



Report for:	Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	29 October 2019
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan
Contact:	Cllr Graham Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure Author/Responsible Officer: James Doe, Assistant Director – Planning, Development and Regeneration
Purpose of report:	To set out progress on the Joint Strategic Plan for South West Hertfordshire
Recommendations	That the report is noted.
Corporate objectives:	All Corporate Objectives are relevant with this annual review of service performance.
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> None arising from this report. Members will note that future funding of the JSP process may be dependent on financial input from the partner Councils, and/or further funding from Government.
'Value for money' implications	<u>Value for money</u> The JSP has been progressed so far with the award of external funding from MHCLG as well as contributions from the Local Plan budgets of each of the partner Councils.
Risk implications	The JSP programme has developed a Risk Register. This is updated monthly by the JSP Director.
Community Impact Assessment	Not applicable for this report.

Health and safety Implications	Not applicable for this report.
Consultees:	Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration Chris Taylor, Group Manager Strategic Planning and Regeneration Sara Whelan, Group Manager Development Management and Planning Chris Outtersides, Director, SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan
Background papers:	Report to Cabinet, 27 March 2018 Dacorum Borough Local Development Scheme 2019
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	JSP – Joint Strategic Plan MHCLG – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government MMS – Multi-Modal (transport) Strategy SGLS – Strategic Growth Locations Study SWH – South West Herts; an abbreviation for the project partnership covering the Borough and District areas of Dacorum, Watford, Hertsmere, Three Rivers and St Albans, with Herts County Council a member of the partnership.

Background

1. The South West Hertfordshire (SWH) Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) is a programme involving the five Borough and Districts on the western side of Hertfordshire, comprising Dacorum, Watford, Hertsmere, Three Rivers and St Albans, along with Hertfordshire County Council. Its aim is to produce a high-level or 'strategic' statutory development plan to guide the location and extent of growth within South West Hertfordshire to 2050.
2. SW Herts, along with most areas in the south east of England, faces considerable growth pressures into the future within the context of common factors such as significant pressures on local infrastructure, high housing prices, and environmental constraints including the Metropolitan Green Belt around London.
3. Each of the five Borough or District Councils is currently progressing Local Plans to deal with growth, development and infrastructure issues to 2036. Members will note that, in line with the Dacorum Borough Local Development Scheme of 2019, this Council intends to publish its draft Local Plan in May 2020. St Albans published its Local Plan earlier in 2019, which is scheduled

currently for Public Examination in January 2020. The other authorities' plans are in progress.

4. SW Herts as an area finds itself in the position of having common issues to deal with, and one where current Local Plan production is broadly in alignment. The key issue for the area is how to best plan for future development in the very long term.

The five Borough and District Councils, together with the County Council, have recognised that there is merit in considering a strategic plan for the area to consider how and where long term growth should be planned for, and to take a comprehensive view of how new infrastructure, to serve the whole area, could be provided. A strategic plan and vision for SW Herts could make a more compelling and credible case for infrastructure funding to Government and related funding agencies as opposed to acting on an individual basis.

5. With this in mind, the SW Herts area was successful in being awarded funding from Government through its then Planning Delivery Fund in January 2018. An award of £242,000 was made to begin preparation of a Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) for the area. Further background was set out in a report to Cabinet on 27 March 2018. This referred also to work carried out by POS Enterprises between the six authorities to set out proposals for next steps; and that a Memorandum of Understanding has been prepared between the partnership Councils.
6. There are other JSPs underway across the Country, recognising the benefits of taking a more strategic approach to manage growth into the future. Examples include the West of England, which covers Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire. Others include West Sussex and Brighton, South Essex and Oxfordshire.
7. Members will note that the other districts and Boroughs in Hertfordshire have begun work on a 'North-East-Central' plan for that part of the County, but it is at an earlier stage than that for SW Herts.

Strategic Visioning

8. Whereas the JSP work will focus on the creation of a statutory development plan for SW Herts, high level visioning work has been carried out involving the Leaders and Chief Executives of the five Borough and District authorities, and the relevant Executive Member and senior officer input from the County Council. Support for funding this work has come from both the National and East of England Local Government Association.

Progress on the Joint Strategic Plan

9. Joint working across the five-authority area is not new. For the past few years joint study work has been procured to inform each of the Local Plans, with the benefit of enabling a strategic picture to be formed across the area and offering cost savings for each authority. Examples of this include the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the employment land study and the retail study.

10. Work began in earnest on the JSP in Spring 2018 following approval by the member Councils to proceed. Members will note that the JSP is also referred to in the Dacorum Local Development Scheme which was published in June 2019. The geographical area that the JSP will cover is set out in the map at Appendix 1.
11. Officers now meet monthly to steer progress on the JSP. Key achievements have been the appointment of a dedicated lead Director for the project, and the commissioning of two major pieces of research: one to look at strategic options for growth locations and the other to draft a sustainable transport strategy for the area.
12. The project Director is Mr Chris Outtersides, who was appointed in 2018 on a two year contract. Chris is a planning professional who has experience of the strategic planning arrangements through the North Essex Garden Communities programme.
13. In summer 2019, arrangements were put in place for the two major pieces of evidence work. The studies will underpin the preparation of the JSP, and will run concurrently and in association with each other.
14. The first, the Strategic Growth Locations Study (SGLS), will carry out a comprehensive review of options for potential development locations across SW Herts to 2050. David Lock Associates has been appointed to carry out this work for the Councils.
15. The second is the Multi Modal Study (MMS) to be prepared by Integrated Transport Planning (ITP). This will examine options for managing transport pressures across SW Herts on the basis of current and anticipated future needs together with the effect of new development, on the transport system. It will consider what aspects of transport management, and new infrastructure, will need to be put in place, with the focus being on sustainable transport and multi modal opportunities across the region. The development of the SGLS will be iterative depending on the emerging conclusions arising from the MMS.
16. Both pieces of work are due to conclude by spring 2020. Members should note that they will take the form of consultants' reports to inform decision making by the member Councils in the future. The reports will not constitute policy or a commitment to the preparation of a JSP

Next Steps

17. The future of the JSP process will particularly depend on the outcome of the SGLS and MMS work which will complete early next year. This work needs to progress to set out the options for future development, their impacts, and infrastructure needed across South West Herts
18. It is expected that, following the evaluation of options, the first major stage of the plan-making process will commence leading to a public consultation on Issues and Options under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Members should note that a programme and accompanying budget to support the preparation and adoption of the JSP has been prepared and is regularly reviewed by the programme officer group.

