



SWHERTS
Joint Strategic Plan

South West Hertfordshire 2050

Realising our Potential



Consultation Report

Part 1: What we did

August 2023

Final draft for approval

Prepared on behalf of:



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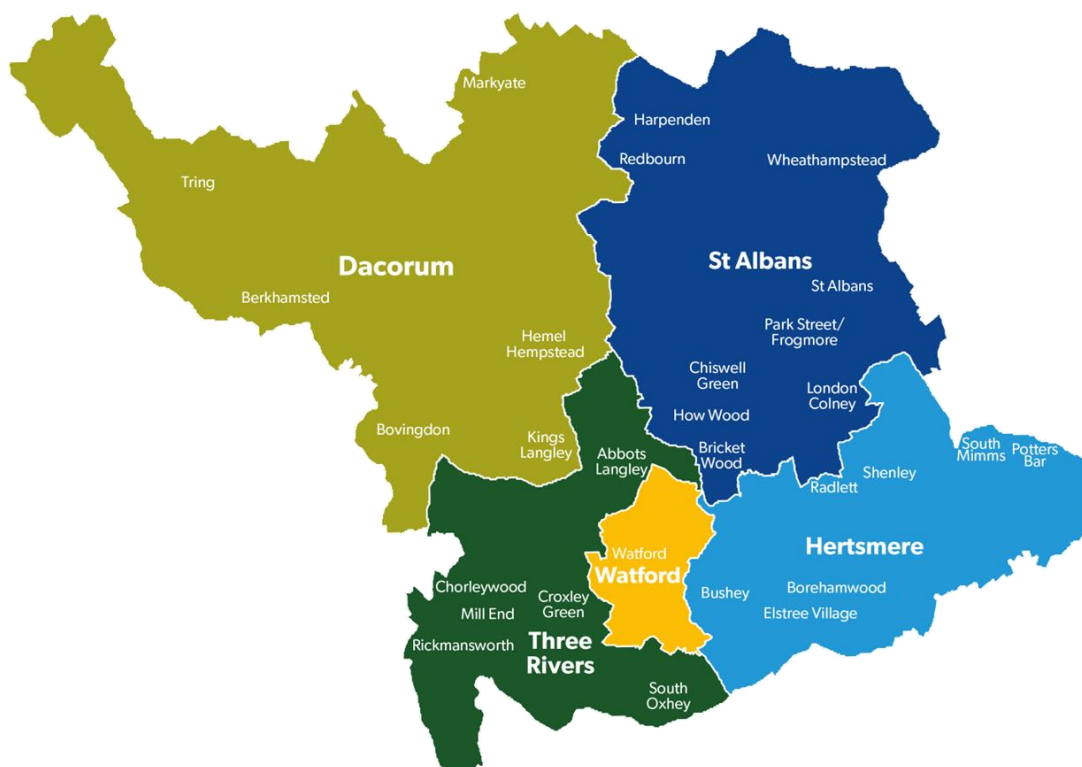
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1. Introduction

SW Herts 20250 – Realising Our Potential

- 1.1 Launching the ‘SW Herts 20250 – Realising our Potential’ marked the first stage of formal consultation on the SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan (JSP). The plan covers the areas of Dacorum Borough, Hertsmere Borough, St Albans City and District, Three Rivers Districts and Watford Borough Councils.



- 1.2 The JSP will set a collective ambition for the area, and once finalised, 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 the response to the challenges of climate change.
- 1.3 At this early stage in the plan-making process feedback was sought on two documents:
1. the main **Regulation 18 Issues and Options document** – entitled ‘South West Hertfordshire 20250 – Realising our Potential’ prepared by the SW Herts SP team with the support of the south west Herts authorities; and
 2. an associated **Draft Sustainability Scoping Report** prepared by Land Use Consultants (LUC).
- 1.4 The main consultation document included a series of questions about the area as it currently is and then asked for feedback on a draft vision and series of objectives for the future, and the types of growth that are the most appropriate to consider. There was also a separate question relating to the Sustainability (SA) Scoping Report
- 1.5 The consultation ran from 5th September until 4th November 2022.

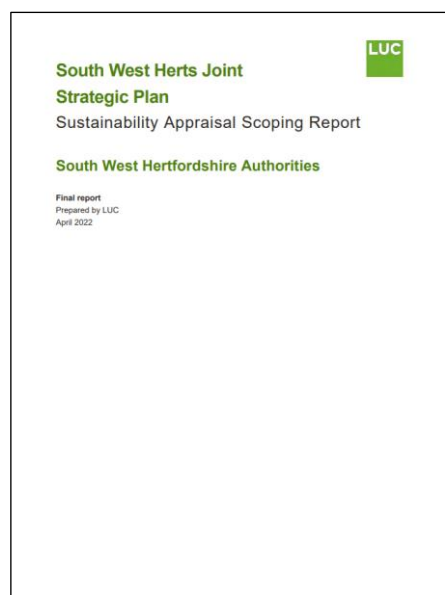


Image: The two documents consulted upon

1.6 Approval to consult on these two documents was given at the following meetings:

Council	Meeting(s)	Date
Dacorum Borough	• Cabinet	12 th July
Hertsmere Borough	•	
St Albans City and District	• Local Plan Advisory Group • Policy Committee	14 th June 24 th June
Three Rivers District	• Local Plan sub-committee • Policy and Resources Committee • Full Council	6 th June 14 th June 12 th July
Watford Borough	• Cabinet	11 th July
Hertfordshire County Council*	• Growth and Planning Panel	28 th July

