

Summary and analysis of consultation responses and summary of representations from named consultees

Background

1. A statutory consultation on proposals for unitary local government in Hertfordshire was opened on 5 February and closed on 26 March 2026. We received a total of 1831 responses.
2. The 3 proposals being consulted on were made by councils and submitted to the Government on 28 November 2025.
3. This document provides a summary of the 1831 responses received to the Government's consultation on the proposals for future unitary local government in Hertfordshire area.
4. The Government announced to Parliament on 16 July 2026 that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government had decided to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, **the proposal for 4 unitaries submitted by Broxbourne Borough Council, Dacorum Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, Stevenage Borough Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.**
5. The consultation invited views on three proposals:

Hertfordshire County Council and St Albans City and District Council proposed 2 unitary councils across the whole of the area of Hertfordshire comprising the current district areas of:

- West Hertfordshire: Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, Watford
- Eastern Hertfordshire: Broxbourne, East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire, Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield

From here this is referred to as the 2 unitary proposal.

East Hertfordshire District Council, Three Rivers District Council and Watford Borough Council proposed 3 unitary councils. This included a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the district areas of:

- West: Dacorum, Three Rivers and Watford, plus 4 wards from Hertsmere
- Central: Hertsmere less 4 wards, St Albans, and Welwyn Hatfield
- Eastern: Broxbourne, East Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire and Stevenage

From here this is referred to as the 3 unitary proposal.

Broxbourne Borough Council, Dacorum Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, Stevenage

Borough Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council proposed 4 unitary councils. This included a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the district areas of:

- North West: Dacorum and St Albans
- South West: Hertsmere, Three Rivers and Watford
- Central: North Hertfordshire less 6 wards, Stevenage and Welwyn Hatfield less 1 ward
- Eastern: Broxbourne, East Hertfordshire plus 6 wards from North Hertfordshire and 1 ward from Welwyn Hatfield

From here this is referred to as the 4 unitary proposal.

6. The consultation on these proposals has informed an assessment of the merits of each proposal. All the proposals have been considered carefully, alongside the responses received to this consultation, representations and any other relevant information, in assessing the proposals against the criteria before a judgement was taken on which proposal to implement.
7. The criteria by which proposals for local government reorganisation have been assessed are set out in the [letter of invitation](#), sent to councils in Hertfordshire on 5 February 2025. The consultation asked questions relating to the criteria for each of the above proposals.
8. This consultation relates to the structure of local government in Hertfordshire. These proposals relate to England only.

Methodology

9. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 states that the Secretary of State may not implement a proposal unless they have consulted with every authority affected by the proposal and other such other persons as they consider appropriate. Those councils and persons considered appropriate are hereafter referred to as 'named consultees'.
10. The list of named consultees is available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).
11. In addition, the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (the Ministry) welcomed the views of any other persons or bodies interested in these proposals, including local residents, town and parish councils, businesses and the voluntary and community sector.
12. The Ministry used Citizen Space, a third-party consultation programme to collect responses. Citizen Space was open to both named consultees and all other interested parties. Further information on the statutory basis for, and methodology of, the consultation is provided on the [publication page](#).

13. Responses to the consultation were also received by email and letter.
14. The Ministry used a tool named Consult AI to assist in the analysis of responses. The AI tool identified themes present in the responses which Ministry officials have checked for accuracy. The tool did not have access to any personal data. All responses from named consultees were read by Ministry staff.
15. The department has conducted an evaluation of the Consult tool and concluded that Consult's theme mappings are consistent with human reviewers' assessments. For this consultation, human reviewers independently checked the theme assignments Consult had produced and likewise found that Consult's theme mappings were broadly consistent with the human reviewers.

Consultation Questions

16. Respondents answered the questions below using a five-point agree–disagree scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', with an additional 'don't know' option.
17. The questions were as follows:
 - a) **Question 1:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?
 - b) **Question 2:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?
 - c) **Question 3:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?
 - d) **Question 4:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?
 - e) **Question 5:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?
 - f) **Question 6:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?
 - g) **Question 7:** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?
 - h) **Question 8:** If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-7 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.

- i) **Question 9:** This is a proposal that is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary change or that affects wider public services. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change?
- j) **Question 10:** If you would like to, please use this free text box to explain your answer to question 9.

Summary of responses

18. There were 1831 responses to this consultation, 27 from named consultees and 1804 by other respondents. Not all respondents provided an answer to each question, please see analysis of responses by question below for individual response data.

Responses from named consultees

Named consultee respondents	Number of responses
Principal councils	8
Neighbouring councils	2
Strategic Authority	1
Health Bodies	5
Police and Fire	2
Education Bodies	1
Other Public Sector	3
Voluntary and Community Sector	1
Business Organisations	0
National Bodies	3
Other named consultees	1
Total named consultees	27

Responses from other respondents

Other respondents	Number of responses
Individual living in Hertfordshire	1686
Individual not living in affected area	49
Organisation	69
Total other respondents	1804
Total responses (Including named consultees)	1831

Summary of findings

19. Tables in this report included numbers rounded to the nearest whole number, and as such, not all cumulative scores will equal 100%.

