Small business (10–49 employees)	13	>1%
Councillor (County)	11	>1%
Large business (250+ employees)	8	>1%
Other	93	1%

2. Which council area do you live in?

council area of respondent	Respondents (By number)	Respondents (By percentage)
Broxbourne Borough Council	353	5%
Dacorum Borough Council	846	12%

East Hertfordshire District Council	680	10%
Hertsmere Borough Council	378	5%
North Herts District Council	691	10%
St Albans City and District Council	1073	15%
Stevenage Borough Council	388	5%
Three Rivers District Council	810	11%
Watford Borough Council	727	10%
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council	1048	15%
I live outside Hertfordshire – (Please specify your relationship to Hertfordshire, if you have a role/business within Hertfordshire please note in which council area this resides)	159	2%

3. How much do you know about the Government's plans to make changes to local councils, called Local Government Reorganisation?



Results: 23% (1558): A lot – I understand it well, 44% (3067): A bit – I understand it a little, 17% (1148): I've heard of it, but don't really understand it, 17% (1141): Nothing – I didn't know about it until now

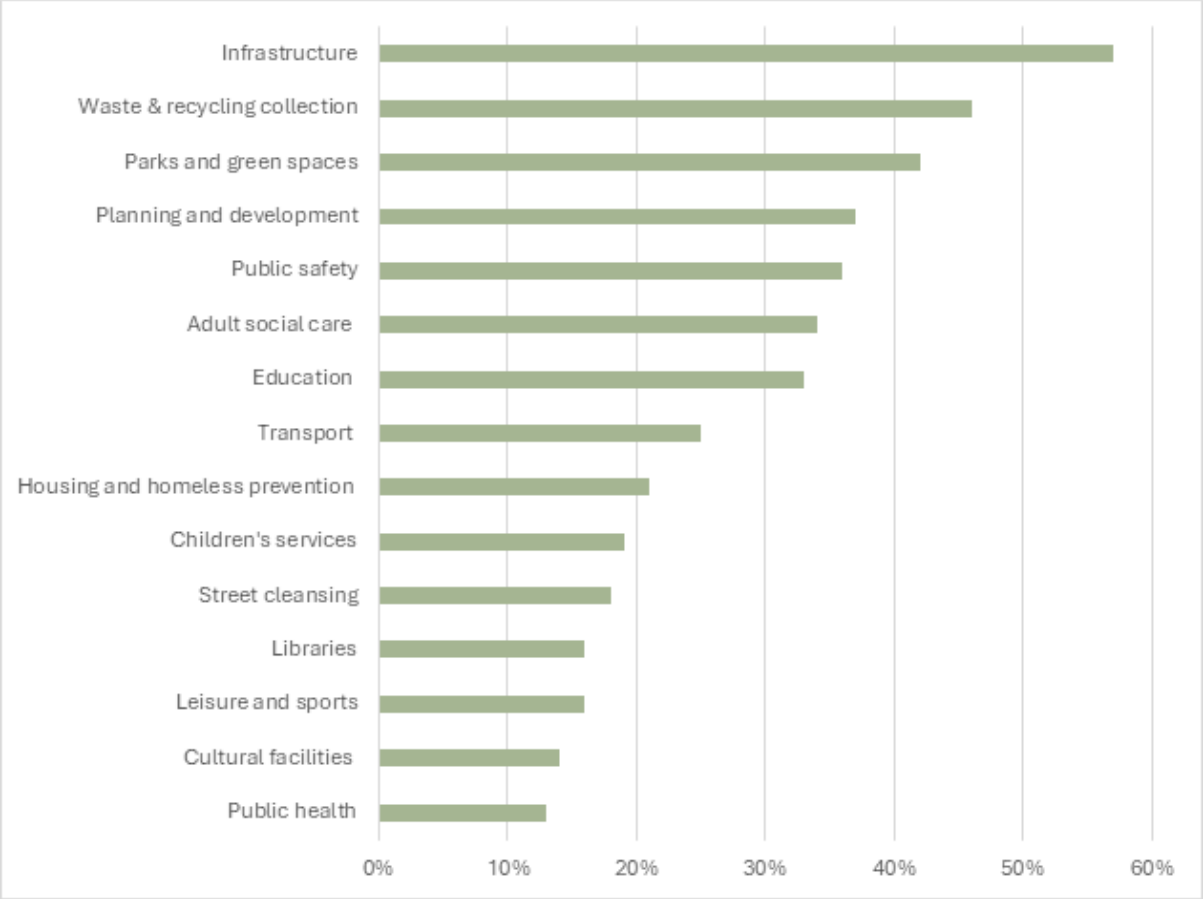
Most Hertfordshire residents came into the survey with at least some awareness of the Government's Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) plans, but detailed understanding was limited. When asked about their knowledge of these proposals, a large majority had heard of them, though many admitted they didn't grasp the specifics. In the survey, over four in five participants (around 83%) indicated they had heard about LGR in some form. This suggests that general publicity or word-of-mouth about the reorganisation had reached a broad number of respondents, with the caveat that those answering the survey are much more likely to have been informed, especially if they came to the survey on their own accord.

