



SWHERTS
Joint Strategic Plan

South West Hertfordshire 2050

Realising our Potential



August 2022



Foreword

As Leaders of the six authorities that make up South West Hertfordshire, we are pleased to introduce a vision for the future of our area and to seek your feedback.

This consultation marks the first exciting step in a new approach to long term planning in South West Hertfordshire, covering the areas of Dacorum Borough, Hertsmere Borough, St Albans City and District, Three Rivers District and Watford Borough.

The South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) will establish a collective ambition and set a blueprint for the future of the area to 2050. Eventually it will need to address big issues like the scale and location of new growth, the infrastructure needed to deliver it and our response to the challenges of climate change. However at this stage it is not about housing or employment numbers, or locations for growth. We don't yet know where growth should go, but we know we want it to happen as sustainably as possible.

This is your chance to tell us how you think our area can realise its full potential and how we can ensure sustainable growth provides a better future for everyone. In section 5, you will find a draft vision and

objectives for our area, which we want your thoughts on. This will then guide future stages of our plan.

We want the preparation of the Joint Strategic Plan to be an open process. This initial document is therefore designed to stimulate debate. We want the plan to be visionary, aspirational and use growth as an opportunity to improve the quality of life for those who currently live, work and play in the area, and those who wish to do so in the future.

When developing our draft vision, we have tried to recognise the many assets and strengths of SW Herts – in terms of our built, natural and human resources. We have also tried to ensure that we make the most of our economic strengths, enhance the quality of our life and reduce and adapt to the impact of climate change.

We want to talk to as many people as possible to ensure that the process of preparing the plan is fully collaborative and inclusive. Only by planning collectively for a sustainable future that benefits all our existing and new residents and businesses can we truly realise our area's potential together.

We look forward to hearing what you have to say.

SIGNATURE 1

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1 Introduction

We, the five local authorities which makes up South West Hertfordshire, supported by Hertfordshire County Council, are working together to produce a Joint Strategic Plan, which will provide a long-term blueprint for the future of the area to 2050.



Our collective ambition is that by working together and over a longer timescale, we will be in a stronger position to deliver and better fund the essential local transport links, health services, educational facilities, homes and employment that local people want to see, as well as ensuring that this part of Hertfordshire is sustainable, cleaner, greener and healthier. By considering the longer-term future of this area as a whole, and by working together, we believe that the opportunities to plan successfully for the future will be greater.

The Joint Strategic Plan will address cross boundary issues and set out high level policies covering:

- Reducing the negative impacts of climate change and the amount of carbon we release into the atmosphere
- Identifying needs for key infrastructure, such as schools and new public transport links, where this should go and how it is paid for
- Reflecting important designations such as the Green Belt and Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

- Establishing long term opportunities for providing new homes and jobs
- Identifying where any large scale growth should be located

It is important to recognise that in preparing this initial consultation document on the Joint Strategic Plan we don't yet know the amount of growth needed, or where that growth might be best located.

These statutory stages and the timetable for when they will be completed are shown in Figure 2 overleaf.

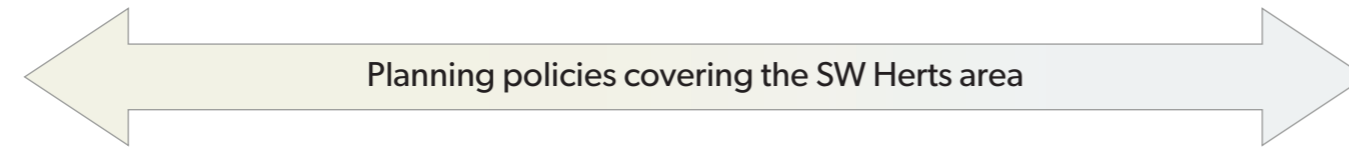




How does the Joint Strategic Plan fit with Local Plans?

The Joint Strategic Plan will play a very important role in shaping the future of SW Herts, by drawing up a longer term strategy to 2050 which best meets the needs of our area as a whole. This will include defining where any large scale growth locations should be.

The Joint Strategic Plan will not replace each district's own Local Plan. Each district and borough will still be required to prepare their own Local Plan. Local Plans set out a local council's policies and proposals for how land will be used and what types of development can happen in that area. Future Local Plans will sit within the framework set by the Joint Strategic Plan and will set out detailed site boundaries and the choice of smaller-scale sites, as well as continuing to guide other day to day planning decisions.



SWHERTS
Joint Strategic Plan

Sets out a series of high level (strategic) policies on key topics that apply across the whole of SW Herts and identify any large-scale development sites.

Local Plans (or equivalent documents)

Sets out for each district/borough:

- the remaining planning policies required to enable the JSP policies to be implemented for that area;
- policies covering more local issues; and
- the detailed boundaries for any large scale development sites identified in the JSP, together with any additional smaller sites

You can read more at www.swhertsplan.com or in the background section at the end of this document.



Your views will help shape the future of SW Herts...

Please let us have your feedback by answering the question(s) at the end of each section. We will firstly ask for your views on the area as it currently is, and then ask for your views on whether you agree with our draft vision for the future and the types of growth that are the most appropriate for us to consider.

You don't have to answer every question we ask, but we would like to receive as much feedback as possible, to help ensure that the Joint Strategic Plan reflects a wide range of views.

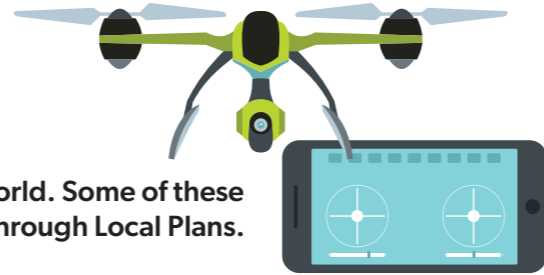
If you would prefer to respond by email or letter, please see further information about how to do this at the end of this document.

The consultation closes at **5pm on **date**** so please ensure that we receive your views by then.

Details of the full engagement programme that supports the Joint Strategic Plan is available on our website www.swhertsplan.com/**



2 Our world is changing



The future of South West Herts will be affected by trends and shifts occurring in the area, the country, and the world. Some of these are set out below. The Joint Strategic Plan will also need to take into account decisions that have already made through Local Plans.

Climate

The UK Government and we, the SW Herts Authorities, have declared a climate emergency. In the face of this climate emergency we need to radically change the way our society and economy operates. To do so will both safeguard the planet and increase our own ability to adapt to a changing planet.

Economy

The UK's decision to leave the EU has created considerable uncertainty for some UK businesses. It continues to be unclear what the UK's eventual relationship with the EU will look like and how this will affect things such as market access, the availability of migrant labour and product regulation. In SW Herts 63% of jobs growth since 2010 has been among non-UK nationals. Migration controls may therefore limit an important labour supply.

Demographics

Across the country, populations are growing, changing, ageing and becoming more diverse. Families are getting smaller and more people are living alone. We're living longer and healthier lives, although there remain inequalities in health and life expectancy. In SW Herts, as well as an ageing population there is also a predicted increase in young people and families moving in; young people who may have different priorities, skills and aspirations than their parents.

Mobility

Connectivity is more important now than ever, both to peoples' daily quality of life and to the wider economy. The way people move around has been affected by the pandemic and it is too soon to see what the long term implications will be. However, traffic congestion and environmental impacts are still key things that will influence how we move around in the future. From better public transport, a move to electric vehicles and just getting more people walking and cycling, the future of mobility needs to be greener, easier and more joined-up.

Technology

Data and digital systems are becoming increasingly integrated into our day to day lives. A report by consultants McKinsey Digital suggests that digital adoption has accelerated by 7 years over the 2 years of the pandemic. As a result, how we manage, experience and participate in our towns and cities, and wider society, is changing. This shift poses many challenges, but it also has the potential to make our places more efficient, resilient, inclusive and better places to live.

COVID-19

In the past two years, the nature of the places and spaces where we live, work, shop, exercise and raise our children have been brought into sharp focus. Lines between home, office, schools, pub and gym have become blurred. High streets, local centres and parks have become focal points for daily life. We have learned that we still need to come together socially and professionally, but that this can take many shapes and forms. Many have suffered greatly and recovery may take many years. How we understand the challenges and opportunities the pandemic has created is an important backdrop for the future vision for our area.