20. Respondents were invited to respond to 8 number of multiple choice questions per proposal and could provide a rationale for their answers in a free text box. Where a proposal included boundary change, respondents were invited to answer an additional question and provide an additional free text response. The multiple choice questions invited respondents to state whether they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat disagreed, strongly disagreed, or did not know when responding to a statement.
21. For the purposes of this document we have classified positive responses as strongly agree, somewhat agreed or agree and negative responses as somewhat disagree or disagree and strongly disagree.
22. Quantitative scoring against specific questions was applied to responses submitted by email and post only where respondents provided explicit answers based on the scale provided. No assumptions or inferred positions were applied to submissions that did not directly address those questions.
23. Responses received by email and post are not included in the respondent count for questions 9 and 11. A summary of the relevant views expressed in those responses against each criterion is included within the summary of free text responses for each respondent type.
24. In addition to this round of consultation, the Government undertook consultation on 6 other local government reorganisation areas between 19 November 2025 and 11 January 2026. One response received as part of that consultation is relevant to all local government reorganisation areas, including those in this round of consultation. A summary of the relevant views expressed in that response against each criterion is included within the summary of free text responses for that respondent type.
25. The table below takes the average response across the multiple choice questions to provide an overall view of whether all respondents viewed a proposal positively or negatively.

All respondents

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>2 Unitary</i>	11545	39%	49%	9%	3%
<i>3 Unitary</i>	12438	29%	54%	13%	3%
<i>4 Unitary</i>	12921	32%	53%	11%	2%

26. Overall, the responses demonstrate a preference for the 2 unitary proposal. 39% of respondents to the 2 unitary proposal provided positive responses to the questions and 49% of respondents provided negative responses. 12% were

responses of neither agree nor disagree or don't know. The 4 unitary proposal was the second most popular proposal, with 32% of respondents providing positive responses to the questions, while 53% of respondents provided negative responses. The 3 unitary proposal is the least popular option by a small margin, with 29% of respondents providing a positive response.

Named consultees

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
2 Unitary	96	47%	30%	23%	0%
3 Unitary	109	15%	51%	34%	0%
4 Unitary	117	50%	22%	28%	0%

27. Overall, the responses from the named consultees demonstrate a small preference for the 4 unitary proposal. 50% of respondents to the 4 unitary proposal provided positive responses to the questions and 22% of respondents provided negative responses. 28% were responses of neither agree nor disagree or don't know. The 2 unitary proposal is the second most popular, with 47% of respondents responding positively, and 30% responding negatively. 15% of respondents to the 3 unitary proposal provided a positive response, with 51% of respondents responding negatively to this proposal.

Individuals living in Hertfordshire

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
2 Unitary	10742	38%	50%	9%	3%
3 Unitary	11574	29%	54%	13%	4%
4 Unitary	12017	31%	54%	11%	3%

28. Overall, the responses from the individuals living in Hertfordshire demonstrate a preference for the 2 unitary proposal. 38% of respondents to the 2 unitary proposal provided positive responses to the questions and 50% of respondents provided negative responses. 12% were responses of neither agree nor disagree or don't know. The 4 unitary proposal is the second most popular, with 31% of respondents responding positively, and 54% of respondents providing a negative response. The 3 unitary proposal is marginally less popular, with 29% of respondents responding positively, and 54% of respondents also providing a negative response.

Individuals living outside of the affected area

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>2 Unitary</i>	336	44%	43%	12%	2%
<i>3 Unitary</i>	349	26%	57%	15%	1%
<i>4 Unitary</i>	358	40%	44%	14%	2%

29. Overall, the responses demonstrate a preference for the 2 unitary proposal. 44% of respondents to the 2 unitary proposal provided positive responses to the questions and 43% of respondents provided negative responses. 12% were responses of neither agree nor disagree or don't know. The 4 unitary proposal was the second most popular proposal, with 40% of respondents responding positively to the questions, while 44% of respondents responded negatively to the questions. The 3 unitary proposal is the least popular option, with 26% of respondents responding positively to the questions, and 57% responding negatively to the questions.

Organisations

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>2 Unitary</i>	371	54%	33%	9%	4%
<i>3 Unitary</i>	406	39%	44%	12%	5%
<i>4 Unitary</i>	429	32%	52%	12%	4%

30. Overall, the responses from organisations demonstrate a preference for the 2 unitary proposal. 54% of respondents to the 2 unitary proposal provided positive responses to the questions and 33% of respondents provided negative responses. 13% were responses of neither agree nor disagree or don't know. The 3 unitary proposal is the second most popular, with 39% of respondents responding positively, and 44% of respondents responding negatively. The 4 unitary option is the least popular, with 32% of respondents responding positively, and 52% responding negatively.