However, familiarity did not always equate to understanding. In fact, only about 23% felt they knew "a lot" about the plans, saying they understood LGR well. A further group, roughly 44%, said they knew "a bit" and understood it a little. This was the largest group, indicating that while most people knew of LGR, their knowledge was still limited. They might have been aware that some kind of council changes were being discussed but not the details of the options or implications. Given that submissions on specific plans are yet to take place, this is unsurprising; however, 67% having at least some knowledge of LGR shows a decent awareness across respondents.

Meanwhile, a significant minority confessed to very low awareness. Approximately 17% of respondents answered "Nothing – I didn't know about it until now." An additional group of around 17% had only heard of it and "don't really understand it." Taken together, roughly a third of respondents had little to no prior knowledge of LGR before engaging with the survey. This does show a success in the survey reaching those who were not previously engaged by promoting it through various channels.

It's worth noting that those responding as council staff had a notably higher knowledge base for LGR in Hertfordshire, as might be expected, with just 1% of staff members saying they didn't know anything about it and 95% saying they had at least some understanding of LGR, showing a good level of staff engagement.

4. Which of these services are most important to you?



Results: 57% (3735): Infrastructure (e.g. local road repairs, pavement/footpath repairs, streetlights), 46% (2970): Waste and recycling collections, 42%(2765) Parks and green spaces, 37% (2433): Planning and development (e.g. planning applications, planning enforcement, building control/safety, protecting old buildings, local development plans), 36% (2378): Public safety (e.g. Fire and rescue, Community Safety, Neighbourhoods), 34% (2217): Adult social care (e.g. support for older people, adults with physical or learning disabilities, mental health needs, or long-term conditions; residential care; home care; supported living), 33% (2179): Education (e.g. school admissions, transport, special educational need provision, 25% (1611): Transport (e.g. buses), 21% (1391): Housing and homeless prevention (e.g. affordable/social housing), 19% (1246): Children's services (e.g. looked-after children, those with special educational needs or disability, fostering or adoption), 18% (1147): Street cleansing, 16% (1072): Leisure and sports (e.g. leisure centres), 16% (1062): Libraries, 14% (884): Cultural facilities (e.g. theatres, museums), 13% (875): Public health (e.g. drug or alcohol dependency support, sexual health services, health improvement programmes)

