



SWHERTS
Joint Strategic Plan

South West Hertfordshire 2050

Realising our Potential



Consultation Report

Part 2: What you said

August 2023

Final draft for approval

Prepared on behalf of:



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1. Summary of consultation

SW Herts 20250 – Realising Our Potential

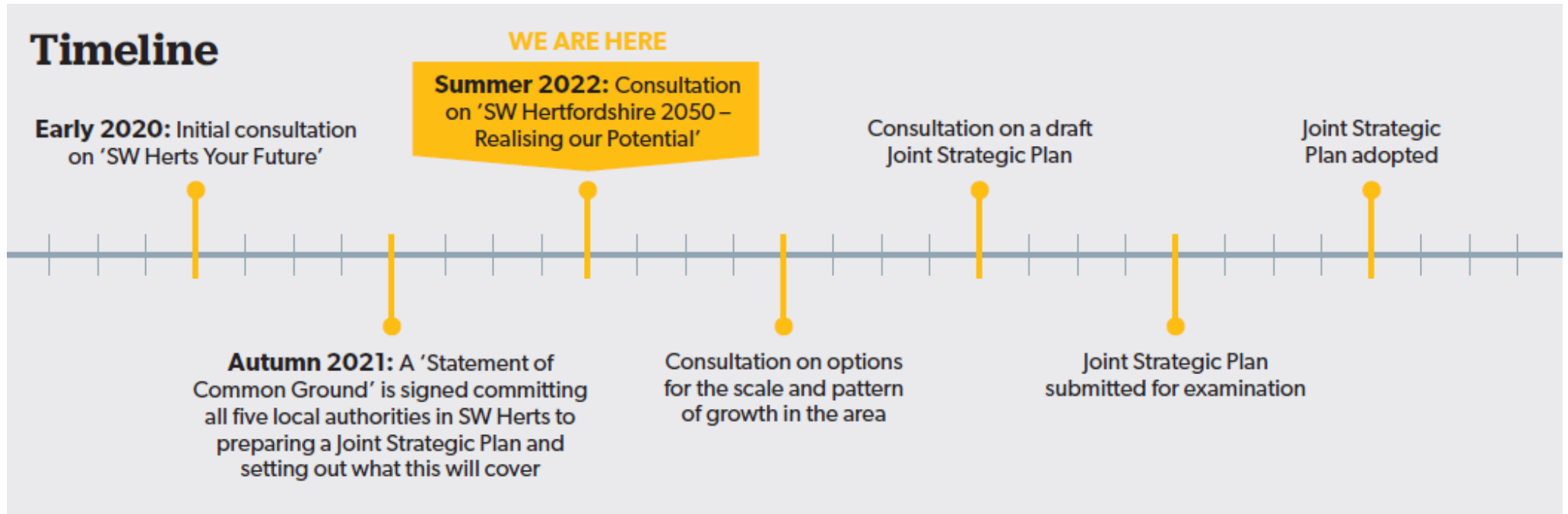
- 1.1 Launching the ‘SW Herts 2050 – Realising our Potential’ marked the first stage of formal consultation on the SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan (JSP). The plan covers the areas of Dacorum Borough, Hertsmere Borough, St Albans City and District, Three Rivers District and Watford Borough Councils.

Figure 1: The South West Hertfordshire area



- 1.2 The JSP will set a collective ambition for the area and, once finalised, will 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 that growth 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** – ‘South West Hertfordshire 2050 – Realising our Potential’; and
 2. an associated **Draft Sustainability Scoping Report**.

Figure 2: Stages of JSP preparation



- 1.4 The main consultation document included a series of questions about South West Herts as it currently is, 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 Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report
- 1.5 Approval to consult on these two documents was given at relevant council meetings across all the partner authorities during June and July 2022. The consultation itself ran from 5th September until 4th November 2022.

