

land use



Hertfordshire is a popular place to live. Its combination of small and medium sized towns, abundance of countryside and good transport links ensure a high quality of life. However there are conflicting pressures on land use, particularly for housing and associated infrastructure such as roads, balanced against a desire to protect the natural environment. The County's main towns for this analysis are those with a population of 7,000 or more. They are illustrated on the map and currently account for 13% of land area.

Indicator LU1 – Land used for urban activities

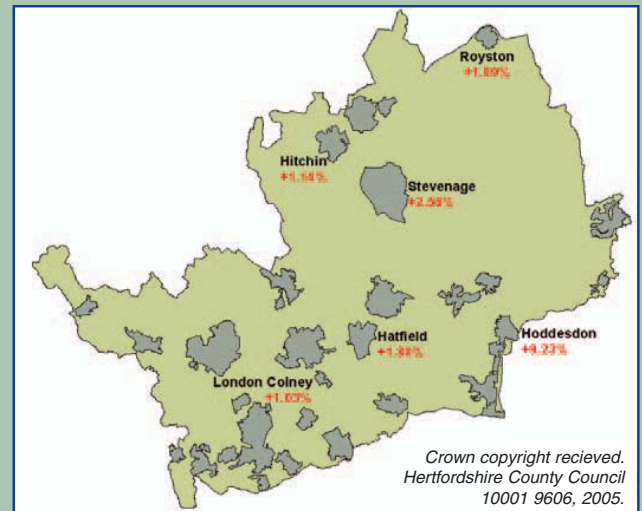
The map shows land use change to urban activities between April 2003 and the end of March 2004. Land use change is recorded when development is started, in this case before 1st April 2004. This period has seen a total of 17.65 hectares, almost the same as in the previous period. Once again development continues to be mostly residential.

Development to provide housing and community facilities is in its later phases both at North East Stevenage (1.66 hectares) and Melbourn Road Royston (1.89 hectares). Other changes include 1.8 hectares of factory sports ground developed for 90 dwellings on the edge of Hatfield. At Napsbury Hospital in London Colney, conversion accounts for 1.03 hectares of change. However the largest single change is 9.23 hectares on the northern extent of Hoddesdon. This involves the MAFF agricultural research facility, now being redeveloped for 327 houses.

Land use change to urban activities 2003 – 2004

Town	Change 2003-4 (Ha)	% Change 2003-04	Urban Area 2004 (Ha)
Hatfield	1.80	0.23%	801.57
Hitchin	1.14	0.14%	816.64
Hoddesdon	9.23	1.83%	513.57
London Colney	1.03	0.62%	165.39
Royston	1.89	0.47%	399.37
Stevenage	2.56	0.11%	2346.86
COUNTY	17.65	0.08%	21275.50

Indicator LU2 – Number of households



The County Council estimates there are about 424,000 households in Hertfordshire in 2004 and that a trend of 1% increase per annum is likely to continue. The Government (ODPM) 1996-based household projections suggest that between 1996 and 2021 there will be a growth of about 89,000 households in Hertfordshire, of which 70% are expected to be single person households.

Indicator LU3 – Residential development on previously developed land

The Government is committed to maximising the re-use of previously developed land (PDL) in order to promote urban regeneration and to minimise the amount of greenfield land being used for development. The national target requires that 60% of housing should be provided on PDL and through the conversion of existing buildings by 2008. Between April 2003 and the end of March 2004, nearly 82% of new homes in Hertfordshire were built on PDL. At the end of the same period, 65% of the new homes planned are to be built on PDL.

The planning system

In September 2004, the Government initiated reform of the UK planning system. As a result, strategic planning for Hertfordshire is no longer undertaken by Hertfordshire County Council but by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) in the preparation of the East of England Plan. This Plan, which is currently at a draft stage, covers

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Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. It contains policies and proposals for the Region covering topics such as housing, employment, roads, minerals, waste, energy and environmental protection.

Amongst other matters, the draft East of England Plan contains proposals for 79,600 dwellings in

Hertfordshire to be provided within the period 2001-2021. This represents an increase of 13,700 dwellings above rates currently planned for in Hertfordshire. It also includes proposals for major growth at Stevenage and within East Hertfordshire District to accommodate growth of Harlow. These proposals reflect Government aspirations for greater development within one of four growth areas it has identified within Southeast England – the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough Growth Area. There is also a possibility that Hertfordshire may need to provide for additional housing development above its proposed 79,600 dwellings to accommodate the expansion of Luton under proposals within another of the Government's growth areas – the Milton Keynes-South Midlands Growth Area.

If the Government confirms these proposals, Hertfordshire is likely to experience much higher rates of house building and associated infrastructure development in the coming years, all of which will have environmental consequences.