

SW Herts JSP

Regulation 18: Issues and Options: Communications and Engagement Plan

Introduction

The purpose of this communications and engagement plan is to set out our suggested approach to cross authority engagement over the coming months to help develop and promote a Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) for South West Hertfordshire.

A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) setting out the broad approach to engagement has been prepared and consulted on and the team are currently reviewing comments. This plan is intended to provide more detail specifically in relation to the statutory Regulation 18 Issues and Options consultation planned for August – September 2022.

To ensure a diverse response to engagement, there are two strands of work planned, the core engagement hosted via the dedicated SW Herts engagement website and the digital engagement work planned using the latest available engagement software as part of the secured PropTech fund. The PropTech fund work is intended to supplement the wider engagement and target a younger audience.

Background and Summary of Work to Date

1. The five local planning authorities within South West Herts (Dacorum Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, Three Rivers District Council, and Watford Borough Council) are working in collaboration with Hertfordshire County Council to develop a JSP, with the intention to proactively plan for growth up to and beyond 2050.
2. The JSP will be a formal statutory Development Plan Document, providing the overarching strategic planning framework for the five Local Planning Authority areas.
3. The JSP team recognises the importance of ensuring that the JSP is not developed in isolation and that in order to help smooth the path of its development, ultimately allowing it to be a successfully adopted planning document, early, diverse and meaningful engagement with the wider community and stakeholders is pivotal.

SW Herts, Your Future, Digital Engagement

4. To commence early engagement with the community, a widespread digital engagement exercise was undertaken between February and May 2020, asking residents across the 6 authorities about issues that were important to them. This resulted in 3,270 members of the community interacting and providing nearly 15,000 pieces of individual feedback. The community also provided over 2,000 pieces of 'free text' written feedback, in addition to the poll questions. The overall outcomes of the initial engagement have been written up in full, both from a qualitative and quantitative basis and includes:
 - An even spread of ages of respondents, from under 25's to over 65's;
 - A clear emerging consensus on community priorities;
 - A strong basis for ongoing engagement; and
 - Over 700 people willing to be engaged during the next stage of work.

SW Herts, Realising our Potential, Vision Workshops

5. Building on the success of the initial consultation exercise and to enable a draft vision for the JSP to be created, a series of workshops were undertaken during 2021 and early 2022 involving a youth group, council officers, local councillors, and key stakeholders. The workshops helped build a greater understanding of the opportunities and challenges currently facing the area, whilst anticipating changes and trends that may inform how we live, work, move, and play in the future.
6. The results of the workshops are available on the dedicated SW Herts engagement website www.swhertsplan.com and have informed the preparation of a Vision report. This vision will form the basis of the first iteration of the JSP that we plan to consult on as part of the Regulation 18 Issues and Options consultation from August – September 2022.

Aims and Objectives of the Regulation 18 Engagement

7. The aims of the ongoing engagement are to:
 - Build awareness, understanding and generate interest in the process, resulting in greater participation in the future; and
 - Inform the technical work, providing information related to priorities, issues and opportunities.

The objectives of the ongoing engagement are to:

1. Engage with young people and record their views on key issues;
2. Establish and expand a dialogue with key stakeholders to become actively involved in the development of the plan; and
3. Communicate the benefits of working together and the vision and objectives of the JSP to residents and businesses in SW Herts, through our own and paid channels and by enabling and empowering local authorities to promote and share digital resources on their channels

Engagement Next Steps: Regulation 18 Consultation

8. The table below outlines how it is intended to continue joint engagement at a strategic level to meet the aims and objectives. The table includes potential additional engagement that could be undertaken at a more local level for each authority to carry out directly.
9. Building insight and transparency into the process over time will support both the key stages of JSP work and promote the benefits of joint working. It will be important to grow the audience at each stage and evaluate ongoing success, alongside recording quantitative and qualitative findings to inform the work.
10. All work will be in line with the Statement of Community Involvement and reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.
11. Proposed engagement activities are as follows:

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Stage	Area of work	Related Objective	Time scale	Suggested engagement activity
Preparation	JSP Programme support from communication officers	2	Now	Continue monthly communication officer meetings across the 6 authorities to coordinate engagement activity and consider how it can be built into existing workstreams. Embed JSP programme within wider communication plans for each authority. Map Local Plan timescales and other key events locally and regionally that may impact on the JSP Reg 18 engagement programme.
	Officers and members involved in JSP work	2	Now	Continue Council officer and member sessions (Strategic Planning Members Group, Steering Group and Strategic Planning Officers Group) to brief on JSP progress and upcoming engagement work.
	Wider officer and members	2	Now	Update members and officers not directly involved in JSP process through briefing notes or otherwise, to raise awareness and understanding. Consider extending this to statutory consultees.
	Youth Forum	1	Now	Establish Youth Forum meetings between April and September, with a view to undertaking 3 meetings, growing attendees each time. Agree overarching Terms of Reference, plus purpose and output for each meeting in advance, including asking the group to support the PropTech digital engagement exercise, given its emphasis on the 18-25 demographic.
	Website	3	Ongoing	Regularly update website based on above scope – key messaging, FAQs, timescales, ‘one pager’ etc. Track website traffic by webpage to see which areas are the most successful, and by geographic location if possible, to highlight any blind spots.
	Integration with wider collaborations	2	Ongoing	Update and integrate the Reg 18 engagement with wider workstreams, particularly those associated with collaboration (e.g. Hertfordshire Growth Board). Ensure through regular reviewing