* As HCC has no statutory responsibility for the JSP, this meeting was asked to support rather than endorse the consultation documents and process

Relationship between JSP and Local Plans

1.7 The JSP will not replace the Local Plans currently being prepared by each of the district councils in SW Herts. Rather it will draw up a longer term strategy to 2050 which seeks to best meet the needs of the area as a whole.



1.8 Many residents and organisations in SW Herts have already given their views on the emerging Local Plans being prepared by their districts / borough councils. This consultation is separate for these Local Plan engagements, but any relevant

lessons learned either in terms of how the consultation was carried out, or the feedback received, will be shared with the individual councils as appropriate.

2. Approach

Consultation requirements

- 2.1 Government regulations¹ set out the formal stages in the preparation process of the JSP i.e. when the documents must be formally published for comment and for how long. How the Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) will comply with these regulations is set out in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which has been endorsed by all the SW Herts authorities:
<https://www.swhertsplan.com/13315/widgets/38228/documents/29755>
- 2.2 This SCI states that “*The early stage of plan preparation (under Regulation 18) will involve engagement with stakeholders, prescribed bodies, partners and consultees to inform the identification of issues and options*” (para 2.5). Further detail regarding what this will comprise is set out in Table 1 of the SCI, an extract of which is below.

Stages and methods of consultation and communications

Plan stage	What will we be consulting or communicating on?	How will we consult / communicate?
Issues and Options <i>(Regulation 18)</i>	This stage can comprise one or more public consultations. These can relate to broad issues and options, draft policies and/or potential sites. To include consultation on associated sustainability appraisal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting representations through the JSP and signposted from individual council’s websites. • Advertising through social media, press releases and electronic alerts. • Written / email consultation with key consultees / organisations as required by the regulations. • Consultation documents available to view at specified deposit points. • Public consultation events such as targeted workshops and/or exhibitions, if appropriate to the nature of the consultation.

Source: Statement of Community Involvement SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan, July 2022.

- 2.3 In terms of how long a formal consultation should last for, the SCI states that this should be for a minimum of 6 weeks. However, this can be extended where considered appropriate. The SCI states that timescales for more informal consultation that is targeted at specific groups will depend on the nature of that engagement.
- 2.4 It was agreed that the full Regulation 18 (R18) consultation (comprising both the ‘Realising our Potential’ document’ and associated Draft Sustainability Scoping Report) would run for just over eight weeks – from Monday 5th September until 5pm on Friday 4th November. This slightly lengthened period turned out to be a prudent decision, as all active marketing on the consultation was paused for a 10 day period during the official mourning period for the Queen, although all of the consultation material remained available during this time. The ‘quick-fire poll’ element of the consultation (see below), aimed at those using social media, ran for a 3 week period

¹ Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

from 5th until 26th September inclusive. Poll providers Built-ID advised that this was the optimum length of time to deploy this type of consultation tool.

- 2.5 In order to provide clarity regarding the full consultation programme, a 'Consultation and Engagement Plan' was drawn up by the JSP's communications consultants, Icen, in collaboration with the JSP Communications Office Appendix 1).
- 2.6 This was reviewed and agreed with the Steering Group and Strategic Planning Members Group who oversee work on the Joint Strategic Plan.
- 2.7 One of the reason for drawing up this communications plan was to set out clear aim and objectives for the consultation. These were as follows:

AIMS

- 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.

OBJECTIVES

1. Engage with hard to reach groups and demographics, particularly 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

Consultation approach

- 2.8 The approach to the consultation ensured full compliance with both the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and the more informal Communications and Engagement Plan. It also exceeded the requirements of the relevant national regulations governing Regulation 18 plan engagement.

Digitally-focused engagement

- 2.9 A recent report called 'The Future of Engagement'² prepared by specialist communications consultants Grayling in association with the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) found that only 21% of people want to engage through in-person public exhibitions or meetings, while 49% of the general public surveyed felt that having the ability to respond digitally would make them more likely to get involved. When combined with the recent Ofcom report³ which showed that only 6% of UK households do not have access to the internet, this demonstrates that in terms of meeting the ambition for maximum engagement with limited resources across a very large geographical area, prioritising resources on digital engagement is essential.
- 2.10 This research is also support by the experience of the SW Herts authorities, four of whom – Dacorum, Hertsmere, Three Rivers and Watford - have recently undertaken

² <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/7258/the-future-of-engagement.pdf>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/find-digital-market-research/online-nation-report-2021-ofcom> (page 3)

'digital-first' engagements on their Local Plans. The evidence from these local authorities clearly shows that digital engagement is far more effective at generating engagement than in-person activity.

