



Report for:	Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	27 April 2021
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan Update
Contact:	Cllr Alan Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure Author/Responsible Officer: Chris Outtersides – JSP Director
Purpose of report:	To update Committee Members on progress with the South West Herts (SWH) Joint Strategic Plan (JSP).
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. The JSP programme is funded through contributions from the member authorities and awards of external funding from Government
'Value for money' implications	<u>Value for money</u> None arising from this report.
Risk implications	None arising from this report.
Community Impact Assessment	Not applicable for this report. A CIA will be needed when the JSP progresses to its next stages.
Health and safety Implications	Not applicable for this report.

Consultees:	James Doe, Assistant Director – Planning, Development and Regeneration
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>AONB – the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</p> <p>HCC – Hertfordshire County Council</p> <p>JSP – South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan</p> <p>MHCLG – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government</p> <p>MoU – Memorandum of Understanding</p> <p>SPMG – Strategic Planning Members Group – on which the portfolio holders for the six Councils are represented on</p>

1.0 **Background Information**

- 1.1 As has been previously reported to this Committee, this Council has begun work on a statutory Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) for the South West Hertfordshire area. This work is being done in partnership with St Albans City & District Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, Three Rivers District Council and Watford Borough Council; with the support of HCC.
- 1.2 A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was agreed by all five local planning authorities and HCC in February 2018. It sets out how cooperation between the five local planning authorities in South West Hertfordshire and Hertfordshire County Council will be managed in respect of strategic planning issues.
- 1.3 In terms of the scope of JSP, and in simple terms:
- The JSP will be a statutory plan focussing on strategic housing, employment, infrastructure and Green Belt/AONB.
 - The JSP will be about more than planning and will create a framework for investor confidence in SW Herts.
 - The JSP currently proposes a timeframe of 2036 - 2050, although this is subject to review.
 - The MoU was signed in 2018 on strategic planning. This was followed by a capacity funding award from MHCLG of circa £300k.

- Chris Outtersides was appointed by DBC, on behalf of the programme, to lead the preparation of the JSP.

1.4 As also previously reported to the Committee, the benefits of a JSP include:

- The potential for unlocking infrastructure investment from Government.
- Creating a bigger canvas to make decisions about future growth.
- Allow an infrastructure-led approach; not 'planning by numbers'
- Coordinated approach to investment and delivery of infrastructure giving priority to strategic solutions.

1.5 For the avoidance of doubt, the intention will be for all 5 LPAs to retain 'sovereignty' over the JSP process with the plan following essentially the same process as individual Local Plans and therefore needing approval from each of the partner authorities. As Members will note from para 1.3 above, the JSP looks at the period beyond the timescale being followed for the five Boroughs' and Districts' emerging Local Plans. To be clear, the ongoing work on the JSP does not affect current work on the new Dacorum Local Plan.

SW Herts – Your Future Engagement Results

1.6 As Members will be aware, and to support the early thinking around the JSP, the partnership conducted an online engagement exercise in 2020. Entitled, "SW Herts – Your Future" the poll achieved over 10,000 visits, with over 600 people indicating that they would like to be involved in any future discussions about the area. By largely using social media, the poll also managed to reach a large proportion of 18-25 year olds, as well as achieving an even spread of responses across all age groups.

1.7 Key findings from the polls were:

- Eighty-six per cent per cent of those who took part felt positive about living and working in South West Herts
- Nearly 70% of all respondents said that parks and open spaces were their favourite thing with closeness to London appealing to over 60%. However, this wasn't the case for the younger age groups with 70% of the under 25's liking the proximity to London more.
- In terms of priorities for improving South West Herts, better health facilities (65%), being able to get around easier (46%) and climate change (36%) were the most popular responses, with better housing choice also appealing to the under 25's.

Further details of the polling can be found here: [south-west-hertfordshire-initial-engagement-results.pdf \(dacorum.gov.uk\)](https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/media/10000/south-west-hertfordshire-initial-engagement-results.pdf)

2.0 **Analysis and Findings**

2.1 Work continues on the background evidence base to support the JSP, with officers working closely with consultants on the Strategic Growth Locations Study and Multi Modal Study. There has been a change in the governance structure for the JSP, with a cross authority Steering Group introduced to provide Corporate and Chief Officer direction to the programme. Details of the amended governance structure are on all the partner authority's websites, with the first meeting of the new Steering Group programmed for mid-April 2021.

2.2 In parallel to this work, the SWH officer team have been working on an updated work programme for the JSP for 2021/22. This was considered and agreed at the Strategic Planning Member Group at their meeting on the 31st March 2021. The Agenda and agreed Minutes of this meeting will be available on the DBC website in the usual way at or in advance of the next Strategic Planning Members Group (SPMG – Cllr Anderson is Dacorum's representative) meeting, currently intended for late June 2021.

2.3 The main 4 elements of the work programme for the JSP for 2021/22 are:

- Statement of Common Ground;
- Statement of Community Involvement;
- JSP Visioning Engagement; and
- JSP Regulation 18 Consultation – Issues and Options – Establishing a vision for the JSP;

as well as the ongoing technical work on the Strategic Growth Locations Study and Multi Modal Study.

2.4 The indicative timescale for this work, including going through the relevant Committee processes at all the partner authorities, shows the 'JSP Regulation 18 Consultation – Issues and Options – Establishing a vision for the JSP' is likely to be in early 2022.

2.5 This programme includes the preparation and signing of a South West Herts JSP Statement of Common Ground that will set out the overall scope and timescale for the preparation of the Plan all the way to adoption.

- 2.6 Another important element of the JSP programme planned for 2021/22 will be a JSP visioning exercise that will commence in mid-2021. This will involve working initially with all Members across the partner authorities, alongside external stakeholders, the business community and the public, to articulate what the vision and objectives of the JSP should be. Once agreed, this will be incorporated into the initial Issues and Options JSP consultation indicatively programmed for early 2022.
- 2.7 A SWH JSP website to host all JSP related materials and the future public consultations is also planned. This is likely to be ready by autumn 2021.
- 2.8 The JSP programme continues to work closely with senior officials from MHCLG in relation to the proposed amendments to the planning system and the planning White Paper. The JSP programme submitted a detailed submission to the Planning White Paper advocating for stronger Government support for strategic planning. Government officials have clearly indicated that they are keen to work with South West Hertfordshire officers to test potential strategic planning solutions moving forward.
- 3.0 **Conclusion**
- 3.1 That the Committee notes the update regarding progress with the SWH JSP.