Methods of response

- 1.6 To make engagement with the consultation material as easy as possible, there were a number of different ways in which the information could be accessed and responses made:
 - (a) **JSP website** – Responses could be submitted via a full survey questionnaire, or via the same questions which were embedded in the interactive version of the Regulation 18 (R18) document and on the SA Scoping Report pages of the website www.swhertsplan.com. All documents, including a questionnaire, were also available to download.
 - (b) **‘Quick-fire’ poll** - 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. The poll ran for a three week period from 5th September until 28th September inclusive.
 - (c) **Letter / email** – Paper copies of the consultation documents and associated questionnaire were made available from all district / borough council receptions, local libraries and town and parish council offices within the SW Herts area. Responses could then be sent via letter or emailed to haveyoursay@swhertsplan.com.
- 1.7 Further detailed information regarding how the engagement was carried out is contained within Part 1 of this consultation report.

2. Level of feedback and consultation reach

Total responses

- 2.1 Across the different feedback mediums, a total of 3,448 individuals and organisations had their say on the 'Realising Our Potential' consultation. Counting the online survey and poll alone, this provided over 27,300 individual pieces of feedback.

Figure 3: Number of responses received

Method of response	Respondees	Individual pieces of feedback
Online survey	204	2,569
Give My View poll	3,122	24,734 (including 5,198 pieces of written feedback)
Email	138	Not assessed
Letter	1	Not assessed
TOTAL	3,465	N/A

- 2.2 The participation levels for the poll compares very well with the 'Your Future' poll the JSP programme carried out in early 2020. This earlier poll had 3,291 voters, casting 15,042 votes and leaving 2,082 pieces of written feedback.

Response to the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

- 2.3 Of the total responses received across all feedback methods, 41 individuals / organisations made specific comment on the SA Scoping Report that accompanied the 'Realising Our Potential' document. This included responses from Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency, with whom it is a legal obligation to consult on these Scoping documents. See Section 5 and Appendix 8 for further information.

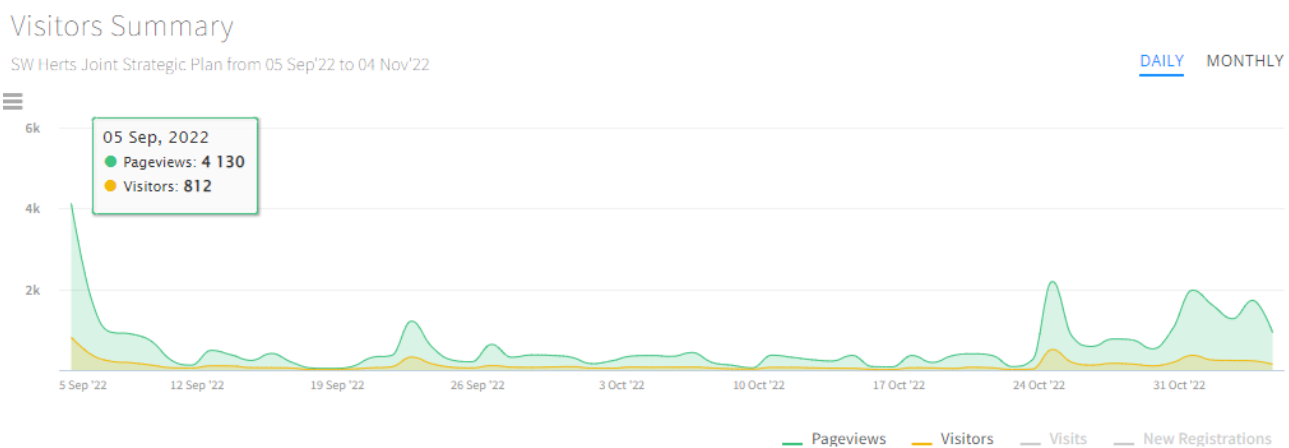
Consultation reach

- 2.4 Whilst the above figures show who chose to *respond* to the consultation, it is also relevant to look at data relating to the *reach* of the engagement i.e. how many people were aware of the consultation but chose not to respond.
- 2.5 The reasons for people being aware of the consultation but not responding are obviously not known. However recent research¹ indicates that the reasons for non participation in planning consultations are often a result of the following:
- Lack of awareness of planning.
 - Negative attitudes towards the planning system.
 - People do not feel their voices will be heard when panning decisions are made
 - People feel that the planning system as a whole lacks transparency and that decisions are taken behind closed doors.
 - There is a misconception or misunderstanding about what participation means.