Feedback



1) Are there any other national or global issues or trends that we should take account of when preparing the Joint Strategic Plan?

YES NO

If YES, please explain what these are and why:

3 SW Herts today

South West Herts today is a great place to live, work and spend leisure time.

It is a place defined as much by its urban character and proximity to London as its rural character, countryside and access to fantastic green and open spaces. From rural villages to historic market towns, a New Town, a small city and outer London feel, there is a great diversity of character across the area.

But there are still issues that we need to address, especially when planning for the future.



What you've already told us...

Before beginning work on the Joint Strategic Plan, we wanted to get a better understanding from those who live and work in SW Herts about what they like about the area now and what we should be prioritising as we look to shape the future.

To help with this we carried out a 'SW Herts Your Future' poll in early 2020.

One of the key messages from the poll was that 86% of local people felt happy about living or working in SW Herts. Their favourite things about the area were parks, open spaces and its closeness to London.

In terms of improvements, the provision of better health facilities was the priority for most respondents. Additionally, three key themes were also identified, these being the need for green spaces, infrastructure and healthcare facilities.

In terms of the priorities for improving the area, 65% of respondents voted for 'Better Health Facilities'. For the under 25s, they pointed to 'Easier to get around', 'Better housing choice' and 'Better health facilities'.

We have also held a series of workshops involving elected Councillors, Council Officers, stakeholders and a SW Herts based youth group.

We have sought informal feedback from residents through our engagement website.

We asked for your views on SW Herts as it is today and what it should be like in the future.

The issues, challenges and opportunities raised through those conversations are included in the following summaries.



Our environment in South West Herts

Climate emergency

- All five South West Herts local authorities, as well as Hertfordshire County Council, have declared a climate emergency and the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) was established in January 2020
- Further action is required to meet, and ideally exceed, the Government's target of net zero carbon by 2050
- Area's water resources are under particular pressure, with lower than average annual rainfall, a growing population, and water use higher than the national average

Home to important landscapes

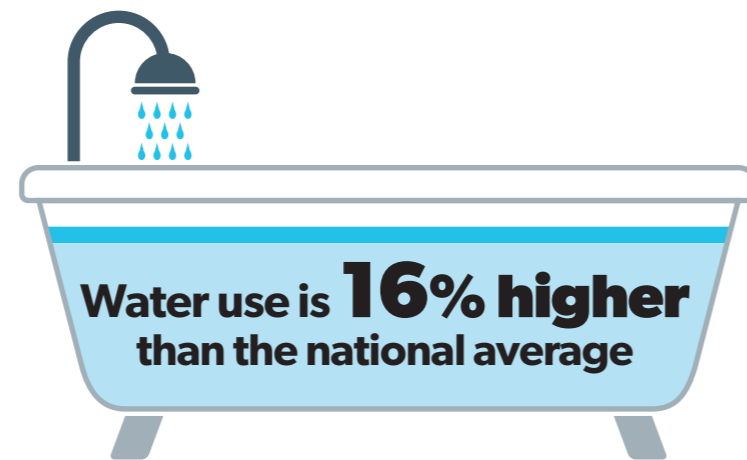
- Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) characterised by its chalk streams, commons and beech woodlands, part of which is designated as a 'Special Area of Conservation'
- Colne Valley Regional Park, connecting Rickmansworth with the Thames
- A wide range of public open spaces, such as the award winning Cassiobury Park and Verulamium Park, plus historic gardens, woodlands, and lakes

- The Grand Union Canal is a key asset that could be further enhanced and utilised for wildlife and recreation

Strong historic heritage

- Numerous listed buildings, many of which are located in designated Conservation Areas
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments such as Berkhamsted Castle and St Albans Cathedral, which is thought to be the oldest site of continuous Christian worship in Britain

Home to **88** Conservation Areas



Access to green space

- Making better use of the land between our buildings and informal open space can help improve our public areas, improve connectivity with green spaces, support biodiversity and help mitigate the effects of climate change
- Access to high quality green space can have a positive impact on our well-being

- The Covid pandemic has made us value both public and private open space more than ever, with green space especially important to those living in more built-up parts of the area
- The greening of urban areas can also help support biodiversity, link up wildlife corridors and lessen the impacts of climate change

Attractive as a home for businesses and people

- High quality natural environment that makes the area attractive as a location for businesses and a desirable place to live

40 Green Flag Award winning parks



Feedback

2) Do you agree with our summary of the current issues relating to OUR ENVIRONMENT in SW Herts?

YES NO

If NO please explain why:

3) Are there any issues or opportunities we have missed?

YES NO

If YES please explain why:

Living in South West Herts

Location

- The area has many locational advantages, being attractive for those needing access to London, or to Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted or Luton airports, whether for business or pleasure

Diversity of character

- Home to a wide range of communities, from large towns to a number of smaller historic market towns, rural villages and hamlets
- A variety of types of homes, ranging from large detached houses in more rural parts of the area, through to higher density apartments in central Watford

Population changes

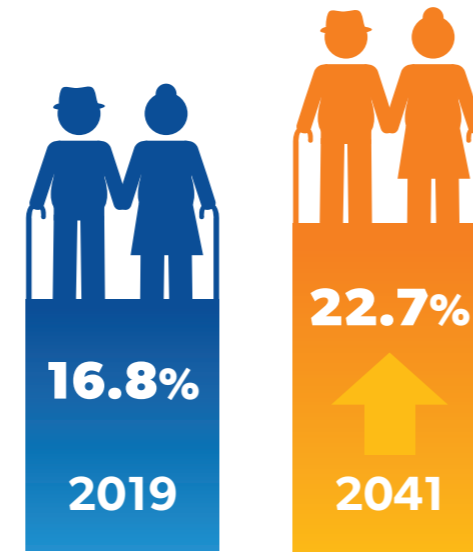
- The local population is growing. In particular, growth in the 65+ age group will increase demand for different types of housing, accessible healthcare and accessible local facilities.
- Watford is also seeing an increase in younger people moving into the town, which places different demands on services and facilities

Housing pressures

- Demand for housing is high, but a large proportion of the area is designated as Green Belt or rural area, so finding suitable locations for sustainable growth is a huge challenge
- House prices are very high, making it very hard to get on the housing ladder and to afford the type of home that suits your family size and lifestyle