- 2.11 However, as the JSP partnership was keen to ensure that everyone across South West Hertfordshire was able to provide feedback on the consultation documents, it was important to ensure that the digitally excluded could also engage with the plan.

Youth Forum

- 2.12 As part of the drive to engage with as wide an audience as possible, a Youth Forum was established to help inform how the consultation was carried out and to try to increase participation rates amongst hard to reach groups – especially the under 25s who historically do not get involved in planning consultations. Engaging with this age group is particularly important considering the long-term nature of the JSP.
- 2.13 The previous 'Your Future' poll⁴ conducted in early 2020, advertised via social media had been very successful at engaging this particular demographic as a representative sample of all age groups, and the JSP programme was keen to build on this success.
- 2.14 The Youth Forum was established by contacting 18-25 year olds who had participated in the 'Your Future' poll and stated that they wished to be involved with ongoing engagement. It was supplemented by other young people who expressed a willingness to participate after being contacted by district / borough councils.
- 2.15 Two meetings were held to specifically inform the R18 consultation:
- 1) **3rd May 2022** – to discuss the key issues for the consultation for younger demographics, and how to encourage greater levels of engagement with younger people.
 - 2) **13th July 2022** – Feedback on draft 'poll' questions and promotional videos – both in terms of style and content, and how to achieve greater levels of engagement with the wider consultation material.
- 2.16 The agreed terms of reference for the Youth Forum are attached as Appendix 2, together with examples of the 'miro board' notes for some of the topics discussed (Appendix 3).

Schools workshop

- 2.17 The second Youth Forum meeting was also attended by some sixth form students from Kings Langley School who had expressed an interest in being involved. As a result of their participation, the JSP team arranged a specific in-person engagement event for sixth form students / college students from across SW Herts.
- 2.18 Due to lead in times involved, the workshop took place on Wednesday 25 January 2023, after the close of the formal consultation period. More than 40 schools, sixth form and colleges were invited to attend the event which was held at Kings Langley School from 4pm to 6pm. A full list of the schools contacted is attached as Appendix 4 and a copy of the email marketing which was sent to schools is attached as Appendix 5.
- 2.19 Nine other schools and colleges expressed an interest in attending, but unfortunately due to staff shortages and transport issues, were unable to

⁴ <https://www.swhertsplan.com/what-you-have-already-told-us>

participate. A small group of Kings Langley School students were however able to participate in the workshop. They were asked where they live at the moment, their priorities for the area over the next 30 years and what they might want to change or keep the same.

2.20 The workshop was facilitated by Icen Projects and a report on the workshop featured in the school's February newsletter (see section 3 below).

Methods of response

2.21 To make engagement with the consultation as easy as possible there were a number of different ways in which the consultation could be accessed and responses made:

JSP website

2.22 The JSP website – www.swhertsplan.com was the principal portal for all of the consultation material and associated information. From the website homepages (below) visitors could easily access:

- Regulation 18 'Realising Our Potential' document (PDF)
- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (PDF)
- Questionnaire (Word)
- FAQs (PDF and web-based version)
- Six Topic Papers, which provided further context for key planning issues for the area (PDF)
- Communications and Engagement Plan (PDF)
- Other relevant background material (PDF)

Image: JSP website homepage



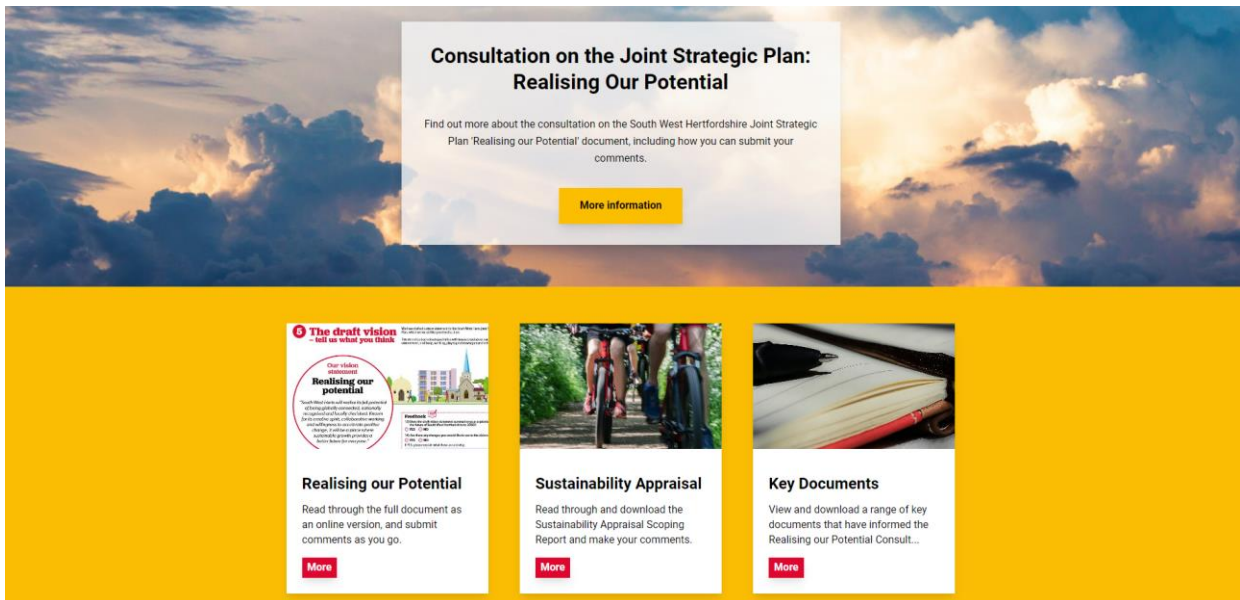
Welcome to the South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan

We're planning for the long-term future of South West Hertfordshire.

Find out more about what our Joint Strategic Plan and where we are in the process.

Register with us so you can be notified about new ways to engage and keep up-to-date.

Together we can plan for the future of the area



2.23 The website also hosted an interactive version of the Realising Our Potential document. Responses could be submitted via a full survey questionnaire, or via the same questions embedded in the interactive version of the R18 document and on the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report pages of the website. Examples of the interactive survey pages are attached as Appendix 6.

2.24 Questions related to each section of the consultation document and the Sustainability Scoping Report and allowed a mix of multiple choice, yes/no and free text responses.

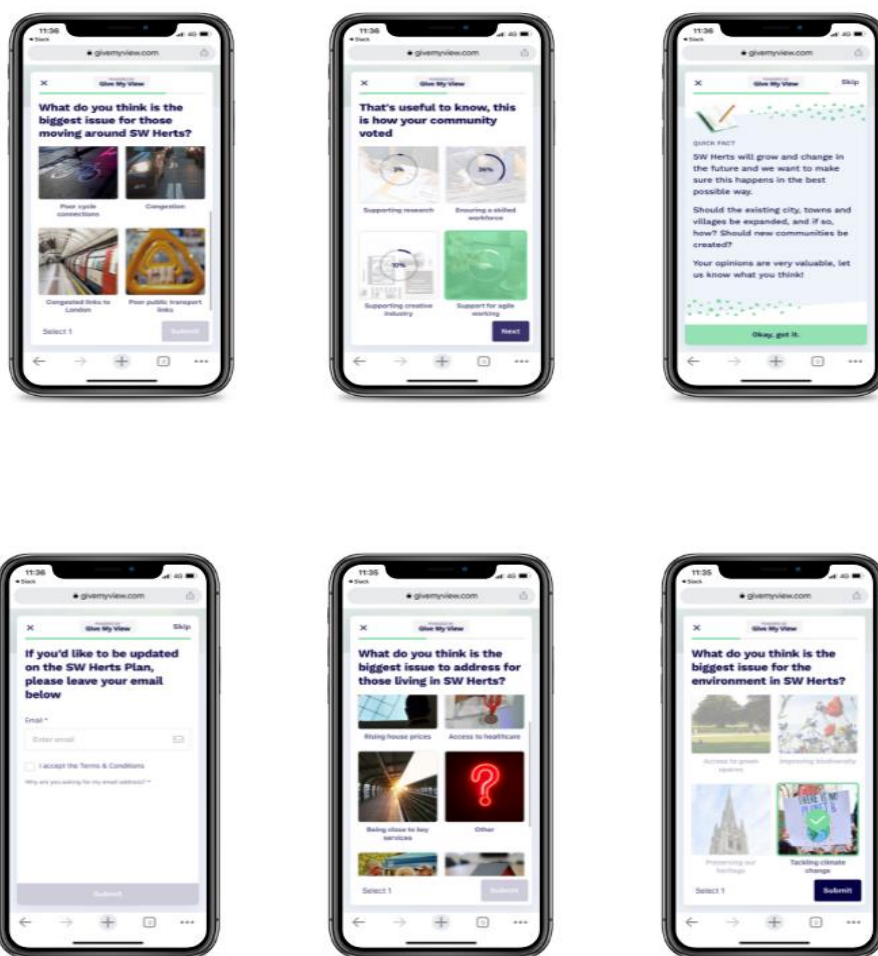
2.25 Responses to the online survey questions could be left by anyone who followed a simple site registration process. The survey could also be downloaded and returned either electronically or by post.

2.26 The survey and all other website material was available for the full duration of the consultation period.

'Quick-fire' poll

2.27 This was hosted on the [Give My View](#) platform and advertised via social media. The poll contained a series of questions based on the R18 survey, but with a reduced number of questions set out in a simplified form using 'slido' style voting and multiple choice questions, based on simple imagery. Examples of these questions and associated imagery are below. The poll ran for a 3 week period at the beginning of the consultation programme – from 5th September until 28th September inclusive.

