



**Police & Crime
Commissioner**
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
Marshall Street
London
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27th July 2026

Dear Home Secretary

Hertfordshire consultation on police force mergers

Congratulations on your re-appointment as Home Secretary by the new Prime Minister.

In May, I launched a consultation to understand the views of Hertfordshire residents on the Government's plans to merge police forces in England and Wales. I am deeply concerned that those who depend on and fund the police have not been consulted on such a fundamental change to the way policing is delivered. This risks undermining public confidence in the police.

I hope you are therefore able to take into consideration the results of my consultation which reflect the views of almost 4,000 residents, businesses and community groups across Hertfordshire.

Over two-thirds (68 per cent) of Hertfordshire residents oppose police force mergers. Their biggest concerns focus on the potential impact on local policing with 72 per cent fearing that Hertfordshire becoming part of a larger force would reduce visible patrols and 70 per cent believing it would lengthen emergency response times. Many felt that a larger force would focus less on local policing with 67 per cent believing it would not prioritise the issues that matter most to them. These findings reflect a clear desire for policing to remain locally focussed. Effective local policing is a critical factor in the public feeling safe and so the perceived threat to day-to-day interactions with officers should prompt serious consideration. **Only 15 per cent support police mergers.**

Notably, **60 per cent believe they would feel less safe if their local police force was to become part of a larger force.** Respondents repeatedly highlighted concerns that Hertfordshire's needs could be overlooked, with resources diverted away from towns and rural areas towards higher crime areas. The Metropolitan Police's unsuccessful merger of its 32 borough-based commands into twelve large Basic Command Units was due, in part, to officers being frequently pulled away from their beats to respond to urgent cases in neighbouring areas, according to the Baroness Casey Review.

The consultation also highlighted the importance that the public attach to local accountability around policing. **94 per cent believe that decisions about policing in Hertfordshire should be taken by people directly accountable to local voters.** Almost three-quarters fear that it



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would be harder to hold local police to account as part of a larger force, again putting public trust at risk.

Many Hertfordshire residents feel that police force mergers are primarily intended to reduce costs. While there is broad support for improving efficiency and ensuring public money is well spent, including from myself, high transition costs will likely mean that cost-savings are not realised for decades. Hertfordshire residents are clear about where they think that money should be spent in the meantime. **Four in five would prefer available funding to be invested in additional frontline officers rather than organisational restructuring.**

How to align financial positions and funding arrangements across merged forces is another important question, and one about which little detail has so far been published. Mergers between areas with different levels of debt or reserves or unequal police precepts must not affect outcomes for residents or disrupt vital community services due to funding shortfalls.

I have enclosed the full findings of the consultation for your consideration, and I have also shared the report with Lord Hogan-Howe as part of his independent review.

In light of the strength and consistency of public opinion expressed through this consultation, on behalf of the people of Hertfordshire, I urge the Government to:

1. Ensure the independent review gives full and formal consideration to the results of this consultation;
2. Commit to conducting its own public consultation into police force mergers to enable communities across England and Wales to contribute to the debate before final decisions are reached;
3. Publish further detail around the Government's expectations for merged forces, including minimum size and operational requirements, to enable policing leaders, local government and the public to properly assess different proposals.

Should it not be possible to demonstrate public support for reform, I believe the Government should carefully consider whether force mergers are the right course of action.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet you or the Policing Minister to discuss this matter in more detail.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Ash-Edwards
Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire