



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Hertfordshire

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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

CPRE Hertfordshire comments on the Dacorum Local Plan to 2045 : Scoping Consultation Sept 2026

Q. 1 Please select your top 5 priorities, based on what you would most like the Local Plan to help achieve.

CPRE Hertfordshire selected (in survey order):

- Making sure development is supported by the infrastructure it needs
- Creating well-designed attractive and distinctive places
- Meeting local housing needs – including a range of homes and affordable housing
- Protecting our heritage, landscapes and countryside
- Protecting and enhancing nature and wildlife

Comment:

All 12 of the topics listed are key elements of the Local Plan and must be included regardless of this tick box exercise. The topics should include specific reference to protecting the Green Belt and chalk streams.

Q. 2 Tell us anything that you think we have missed.

CPRE Hertfordshire notes the list of topics in the Baseline Technical Note which is a standard but incomplete listing of subjects relating to future development for a Local Plan which should be a comprehensive planning exercise covering all the factors and issues affecting future development in the Borough.

The baseline information indicates the present situation with regard to the major land uses of housing, employment and infrastructure but omits any significant treatment of the non built-up major land uses which include agriculture, leisure and amenity space forming the large majority of the Borough area. "Environmental assets and patterns" notes the presence of the Chilterns National Landscape including the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation covering over one third of the Borough and lists environmental assets without elaboration of their significance in terms of opportunities and constraints for development in the future.

“The potential future picture of Dacorum” is an entirely inadequate basis for seeking public responses with regard to future development policies and planning. Only housing is identified for future planning together with a listing of transport infrastructure related to major housing proposals which provides a completely false impression of the scope and function of a Local Plan.

It is most disappointing that the Council has failed to indicate the significance of all the characteristics which mark out Dacorum as a place in which to live and work, and to visit. A single mention is made of Green Belt with regard to Small General Employment Areas at Bourne End and Bovingdon (para 1.1.66) despite it forming 50% of the Borough’s land area.

The Green Belt is designated as protected land and there is no reference to its function and influence on development decisions, notwithstanding recent legislative changes which affect its continued existence. There is huge public concern that recent Government changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the introduction of grey belt policy are providing an existential threat to the principle of protection of open countryside and this should be reflected in the new Local Plan.

The lack of identification of the major environmental challenges comprising the amelioration of climate change, loss of biodiversity and threats to natural and built heritage are serious omissions in the baselining information. These should provide the foundations of policy formulation to ensure truly sustainable development in the right places.

Q. 3 Comments on the baselining exercise.

Following our concerns regarding the omissions as identified in response to Question 2, CPRE Hertfordshire believes that public responses could be negatively affected by the baselining information. The baselining exercise does not demonstrate a balanced treatment of the opportunities and constraints affecting development in the future as required by the National Planning Policy Framework.

A Local Plan is not prepared in a vacuum and it is a key role of political leadership to indicate its priorities and the most significant constraints and opportunities affecting future development. Without an awareness of the boundaries of what is appropriate and within the scope of a Local Plan, there is a likely risk of contributions from residents and businesses being irrelevant, leading to wasted effort and frustration with what should be a positive and useful endeavour.

The Council should indicate the scope of the Local Plan in terms of its comprehensive nature and its role in defining the principal factors affecting future development and protection of the countryside. The baselining exercise fails to provide a comprehensive framework for responses to the challenges and opportunities facing Dacorum in coming years in terms of the topics and subjects for policy-making and decision-taking.

CPRE Hertfordshire believes that primary challenges and opportunities should be concerned with protecting and valuing the countryside, nature, waterways and valued green spaces in balancing the need for economic growth and new housing.

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