Image: Examples of poll questions and imagery

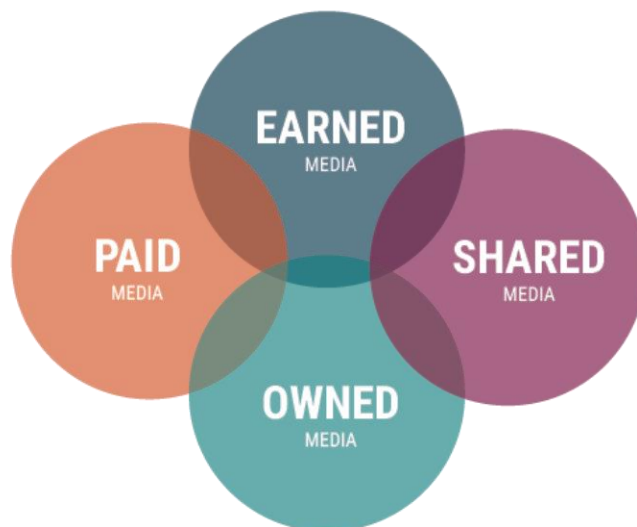


Hard copy documents

- 2.28 In order to ensure those who are digitally excluded were able to participate in the consultation all district / borough council receptions and local libraries (defined as the 'deposit points'), together with all town and parish councils within the SW Herts area were sent a paper copy of the key documents and asked to make these available for reference purposes. These documents included:
- 'Realising Our Potential' Regulation 18 document
 - Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report
 - Questionnaire - a paper version of the full survey questions (on the R18 document and associated Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report), which could be completed either in full or part (Appendix 7)
 - 'Frequently Asked Questions' document (Appendix 8).
- 2.29 Responses to the hard copy consultation material could be sent by post to the JSP team c/o Dacorum Borough Council or emailed to haveyoursay@swhertsplan.com.
- 2.30 The number and nature of responses received from each feedback method is summarised in section 3 of this document, with a more detailed summary of response content in Part 2 of the Consultation Report.

3. Promotion

- 3.1 Promotion and awareness raising for the consultation on the 'Realising Our Potential' document involved all four of the recognised communications channels: owned, earned, paid and shared. Each one of these channels serves a specific purpose and helps reach different groups and demographics, although there is some overlap between the categories.



Owned media

Direct notifications

- 3.2 Direct notifications about the consultation on the 'Realising Our Potential' Regulation 18 document and associated Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report were sent out on 5th September to over 2,600 contacts. These came from three data sources, and it should be noted there was some duplication between each.
- The **JSP database** comprises contact information for all key consultees – including specific and general consultation bodies and duty to co-operate bodies as defined in national planning regulations and listed in the Statement of Community Involvement. This database also includes details from groups and individuals who the district / borough councils had contacted from their Local Plan databases who requested to also be notified about the JSP. At the start of the consultation this database comprised around 760 groups / individuals, although there was some duplication with other contact lists.
 - Direct notifications were also sent to everyone who had registered directly on the **JSP website** at www.swhertsplan.com (Appendix 9) An initial email was sent to all 1,126 people registered on the first day of the consultation (Monday 5th September), with a reminder email sent on 31st October, just prior to the consultation close. This follow-up email was sent to all original registration contacts, plus those who had registered since the start of the consultation process, reaching a total of 1,357 groups and individuals.
 - Notifications were also sent from Built-ID's '**Give My View**' platform to everyone who had participated in the previous 'Your Future' poll in 2020 and left their email address on the understanding that they would be contacted regarding further related consultations (Appendix 9). This comprised 548 contacts.
- 3.3 In addition to the above, paper copies of all key documents were sent to all district or borough council receptions and local libraries (defined as the 'deposit points'), together with all town and parish councils within the SW Herts area.

Press releases

- 3.4 Press releases were issued at the start of the consultation process and to encourage responses towards the end of the engagement period (see Appendix 11). These were issued by the district council communications teams based on common text, but with the addition of a specific quote from the relevant lead Councillor for planning at each authority.
- 3.5 They were published on the new page of the council websites and helped inform a range of wider print and digital press coverage (see below).

Posters

- 3.6 All local council offices, town and parish councils, leisure centres and principal theatres in the SW Herts area were sent copies of the posters and promotional business cards and asked to display these in a prominent location in their foyers.
- 3.7 Electronic versions of the posters were also displayed on the e-boards in Watford High Street for the duration of the consultation.



Image: Digital posters on Watford High Street

Business cards

- 3.8 Following the success of using business cards to promote the 'Your Future' engagement in 2020, over 4,000 were distributed to town and parish councils, district / borough councils, libraries, leisure centres and theatres within SW Herts, with a request that they were left in reception areas for visitors to take away. As shown below, they included a simple message encouraging people to 'Join the conversation about the long term future of South West Hertfordshire,' specified the closing date for the consultation and provided a web link and QR code to enable easy access to the consultation material.