Analysis of responses by question

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?

Summary of named consultee responses

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Principal Council 2 Unitary</i>	3	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 3 Unitary</i>	3	33%	67%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 4 Unitary</i>	4	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary</i>	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Authority 4 Unitary</i>	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
<i>Strategic Authority 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Strategic Authority 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Strategic Authority 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	2	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 2 Unitary</i>	4	50%	0%	50%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 3 Unitary</i>	4	25%	25%	50%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 4 Unitary</i>	4	25%	25%	50%	0%

<i>Voluntary and Community Sector</i> 2 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector</i> 3 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector</i> 4 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies</i> 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies</i> 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies</i> 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies</i> 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies</i> 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies</i> 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees</i> 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees</i> 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees</i> 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees 2 Unitary	14	50%	29%	21%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	13	23%	46%	31%	0%
Total Named Consultees 4 Unitary	15	53%	20%	27%	0%

Individuals and organisations (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area</i> 2 Unitary	1537	49%	46%	4%	1%

<i>Individual living in affected area</i> <i>3 Unitary</i>	1450	38%	53%	8%	1%
<i>Individual living in affected area</i> <i>4 Unitary</i>	1508	39%	55%	6%	1%
<i>Individual living outside affected area</i> <i>2 Unitary</i>	48	52%	40%	6%	2%
<i>Individual living outside affected area</i> <i>3 Unitary</i>	44	32%	55%	11%	2%
<i>Individual living outside affected area</i> <i>4 Unitary</i>	45	40%	49%	9%	2%
<i>Organisations</i> <i>2 Unitary</i>	53	64%	26%	9%	0%
<i>Organisations</i> <i>3 Unitary</i>	51	43%	45%	12%	0%
<i>Organisations</i> <i>4 Unitary</i>	54	31%	61%	7%	0%

Total responses: Question 1

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Total all responses</i> <i>2 Unitary</i>	1652	50%	45%	5%	1%
<i>Total all responses</i> <i>3 Unitary</i>	1558	38%	53%	8%	1%
<i>Total all responses</i> <i>4 Unitary</i>	1622	39%	54%	6%	1%

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?

Summary of named consultee responses

	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Principal Council</i> <i>2 Unitary</i>	3	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council</i> <i>3 Unitary</i>	3	33%	67%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council</i> <i>4 Unitary</i>	4	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council</i> <i>2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%

Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
Neighbouring Council 4 Unitary	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
Strategic Authority 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies 2 Unitary	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Health Bodies 4 Unitary	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 4 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 2 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Education Bodies 4 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other Public Sector 2 Unitary	4	50%	0%	50%	0%
Other Public Sector 3 Unitary	4	25%	25%	50%	0%
Other Public Sector 4 Unitary	4	25%	25%	50%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 4 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Business Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%

<i>Business Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees 2 Unitary	14	50%	29%	21%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	13	23%	46%	31%	0%
Total Named Consultees 4 Unitary	15	53%	20%	27%	0%

Individuals and organisations (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area 2 Unitary</i>	1536	41%	49%	7%	3%
<i>Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary</i>	1449	31%	53%	12%	3%
<i>Individual living in affected area 4 Unitary</i>	1507	32%	57%	9%	2%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 2 Unitary</i>	48	48%	40%	13%	0%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 3 Unitary</i>	44	27%	57%	14%	2%

<i>Individual living outside affected area 4 Unitary</i>	45	40%	49%	11%	0%
<i>Organisations 2 Unitary</i>	53	57%	34%	6%	4%
<i>Organisations 3 Unitary</i>	51	41%	41%	12%	6%
<i>Organisations 4 Unitary</i>	54	28%	56%	11%	6%

Total responses: Question 2

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Total all responses 2 Unitary	1651	42%	48%	7%	3%
Total all responses 3 Unitary	1557	31%	53%	13%	3%
Total all responses 4 Unitary	1621	32%	56%	9%	2%

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?

Summary of named consultee responses

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Principal Council 2 Unitary</i>	3	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 3 Unitary</i>	3	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 4 Unitary</i>	4	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Principal Council 3 Unitary</i>	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Principal Council 4 Unitary</i>	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
<i>Strategic Authority 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%

Strategic Authority 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies 2 Unitary	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies 3 Unitary	2	0%	100%	0%	0%
Health Bodies 4 Unitary	2	50%	50%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 4 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 2 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Education Bodies 4 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other Public Sector 2 Unitary	4	25%	0%	75%	0%
Other Public Sector 3 Unitary	4	25%	25%	50%	0%
Other Public Sector 4 Unitary	4	25%	25%	50%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 4 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Business Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Business Bodies 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
National Bodies 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
National Bodies 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%