Prosperity hides some inequalities

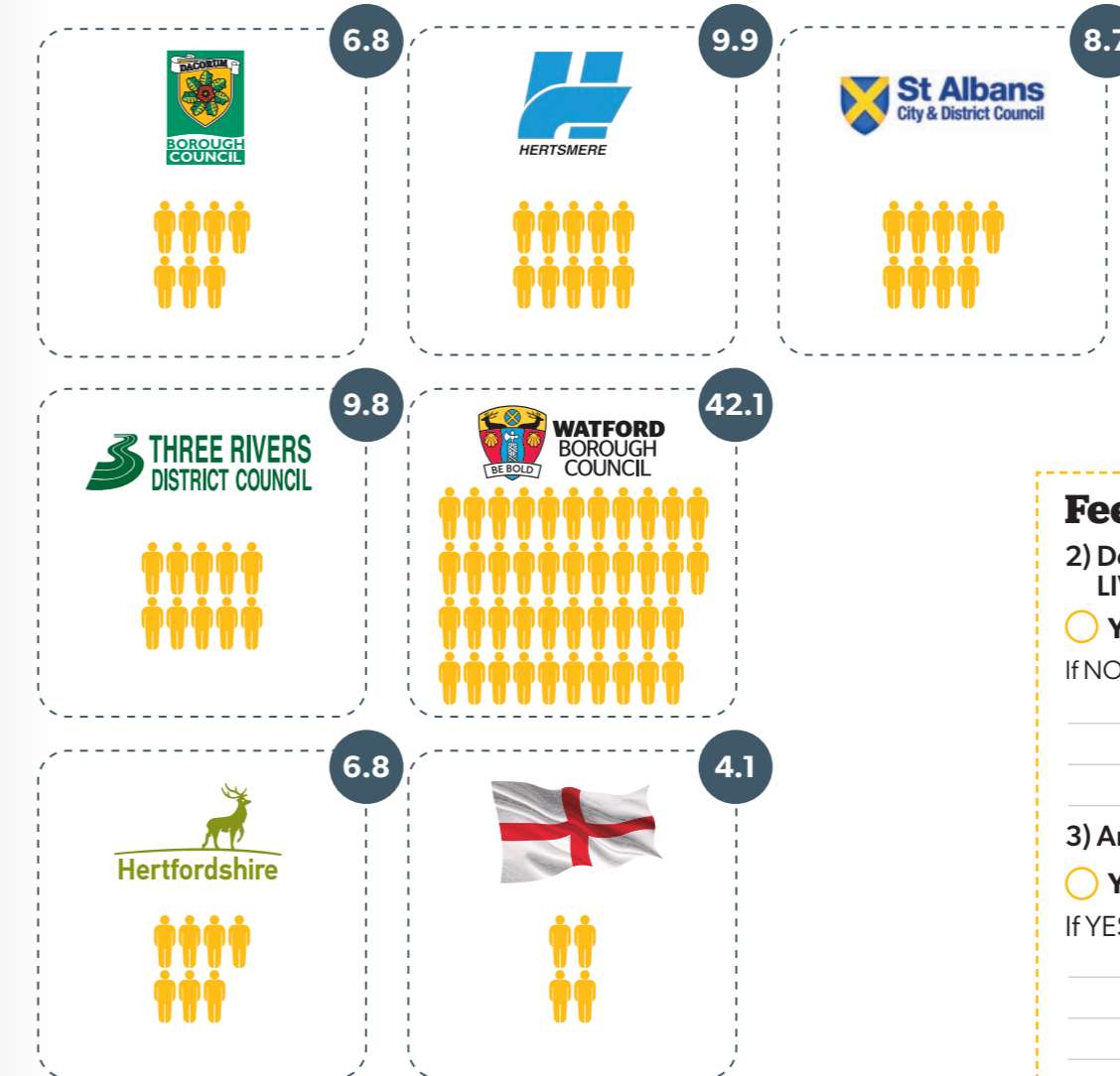
- There are some pockets of deprivation, mostly focussed in the larger centres of Watford, Hemel Hempstead and Borehamwood
- There are health inequalities across the area, with differences in life expectancy of up to 10 years
- Patients have variable access to local health and social care services
- Hospitals within the area are in a poor physical condition and need upgrading to ensure they can continue to deliver the range and quality of services required
- Those living outside of the larger towns are more likely to suffer from isolation and need access to a car to be able to reach local services and facilities



In 2019 those aged 65+ represented 16.8% of the area's population, with this predicated to rise to 22.7% by 2041

Population density

Number of people per hectare (2011)



House prices



Feedback

2) Do you agree with our summary of the current issues relating to LIVING in SW Herts?

YES NO

If NO please explain why:

3) Are there any issues or opportunities we have missed?

YES NO

If YES please explain why:

Working in South West Herts

Strong and growing economy

- Economy has recovered well from the last recession, growing by around 4% a year since 2011
- Historically driven by the professional and business services sectors, with other strong sectors emerging such as film/TV, life sciences, sustainable construction and advanced engineering and manufacturing

- Home to a number of international business HQs, in area such as Clarendon Road in Watford and the Maylands Business Park in Hemel Hempstead

Economic Pressures

- Some sectors have declined in recent years, particularly public administration and manufacturing
- Land availability for both new and existing businesses is very challenging due to planning constraints and competition with housing
- Some companies have moved out of the area in the search for cheaper and larger premises

- Growth in the construction, education and healthcare sectors is particularly dependent on the employment of non-UK nationals

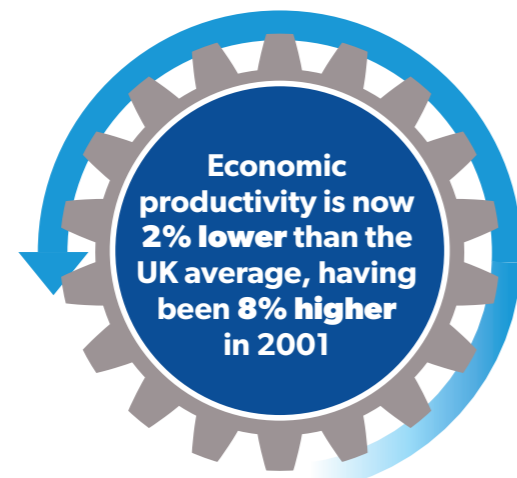
- High house prices are one of the reasons key sectors struggle to recruit

Research and innovation

- A strong research and innovation sector with the likes of Rothamsted Research and the Building Research Establishment - global leaders in the fields of agri-tech and building research
- The Herts Innovation Quarter Enterprise Zone will encourage growth in these and other related sectors

Creative industries

- A strong and growing location for creative industries including publishing, film and TV, arts and entertainment
- Home to Elstree Studios, BBC Elstree, Warner Bros Studios at Leavesden and the newly developed Sky Studios, Borehamwood



Low unemployment

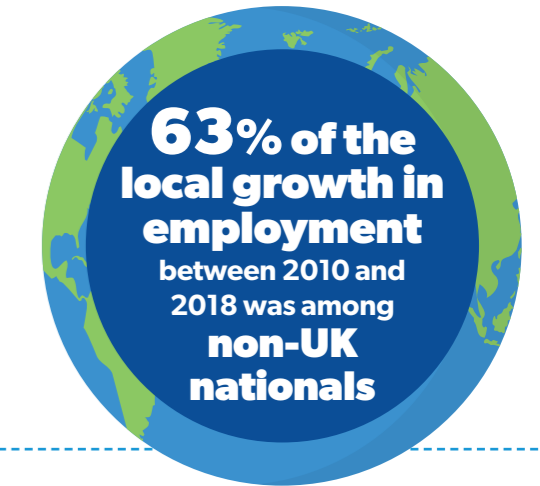
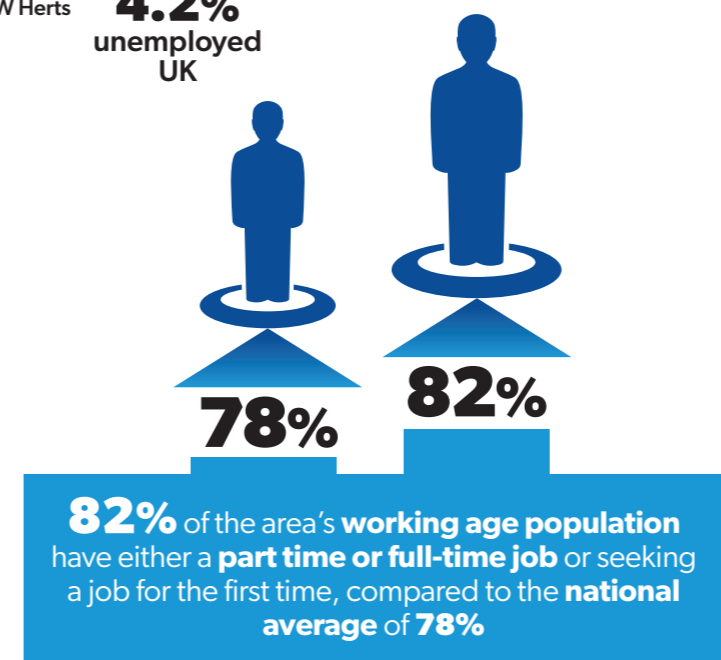
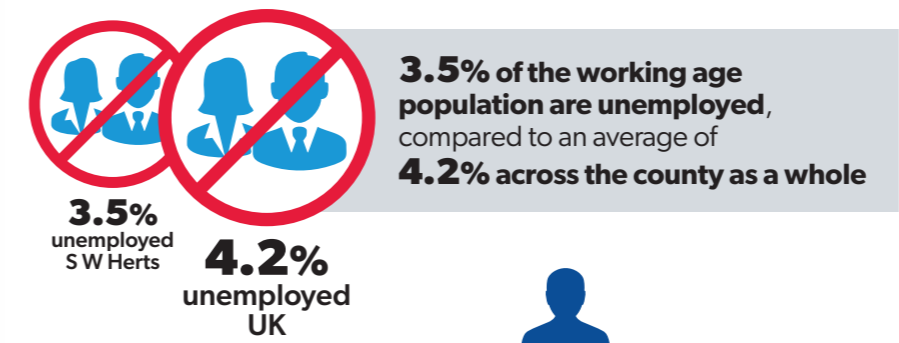
- The proportion of the area's working age population who have either a part time or full-time job or seeking a job for the first time is significantly higher than the national average.
- Unemployment is lower than the national and county average, with all districts have seen a significant fall in those without jobs since 2010