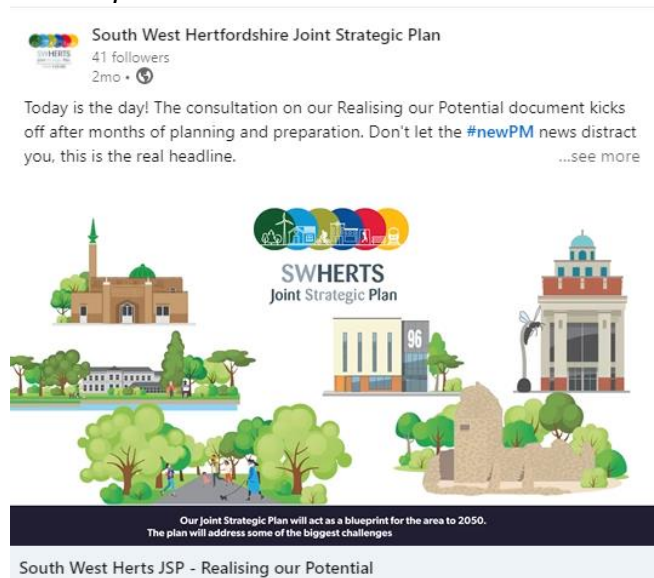
Image: Business card (front and back)



LinkedIn

- 3.9 A number of posts aimed at promoting the Realising Our Potential document were made on the JSP's LinkedIn page (see example below), alongside the explainer video and static graphics.

Image: Example of LinkedIn promotion



District / Borough council websites, newsletters and press releases

- 3.10 Individual district / borough websites also promoted the engagement on their homepages and signposted how to access the consultation material and respond (see Appendix 12).
- 3.11 Those councils with e-newsletters also included articles promoting the consultation (see examples in Appendix 13)
- 3.12 Agreed press releases was also issued by each council at the start of the consultation and a week before close of the engagement period (see Appendix 11)

Watford Urban Room

- 3.13 An invitation to an 'in-person' event at Watford's urban room on the afternoon of 21st September was also circulated to all contacts that the JSP team had for Watford-based residents and was also advertised via Watford Borough Council's social

media channels (see Appendix 14). However due to a low level of interest the event was unfortunately cancelled.

Paid media

Explainer videos

3.14 A video to promote the consultation and explain in simple terms why a JSP was being prepared was available to support promotion of the consultation. This used images from the Realising Our Potential document in animated form, supported by sub title and a voiceover. The video was hosted on YouTube and available in three different versions (full length and two half length) in order to be usable to as many web and social media platforms as possible.

- Full video: <https://youtu.be/m6yvEkDIT0>
- Issues video: <https://youtu.be/QWQwOdpju4Y>
- Overview video: <https://youtu.be/-3hLp07oY-g>

3.15 The video was embedded in the interactive consultation document on the JSP website, used in social media promotion and also played at various briefings given by the JSP team to help explain and promote the consultation.

Image: Static image from explainer video



Railway Station Posters

3.16 In order to raise the profile of the consultation with commuters and leisure travellers, a poster campaign was rolled at key train and tube stations within the area. This included posters of varying sizes from large poster to billboard size the following locations for the following periods:

Locations)	Duration	Size
Watford	26/09/2022 - 09/10/2022	Poster (4 sheet)
	26/09/2022 - 09/10/2022	Poster (4 sheet)
	10/10/2022 - 23/10/2022	Billboard (28 sheet)
Hemel Hempstead	26/09/2022 - 09/10/2022	Poster (4 sheet)
St Albans	10/10/2022 - 23/10/2022	Billboard (28 sheet)
Moor Park	26/09/22 – 06/11/22	Poster (4 sheet)
Carpenders Park	26/09/22 – 06/11/22	Poster (6 sheet)



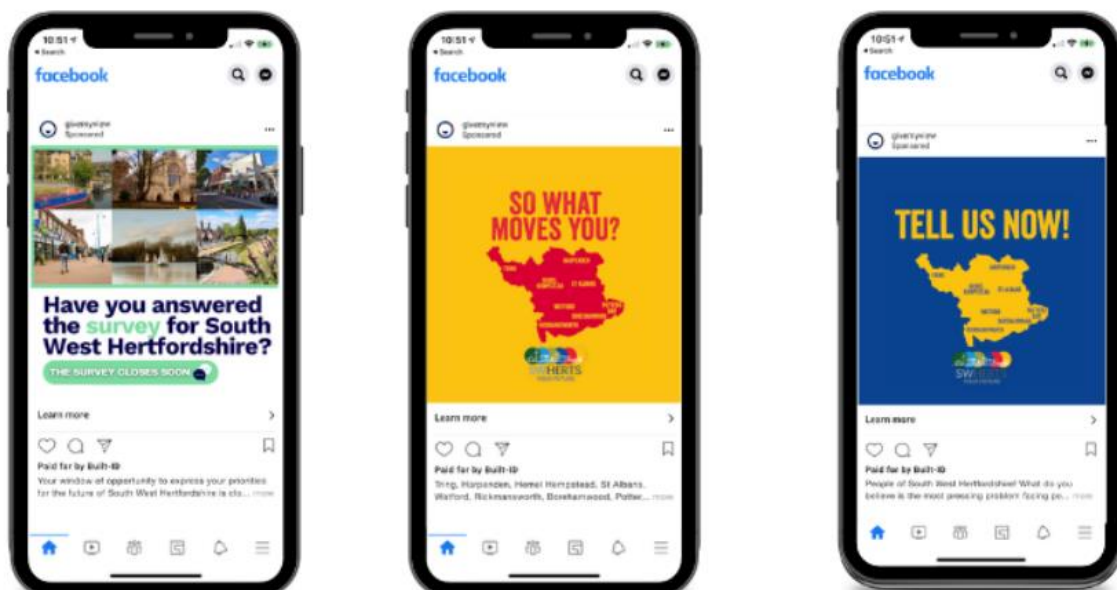
Image: Examples of the posters in- situ at Watford and St Albans stations