National Bodies 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other named consultees 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other named consultees 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other named consultees 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees 2 Unitary	14	43%	29%	29%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	14	14%	57%	29%	0%
Total Named Consultees 4 Unitary	15	47%	27%	27%	0%

Individuals and organisations (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Individual living in affected area 2 Unitary	1535	43%	49%	6%	2%
Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary	1449	32%	56%	11%	2%
Individual living in affected area 4 Unitary	1503	30%	59%	8%	2%
Individual living outside affected area 2 Unitary	48	44%	46%	10%	0%
Individual living outside affected area 3 Unitary	44	23%	68%	9%	0%
Individual living outside affected area 4 Unitary	45	38%	56%	4%	2%
Organisations 2 Unitary	53	60%	32%	8%	0%
Organisations 3 Unitary	50	44%	44%	8%	4%
Organisations 4 Unitary	54	30%	59%	7%	4%

Total responses: Question 3

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Total all responses 2 Unitary	1650	43%	48%	6%	2%
Total all responses 3 Unitary	1557	32%	56%	11%	2%
Total all responses 4 Unitary	1617	31%	59%	8%	2%

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?

Summary of named consultee responses

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Principal Council 2 Unitary	3	0%	100%	0%	0%
Principal Council 3 Unitary	3	33%	67%	0%	0%
Principal Council 4 Unitary	4	100%	0%	0%	0%
Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
Neighbouring Council 4 Unitary	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
Strategic Authority 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies 2 Unitary	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies 3 Unitary	2	0%	100%	0%	0%
Health Bodies 4 Unitary	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%

<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 2 Unitary</i>	4	50%	0%	50%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 3 Unitary</i>	4	25%	25%	50%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 4 Unitary</i>	4	25%	25%	50%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary</i>	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 4 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees	14	50%	29%	21%	0%

2 Unitary					
Total Named Consultees					
3 Unitary	14	21%	50%	29%	0%
Total Named Consultees					
4 Unitary	15	53%	20%	27%	0%

Individuals and organisations (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area</i>					
2 Unitary	1533	36%	50%	11%	3%
<i>Individual living in affected area</i>					
3 Unitary	1446	27%	55%	14%	4%
<i>Individual living in affected area</i>					
4 Unitary	1501	30%	55%	12%	3%
<i>Individual living outside affected area</i>					
2 Unitary	48	50%	44%	4%	2%
<i>Individual living outside affected area</i>					
3 Unitary	44	23%	57%	18%	2%
<i>Individual living outside affected area</i>					
4 Unitary	45	40%	44%	13%	2%
<i>Organisations</i>					
2 Unitary	53	47%	34%	11%	8%
<i>Organisations</i>					
3 Unitary	51	31%	41%	16%	12%
<i>Organisations</i>					
4 Unitary	53	28%	55%	11%	6%

Total responses: Question 4

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Total all responses					
2 Unitary	1648	37%	49%	11%	3%
Total all responses					
3 Unitary	1555	27%	55%	15%	4%

Total all responses 4 Unitary	1614	30%	54%	13%	3%
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Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?

Summary of named consultee responses

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Principal Council 2 Unitary</i>	3	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 3 Unitary</i>	3	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 4 Unitary</i>	4	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary</i>	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 4 Unitary</i>	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
<i>Strategic Authority 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Strategic Authority 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Strategic Authority 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%

<i>Education Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 2 Unitary</i>	4	25%	25%	50%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 3 Unitary</i>	4	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 4 Unitary</i>	4	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary</i>	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector 4 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees 2 Unitary	12	33%	42%	25%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	12	8%	58%	33%	0%
Total Named Consultees 4 Unitary	13	46%	23%	31%	0%

Individuals and organisations (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area</i> 2 Unitary	1530	29%	55%	12%	4%
<i>Individual living in affected area</i> 3 Unitary	1442	23%	57%	15%	5%
<i>Individual living in affected area</i> 4 Unitary	1505	29%	53%	12%	5%
<i>Individual living outside affected area</i> 2 Unitary	48	35%	46%	17%	2%
<i>Individual living outside affected area</i> 3 Unitary	44	20%	59%	18%	2%
<i>Individual living outside affected area</i> 4 Unitary	44	36%	41%	20%	2%
<i>Organisations</i> 2 Unitary	53	49%	38%	8%	6%
<i>Organisations</i> 3 Unitary	51	35%	45%	14%	6%
<i>Organisations</i> 4 Unitary	54	33%	48%	13%	6%

Total responses: Question 5

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Total all responses 2 Unitary	1643	30%	54%	12%	4%
Total all responses 3 Unitary	1549	24%	57%	15%	5%
Total all responses 4 Unitary	1616	30%	53%	13%	5%

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?