¹<https://www.commonplace.is/hubfs/Engaging%20for%20the%20Future.pdf?hsCtaTracking=f2f7a455-4eac-493b-865b-03678a40faab%7Cd2126c33-2397-4433-afaa-61110da90ed2>

- 2.6 As Part 1 of the consultation report shows, the engagement was very well publicised in a variety of ways, and anecdotal information suggests it was also promoted by a number of independent Facebook groups and e-newsletters from organisations such as CPRE Hertfordshire.
- 2.7 Over 3,000 groups / individuals were either notified directly from the JSP website, by an email from haveyoursay@swhertsplan.com or directly from the Give My View poll platform.
- 2.8 The social media adverts released via the SW Herts council's social media accounts were also seen by almost 45,500 people (see Appendix 17 of Part 1 Consultation Report).
- 2.9 During the course of the nine week consultation period, the JSP website was visited 8,700 times, although this number will include some duplicate visits by the same person.
- 2.10 The graph below shows that visitors to the site reached a peak of 812 on the 5th September when the consultation launched, with other peaks relating to promotional activity, such as press articles or social media posts.

Figure 4: Profile of JSP website 'hits' during duration of consultation



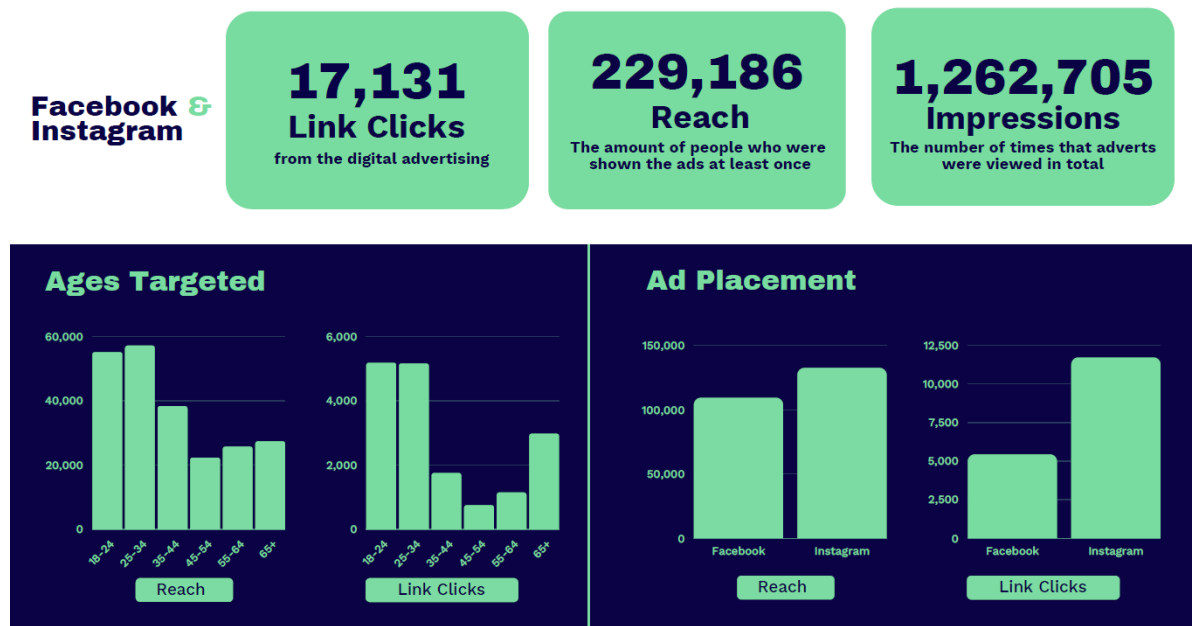
- 2.11 In addition to logging the number of people who completed a survey response, the website also recorded those who had visited the webpages and interacted with them in some way, such as downloading consultation documents. It also recorded those who had visited the website but didn't interact with the material (see table below).