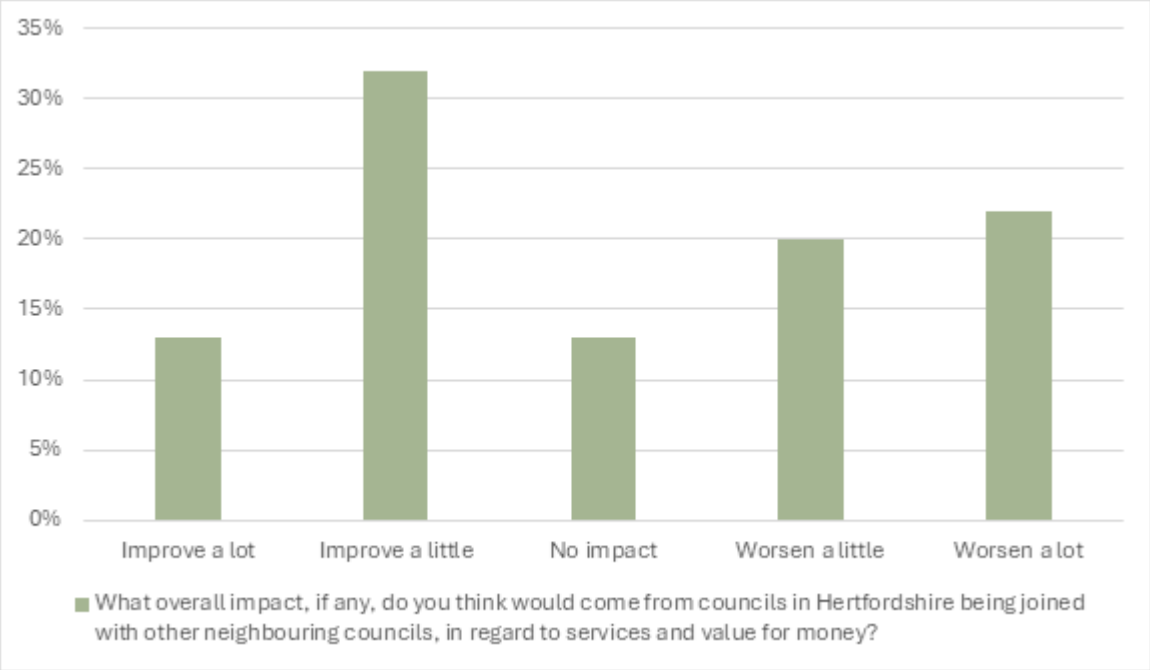
When residents were asked to select *which, local services are most important to them*, several clear priorities emerged. The survey allowed people to pick up to five services from a list covering the broad range of council responsibilities. The results show that residents gravitate toward the fundamental, day-to-day services that affect all communities. Maintaining local infrastructure and cleanliness, and core people-focused services, topped the list of priorities.

Infrastructure (e.g. local road repairs, pavement/footpath repairs, streetlights) was the most frequently selected service, with 57% of respondents selecting this. Alongside this, public transport (such as bus services) also featured, though slightly less prominently, with 25% of respondents selecting it. This suggests that while residents value transport, they placed even more weight on the physical upkeep of roads and highways that councils manage. Comments in the consultation echoed this emphasis: numerous respondents mentioned fixing roads as a key improvement they want to see, underscoring infrastructure's top-tier importance.

Another top service priority was waste collection and recycling. “Waste and recycling collections” was one of the most commonly chosen options by residents, selected by 46%. This reflects that refuse collection is a universal service everyone relies on weekly. People tend to notice immediately if bins aren’t collected or if recycling services change, so it makes sense that this service was front-of-mind. In open-text feedback, residents frequently brought up waste services. The high ranking of waste management in the survey results confirms that residents view this as essential to their quality of life and the image of their neighbourhoods.

It’s also worth noting which services were less commonly selected as top tier. More specialised services, for example public health and leisure facilities, were chosen by fewer respondents. This doesn’t mean they’re unimportant, but in a prioritisation exercise, average residents likely view them as more peripheral to their daily lives. Leisure and cultural facilities (parks, libraries, museums, sports centres) received a moderate level of interest. Many did pick parks and open spaces as important, ranking third at 42%, but these tended to rank just below the critical infrastructure and care services. Various comments from people who directly engaged with more specialised services did show that for those who use them they do remain important functions of local government in Hertfordshire, for example culture and leisure facilities attracted a number of mentions in open text answers.

5. What overall impact, if any, do you think would come from councils in Hertfordshire being joined with other neighbouring councils, in regard to services and value for money?



Results: 13% (670): Improve a lot, 32% (1723): Improve a little, 13% (684): No impact, 20% (1074): Worsen a little, 22% (1153): Worsen a lot