Summary of named consultee responses

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Principal Council 2 Unitary</i>	3	33%	67%	0%	0%
<i>Principal Council 3 Unitary</i>	3	0%	67%	33%	0%
<i>Principal Council 4 Unitary</i>	4	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary</i>	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary</i>	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Authority 4 Unitary</i>	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
<i>Strategic Authority 2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Strategic Authority 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Strategic Authority 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	2	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 2 Unitary</i>	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 2 Unitary</i>	4	50%	0%	50%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 3 Unitary</i>	4	25%	25%	50%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 4 Unitary</i>	4	25%	25%	50%	0%

<i>Voluntary and Community Sector</i> 2 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector</i> 3 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community Sector</i> 4 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies</i> 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies</i> 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies</i> 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies</i> 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies</i> 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies</i> 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees</i> 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees</i> 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees</i> 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees 2 Unitary	14	57%	21%	21%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	14	14%	50%	36%	0%
Total Named Consultees 4 Unitary	15	53%	20%	27%	0%

Individuals and organisations (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area</i> 2 Unitary	1536	37%	43%	15%	5%
<i>Individual living in affected area</i> 3 Unitary	1447	29%	48%	17%	7%

3 Unitary					
<i>Individual living in affected area</i>					
4 Unitary	1500	29%	50%	15%	6%
<i>Individual living outside affected area</i>					
2 Unitary	48	48%	31%	17%	4%
<i>Individual living outside affected area</i>					
3 Unitary	43	26%	51%	21%	2%
<i>Individual living outside affected area</i>					
4 Unitary	45	31%	40%	22%	7%
<i>Organisations</i>					
2 Unitary	53	57%	25%	13%	6%
<i>Organisations</i>					
3 Unitary	51	43%	41%	12%	4%
<i>Organisations</i>					
4 Unitary	53	40%	42%	15%	4%

Total responses: Question 6

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Total all responses					
2 Unitary	1651	38%	41%	15%	5%
Total all responses					
3 Unitary	1555	29%	48%	17%	6%
Total all responses					
4 Unitary	1613	30%	49%	15%	6%

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

Summary of named consultee responses

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Principal Council					
2 Unitary	3	0%	100%	0%	0%
Principal Council					
3 Unitary	3	0%	100%	0%	0%
Principal Council	4	100%	0%	0%	0%

4 Unitary					
Neighbouring Council 2 Unitary	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary	2	0%	50%	50%	0%
Neighbouring Authority 4 Unitary	2	50%	0%	50%	0%
Strategic Authority 2 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority 3 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strategic Authority 4 Unitary	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies 2 Unitary	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Health Bodies 3 Unitary	2	50%	50%	0%	0%
Health Bodies 4 Unitary	2	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 2 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 4 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 2 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Education Bodies 3 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Education Bodies 4 Unitary	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
Other Public Sector 2 Unitary	4	25%	25%	50%	0%
Other Public Sector 3 Unitary	4	0%	25%	75%	0%
Other Public Sector 4 Unitary	4	25%	25%	50%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 2 Unitary	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 3 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
Voluntary and Community Sector 4 Unitary	1	0%	100%	0%	0%

<i>Business Bodies</i> <i>2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies</i> <i>3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies</i> <i>4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies</i> <i>2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies</i> <i>3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies</i> <i>4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named</i> <i>consultees</i> <i>2 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named</i> <i>consultees</i> <i>3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named</i> <i>consultees</i> <i>4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees <i>2 Unitary</i>	14	43%	36%	21%	0%
Total Named Consultees <i>3 Unitary</i>	14	7%	57%	36%	0%
Total Named Consultees <i>4 Unitary</i>	15	60%	13%	27%	0%

Individuals and organisations (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent</i> <i>type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of</i> <i>responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither</i> <i>Agree nor</i> <i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in</i> <i>affected area</i> <i>2 Unitary</i>	1535	29%	60%	9%	2%
<i>Individual living in</i> <i>affected area</i> <i>3 Unitary</i>	1447	28%	56%	12%	3%
<i>Individual living in</i> <i>affected area</i> <i>4 Unitary</i>	1501	36%	50%	12%	2%
<i>Individual living</i> <i>outside affected</i> <i>area 2 Unitary</i>	48	29%	54%	15%	2%

<i>Individual living outside affected area 3 Unitary</i>	43	40%	47%	14%	0%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 4 Unitary</i>	45	60%	24%	16%	0%
<i>Organisations 2 Unitary</i>	53	45%	40%	9%	6%
<i>Organisations 3 Unitary</i>	51	35%	51%	6%	8%
<i>Organisations 4 Unitary</i>	54	37%	44%	13%	6%

Total responses: Question 7

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Total all responses 2 Unitary	1650	30%	59%	10%	2%
Total all responses 3 Unitary	1555	29%	56%	12%	3%
Total all responses 4 Unitary	1615	37%	49%	12%	2%

Question 8: If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-7 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.