Poll

- 3.17 Specific marketing was carried out to promote the 'quick-fire' poll host on the Give My View platform and promoted via social media. This promotional material comprised a mix of static imagery and a series of brief, impactful video messages. Marketing for the poll was carried out over the 3 weeks the poll was live for, but was paused for the weekend of the Queens' funeral.
- 3.18 Some examples of how the marketing material appeared on phone screens is shown below, with further detail of the material itself in Appendix 15:

Image: Examples of poll marketing imagery



Earned media

3.19 Earned media relates to promotion of the consultation by third parties.

Media coverage

3.20 There was a range of both paper and digital media coverage throughout the consultation period (see examples in Appendix 16), both locally and in the trade planning press, including:


- Herts Advertiser (digital)
- Herts Mercury (digital)
- My Local News – various editions including Radlett, Abbots Langley and Chorleywood (print)
- The Planner - national professional press (digital)



Image: Extract from My Chorleywood News, 22nd October 2022 edition


School newsletter

3.21 Following the schools workshop held at Kings Langley School on Wednesday 25 January, an article appeared in the Kings Langley February newsletter describing the event with a link to the consultation website for further information.



Kings Langley School News

Issue 17



Sixth Formers are part of the community vision

A small group of sixth formers: James, Scarlett, Sam and Maria attended a workshop organised by the SW Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan, supported by their consultants Icen Projects. They discussed the local area as they see it, and their hopes and aspirations for themselves and the local area into the future. It was a positive exercise as they were encouraged to think about their lives into their 20s and 30s and how the local area will change and respond to environmental challenges ahead.


The group took part in three main activities, mapping places that matter to them in the local boroughs of Dacorum, Three Rivers, Watford, St Albans and Hertsmere, then placing issues in a pictorial rank order for the joint strategic plan to consider and then finally commenting on the role of the local area in their lives as they see them in the future, as places to live and work.

School events next week

Tuesday 21st February -
Y12 Visit to Auschwitz
Y11 Blood Brothers
Richmond theatre trip - 7.30pm - 11pm


Thursday 23rd February -
Y7 Virtual subject consultation evening 4.15pm—7.45pm

Friday 24th February -
Y10 Drama workshop all day activity.



As Subject Leader of Geography it was good to see the students grappling with issues of sustainability in such an engaging way. Also, from a careers education point of view it was excellent to witness the way these professionals are utilising their Geography degrees in their chosen careers. We look forward to continuing to work with the SW Herts team in the future at KS3 and KS4, especially as the consultants commented that getting to hear the views of young people is so important to the process and often difficult for them to access.

[SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan \(swhertsplan.com\)](http://swhertsplan.com)
Ms Chabrel
Subject Leader - Geography



Shared media

Town and Parish Councils

3.22 The JSP team recognises the importance of ensuring town and parish councils in the area are aware of the consultation and can assist the JSP programme spread the word locally. Separate briefing sessions were held on a district / borough basis⁵ on the 5th to 7th September, with attendees including representatives from:

- Aldenham Parish Council
- Shenley Parish Council
- Abbots Langley Parish Council
- Little Gaddesden Parish Council
- Harpenden Town Council
- Colney Heath Parish Council

3.23 As a result of these meetings a number of town and parish councils included information about the consultation on their websites (see Appendix 17).

Third party email promotion

3.24 A number of community groups and organisations are understood to have raised the profile of the consultation through direct messages to their supporters. For example, CPRE Hertfordshire emailed their membership on 17th October, setting out their initial views on the consultation and urging their members to submit individual responses.

⁵ Excluding Watford Borough, as this area is not parished.

Social media

3.25 Social media had the potential to reach of up to 760,000 users over the engagement period and its use is explicitly encouraged by the Government’s plan making policy⁶. The individual councils’ social media accounts were therefore an important mechanism to publicise the consultation and inform residents and organisations how they could respond (see Appendix 18). The schedule of promotional activity agreed with council Communications Officers is attached as Appendix 19. Actual activity varied slightly from this plan due to communications output being affected by the Queen’s death and much local council promotional activity being paused as a mark of respect.