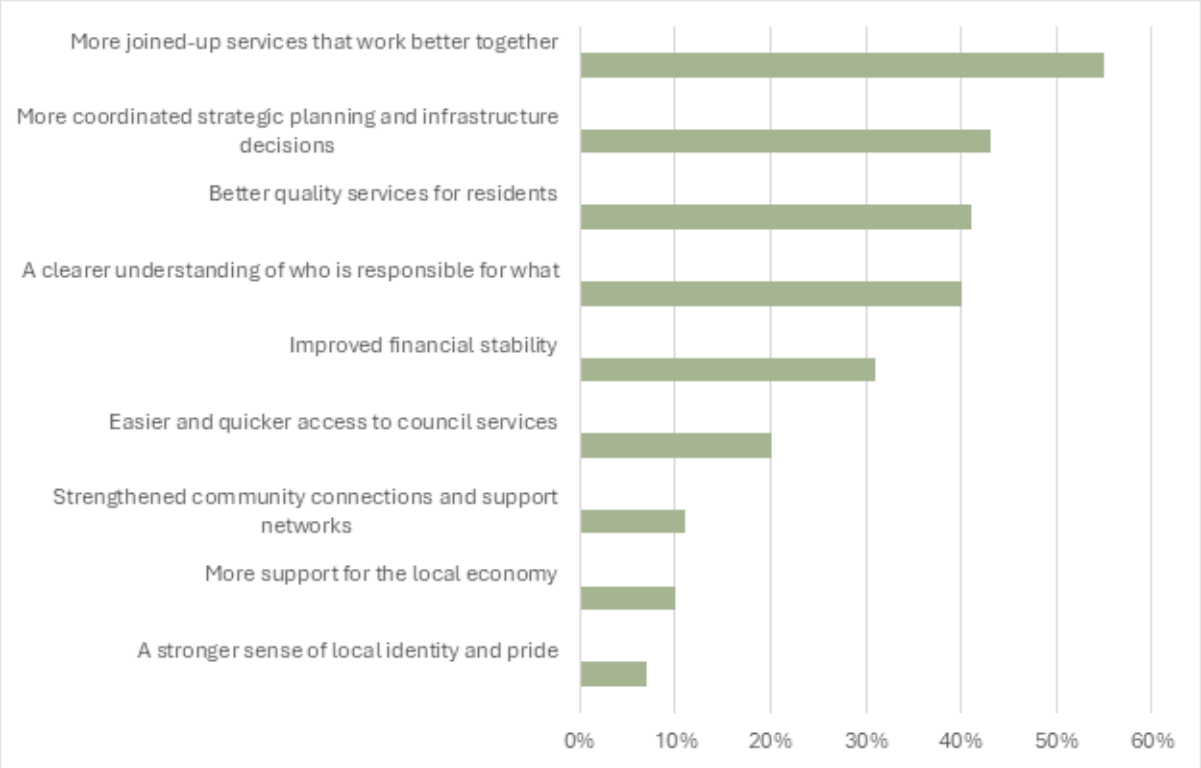
Opinion is divided on the likely overall impact of joining Hertfordshire’s councils together, especially regarding service outcomes and value for money. When residents were asked whether merging councils would improve or worsen services and value, responses spanned the spectrum. However, the largest single group was cautiously optimistic, and a plurality anticipated an improvement, which is a positive early sign for views on LGR in Hertfordshire. At the same time, a substantial portion feared a negative impact. This split viewpoint underscores the community’s uncertainty and the balance of hope vs. concern regarding reorganisation.

In quantitative terms, about 45% of respondents expected some level of improvement in services and value for money if councils were merged. Within this, more people leaned to mild optimism rather than dramatic gains – the most common answer was “Improve a little.” Residents choosing this option seem to think there would be efficiencies or service enhancements, but not major improvements. On the other side, roughly 42% of respondents anticipated a negative impact on services and value for money. The concerns driving these views mirror the earlier question on worries: people are concerned about bureaucratic upheaval, loss of local focus, and transitional pains leading to service decline.

Meanwhile, about **1 in 10 residents predicted no impact**. These individuals presumably feel that services might continue at status quo levels, and any financial efficiencies could balance out against implementation costs, resulting in a net neutral effect.

Overall, these results, with a plurality expecting improvements, show cautious optimism, which is a hopeful outcome in the current political climate where residents can lean to being sceptical or dismissive.

6. What potential benefits of this reorganisation would be most important to you? Please select your top three priorities?



Results: 55%(2721): More joined up services that work better together, 43%(2120): More coordinated strategic planning and infrastructure decisions, 41%(2013): Better quality services for residents, 40%(1976): A clearer understanding of who is responsible for what, 31%(1536): Improved financial stability, 20%(996): Easier and quicker access to council services, 11%(528): Strengthened community connections and support networks, 10%(489): More support for the local economy, 7%(365): A stronger sense of local identity and pride

When asked to select the most important potential benefits of LGR, residents’ choices shed light on what they value most in the prospect of change. The survey invited people to pick their top three potential benefits from a list, and the pattern of responses reveals a clear emphasis on practical improvements for residents and communities. In particular, benefits related to service quality, coordinated planning, and financial prudence ranked highest, alongside a desire for clearer governance.