<i>Respondent type/Proposal</i>	<i>Total named consultees</i>	<i>Total individuals living in area</i>	<i>Total individuals not in area</i>	<i>Total organisation</i>
Total all responses 2 Unitary	14	989	27	37
Total all responses 3 Unitary	10	833	20	35
Total all responses 4 Unitary	12	914	22	37

Summary of named consultee responses

31. Principal Councils

Eight principal councils responded and supported the proposals that they had put forward.

32. Neighbouring Councils

Two neighbouring councils responded neutrally.

33. Strategic Authorities

One strategic authority responded neutrally, but outlined that structures should have scale, capacity and stability to operate effectively.

34. Health bodies

Five health bodies responded. Each expressed a preference for the 2 unitary proposal and commented that this would best align with current health organisations, with many noting it would also reduce duplication. Three health bodies noted that the 4 unitary also offered alignment with existing health footprints but some also noted the risk of duplication.

35. Police and Fire

Two police and fire bodies responded and each expressed a preference for the 2 unitary proposal in the context of their statutory role and duties.

36. Education bodies

One education body responded and expressed a preference for the 2 unitary proposal.

37. Other Public Sector

Of the three other public sector bodies who responded, two were neutral and one stated a preference for the 2 unitary proposal. One response set out sustainability and disaggregation considerations for their statutory body.

38. Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector

One voluntary and community sector body responded and expressed a preference for the 2 unitary proposal.

39. National Bodies

Three national bodies responded neutrally.

40. Other

One other body responded neutrally.

Comments against the criteria

41. For criterion 1: A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government:

Concerns were expressed about the scale of new councils in the 2 unitary proposal which could be perceived as administratively remote, with weaker local representation and reduced recognition of local identity. Concerns also

expressed that the Eastern council in the 3 unitary would separate Welwyn Hatfield from the wider A1(M) and East Coast Main Line corridor which links Stevenage with Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Baldock and thereby weaken one of the county's clearest economic, travel to work and service use geographies. There were also concerns that the smaller size of councils in the 4 unitary proposal may mean they lack the scale required for social care services unless shared service arrangements were put in place.

42. **For criterion 2: Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks:** Some respondents noted that the 2 unitary proposal offers stronger strategic capacity, financial resilience and lower transition risks. Others noted concern that the scale of 2 unitary proposal could reduce agility, local responsiveness and service modernisation. There was concern that the 3 unitary proposal could create additional complexity, bureaucracy, cost and delay, particularly where services or funded activities currently operate on countywide arrangements. Several concerns were raised about the size of councils in the 4 unitary proposal, including their financial sustainability, ability to make efficiencies and anticipated duplicative functions which risk increasing costs. Some respondents noted a preference for fewer larger authorities or the current two-tier system.
43. **For criterion 3: Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens:** There was support noted for the 2 unitary proposal with statutory partners considering it to be coherent and sustainable for integrated service delivery, collaboration and joint planning. Alignment to existing service, partnership and emergency planning geographies was also noted. One respondent noted a concern that the 2 unitary proposal risks the ability to tailor services to communities. There were concerns expressed that the 3 unitary proposal is least well aligned with existing service and partnership geographies and the associated risks of cost and service delivery if implemented. Respondents noted that the 4 unitary proposal may be operationally manageable however would be less efficient than the 2 unitary proposal and risks duplication. Financial, efficiency and sustainability concerns were also noted about the 4 unitary proposal.

More widely, concern was expressed about the potential need to create a standalone Fire and Rescue authority if a strategic authority is not created on same timescale as reorganisation.
44. **For criterion 4: Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views:** There were limited comments on local needs and engagement in regards to the 2 unitary, 3 unitary and 4 unitary proposals.
45. **For criterion 5: New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements:** There were limited comments on the approach to unlock devolution in regard to the 2 unitary, 3 unitary and 4 unitary proposals. There was a small concern noted that the scale of councils in the 2 unitary proposal could be too close to the size of a future strategic authority. There was a small concern noted that the imbalance between council sizes in the 3 unitary could negatively affect a future strategic authority.

46. **For criterion 6: New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment:** Support was offered for the work of the Hertfordshire Parish and Town Council Task and Finish Group. Some support was expressed for the 2 unitary proposal stating it makes sense in relation to commissioning and avoids duplication. On the other hand, concerns were expressed that the proposed community arrangements in the 2 unitary proposal are designed to compensate for scale of new councils. There was also concern noted about fragmentation of engagement in the 3 unitary proposal and that the 4 unitary proposal risks weakening local identity and marginalising community voice.

