

LUTON LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – SCOPING CONSULTATION RESPONSE

I welcome the commencement of the Luton Local Plan Review and support the preparation of a new Local Plan that will help deliver the Luton 2040 Vision and provide a framework for sustainable growth, regeneration and investment over the coming decades.

I recognise that this is a Scoping Consultation and that its purpose is not to present detailed policies or a completed evidence base, but rather to identify the issues that should be addressed, determine what evidence should be gathered, and help shape the future direction of the Local Plan.

In my view, the principal purpose of this consultation should be to establish:

- Luton's key strengths that should be protected and enhanced.
- Luton's key weaknesses and challenges that require intervention.
- Emerging opportunities that may significantly influence the town's future.
- Emerging risks that may affect the successful delivery of the Local Plan.
- The evidence that should be commissioned and prioritised.
- The relative importance of issues over the short, medium and long term.

The consultation identifies many important issues including housing, economic growth, infrastructure, transport, health, climate change, environmental protection and town centre regeneration. However, there is currently limited information regarding the scale, urgency and relative importance of these issues. As a result, it is difficult for consultees to determine which matters should receive the greatest attention during the next stages of plan preparation.

I therefore encourage the Council to use this consultation to help identify the evidence requirements and strategic priorities that should inform the next stage of the Local Plan process.

A STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS ASSESSMENT

Before the next stage of consultation, I believe it would be beneficial for the Council to publish a high-level assessment of:

- Luton's principal strengths.
- Luton's principal weaknesses.
- Emerging opportunities.
- Emerging risks and constraints.

This should be supported by baseline information and emerging evidence where available.

Such an assessment would assist stakeholders in understanding the key challenges facing the town and enable more informed and productive engagement during future consultation stages.

ECONOMIC GROWTH, AI, AIRPORT EXPANSION AND INWARD INVESTMENT

Luton benefits from significant economic strengths including its strategic location, London Luton Airport, excellent rail and motorway connectivity, established business base and diverse workforce.

At the same time, significant economic changes are likely to occur over the next twenty-five years as a result of artificial intelligence, automation, digital technologies, changing working practices, demographic change and global economic restructuring.

In my view, one of the principal risks facing long-term planning across the UK is the tendency to project current trends forward without adequately considering the pace of technological, economic and social change.

The evidence gathering stage should therefore give particular attention to:

- The impact of AI and automation on future employment.
- Future workforce and skills requirements.
- Opportunities for inward investment.
- Airport-related economic growth opportunities.
- Local supply chain development.
- Business retention and expansion.
- Emerging sectors including AI, digital technologies, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, innovation and knowledge-based industries.
- The future demand for employment land, commercial premises and supporting infrastructure.

Particular attention should be given to identifying those matters that require action in the short term (1–3 years), medium term (3–10 years) and long term (10–25 years).

HOUSING

Housing affordability, social rented housing provision, homelessness and temporary accommodation remain major challenges for the town.

Evidence should be developed regarding:

- Future housing need.
- Housing affordability.
- Housing mix requirements.
- Housing capacity within the borough.
- The scale of any unmet housing need.
- Potential cross-boundary solutions where needs cannot be accommodated within Luton.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Future growth can only be achieved if supported by appropriate infrastructure.

Evidence should therefore be gathered regarding:

- Transport capacity.
- Health infrastructure.
- Education infrastructure.
- Utilities and energy networks.
- Flood mitigation requirements.
- Community facilities.
- Digital infrastructure.

The Local Plan should clearly identify both existing infrastructure constraints and future infrastructure requirements.

TOWN CENTRE

The town centre remains one of Luton's most important economic and social assets but continues to face significant challenges.

Further evidence should be gathered regarding:

- Footfall trends.
- Vacancy rates.
- Business performance.
- Visitor numbers.
- Public safety and crime.
- Leisure and cultural activity.
- The evening and night-time economy.

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCE

The Local Plan should continue to protect and enhance Luton's environmental assets whilst preparing for future climate-related risks.

Evidence should be gathered regarding:

- Biodiversity and ecological networks.
- Green infrastructure.
- Air quality.
- Flood risk.
- Water resources.
- Heat resilience.
- Energy generation and distribution infrastructure.

SHORT, MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM PRIORITIES

One of the most valuable outputs from the evidence gathering stage would be a clear distinction between:

- Short-term priorities requiring action within the next 1–3 years.
- Medium-term priorities requiring action within the next 3–10 years.
- Long-term priorities extending to 2040–2050.

The Local Plan should not simply identify long-term aspirations but should also help inform the investment, policy and partnership actions required today to support future success.

INFORMATION TO SUPPORT FUTURE CONSULTATION

To support more informed engagement at future consultation stages, I encourage the Council to publish high-level information regarding:

- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks.
- Economic forecasts.
- Housing forecasts.
- Infrastructure capacity assessments.
- Skills and workforce trends.
- Airport-related growth opportunities and impacts.
- Climate and environmental risks.
- Emerging strategic priorities.

CONCLUSION

I support the preparation of a new Local Plan and believe this Scoping Consultation provides an important opportunity to identify the evidence that should be gathered and the issues that should be prioritised before detailed policies are developed.

Overall, I believe the Local Plan should focus on protecting and enhancing Luton's existing strengths, addressing its most significant weaknesses, preparing for emerging opportunities and risks, and ensuring that future growth is sustainable, inclusive, resilient and deliverable.

I look forward to reviewing the evidence base, emerging strategy and proposed policies as the Local Plan progresses.

MH 4 June 2026