Figure 5: Website visits

Overall totals for JSP website (5/9/22 – 4/11/22)	
Total Visits	8,700 (includes duplicate visits by one person)
Max Visitors Per Day	812
Engaged Visitors	204
Informed Visitors	1,800 (c1,500 visited multiple survey question pages and c1,300 downloaded a document)
Aware Visitors	5,800 (visited website at least once)

2.12 The poll hosted by 'Give My View' had even greater reach than the online survey, with over 17,000 people clicking through to the poll website from adverts on Facebook and Instagram, with the adverts viewed a total of 1,262,705 times. A more detailed breakdown of these numbers is given below:

Figure 6: Headline marketing statistics for Give My View poll



Source of visits

2.13 When assessing which of the engagement methods were most successful, it is also relevant to look at what prompted respondees to visit the JSP website and/or Give My View Poll site. The email notification sent directly to those who had registered on the website was the most successful method of raising awareness of the consultation and generating responses to the survey, followed by advertising on social media

Figure 7: Sources of website visits (total)

TRAFFIC CHANNEL	AWARE VISITS	INFORMED VISITS(%)	ENGAGED VISITS(%)
DIRECT	2994	604 (20.2%)	42 (1.4%)
SOCIAL	1120	133 (11.9%)	4 (0.4%)
EMAIL	1402	211 (15%)	9 (0.6%)
SEARCH ENGINE	856	178 (20.8%)	2 (0.2%)
.GOV SITES	354	65 (18.4%)	0 (0%)
REFERRALS	1554	206 (13.3%)	9 (0.6%)

2.14 The graph below shows how the numbers accessing the survey varied depending upon how visitors became aware of the consultation. As expected there are peaks of visits from people accessing via links in emails which correlate to when initial and

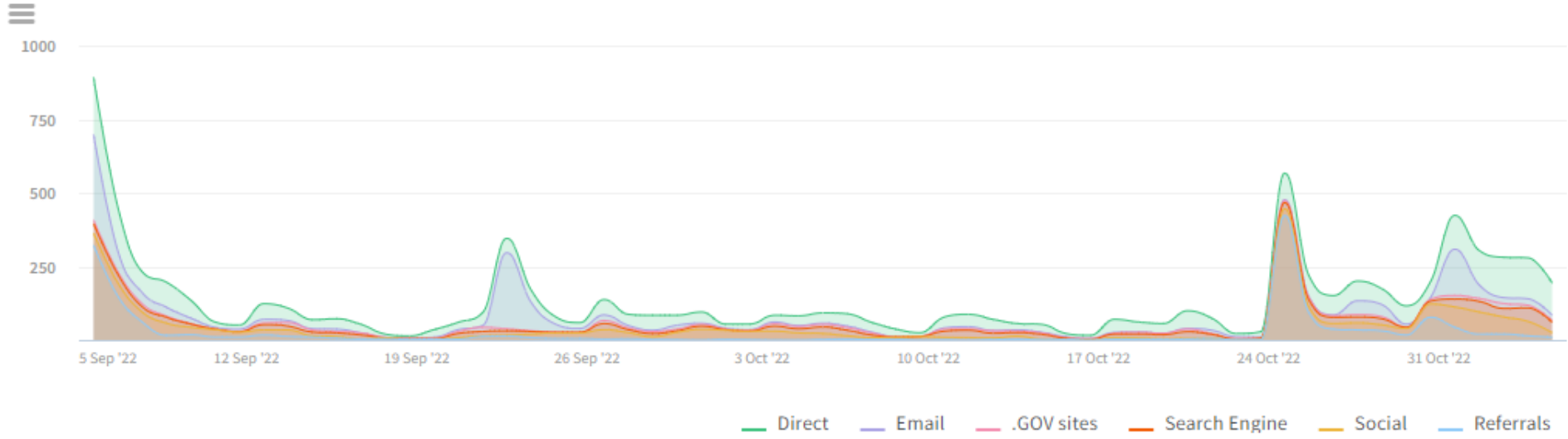
reminder alerts were set to those registered on the website and those who were contacted via the JSP consultation database. Other peaks correlate to the dates when there was targeted social media advertising.

