# August Newsletter

As I write this there is still a week before the full North Herts District Council meets consider a draft Local Plan. This draft plan will include all associated supporting information, both from previous consultations, and the legislative and evidential background information. If the Council meeting decides to endorse this plan, it will be taken forward to Cabinet in September this year. Under the NHDC constitution, Cabinet has the ultimate responsibility for approving the final draft for submission.

The report put before Council summarises the key findings of the Preferred Options consultation and evidence studies. It discusses the implications of the plan including the 'strategic' policies (for the five largest sites) and the various targets.

## Consultation

Assuming that Cabinet approve the plan, public consultation will start in September for the statutory six-week period. Several months are required to prepare the draft plan for consultation. New software has been installed on the NHDC website to make this process easier than previous consultations.

Responses will be collated by NHDC, but for examination by the Inspector. There is no scope within the relevant legislation for the Councilto make further substantive amendments to the plan in response to therepresentations prior to submission. It is anticipated that the draft Local Plan will be submitted, together with all the relevant supporting documentation, to the Planning Inspectorate by March 2017. At some point in the summer of 2017, approximately a year from now, the public examination of the Plan will be held.

## History

This represents a continuation of work aimed towards the production of a new local plan. The current local plan dates from 1996 ('Local No. 2 with alterations') but the last time any sites were allocated for development was 1992. Work was thrown off track by the 2012 Localism Act and the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012. This resulted greater responsibilities for planning being imposed on NHDC, including, for the first time, the setting of housing targets.

## The Examination Process

If the Inspector, at the public enquiry judges the Plan to be 'sound' and legally compliant, NHDC will be permitted to adopt it. If all goes smoothly this could be as early as March 2018, twenty-two years after work was started on it. It is expected that there will be at least some representatives of 'unsuccessful' landowners at the public enquiry, whose sites have not 'made the cut' into the list of allocated sites. No doubt there will also be some objections from members of the public.

The timetable for the whole process is contained in the 'Local Development Scheme' document, dated January 2016, which is available on the website (as all documents relating to the plan and the various iterations of consultation).