3.26 A mix of paid and organic social media posts were used. Advertising took place predominantly via Facebook and Instagram due to their use among a wide range of demographics and Facebook’s increasing use by many community groups and organisations. Data provided social media reach is summarised in Appendix 20.

Image: Examples of Instagram promotional posts

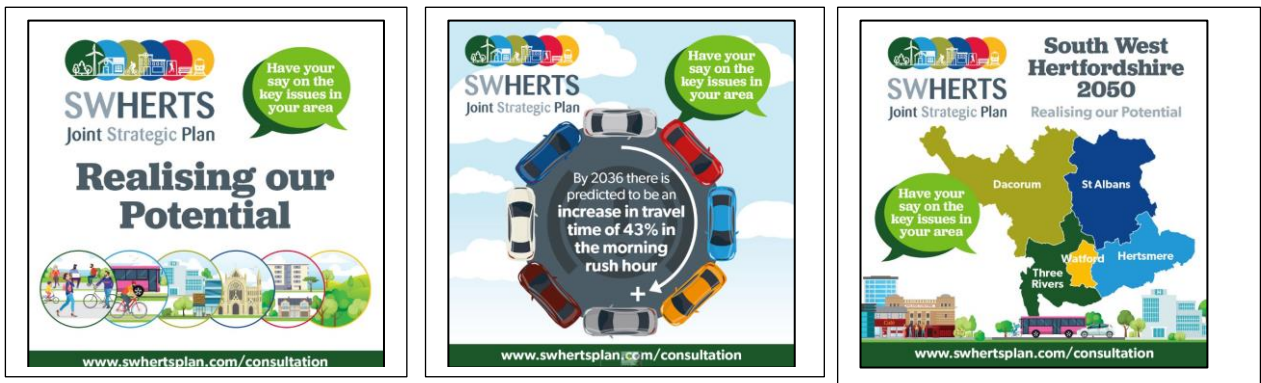
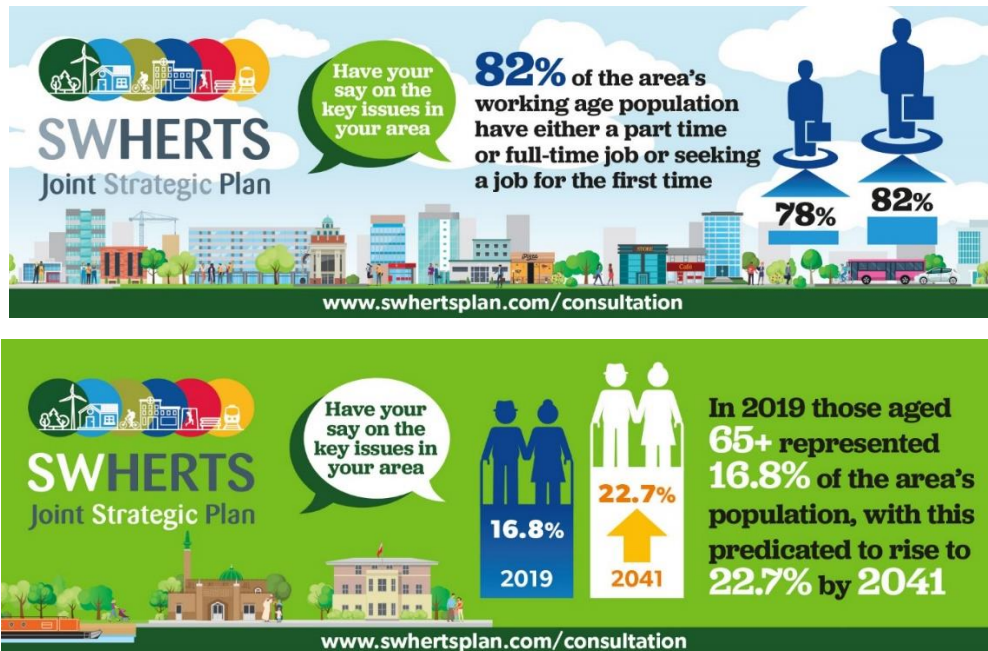


Image: Examples of Facebook promotional posts



⁶ Plan-making - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The banner features a header with icons for a wind turbine, house, school, factory, and bus. Below these is the text 'SWHERTS Joint Strategic Plan'. A green speech bubble contains the text 'Have your say on the key issues in your area'. Two orange boxes display statistics: '72% of adults recorded as physically active in 2019/20' and 'compared to the national average of 66%'. The background shows a stylized town with trees and buildings, and two runners on a path. A dark green footer contains the URL 'www.swhertsplan.com/consultation'.

Have your say on the key issues in your area

SWHERTS
Joint Strategic Plan

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

compared to the national average of 66%

www.swhertsplan.com/consultation