Figure 8: Sources of website visits (over time)

Visits by Channel

SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan from 05 Sep'22 to 04 Nov'22

DAILY MONTHLY



3. Who responded

- 3.1 Significant effort was put in to developing a wide ranging engagement programme, to encourage responses from as many groups and individuals as possible – including responses from 18-25 year olds who historically do not engage in planning consultations.
- 3.2 As set out in Part 1 of this Consultation Report, the engagement programme was informed by a Youth Forum who advised on the best way to encourage younger people to provide feedback. A consultation database was also drawn up for the JSP, comprising the specific consultation bodies and duty to co-operate bodies defined in planning regulations. This database was supplemented by other groups and organisations who had asked to be kept informed, including those who had asked for their names to be added after being contacted by the five district / borough councils. This database will continue to be expanded, with the contact details of those who responded to the Realising Our Potential consultation added, so that they are directly notified of future consultations.

Category of respondents

- 3.3 Those who responded to the online survey were not required to specify whether they were completing the survey on a personal basis or on behalf of an organisation / company. However, an assessment of email addresses, usernames and the content of responses indicates that the online survey was largely completed by individuals, although Hertfordshire Police and several town / parish councils also provided their responses this way. There were also some limited submissions from other groups and organisations, including the Chiltern Society, Landscape Futures - a community interest company - and residents groups.
- 3.4 Similarly, the poll did not formally capture whether the response was from an individual, organisation or company. However, the email addresses provided by participants, and the fact that 89% of respondents completed the poll on their mobile phone, indicates that the majority of participants did so on a personal basis.
- 3.5 There was a particularly good response rate via email from those groups categorised as 'specific consultation bodies' or 'Duty to co-operate bodies'². This included:
- Affinity Water
 - Transport for London
 - Environment Agency
 - West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
 - National Grid
 - Historic England
 - Thames Water
 - Historic England
 - Natural England
 - Town and Parish Councils – including Shenley Parish Council, Croxley Green Parish Council, Tring Town Council and Chorleywood Parish Council
 - Adjoining authorities – including London Borough of Enfield, Buckinghamshire Council and Central Bedfordshire Council.

² See Statement of Community Involvement for full list of these groups
<https://www.swhertsplan.com/sci>

- 3.6 However, the highest proportion of emails were received from individuals and developers / landowners or the consultants representing them, with the overall split as follows:

Figure 9: Number of respondents by category

Category of respondees using email ³	Total number of responses
Specific consultation bodies and DtC bodies	18
General consultation bodies	15
Residents / individuals	45
Developers / landowners / consultants	60
Total	138

Location of respondents

- 3.7 Postcode information was required from everyone who completed the online survey and voted in the poll. No locational information is available from those replying by email.
- 3.8 As shown in the table below, almost three quarters of responses to the survey were located in Dacorum, Hertsmere or St Albans. The distribution of those responding to the poll was broadly similar, except for a much more significant number of those located in Watford responding to the consultation this way. It is also interesting to note the much lower number of people responding to the poll who lived or worked outside of the area, compared to those who responded to the online survey. This is likely to be a reflection of the fact that most poll responses appear to have been from individuals, rather than groups / organisations or those representing landowners / developers.