The top priority benefit, chosen by a 55% of respondents, was the prospect of “More joined up services that work better together.” Residents appreciate that a unitary council could coordinate services seamlessly. This was reflected also in the second most chosen priority “More coordinated strategic planning and infrastructure decisions.” The idea that housing, planning, and social services could collaborate more easily under one roof, or waste collection and street cleaning could be managed in tandem, was seen as a priority for residents. The importance of “joined up” working reflects frustrations with the current siloed system. By selecting these as the top potential benefits, people are saying they value integration and coordination, they hope to see less fragmentation leading to smoother service delivery.

Better quality services for residents was also a priority for 41% of residents. This echoes the qualitative feedback: many people will judge the reform on whether day to day services like road maintenance, waste collection, social care, etc. actually get better. The importance of service quality came through strongly; it was a principal yardstick for many respondents when envisioning benefits.

Another major potential benefit identified by 40% of respondents was “a clearer understanding of who is responsible for what.” This was one of the most popular picks on the list and explicitly mentioned in a number of comments which stated this could both help residents and improve accountability. “Improved financial stability” was listed by 31% of respondents with many referencing efficient use of funds in comments as well as economies of scale and reduced duplication.

Benefits related to community and local identity were further down the priority list. “A stronger sense of local identity and pride” was selected by 7% of respondents, and “strengthened community connections and support networks” being selected by 11%, suggesting a focus by respondents on practical improvements on service delivery, coordination and efficiency in the LGR process.

7. What opportunities and improvements would you like to see come from Local Government Reorganisation?

This question offered respondents the opportunity to use an open text box to encourage respondents, even if sceptical of LGR, to say what they would want to see from the upcoming reorganisation. Residents offered a wide range of aspirations for how reorganising local government might improve public services and governance in Hertfordshire. Feedback to this question revealed several key themes covering both aspirations for tangible benefits in day-to-day services as well as broader structural gains. Many respondents hoped reorganisation would lead to more efficient delivery of services, elimination of duplication, and better value for money. Others highlighted the chance to simplify the system, making councils easier to understand and access, while still preserving local identity and accountability under any new structure. The following analysis explores these themes in turn, using respondents’ own words to illustrate their expectations.

Most common words from answers to above question

Improved Service Delivery and Quality

A prominent theme was the expectation that services would be better integrated and improved under a new unitary system. Residents envisage councils working in a more joined up way, ending the current fragmentation of responsibilities. The idea of reducing the postcode lottery came up: by reorganising councils, residents believe service standards could be made more consistent across the county. One St Albans resident said they hoped for *"Better and more integrated services being available to local communities - less of a postcode lottery for services,"* likewise a Three Rivers resident said they wanted *"Aligned services, without 'postcode lottery' imbalances"* and a Dacorum resident said they wanted *"Less postcode lottery"* but caveated that they don't expect *"much to take effect until 3+ years post reorganisation as it will take time for the new structure to bed in and deliver services to a wider audience."*

This demonstrated a hope shown by various respondents that a streamlined council structure could direct resources to enhance service quality, with larger unitary authorities better able to coordinate improvements across multiple areas. In this line of thinking, some also felt that services could become more accessible, for instance, by pooling resources; new councils might offer a single point of contact for various services. Overall, residents' comments show optimism that reorganisation could *"enhance community services due to larger budgets – even if you have to travel further to access them"*, as one St Albans resident noted, believing bigger councils could deliver a more consistent level of services county-wide. A number of respondents used the word 'equity' to describe what they hope can be done on service delivery across Hertfordshire, like East Herts resident who envisioned *"Greater equity of services across the county."* Naturally, some felt they might be on the other side of a levelling of service delivery, like a St Albans resident who opposed LGR because they believed *"taxes raised locally should only be spent locally. Not redistributed."*

A Watford resident who formerly worked at HCC said success would look like *"financial efficiency to avoid so much of our taxes are spent on providing services by the current 10 local councils repetitively. including by expensive 3rd party providers with less than effective contract management"*. By simplifying the structure, residents hoped they would no longer be bounced between county and district authorities when seeking help.