A highly skilled workforce

- Home to a highly skilled workforce, but there are not always suitable jobs to allow residents to work locally
- Local skills and education opportunities are supported by the nationally respected University of Hertfordshire
- Further education opportunities are offered by both West Herts College and Oaklands College

Agile working

- The Covid pandemic has increased the importance of ensuring technology and data networks are sufficient to support changing ways of working, especially in some rural areas where access to broadband needs upgrading



Feedback

4) Do you agree with our summary of the current issues relating to **WORKING in SW Herts**?
 YES NO
 If NO please explain why:

5) Are there any issues or opportunities we have missed?
 YES NO
 If YES please explain why:

Playing in South West Herts

Strong sporting community

- SW Herts has one of the highest sports participation rates in the country, helping to keep obesity levels below the national average
- Teams such as Watford, Arsenal, Boreham Wood, Kings Langley and other grassroots football clubs provide local outreach to people of all ages

High quality visitor attractions

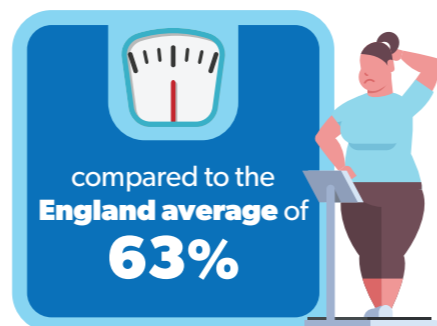
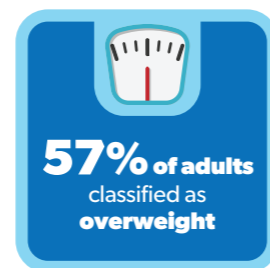
- The area is home to nine registered parks and gardens and six National Trust sites
- Warner Bros. Studio and St Albans Cathedral attract local, national and international tourists
- Most visitors only stay for the day, and more can be done to celebrate and promote SW Herts as a destination where visitors spend more time

Shopping and socialising

- A number of well-established town centres, with Watford providing the largest range of leisure and shopping facilities
- A better night-time and entertainment offer would attract a more diverse and younger range of people, but must be supported by improved public transport
- Scope to provide new leisure, cultural and recreational facilities and to improve the accessibility of existing facilities for those who do not have access to a car



Watford FC's Community Sports and Education Trust run over **30 different projects** engaging with over **158,000 participants** annually



High quality cycle networks

- There are a number of high quality cycle networks in the area that are predominantly used for leisure and recreation, including the Nickey Line that follows the route of the former Harpenden to

Hemel Hempstead Railway and the Ebury Way connecting Watford and Rickmansworth and other routes along the Grand Union Canal

- These networks form important green corridors, providing wildlife links as well as pleasant traffic free routes

Streets and public spaces

- There are opportunities for the well-planned regeneration of some town centres, which can boost local trade and improve the experience for those shopping there

72% of adults recorded as **physically active** in 2019/20

compared to the **national average of 66%**



In 2019 'The Making of Harry Potter' studio tour at Warner Bros. generated almost **£133 million** for the local economy

Feedback

6) Do you agree with our summary of the current issues relating to **PLAYING** in SW Herts?

YES NO

If NO please explain why:

7) Are there any issues or opportunities we have missed?

YES NO

If YES please explain why:



Moving around South West Herts

Good North-South links

- Connected by fast and efficient links to London and the Midlands by the M1, A1, M25, Midland Main Line and West Coast Main Line, as well as stops on the London Underground and Overground network
- The Abbey Line connecting St Albans and Watford has significant future potential and a more frequent service would help improve local north south links
- Residents have highlighted the importance of continued easy accessibility to leisure and employment opportunities in London



9 out of 10 households own at least one car

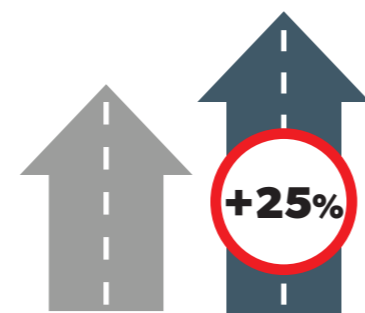
Poor East-West links

- East-west movements, particularly for public transport, are however poor and focussed on the M25 and A414.
- East-west travel is not possible by train, whilst bus services are infrequent and slow

63% of trips in Hertfordshire are less than 5 miles

Rail and road congestion

- Road congestion is a particular issue along east-west routes where there isn't a realistic public transport alternative
- Rail congestion is a common issue at peak times, and likely to increase with growing demand
- A number of rail lines are forecast to be operating at over capacity by 2031, especially the Midland Main Line to St Pancras, West Coast Main Line suburban services and Great Northern services to Moorgate, although it is unclear how the Covid pandemic will affect these forecasts



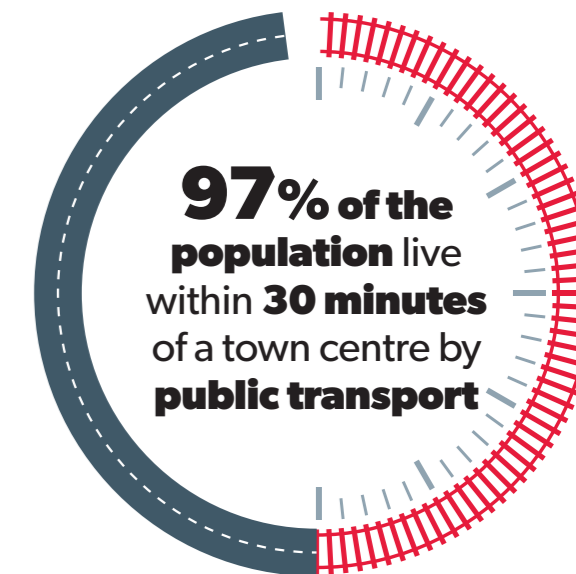
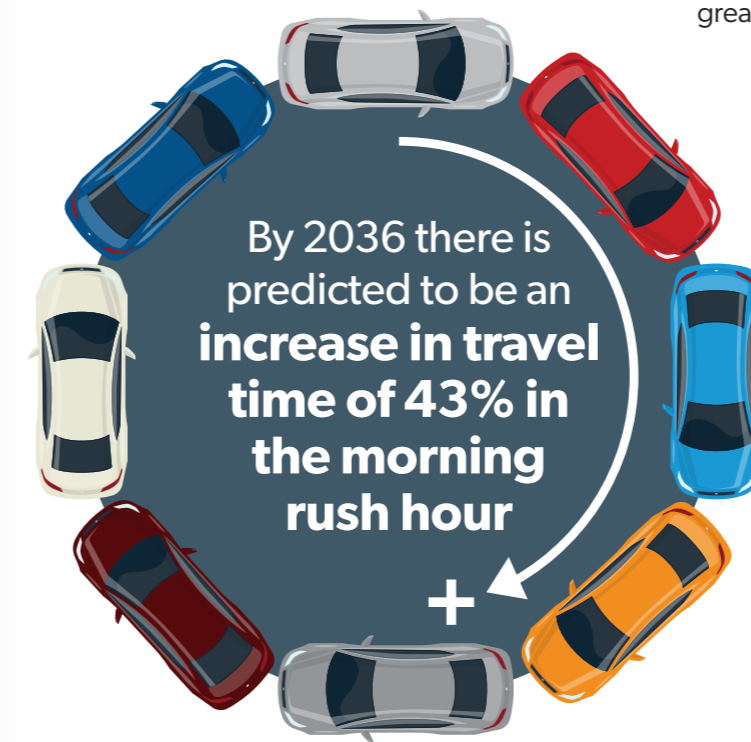
Predicted **25% increase in trips originating in Hertfordshire by 2036**

Cycling connections

- More than half of trips made in Hertfordshire are less than 5 miles, a distance that many could do on a bicycle with the right infrastructure in place
- Cycling improvements around Hemel Hempstead and an off-road cycleway connecting St Albans to Luton via Harpenden, and along the A405 from St Albans to Leavesden are helping to improve the otherwise patchy and variable quality cycle network. However these routes remain underused

Car reliance

- Public transport in rural parts of SW Herts is poor. Car dependency in the area is therefore very high, both for local and longer trips. Car use has increased as a result of the pandemic
- Discussions are underway to deliver an east-west Mass Rapid Transit scheme, broadly following the route of the A414 from Hemel Hempstead to Harlow, to help support a move away from reliance on the private car
- Whilst there is a slow move towards greener movement with electric cars and shared travel options such as car clubs, there is a lack of supporting infrastructure to encourage greater uptake



Feedback

6) Do you agree with our summary of the current issues relating to MOVING in SW Herts?