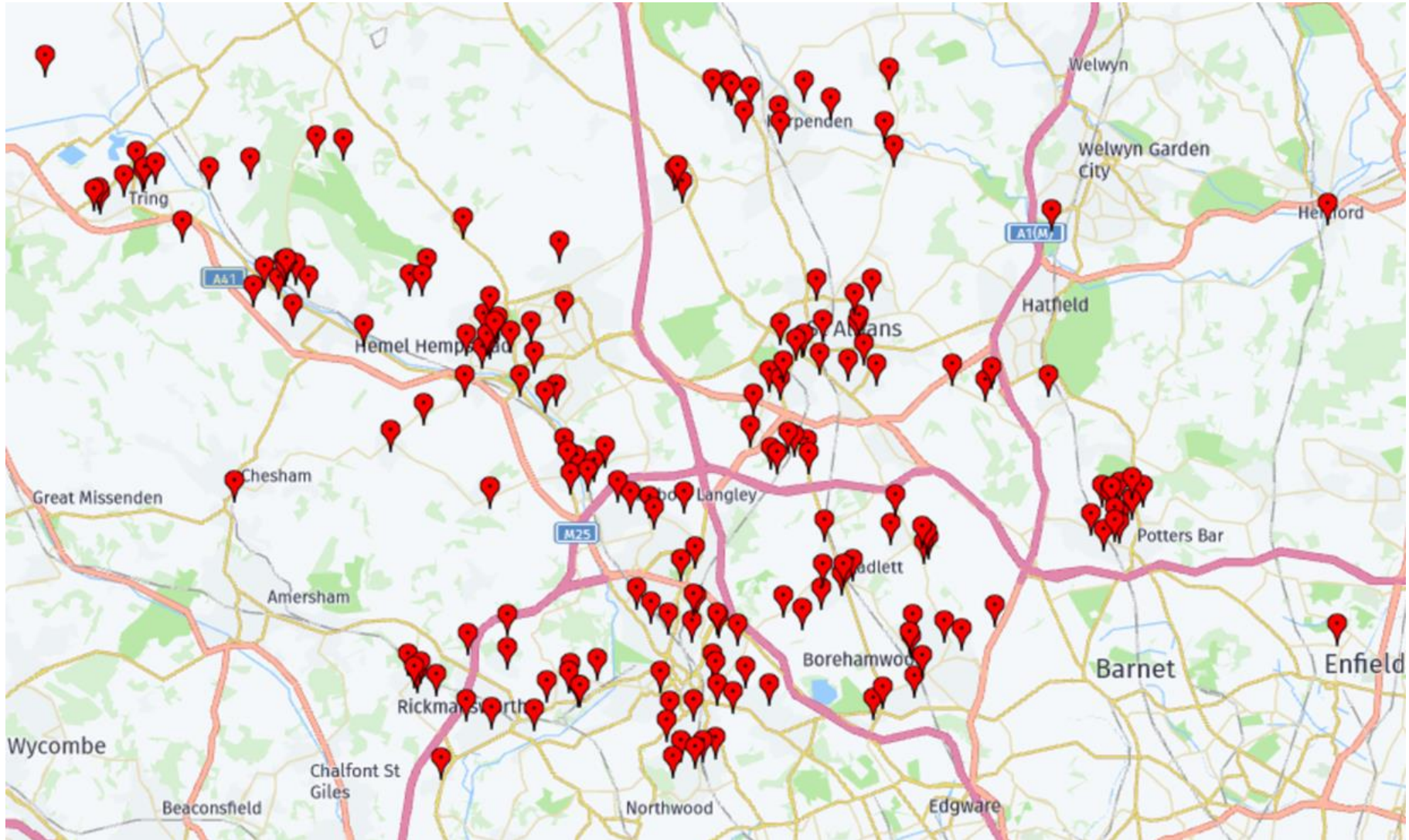
Figure 10: Percentage of responses by area

	Percentage of total respondees	
	Online survey	Poll
Dacorum	26%	28%
Hertsmere	21%	10%
St Albans	21%	23%
Three Rivers	15%	13%
Watford	6%	12%
Don't live / work in area	11%	2%

- 3.9 The postcode information for the online survey responses has been mapped and is shown below. It is interesting to note some clusters of responses, particularly around Potters Bar, which is likely to reflect the survey being promoted by a local group(s).

