



Datchworth

PARISH COUNCIL

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF DATCHWORTH, BULLS GREEN, BURNHAM GREEN & HOOKS CROSS

Datchworth Parish Council Briefing Note

Agenda item heading Planning – North Hertfordshire Local Plan - update.	Date 20th September, 2026 Committee/ Working Group Planning
Why The Parish Clerk circulated to all Councillors on 18th September, 2026 an email received from North Hertfordshire District Council regarding progress and detail surrounding the new North Hertfordshire Local Plan. This e-mail contained information stating that a consultation period is scheduled between 13/10/26 – 24/11/26 regarding that Councils' proposed contents of its new forthcoming local plan and the evidence base which is intended to underpin it. Informal drop-in sessions are scheduled to take place, one of which will be at Knebworth Village Hall on 19th October, 2026. Comments can be submitted to North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) with a closing date of 24th November, 2026. It will be noted that NHDC borders Datchworth Parish at a number of locations. It is important to note that the reason for this briefing note is to highlight one particular element of the evidence base which forms part of the NHDC consultation and which directly affects Datchworth village. <u>Context:</u> Both NHDC and East Herts District Council (EHDC) are reviewing their current local plans. In the case of NHDC the review period started in April, 2026 with an eventual adoption anticipated for January, 2029. EHDC have yet to commence its Local Plan review key consultation stages. Various key stages arise during the review period which will involve consultation with key stakeholders including Datchworth Parish Council. The current consultation is the first of these consultation exercises involving NHDC. It is quite important that DPC highlight any concerns (if any) at this early stage. Prior to now, NHDC has undertaken and amassed a number of evidence-based reports which will underpin its forward trajectory and which currently form part of the present consultation exercise. One of these documents forming part of the evidence base is entitled: <u>Green Belt Assessment for East Herts, North Herts and Stevenage</u>, and is dated June, 2026. The relevant parts of this document can be viewed at both East Herts Council website: Datchworth locations: (https://eastherts.fra1.digitaloceanspaces.com/s3fs-public/2026-07/GB%20Map_Datchworth.pdf)	

and North Herts Council website:

Knebworth locations: (<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-07/Knebworth.pdf>).

So why is this so important?

Each District Council has a duty of review its green belt boundaries on a regular basis alongside other duties, including the provision of sufficient development land allocated in its local plan to meet anticipated demand particularly (but not exclusively) in terms of new housing provision.

Datchworth and its environs is currently washed over with green belt designation. Whilst not preventing appropriate development, the current green belt designation is essentially a restraint policy within which there is a presumption against new housing development (for example) unless there are sufficient grounds to outweigh the presumption against new development.

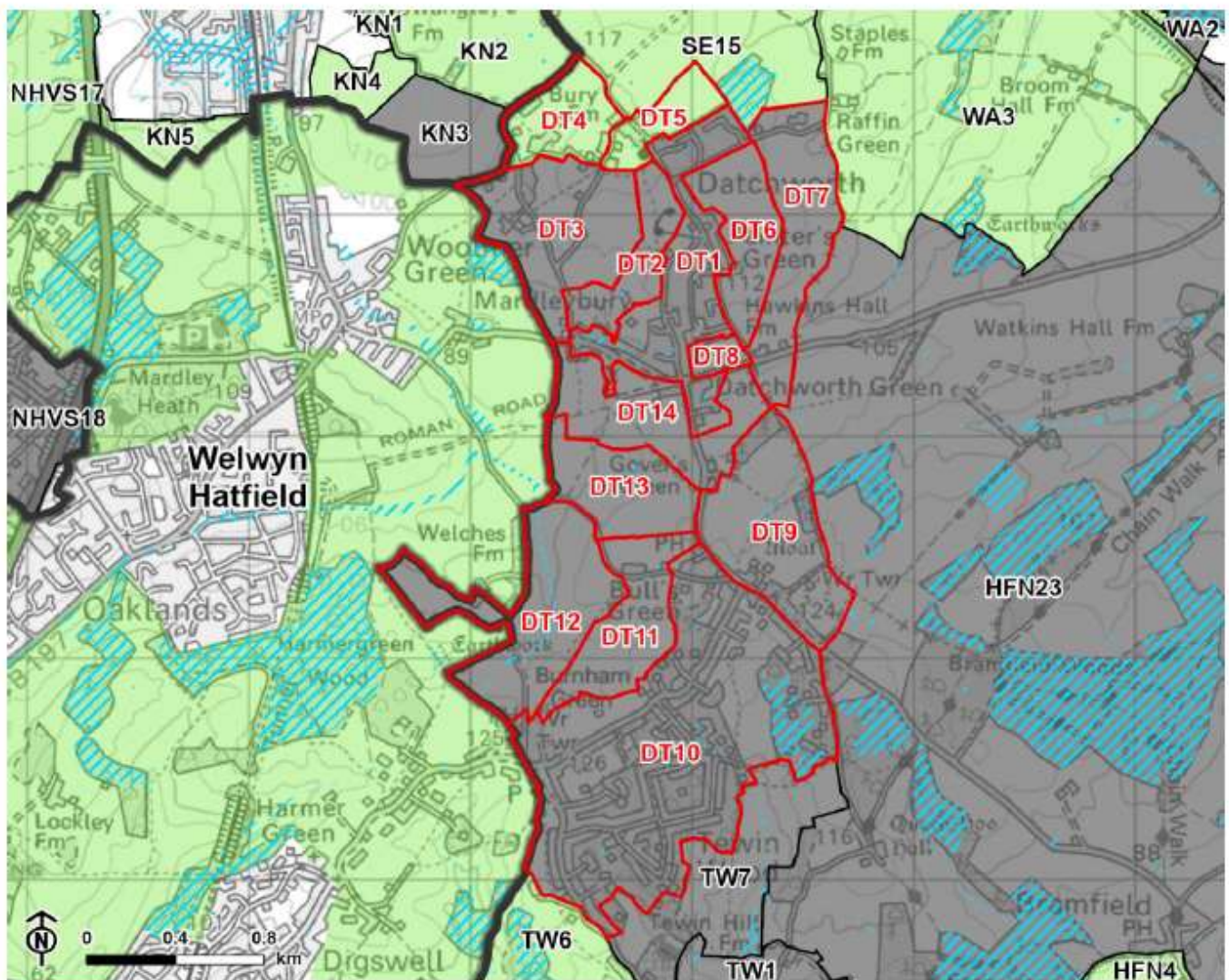
The new evidence-based document in reviewing Green Belt for our three surrounding District/Boroughs would appear to fundamentally change this position and the implications for Datchworth could be quite severe.

How (including Time and Money)

The Green Belt Assessment June, 2026 report has not been 'adopted' and does not form part of the Local Plan. It just informs the authors (District Councils) prior to further stages in the preparation process of each new Local Plan. However, it can be interrogated and challenged if DPC feels it is not soundly based.

For Datchworth, the proposal in the report is that the village of Datchworth and its environs could potentially be redesignated as "grey belt" (see overleaf for graphic extracts). 'Grey Belt' fundamentally provides lesser protection against new development by comparison to the current protection provided by 'green belt' status. So, the starting point for preparation of future Local Plan policy in the forthcoming new Local Plans for both East Herts and North Herts changes dramatically:

Potential grey belt in Datchworth

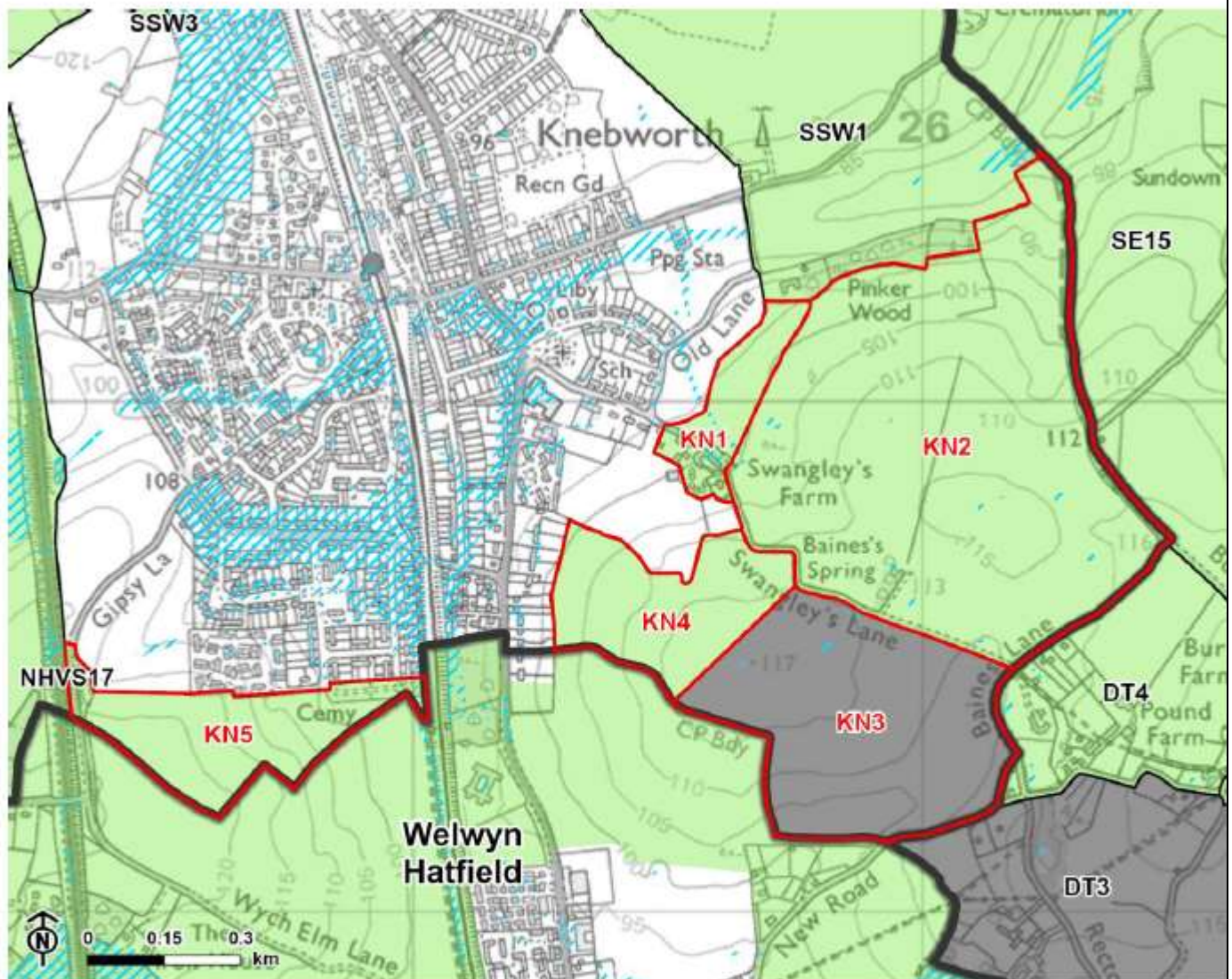


- Datchworth parcel
- Neighbouring parcel
- Local authority
- Neighbouring authority
- Green Belt

Potential grey belt

- Potentially suitable for definition as grey belt land in the borough
- Footnote 7 designation

Potential grey belt in Knebworth



- Knebworth parcel
- Neighbouring parcel
- Local authority
- Neighbouring authority
- Green Belt

Potential grey belt

- Potentially suitable for definition as grey belt land in the borough
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When

This briefing note does not purport to provide all the detail surrounding the Green Belt assessment document nor the other suite of documents that are available at this stage.

However, its purpose is to highlight what is a worrying trend and for DPC to consider whether next steps need to be taken.

Recommendation:

The recommendation is as follows:

- a) A representative of DPC attend the public consultation drop-in session on 13th October, 2026 and discuss with representatives of North Herts District Council, in-line with the e—mail circulated by the Parish Clerk; and
- b) The matter then be further discussed at the next DPC meeting on 27th October, 2026 with a view to agreeing suitable comments to be provided to NHDC prior to the closing date of 24th November, 2026.