YES NO

If NO please explain why:

7) Are there any issues or opportunities we have missed?

YES NO

If YES please explain why:

4 Planning for infrastructure

It is vital when planning for our area's future that full account is taken of the infrastructure needed to deliver sustainable growth and what opportunities there are to help reduce gaps in existing provision. It is also critical to ensure these essential facilities and services are delivered at the right time and in the right place.

What do we mean by 'infrastructure'?

The term covers a wide range of services and facilities, from those we use every day to others we use more occasionally. It includes things like:

- Public transport – buses, trains and bike hire schemes
- Footpaths and cycle routes
- Roads
- Water (both drinking and waste)
- Internet and telephone connections
- Energy supplies
- Sports facilities – both indoor and outdoor
- Health services – such as GPs and hospitals
- Green spaces – parks, country parks and more informal areas of open space
- Community halls
- Schools

Whilst we don't directly provide much of this infrastructure, it is important that when planning for our area we work with the relevant providers to ensure these services and facilities are provided at the right time and in the right place. New infrastructure should be planned so that it brings benefits to existing as well as new residents and employers.

Work done to support our Local Plans highlights significant gaps in infrastructure provision, and in particular the difficulties in planning for services and facilities that cross council boundaries. These challenges are reflected in the informal feedback we have received so far, and will only increase over time.

By working together, we will be in a stronger position secure funding and deliver the infrastructure that local people and businesses want to see.

The Joint Strategic Plan will need to be supported by a longer term delivery plan setting out what types of infrastructure are needed where, by when, and how they are expected to be paid for. This document will be prepared once it is clearer how much growth the area will need to accommodate and where it will be located.

Some of the challenges we face have been highlighted in the 'SW Herts today' section above, but there may be others that you wish to draw our attention to.

Feedback

12) Are there any long term infrastructure challenges or opportunities that you would like to make us aware of as we begin work on the plan?

YES NO

If YES, please explain what these are and why:

Current and proposed key infrastructure

Two important large scale infrastructure projects are already at the planning stage, or underway across SW Herts. They provide an indication of the type and scale of infrastructure investment that will be required to support long term sustainable growth.



The **West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust** has been identified by Government as one of eight 'Pathfinder' Trusts to deliver their plans to build 40 new hospitals across the UK by 2030. The proposals would see Watford General redeveloped, together with significant improvements to the trust's other sites in St Albans and Hemel Hempstead, – improving the range and quality of services on offer and the way in which they are delivered.



The **Hertfordshire Essex rapid transit (HERT)** is intended to be a new, sustainable passenger transport network running from Hemel Hempstead and West Watford, joining just south of St Albans in Hertfordshire, to Harlow in Essex and onwards to Stansted Airport. It will carry more people than a car but will be more convenient and reliable than a traditional bus.

Initial public consultation has been carried out to help inform the business case that will be submitted to government. This will explore what benefits the HERT could provide, the different options available and potential costs. [See YouTube clip for more information](#)

5 The draft vision – tell us what you think

We have drafted a vision statement for the South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan, which we would like your feedback on.

This vision has been developed in line with issues raised about our environment, and living, working, playing and moving around in the area.

Our vision statement

Realising our potential

“South West Herts will realise its full potential of being globally connected, nationally recognised and locally cherished. Known for its creative spirit, collaborative working and willingness to accelerate positive change, it will be a place where sustainable growth provides a better future for everyone.”



Feedback

13) Does the draft vision statement summarise your aspirations for the future of South West Hertfordshire to 2050?

YES NO

14) Are there any changes you would like to see to the vision statement?

YES NO

If YES, please explain what these are and why:

The objectives we set today will shape the lives of generations to come. And this is where it starts...

Setting clear objectives

In order to achieve our vision, we have established six pillars to guide us.

These set out our ambitions for the key areas that the plan will cover. Each pillar contains a number of more specific objectives that are designed to help shape future policies and allocations within the Joint Strategic Plan, and wider investment decisions in the area.

Through these pillars we aim to understand current and future needs and desires of those who live and work in the area, and where we want to be by 2050.

The 6 Pillars

Living green in a healthy natural environment

What if SW Herts made living green easy and led our country's response to climate change?

Growing opportunities to work locally

What if SW Herts was a place where investors, innovators, entrepreneurs and creators chose to come together?

Living in healthy, thriving local communities

What if SW Herts was an affordable, sustainable and fulfilling place to live?

Moving easily in well connected places

What if SW Herts had more people moving around by public transport, bikes and on foot than by car?

Building homes and places that people are proud of

What if SW Herts became nationally recognised as providing a high quality of life?

Delivering robust and sustainable infrastructure

What if SW Herts was cleaner and greener, with more robust and sustainable infrastructure?



These pillars are expanded in more detail overleaf. We would like your feedback on each of these and the objectives that sit beneath them.

Living green in a healthy natural environment

We have nationally recognised and locally cherished green and open spaces, but our natural environment is fragile. We are facing a climate and ecological emergency and it is time for us to accelerate change. Our future will balance demand for resources and growth with the natural capacity of our environment. We must be greener, healthier and leaders in climate action.

Our objectives



Commit to net zero carbon

Ensure all new development is net zero carbon and striving to be carbon negative, while improving the carbon performance of our existing built environment.



Bring people closer to nature

Protect the natural, recreational and character value of the area's green spaces, integrate nature into all new development, and improve existing links.



Create sustainable buildings and infrastructure

Introduce nature based solutions that are resilient to the effects of climate change.



Enrich native biodiversity and ecology

Protect, enhance and connect new and existing biodiversity and ecological networks.



Green construction

Build responsibly with modern methods that reduce resource consumption and reuse materials.



Feedback

15) Do you support the draft objectives relating to LIVING GREEN IN A HEALTHY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT?

YES NO

Please explain your answer and any suggested changes:

Growing opportunities to work locally

We have a high performing economy with globally leading scientific research, film, TV and creative media together with office and service sector jobs. But it will not be enough to rely on these businesses and sectors alone to drive our future. We must embrace new and growing sectors, new models of working, and new ways of shopping and accessing services. There must be opportunities for everyone.

Our objectives



Create space to grow

Support the delivery of a wide range of quality workspaces, where new and existing businesses from different sectors can grow and flourish.



Target investment

Encourage investment in new and high performing sectors to allow the local economy to prosper and keep the workforce local.



Diversify and increase activity in centres

Encourage the resilience of high streets and town centres by supporting mixed use and their diversified role as destinations for leisure, culture and work.



Retain and develop talent

Support and promote the provision of facilities, funding, and links to business for education and training, including access to higher education, lifetime learning, apprenticeships, and re-skilling for all.



Strengthen the visitor economy

Build on our globally recognised attractions, to develop a thriving visitor economy.



Feedback

16) Do you support the draft objectives relating to GROWING OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK LOCALLY?

YES NO

Please explain your answer and any suggested changes:

Living in healthy, thriving local communities

Our area is a desirable and attractive place to live. Our population is generally healthy, prosperous and people feel positive about the experience of living and working here. But this must not mask our challenges. We have areas of deprivation and a number of services under pressure. We know that our people are our future, and we must help both new and existing communities achieve the highest quality of life and support their physical and mental health and wellbeing.