Simplification, Accountability and Communication

Another clear opportunity in respondents' eyes is the simplification of local government. People welcomed the prospect of a more straightforward system replacing the current two-tier (county/district) arrangement, which some described as confusing or inefficient. A common refrain was that having fewer councils could eliminate redundant bureaucracy. One Broxbourne resident advocated to *"eliminate duplication to cut waste to improve efficiency*." This desire to remove overlapping functions and departments was echoed across few submissions that see the merger of councils as a chance to streamline back-office operations and administration. In turn, they expect this to make the council easier to deal with. As a Three Rivers resident in the survey said, *"clarity that one council is responsible for everything rather than, as now, buck-passing between tiers."* This was reflected in a number of respondents' comments who hoped for a *"less confusing structure"* (Welwyn Hatfield resident), *"lines of responsibility would be less confusing and more straightforward making access to services easier and more efficient"* (Dacorum resident), *"At present, it can be confusing for people to know whether [HCC] or their local district/borough council is responsible for certain services. Under a unitary model, I would hope to see clearer accountability and more resources made available to different departments across the council, leading to more efficient and effective service delivery."* (Broxbourne resident).

In line with a better understanding of responsibilities in local government, respondents mentioned improved accountability as a hoped-for outcome. Some are frustrated by the diffusion of responsibility in the two-tier system, described by many respondents as *"passing the buck"* between county and boroughs/districts. Reorganisation is seen as a chance to establish clear lines of accountability. This came through in numerous comments, like a Hertsmere resident who called for *"Clearer accountability – one council responsible for all services, so residents know who to contact."* This clarity of responsibility is hoped to not only reduce confusion but also to drive better performance: if one authority can be held to account for outcomes, it has stronger incentives to deliver. One Stevenage resident termed this as an opportunity for *"One council responsible for everything so no arguments on who's responsible for what."* This shows a desire for transparency and straightforward governance. In addition, a few respondents connected accountability with better communication, one Watford resident hoping that LGR *"will make communication…better."* Communication was mentioned in various contexts:

- **Communication from local government to residents** (*"Improved listening to, consultation with, and communications with individual residents and communities by the Unitary Authorities."* - St Albans resident)
- **More uniform messaging across authorities** *("More joined up communication generally"* - Watford resident)
- **Communication between councils** ("*Better communication and access between all services and Councils"* - Three Rivers resident)
- **Communication between the Unitary Authorities and Town and Parish councils** (*"better communication with Parish and Town councils perhaps through Neighbourhood Committees*" - Three Rivers resident)

Financial Efficiency and Value for Money

Financial improvements were at the forefront of some residents' minds. A large number of respondents hope that reorganisation will produce cost savings and better value for money in local government. The prospect of reducing overheads by combining councils was frequently mentioned. *"Significant savings over time. More joined up services for residents,"* one Dacorum resident commented, linking financial efficiency with service integration. Others spoke in terms of cutting waste: by merging structures, councils could spend less on management and administration, freeing up funds for frontline services or allowing a reduction in council tax. Indeed, lower council tax was an improvement some unsurprisingly, wished to see. A number of respondents explicitly wrote that they hoped for their council tax bill to decrease if duplication is eliminated. *"a big cost saving that is then passed on to*

residents as a reduction of council taxes" (Hertsmere resident) *"Efficiency in delivery of services and reduced Council taxes"* (Stevenage resident) *"Reduced council taxes"* (North Herts resident).

Many respondents raised taxes in the context of them being spent more efficiently rather than being decreased, or both in tandem, showing that for many, taxes and services were tied together; and it isn't just a case of wanting less taxes or less tax increases, but wanting to see their money used more effectively. *"A lowering of council taxes, and a more efficient use of funds"* (Dacorum resident) *"Better use of council taxes and avoid…increasing it. Speedy delivery of projects and streamline decision making and approval processes."* (Watford resident), *"Better management of the council taxes collected."* (St Albans resident). Some respondents explicitly mentioned reducing bureaucracy: *"A reduction in bureaucracy and better-quality services for residents"* was the hope of one St Albans respondent, tying streamlined governance to service outcomes.

