

Hatfield

Herfordshire

'Mark One' New Town – Designated 20 May 1948

Hatfield was designated alongside Welwyn Garden City, having first been identified for expansion in Abercrombie's Greater London Plan. The 'twin' New Towns, separated by a thin strip of Green Belt, were developed by separate Development Corporations (run by the same personnel). Part of the reason for Hatfield's designation was to provide housing for the rapidly expanding workforce of the de Havilland Aircraft Company. Following closure of the aircraft factory in the 1990s, the site was used to develop 2,000 homes – and a campus for the University of Hertfordshire and a business park, which together replaced the jobs lost by the closure of the aircraft company. Hatfield town centre has suffered significant decline since the 1990s, which has led to high vacancy levels and a public realm in need of renewal.



Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Key facts:

- **Location:** 29 kilometres north of London, 4.8 kilometres from Welwyn Garden City.
- **2011 Census population:** 39,088 people, in 14,003 households.¹
- **Local authority:** Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
- **Local Plan status:** Welwyn Hatfield Emerging Core Strategy 2012, with saved policies from the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (adopted 2005).

New Town designation:

- **Designated:** 20 May 1948.
- **Designated area:** 948 hectares.
- **Intended population:** 25,000 (population at designation: 8,500).
- **Development Corporation:** Designated to assist the decentralisation of the population of Greater London. The masterplan aimed to create a New Town from what was a 'traffic island' – with roads and railways to St Albans and the Great North Road – and to protect the Green Belt. Development Corporation wound up 31 March 1966.

Housing, deprivation and health:

- Owner-occupation in Hatfield is much lower than the UK New Towns and UK averages. The proportion of households in social rent (30.7%) is 9% and 13% higher than the UK New Towns and UK averages, respectively. The proportion in private rent (23%) is higher than the UK average and nearly double the UK New Towns average.
- Deprivation in Hatfield is broadly in line with the English New Towns and England averages (4% more deprived in one dimension than the averages, but with a lower percentage for those deprived in two or more dimensions).
- The 2011 Census reported that the 'general health' of Hatfield residents is above the UK New Towns and UK averages: 51.7% declared themselves in 'very good' health, compared with UK New Towns and UK averages of around

47%; and 1.5% fewer than the UK average declared themselves to be in 'bad' health (3.0%). 0.9% declared themselves to be in 'very bad' health – 0.4% and 0.5% below the UK New Towns and UK averages, respectively.

Employment/economic profile:

- Hatfield is a medium-sized town and a regional transport node by virtue of its good accessibility to road, rail and bus networks. The opportunity for further improvements to inter-urban public transport has been identified.
- Hatfield is serviced by a town centre and supported by a series of large and small neighbourhood centres. The town provides a key focus for jobs and higher education, serving a catchment area beyond the Borough boundary. Shopping, community and leisure facilities serve the town's needs in the main.
- New development is proposed to encourage economic growth and investment. The business park on the former Hatfield Aerodrome site now includes several major employers, such as Everything Everywhere (formally T-Mobile), Computacenter, Eisai, Ocado, Affinity Water, and the Environment Agency.
- Within Hertfordshire LEP.

Development Corporation legacy:

- The masterplan has left a strong visual identity for the town.
- The structural integrity of the masterplan influences planning and development in the town today.

Key issues for the future:

- Regenerating the town centre and the High View neighbourhood centre.
- Dealing with changing demographics – the presence of the University of Hertfordshire has led to a loss of family homes as they are turned to houses in multiple occupation.

¹ Totals for the following wards: Hatfield West, Hatfield Central, Hatfield South, Hatfield East, Hatfield Villages

Did you know?

A concrete frieze and statue by noted 20th century sculptor William Mitchell which were originally part of the Lee Valley Water buildings in Bishop's Rise have been incorporated into a new housing development that now occupies the site.