The themes identified by the AI tool were as follows:

47. **Increased risk of losing local representation and identity:** There were concerns that larger, more remote councils may erode local identity, reduce community engagement, weaken democratic accountability, and fail to address the needs of smaller towns and rural areas.
48. **Doubt over financial savings and efficiency:** There was some scepticism that reorganisation will deliver promised cost savings or efficiencies, with concerns about increased costs, bureaucracy, and insufficient evidence for claimed benefits.
49. **Improved coordination and accountability:** The creation of two unitary authorities was expected to enhance service coordination, strategic planning, and accountability, resulting in simpler governance and better alignment with public service boundaries.
50. **Risk of reduced service quality for vulnerable groups:** There were concerns that larger authorities may struggle to deliver high-quality, accessible services, particularly for vulnerable groups and those in rural areas, risking neglect and reduced service quality.
51. **Risk of increased urban-rural inequality:** There were concerns that larger or merged councils may prioritise urban areas, fail to address diverse community needs, and increase inequality and resource disparity.

Summary of paper and emailed non-named consultee responses

52. Emailed and written responses from non-named consultees were broadly consistent with the responses received on Citizen Space. Respondents who supported the 2 unitary proposal regarded it as the most financially viable and efficient, highlighting potential economies of scale, reduced duplication and service resilience. While others expressed concerns about the scale of the 2 unitary proposal and the risk of not being able to respond to local need which could lead to reduced local representation, weaker community engagement, and loss of local identity.
53. Respondents noted that the 3 unitary proposal offered a better balance between scale and local responsiveness, in particular compared to the 2 unitary proposal. While concerns were noted about the financial sustainability, potential duplication of services, and the risk that 3 councils would weaken efficiency and service delivery.
54. Respondents who favoured the 4 unitary highlighted that it created smaller, more localised councils. Concerns were noted about increased fragmentation

and duplication of services as well as weaker financial resilience for the proposed 4 unitary councils.

Question 9: This is a proposal that is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary change or that affects wider public services. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change? This question and question 10 were asked in relation to proposal 2 and 3.

Summary of named consultee responses

<i>Respondent type</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Principal Council 3 Unitary</i>	3	33%	0%	67%	0%
<i>Principal Council 4 Unitary</i>	3	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Council 3 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Neighbouring Principal Council 4 Unitary</i>	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Strategic Authority 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Strategic Authority 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	2	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Health Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	2	50%	50%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Police and Fire and Rescue Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Education Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%

<i>Education Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 3 Unitary</i>	4	0%	25%	75%	0%
<i>Other Public Sector 4 Unitary</i>	4	0%	25%	75%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community sector 3 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Voluntary and Community sector 4 Unitary</i>	1	0%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Business Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>National Bodies 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 3 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Other named consultees 4 Unitary</i>	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Named Consultees 3 Unitary	14	7%	43%	50%	0%
Total Named Consultees 4 Unitary	14	29%	36%	36%	0%

Individuals and organisations (not named consultees)

<i>Respondent type</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary</i>	1444	26%	53%	16%	5%
<i>Individual living outside affected area 4 Unitary</i>	1492	25%	54%	15%	6%
<i>Individual living in affected area 3 Unitary</i>	43	21%	65%	14%	0%
<i>Individual living in affected area 4 Unitary</i>	44	32%	52%	16%	0%
<i>Organisations 3 Unitary</i>	50	36%	42%	20%	2%
<i>Organisations 4 Unitary</i>	53	28%	47%	21%	4%

Total responses: Question 9

<i>Respondent type</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Total all responses <i>3 Unitary</i>	1537	26%	53%	16%	5%
Total all responses <i>4 Unitary</i>	1589	26%	54%	15%	5%

Question 10: If you would like to, please use this free text box to explain your answer to question 10

<i>Respondent type</i>	<i>Total Named consultees</i>	<i>Total Individuals living in area</i>	<i>Total individuals not in area</i>	<i>Total Organisation</i>
Total all responses 3 Unitary	7	526	14	25
Total all responses 4 Unitary	7	584	15	27

55. We also received 27 responses by email and post. 13 were from named consultees, 19 were from individuals living in area, 8 were from individuals not in area or who did not specify their location, 15 were from organisations. A summary of the views shared in these responses is included within the summaries below.

Summary of Local Government Boundary Commission for England (The Commission) Response

56. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England provided observations on the evidence provided to support the boundary change request within the 3 unitary proposal and the 4 unitary proposal, drawing on its Principal Area Boundary Review expertise. It considered the evidence in the proposals as it related to the identity and interests of local communities, and the promotion of effective and convenient local government. The Commission observed that the 3 unitary proposal would be enhanced by more community engagement evidence and information about how specific community groups will engage with new councils. In respect of the 4 unitary proposal, it noted there was little evidence to support the specific boundary changes put forward. The Commission also noted the arguments to include Arbury ward in either the new Central or Eastern council.

Summary of named consultee responses

57. Principal Councils

One principal council expressed concerns about the proposed boundary change in the 3 unitary proposal.

Two principal councils wrote in support of the proposed boundary change in the 4 unitary proposal. Another principal council expressed their support for boundary change in the 4 unitary proposal but noted the strong view of Arbury and Baldock councillors and residents that Arbury ward should remain in the new Central council, setting out existing strong local ties to Baldock and lack of links to A10 corridor which is the basis of the Eastern configuration.