³ Categorisation based on email address used and content of response

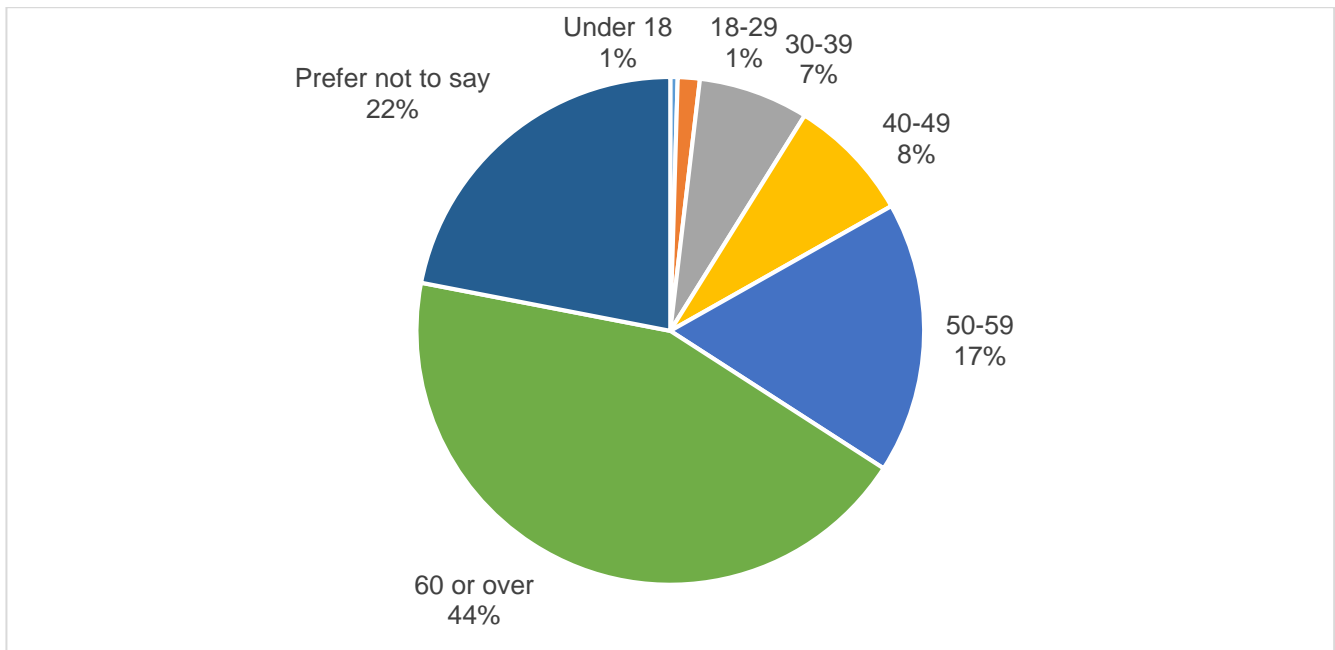
Figure 11: Map showing location of those responding to online survey



Age of respondents

3.10 Those completing the surveys were asked to indicate their ages and over three-quarters did so, despite this information not being compulsory. The information provided shows that the survey had limited success in attracting responses from those in younger age groups, with over 60% being over 50. However, the actual number of young people responding may be slightly higher than indicated in the chart below, as there is anecdotal evidence to suggest younger people are less likely to share personal information online, so may form a high proportion of the 22% in the 'prefer not to say' category.

Figure 12: Percentage breakdown of survey respondents by age



3.11 The polls proved more successful at reaching the younger demographics, although these groups were still relatively under-represented. The table below shows the proportion of poll respondents per age category for the polls compared to the one carried out in early 2020. Built-ID, who operate many surveys on their Give My View platform, advise that the results seem to reflect their general assessment that younger people are perhaps less active on Facebook and Instagram than they were in the past – preferring to use different social media platforms. The pandemic has also accelerated digital adoption amongst older demographics, so they have become more regular users of social media.

Figure 13: Poll voter ages for 2020 poll vs 2022 poll

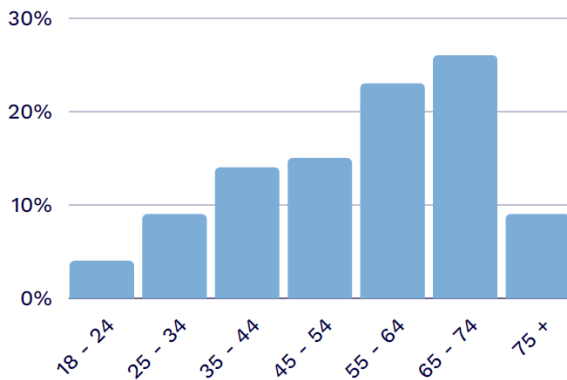
% Breakdown of voters by age	Your Future survey 2020	Realising Our Potential survey 2022
18-24	16%	4%
25-34	16%	9%
35-44	18%	14%