Our objectives



Provide healthy places to live

Focus on creating homes and neighbourhoods that provide opportunities for healthy living and strong physical and mental wellbeing.



Locate facilities to encourage community interaction

Support the timely delivery of well located, flexible spaces for work, leisure, health, learning, cultural, community and shopping facilities.



Ensure safe and inclusive places and spaces

Create and protect environments where individuals and communities feel safe and supported.

Feedback



17) Do you support the draft objectives relating to LIVING IN HEALTHY, THRIVING LOCAL COMMUNITIES?

YES NO

Please explain your answer and any suggested changes:

Moving easily in connected places

Our area is defined by its location and its easy access to London. However, our roads are congested and east-west public transport links are poor. It is time for us all to change the way we travel. We need a future where fast, efficient and affordable public transport and walkable neighbourhoods encourage greener travel, where our communities feel connected and where our people, businesses, visitors and goods can move around easily.

Our objectives



Transform travel

Encourage a radical shift away from car travel by providing accessible, efficient, safe, and affordable alternatives.



Connect towns and villages

Make travel between new and existing communities easier by strengthening public transport, cycle and walking networks and promoting on-demand services.



Improve delivery solutions

Support a move towards carbon negative and more sustainable delivery networks.



Create walkable neighbourhoods

Create a neighbourhood full of activity, where people can access all their daily needs, workplaces and transport options by foot and bike, and where life is active.



Feedback



18) Do you support the draft objectives relating to MOVING EASILY IN CONNECTED PLACES?

YES NO

Please explain your answer and any suggested changes:

Building homes and places that people are proud of

Our area's distinct qualities have long attracted people to move here. The natural environment, the mix of towns and villages and the proximity to London are all key factors in what makes the area an enviable place to be. There is no single unifying character, but this variety is our strength. We want to build on our diversity and desirability by making strategic decisions about where and how we build.

Our objectives



Design attractive places

Deliver places that are fit for current and future needs, where high quality buildings and public spaces create places that people feel proud to call home.



Celebrate a diverse place

Reinforce the varied urban and rural character of the area.



Deliver new homes in the right places

Ensure homes are built in sustainable, well connected locations, accompanied by the timely delivery of new infrastructure.



Recognise current and future housing needs

Ensure current and future residents can live in a high quality home they can afford, that is flexible and adaptable to different lifestyles and work patterns.



Feedback

19) Do you support the draft objectives relating to BUILDING HOMES AND PLACES THAT PEOPLE ARE PROUD OF?

YES NO

Please explain your answer and any suggested changes:

Delivering robust and sustainable infrastructure

Our area is growing and there is an ever increasing demand on resources. This will not change and indeed we want to actively encourage continued investment in our area. But we must change how we do this. We need a proactive and positive approach to planning and delivering infrastructure that focuses on a more resilient and sustainable future.

Our objectives



Deliver key infrastructure

Identify the infrastructure required to support new and existing growth, work with partners to deliver it in a timely manner and ensure it meets local needs, and adapts to the effects of climate change.



Green energy generation

Promote local energy production with an increased focus on renewable sources.



Promote circular economies

Minimise waste by promoting the reduction, reuse and recycling of materials.



Advance digital infrastructure

Ensure everyone can be connected through fast digital networks.

Feedback

20) Do you support the draft objectives relating to DELIVERING ROBUST AND SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE?

YES NO

Please explain your answer and any suggested changes:

Feedback

21) Which of the six topics covered by the 'pillars' is of most importance to you?

Please tick the relevant box below:

- Living green in a healthy natural environment
- Growing opportunities to work locally
- Living in healthy, thriving local communities
- Moving easily in well connected places
- Building homes and places that people are proud of
- Delivering robust and sustainable infrastructure

Please explain the reasons for your choice:

6 Shaping the future



Between now and 2050 SW Herts will grow and change. The Joint Strategic Plan will play a very important role in shaping the future of the area, identifying broad locations for sustainable growth, with the allocation of detailed site boundaries and the choice of smaller-scale sites being left to Local Plans to define.

No decision on either the scale or location of new development has been made yet.

We know it will be a challenge to decide on the best locations for the most sustainable growth, and specific local concerns will need to be considered alongside the need for new infrastructure, homes and jobs before any decisions are made.

The pattern of sustainable growth that is eventually chosen for the Joint Strategic Plan is unlikely to be based on just one of the growth types outlined here. Rather it will include a mix of types of growth that are best suited to the SW Herts area and reflect local constraints, opportunities and ambitions.

We are required by Government to ensure that we have maximised the use of land that has been previously built on ('brownfield' sites), before considering using any undeveloped land ('greenfield' sites).

We would like your feedback on each of each of these growth types. When answering the questions that follow, please think about how the growth types might impact on **the 6 pillars and objectives** set out in section 4:

- 1 Living green in a healthy natural environment**
Green spaces and biodiversity could be enhanced through larger-scale growth, for example by creating large-scale new green spaces. Alternatively, smaller green spaces could be linked together or existing spaces could be extended.
- 2 Growing opportunities to work locally**
The success of some job types is based in part on companies co-locating so that **businesses can work together**. Equally, **spreading job opportunities** around, including to smaller towns and villages, can help **to sustain existing and new town and local centres**.
- 3 Living in healthy, thriving local communities**
New growth should ideally be located where it can benefit new and existing communities by ensuring it enables improved **access to services, facilities and green space** and **support community interaction**.
- 4 Moving easily in well connected places**
Our ambition to meet and ideally exceed net zero **carbon targets** suggests that we should locate growth in places which will reduce the need to travel by private car. Think about which options will provide the best opportunities for residents to use more **sustainable forms of transport**, such as public transport, walking or cycling to get from one place to another.
- 5 Building homes and places that people are proud of**
Different types of growth can support **different types of homes** – whether that be houses or apartments – which can be suited to different people at different stages of their lives. **Affordable housing** may also be easier to deliver as part of some growth types than others, due to economies of scale.
- 6 Delivering robust and sustainable infrastructure**
When deciding where to locate new growth we need to consider where **access to existing and planned infrastructure** (see section 4) could promote the **efficient use of resources**.

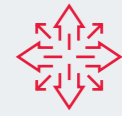
Shaping the future

We have set out a number of different growth types below, and your feedback will help us develop these in more detail in the next stage of our plan.



A) Growth within existing large settlements

A continued focus on our existing city, towns and large villages, through a combination of more dense development than traditionally seen in SW Herts and maximising redevelopment opportunities.



B) Outward growth of existing large settlements

The outward growth of existing city, towns and large villages, through urban extensions.



C) New settlements

The creation of completely new communities. These would need to be large enough to ensure they can provide key local facilities.



D) Growth of groups of settlements

Expanding the size of a number of existing communities which are located near to one another. These would need to be large enough in total to ensure they can provide key local facilities.



E) Growth along sustainable transport corridors

Locating growth where there is potential to create new connected and improved public transport corridors, particularly those running east-west through the area.



F) Growing the best connected places

A focus on areas that already have, or have the potential for, good access to railway stations, high frequency bus routes, high quality cycle routes and good pedestrian accessibility.



G) Scattered growth

Growth spread across the whole area, in all sizes of settlements, from large to small.

A high-level assessment of how each of these different growth types performs in terms of their social, economic and environmental impacts is set out in a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report that accompanies this consultation. This has been prepared by independent specialist consultants and is available at www.swhertsplan.com/**. You are welcome to give your views on this assessment as part of your feedback.

There may also be other ways that you think the SW Herts area could accommodate sustainable growth that we haven't mentioned and that you would like to put forward for consideration.

The potential levels of new homes and jobs that could be accommodated by each growth type will be assessed at the next stage of the plan-making process. The views received through this consultation will be taken into account when refining options.



Feedback



22) Which option or options do you think is the most appropriate way to shape future growth in SW Herts?

Please tick **ALL** that apply:

- a) Growth within existing large settlements
- b) Outwards growth of existing large settlements
- c) New settlements
- d) Growth of groups of settlements
- e) Growth along key transport corridors
- f) Growing the best connected places
- g) Scattered growth

Please explain the reasons for your answer, relating this to the draft vision and objectives for the plan where possible.

23) Are there any other growth types we have not mentioned that you think should be considered?