58. **Health Bodies**

Two health bodies noted concern about boundary change in relation to the 3 unitary proposal observing that boundaries do not match existing health footprints and working partnerships which could lead to inefficiencies and poor outcomes. One health body noted that the 4 unitary proposal created councils that were too small and risked duplication for other public services. Another health body found the 4 unitary proposal favourable compared to the 3 unitary proposal.

59. **Other Public Sector**

One respondent expressed concerns about boundary change in relation to both the 3 unitary proposal and the 4 unitary proposal stating it risked adding disruption, cost and complexity.

60. **Education Bodies**

One respondent expressed some concern about the boundary change in relation to the 4 unitary proposal.

61. **National Bodies**

The Boundary Commission response is noted above.

62. Other named consultees did not respond to this question.

Comments against the criteria

63. **For criterion 1: A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government:**

There was concern that under the 3 unitary proposal Hemel Garden Community and Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter would be split over two new councils. Concerns were noted about the requested boundary change for Arbury ward in the 4 unitary proposal, centring on existing strong local ties to Baldock and lack of links to A10 corridor which is the basis of Eastern configuration.

64. **For criterion 2: Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks:**

There was concern noted about the relatively large size of the Eastern council in the 3 unitary proposal. Several concerns were raised about the size of councils in the 4 unitary proposal, including their financial sustainability, ability to make efficiencies and anticipated duplicative functions which risk increasing costs.

65. **For criterion 3: Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens:**

Concerns expressed that the 3 unitary proposal is least well aligned with existing service and partnership geographies and the associated risks of cost and service delivery if implemented. Respondents noted that the 4 unitary proposal may be operationally manageable however it is less efficient than the 2 unitary proposal and risks duplication.

66. **For criterion 4: Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views:** There were limited comments on local needs and engagement in regards to the 4 unitary proposal. Concern noted that under the 3 unitary proposal Hemel Garden Community and Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter would be split over two new councils.
67. **For criterion 5: New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements:** Comments on the approach to unlock devolution in response to this criterion were not provided.
68. **For criterion 6: New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment:** There were limited comments on community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment in regard to the 3 unitary and 4 unitary proposals. Some concern noted about fragmentation of engagement in the 3 unitary proposal. Some concern noted that the 4 unitary proposal risks weakening local identity and marginalising community voice.

The themes identified by the AI tool for the 3 unitary proposal were as follows:

69. **Scepticism about financial sustainability and increased cost:** There was doubt that boundary changes will deliver financial sustainability, with concerns about increased costs, bureaucracy and complexity.
70. **Negative impacts on services and community identity:** There was concern that boundary changes may disrupt public services, dilute local representation, erode community identity and reduce responsiveness, especially for smaller or rural communities.
71. **Support for boundaries reflecting local identity:** Boundary changes were supported when they align with real communities, local identities and logical geographic or functional groupings.
72. **Insufficient evidence for boundary changes:** Respondents felt that the proposal lacked a clear, strong and evidence-based justification for boundary changes, especially regarding improvements to public services and financial sustainability.
73. **Preference for alternative governance models:** Preference expressed for alternative models or maintaining current arrangements, citing better community identity, efficiency and familiarity.

The themes identified by the AI tool for the 4 unitary proposal were as follows:

74. **Insufficient justification and evidence for boundary changes:** Respondents highlighted that the proposals lacks convincing evidence or a clear case for improving public services or financial sustainability, raising concerns amongst respondents about unclear benefits and potential inefficiency.
75. **Increased disruption and complexity from boundary changes:** There was concern about boundary changes, which respondents felt are likely to cause significant disruption, increase bureaucracy, and create operational challenges for residents and staff, including high transitional costs.
76. **Support for logical, locally responsive boundary changes:** There was support for boundary changes when these align with functional areas, local

communities, or economic geographies, offering potential for improved efficiency and public services if implemented carefully.

77. **Preference for status quo or alternatives:** There was a preference for maintaining current arrangements, empowering local councils, or adopting alternative governance models over the proposed boundary changes.
78. **Threat to community identity and local representation:** Respondents identified a risk of harming community identity through boundary changes, highlighting a disruption of established ties, reduction of local representation and accountability, especially if natural communities are split.

Summary of paper and emailed non-named consultee responses

79. Respondents to the 3 unitary proposal indirectly commented on the proposed boundary change. Some noted the principle of splitting established boroughs and wards.
80. Respondents to the 4 unitary proposal expressed strong views on boundary change, notably in relation to Arbury ward. Concerns centred on the separation of Arbury from Baldock and the surrounding villages, which risks established community, service and travel to work links, particularly for schools, healthcare, shopping and transport. Respondents also noted that the separation risks confusion, weakens local identity and undermines effective representation. Concerns were generally framed around boundary coherence rather than opposition to reorganisation itself.