				and communication that the engagement in relation to the JSP fits within any wider collaboration work to ensure consistency in messaging and approach.
Communications Protocol	3	April – May		Refresh communications protocols to ensure consistent messaging across the multiple authority areas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website and social media updates - Key messaging framework - Joint media protocol, including statement from Leaders once engagement goes live - Suite of document templates to support the engagement programme - Member briefings
FAQ	3.	April – May		Disseminate website FAQs amongst officers within each authority, including those not directly involved in the process to increase awareness, understanding and maximise opportunities. Update on rolling basis.
One pager	3.	April – May		Disseminate ‘one pager’ briefing note which serves as a public facing guide to the JSP including updating officers and members not directly involved in the process. The note would set out the benefits of the JSP, who is involved and how the work is developing with key next steps.
PropTech Fund	1.	April – May		Develop PropTech fund digital engagement exercise including marketing collateral and consultation questions Explore potential for social media ‘influencer’ to promote engagement process.
Meetings and networks	2	April – May		Map existing meeting network across the areas and consider attendance during summer months to promote consultation e.g., LEP meetings, relevant Parish Council meetings, Chamber of Commerce, heritage groups, environmental groups etc.
Database contacts	3	End May		District Councils to give everyone on their Local Plan consultation databases the option to ‘opt in’ to receive direct notification of the JSP engagement (in accordance with GDPR rules).
External press	1,2 &3	April - June		Agree approach to external press in relation committee cycle process and formal engagement launch. Options are

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No proactive media approach, but ensure we have ‘if-asked’ lines prepared to share with district/borough comms officers should they get media enquiries, mainly drawn from the FAQs on the JSP website - Proactive media approach, which would involve a template press release shared with district and borough comms teams, for them to issue after their individual council committee meeting, should it be approved that the plan can move forward for engagement.
	Toolbox	3	April – June	<p>Create ‘toolbox’ of engagement collateral to enable each authority to promote and directly undertake consultation at a local level, linked to meetings and networks above, initial ideas <i>for discussion</i> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QR codes on business cards for circulation including at stations/ high streets/ library’s/council buildings etc. • Digital signage adverts in stations and/ or bus stops • Radio advert • Email bulletins • Existing e-newsletters and residents magazines. • JSP-branded social media for use on own channels, potentially with a view to paid-for promotion.
	Interactive content	2.	May – June	<p>Consider interactive content to build online presence in lead up to consultation stage – for example explanatory video from Youth Forum or others in relation to forthcoming consultation, to be hosted on the engagement website.</p>
During	Commence consultation	1,2 & 3	Aug – to run for 8 weeks	<p>Commence Formal Regulation 18 consultation in line with draft SCI, including notifying all relevant consultees in writing and placing hard copies of document and associated questionnaire in local libraries and deposit points as per requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signpost through individual council websites.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update JSP website to coincide with the start of the formal consultation. – to include launch of interactive consultation document, associated background information and initial explainer video including explanation in relation to JSP/ Local Plan relationship. • Encourage electronic engagement wherever possible. • Supply JSP-branded social media content to promote the start of the consultation period, and support district councils to update their social media channels. • Issue joint press release to launch JSP consultation, noting we are particularly keen to hear from young people. • Direct notification of contacts on JSP database – including those who responded to ‘Your Future’ engagement and those who have ‘opted in’ following contact from district Local Plan databases.
Continual review	1,2 &3	Aug – Sept	<p>Consider supporting engagement work to maximise response rate and ensure a diverse range of views are sought, for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise virtual briefings and invite Parish Council representatives and members, one briefing per authority. • Encourage local stakeholders to use networks to notify people consultation is live • Contact (by email) existing networks including the 700 interested residents who said they would like to be involved as part of the earlier digital engagement exercise to complete the consultation. 	
Monitoring	3.	Aug – Sept	Measure and report on success with weekly monitoring of feedback by geographical position where possible	
	3.	Aug – Sept	Weekly monitoring of press and social media reach and engagement for paid-for posts. To be provided by comms teams via a secure, online, shared document, where possible.	

	Initiate Protech work	1.	Early Aug	Commence Built ID adverts with key questions linked to consultation, with a particular focus on engaging with the 18-25 demographic and other groups that tend not to take an interest in planning policy matters.
		1.	During August	Review build ID feedback on weekly basis
	Announce end of consultation	3.	Sept	Issue press release to mark the end of the consultation and highlight next steps, update social media channels & all references on websites. A template press release and messages will be provided by the JSP comms resource which each council comms team can adapt/use to their borough/district.
Post Consultation	Review and evaluate process	3.	Mid – Sept	<p>Commence review of feedback once consultation ends.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure lessons learnt are recorded for PropTech fund write up. • Capture and evaluate user data to measure interaction including geographic and demographic analysis where possible, building on the 'Your Future' digital engagement in 2022 • Review results with Youth Forum group. • Update officers and Members. • Review how the results and engagement from this consultation can be used to build engagement and reach for the next stages of consultation in order to support JSP progression.

Evaluation and measuring success

We will be using simple mechanisms to capture and evaluate user data, which will include demographic and geographic distribution analysis.

The results for this second round of consultation on the South West Hertfordshire will look to build upon the results of the first 'Your Future' digital activity, which saw responses from an even spread of age ranges and across all five districts and boroughs.

We would expect some changes in the amount and richness of engagement.