YES NO

If YES, please explain what these are and why. (Note: we are not considering specific locations or sites at this stage):

7 Making it happen

At this early stage of preparing a plan, details of precisely how the vision and objectives will be delivered are not being considered. That will come in future stages. However, it is important to consider how the Joint Strategic Plan could support innovative solutions to the challenges faced in SW Herts, as this will help determine how aspirational the Joint Strategic Plan should be.

Some case studies, ranging from an international to more local scale that show what we might want to try to achieve are set out below.



Heartwood Forest

The Woodland Trust have created a new forest near Sandridge, in St Albans district. Heartwood Forest's 347-hectare site was created on what was once mainly agricultural land. It's so big that it's now the largest continuous new native forest in England; a place where everyone can find space, peace, wildlife and miles of beautiful woodland to explore. [More information](#)



Rivertech, Rickmansworth

Flexible working is here to stay. Rivertech is a shared workspace in Rickmansworth for entrepreneurs, freelancers, start-ups, small and medium businesses. Inclusive and affordable workspace is complemented by a range of clubs and programmes that support skills exchange, partnerships, and member wellbeing. [More information](#)



Aarhus Carbon Neutral City

Aarhus, Denmark aims to become a carbon neutral city by 2030, having already cut its emissions by 50% in the last 10 years. The city has undergone a radical energy transformation, moving from fossil fuel to heat pumps and electric boilers and switching the majority of heating and electricity to biomass. To reach its goal of 100% renewable energy, it is planning to increase solar and wind power, boost efficiency in buildings, and decarbonise transportation. [More information](#)



Co-located community services

Loneliness can be a major issue in cities and towns, and the loss of community space and increasingly independent lifestyles are often considered contributing factors. Café 1759 in Whitehill & Bordon, Hampshire is a not-for-profit community café and multi-purpose space run by the local housing association. It provides a range of activities and services including programmes with the local GP surgery, employment and health-check events. [More information](#)



Lifetime neighbourhoods

Lifetime neighbourhoods are designed to be welcoming, accessible, and inviting for everyone; regardless of age, health, or disability. They are built to be accessible, offer a mix of services and amenities, promote social networks and interaction with nature, and offer a range of house types and tenures that can be flexible to meet residents' changing needs. [More information](#)



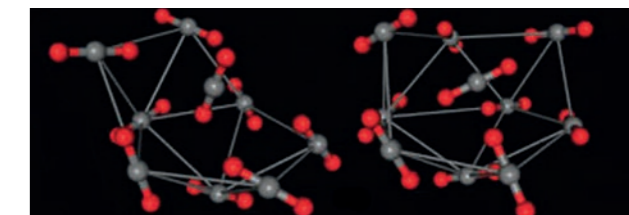
One Planet Living

Bioregional created the One Planet Living framework in 2003 from their experience developing the multi-award-winning BedZED eco-village in South London. The One Planet Living sustainability framework comprises principles and guidance designed to support the creation of a 'One Planet Action Plan' that acts as a route map towards a more sustainable future for organisations and authorities. [More information](#)



Cycle Superhighways

Denmark is developing a cycle superhighway network to link urban areas and workplaces across municipal borders. The first cycle superhighway opened in 2012 and there are now nine across the country. On average, there is a 23% increase in cycle trips every time a route is upgraded to a cycle superhighway. Cooperation between municipalities was key in realising this model. [More information](#)



Carbon capture

As concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) continue to rise and drive climate changes, scientists have been researching options not just to reduce CO₂ emissions, but to actually remove existing carbon from the atmosphere. 'Carbon cracking' is one such approach that is at the pilot stage. [Good News: Rocks Crack Under Pressure from Mineral CO₂ Storage – Eos](#)



High density mixed use, Watford

The primary office location in SW Herts, Clarendon Road has seen £100m of private sector investment and commitments for 62,000sqm of new high quality employment floorspace including KPMG, PwC and TJX's new flagship European headquarters. A public realm improvement scheme has been completed to prioritise pedestrians and sustainable travel choices that supports higher density living in a quality environment.

Feedback

24) Are there any further comments you would like to make on the SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan?

YES NO

If YES, please explain what these are and why:

25) Are there any other 'good practice' examples you feel should be considered for SW Herts?

YES NO

If YES, please explain what these are and why:

8 How to comment

We are really keen to hear your views on the questions we ask within this consultation. Comments can be made from *****date***** to *****date*****. Your views are important as they will help shape the next stages of the Joint Strategic Plan.

You can make your comments in a number of different ways. The easiest way is via our website:

 www.swhertsplan.com



Alternatively if you would prefer to send us your written comments you can download a comment form from the website and return to:

 **Email**
*****.gov.uk

 **Post**
SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan Team
c/o Dacorum Borough Council

The Forum, Marlowes,
Hemel Hempstead,
Hertfordshire HP1 1DN

You can also comment on the Sustainability Scoping Report that accompanies this consultation *****add link***** by sending an email or letter to the above addresses.

If you respond to this consultation we will also give you the opportunity to say if you would like your contact details added to our database to ensure you are kept informed of progress on the project.

All comments/completed forms must be received by 5pm on **date**** 2022.**

Next steps

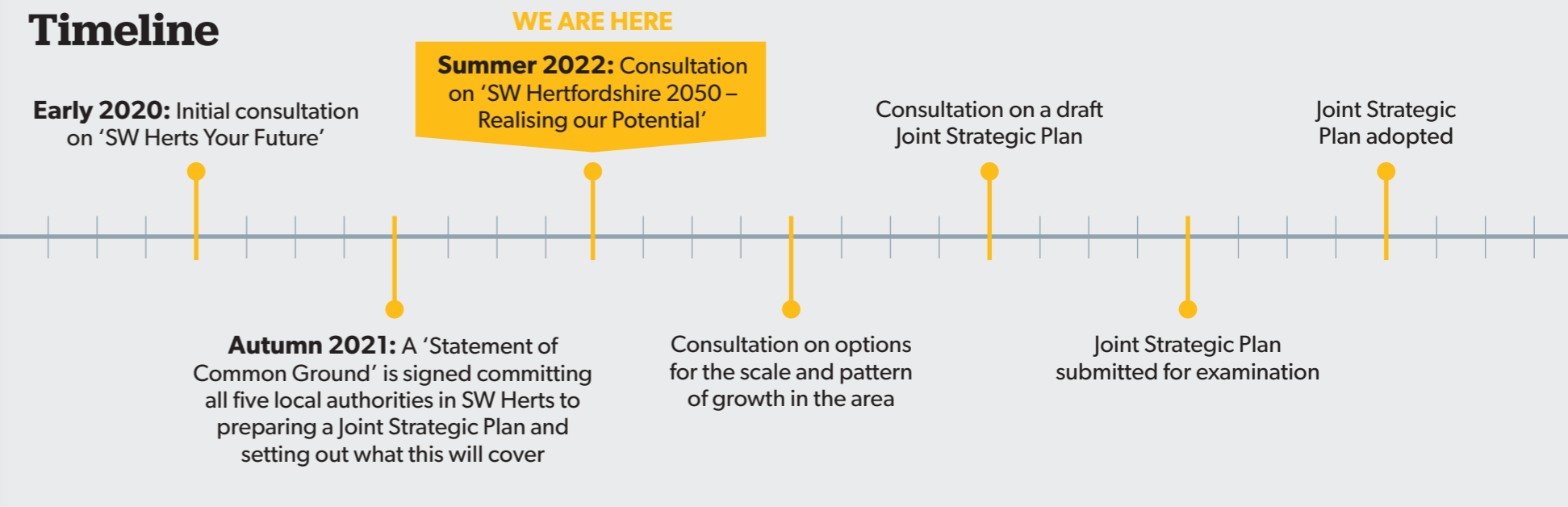
All the comments received before the consultation closes will be analysed and a summary report produced and published on our website.

The responses will be carefully considered and used to help inform the next stage of the SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan. This will be a 'spatial options' consultation, where we seek feedback on the appropriate amount and best locations for growth.

Further details of these next steps are available on our website.