Strategic Planning and County-Wide Coordination

Many residents said one benefit that should be aimed for would be 'joined up' service, sometimes naming specific services they want to see a more collaborative approach to. Many comments named infrastructure, often in tandem with other public services, and notably transport, as an area they would like to see LGR bring about joined up planning: *"More joined up working i.e. between housing and care services"* (staff member in Local government from Stevenage), *"More joined up services with better communication so things run smoother"* (Watford resident*), "more joined up thinking between departments i.e. councils and highways"* (North Herts resident), *"Better joined up services and better transport links throughout Hertfordshire"* (Watford resident), *"Better joined up infrastructure planning and new developments"*(Welwyn Hatfield resident), *"More joined up services i.e. recycling and waste"* (Broxbourne resident). *"More joined up working with social services and trading standards for the benefit of services and residents"* (local Government staff member*) "Joined up thinking, pooled resources and talent. Joined up ideas on infrastructure, planning and development for housing and town planning development."* (North Herts resident) *"Better joined up services. and fix the infrastructure."* (Welwyn Hatfield resident), *"More joined up planning for housing, health services and the infrastructure to support this, schools, roads, doctors etc"* (Hertsmere resident), *"unitised management of roads (parking, highways, transport all joined up)"* (St Albans resident). *"More joined up planning for large housing and infrastructure. Make sure there are enough Transport staff."* (Local government staff member from Dacorum). *"More joined up working with the highways and planning teams in the planning application process."* (Three Rivers resident).

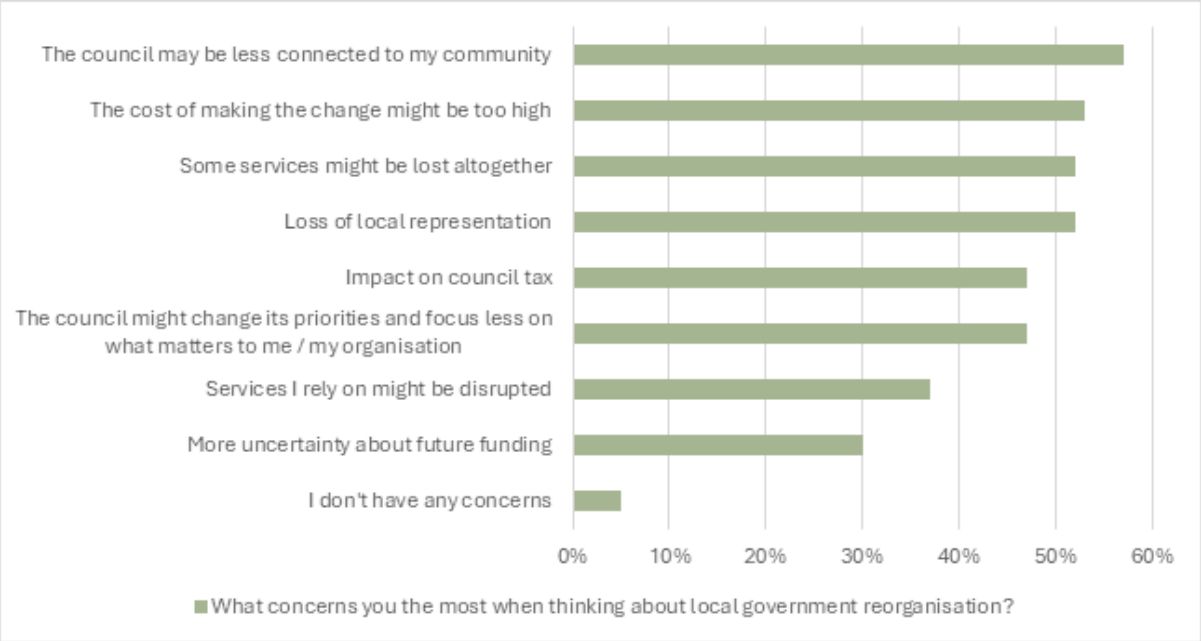
In the above comments, respondents also looked at the reorganisation as a chance to improve long-term planning and coordination across the whole of Hertfordshire. In the current system, planning for infrastructure, housing, transport and other cross-boundary issues can be seen to be fragmented among different councils. Residents see value in having larger authorities that cover wider areas, believing this would enable *"More coordinated strategic planning"* (Dacorum resident). This reflects an expectation that big challenges, from road networks and public transport to housing development and environmental management, could be addressed more effectively when dealt with at a larger geographic scale. The feedback included comments about consistency in planning and policy: with fewer councils, policies could be aligned so that neighbouring communities work toward common goals instead of potentially pulling in different directions. A resident from Watford (in a different question) argued that planning at a broader scale is essential to avoid *"fragmented or siloed approaches."*