Timeline

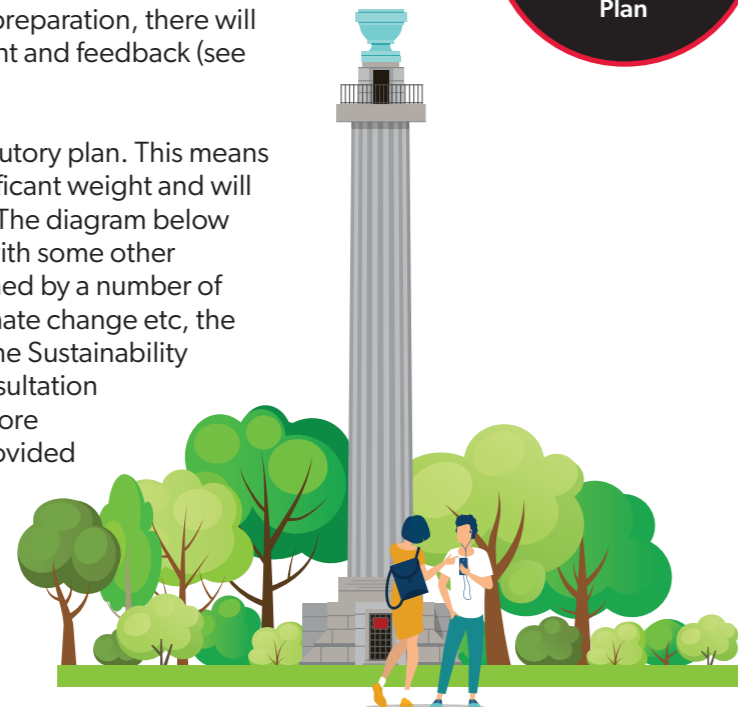


Appendix: Background to the Joint Strategic Plan

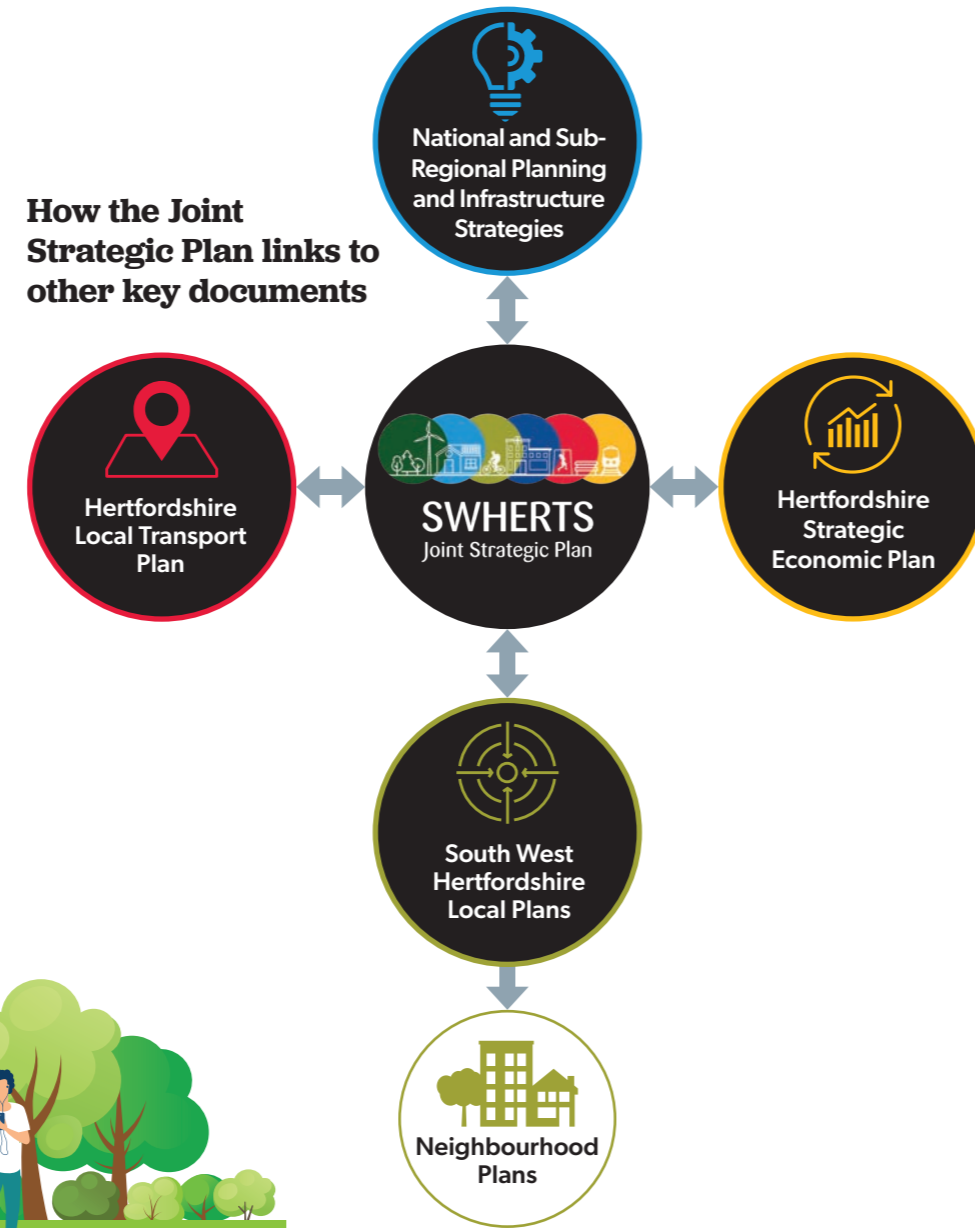
In 2014 we agreed a formal Memorandum of Understanding, pledging to work together to understand and plan strategically for the future development needs of South West Herts. This was followed by a signed Statement of Common Ground in 2021. This sets out a clear commitment to engage in a statutory plan making process, now taking shape in the form of the Joint Strategic Plan. It can be viewed here: [Statement of Common Ground](#).

The Joint Strategic Plan will take time to prepare as there are a number of formal stages that it needs to go through before it is put before an independent Planning Inspector and then comes into effect. At each key stage in the plan's preparation, there will be opportunities for further public comment and feedback (see timeline below).

The Joint Strategic Plan will be a formal statutory plan. This means that once finalised, the plan will carry significant weight and will be used to inform key planning decisions. The diagram below shows how the Joint Strategic Plan will fit with some other important documents. It will also be informed by a number of strategies relating to transport, health, climate change etc, the most important of which are listed within the Sustainability Scoping Report that accompanies this consultation [****add link****](#) and within a series of more technical 'Topic Papers' that have been provided as background to this consultation [***add link***](#).



How the Joint Strategic Plan links to other key documents



It is important to note that the Joint Strategic Plan will not replace our individual Local Plans, which will continue to be prepared by each of the district and borough councils. The Joint Strategic Plan will provide the overall strategic spatial strategy and set the level of housing and employment land to be provided to 2050 to meet the needs of SW Herts. It will also identify the key pieces of infrastructure required to support sustainable growth. As shown in the diagram below, the Joint Strategic Plan will be supplemented by more detailed plans prepared by the individual councils. New versions of these Local Plans are currently being prepared and, whilst they must usually cover a period of at least 15 years, there is a requirement that they are reviewed every 5 years after adoption. We would again note that no decisions have been made on any locations for growth. This will come later.

Future Local Plans (or their equivalents) will need to reflect the vision, objectives and strategic policies set by the Joint Strategic Plan, to help ensure the strategy set out in the Joint Strategic Plan is delivered. This includes both additional policies and the land allocations that these Local Plans will contain.



Any Neighbourhood Plans prepared in the SW Herts area will also need to take account of the Joint Strategic Plan when it comes into effect.

Statutory plan-making can be a complex and detailed process and it can be challenging to ensure everyone engages in this process, particularly when it looks a long way ahead and covers a large geographical area. However, the Joint Strategic Plan needs to be owned by our communities. To support this, effective public engagement and awareness raising is crucial. In July 2022 we adopted a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) [\(**inset web link**\)](#). This set out how we intend to consult on the Joint Strategic Plan. This was subject to public consultation from November 2021 to January 2022 before being finalised earlier this year. A more detailed Consultation and Engagement Plan that supports this current stage of the Joint Strategic Plan is on our website [***add link***](#).



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Joint Strategic Plan

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