Community Identity and Local Representation

Some residents also stressed that reorganisation must respect community identities and maintain local representation, and some saw opportunities for improvement on this front as well. Some said the new councils should be designed around natural communities and be

able to work in *"functional areas,"* (North Herts resident) and wanting the aim to be to foster *"A strong sense of local identity and pride"* (Three Rivers resident). On the other hand, some respondents were concerned about losing the very local touch they value; hence, they noted that systems should be put in place to preserve local input, for example on Dacorum resident who opposed LGR as they didn't want to lose *"local identity."* Some suggested empowering or creating more town and parish councils more, under the new structure, to ensure grassroots voices are heard – effectively using reorganisation to improve the democratic link to communities. A Dacorum resident called for *"Devolution of genuinely local low level services to town & parish level,"* a sentiment reflected in a few comments; *"Formation of Parish Council for St Albans"* (St Albans resident), *"Parking is very much a local issue and should be devolved to the town/parish council level"* (St Albans resident), *"Parish councils having broader responsibility"* (Hertsmere resident), *"Better funding for each parish and town councils to administer. More power to Parish and town councils for planning decisions"* (East Herts Town Councillor), *"More power and funding devolved to local parish councils*" (Three Rivers resident), *"better communication with town and parish councils who know how our local residents feel"* (East Herts Parish Councillor), *"devolution of more services to the lower tier (town/parish councils) making them easier to access"* (St Albans resident).

8. What concerns you the most when thinking about Local Government Reorganisation?



Results: 57% (2855): The council may be less connected to my community, 53% (2671): The cost of making the change might be too high, 52% (2600): Some services might be lost altogether, 52% (2595): Loss of local representation, 47% (2344): Impact on council tax, 47% (2369): The council might change its priorities and focus less on what matters to me / my organisation, 37% (1829): Services I rely on might be disrupted, 30% (1486): More uncertainty about future funding, 5% (245): I don't have any concerns

When asked to choose their top concern, respondents spread their concerns somewhat evenly across the given options, although concern about council being less connected to communities (57%) was the most selected concern, with loss of local representation (52%) and that council might change its priorities and focus less on what matters to the respondent (47%) also being a notable concern. Currently, with district and borough councils, residents have councillors who focus on relatively small communities. If those councils are merged into large unitary authorities, people worry that their town or village might have fewer councillors or be a smaller fish in a bigger pond.

A concern registered by the majority (53%) of respondents was also the financial cost of implementing the change. People are concerned that millions could be spent on merging councils would ultimately come out of taxpayers' pockets without commensurate benefit. In other words, residents fear wasting money on the process itself. This concern often came paired with scepticism about the promised savings. This was also evident in the 47% who were concerned of the impact on council tax.

Loss (52%) and disruption (37%) to services were registered as concerns, although it should be noted people were more concerned over losing services rather than the disruption of services. Residents fear that in the process of merging councils, with new structures, staff changes, essential services might falter or disappear, even if temporarily. For example, one Dacorum resident in a free-text comment voiced anxiety that a complicated reorganisation will mean *"There will be a huge cost to implement the reorganisation and I don't think any one of the benefits above is more important than the others that would justify the cost and disruption."*

It's notable that only a small minority, around 5%, said *"I don't have any concerns"* about reorganisation. The vast majority do have at least one significant concern, underlining that while people see opportunities, and the plurality of respondent expect improvements, they are also quite apprehensive and do expect some cost, temporary or permanent, to reorganisation.

9. What is your gender?

Gender	Male	Female	Prefer not to say	Prefer to self-describe
Respondents (By number)	2146	2406	252	20
Respondents (By percentage)	44%	50%	5%	0%

10. What is your age group?

Age Group	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Prefer not to say
Respondents (By number)	12	108	377	695	920	1059	959	554	246
Respondents (By percentage)	0%	2%	8%	14%	19%	21%	19%	11%	5%

11. What is your ethnic group?

Ethnic group	Asian or Asian British	Black, African, Caribbean or Black British	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	White (English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, or British)	White (Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Roma, or other White group)	Other ethnic group	Prefer not to say
Respondents (By number)	135	58	79	3807	245	92	483
Respondents (By percentage)	3%	1%	2%	78%	5%	2%	10%