45-54	18%	14%
55-65	17%	22%
Over 65	15%	26%
75+		9%
Prefer not to say		2%

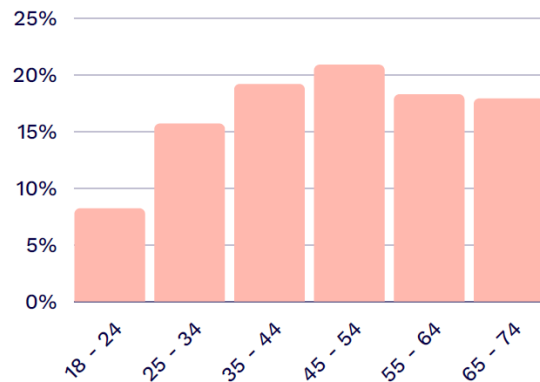
3.12 Built-ID have also provided Google analytics data which records visits to the poll, by way of a comparison. This suggests the actual proportion of under 25s who responded to the poll may be higher than the data provided indicates (see graphs below). Again this is thought to reflect a reluctance amongst many younger people to share personal details online.

Figure 14: Age of respondents (2022 poll)

Based on the demographic section of the survey

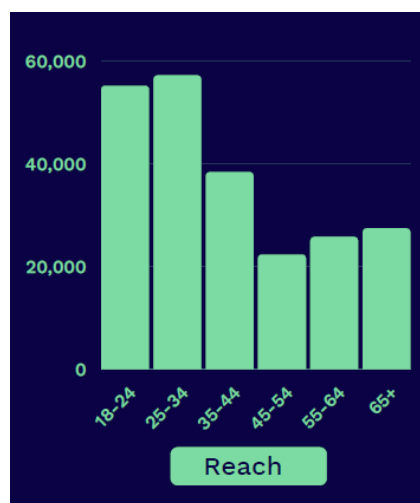


Based on the Google Analytics



3.13 This conclusion is supported by the fact that the adverts for the poll on Facebook and Instagram reached a greater proportion of younger than older people:

Figure 15: Reach of social media poll marketing



3.14 No information is available regarding the age of those who replied by email / letters.

3.15 The high response rate from those aged over 55 does however indicate that the 'digital-first' approach to the engagement did not exclude those who may have historically preferred in-person consultation events.

Ethnicity of respondents

3.16 When completing the online surveys, respondents were asked their ethnicity, although this question was not compulsory and 22% of respondents preferred not to specify. Of those who did provide this information, almost three-quarters were white. This is disappointing considering the 2011 census indicates that 19.2% of Hertfordshire residents are from an ethnic minority⁴ and this figure is likely to be even high when data for the 2021 census is assessed.

Figure 16: Ethnicity of survey respondees

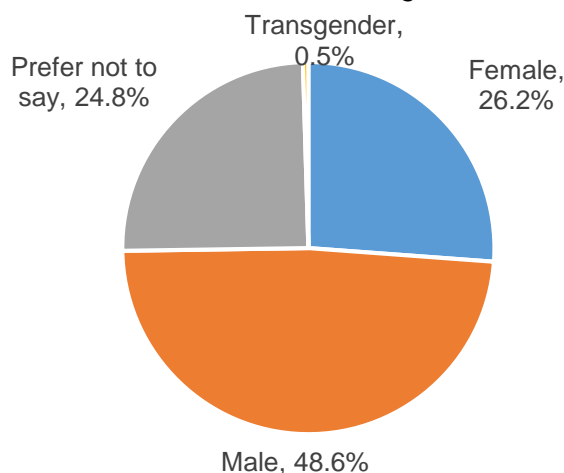
Ethnicity	% of overall survey responses
White – English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	63
White – any other white background	9
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups – White and Black Caribbean	1
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups – White and Asian	1
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups – any other	1
Asian/Asian British – Indian	1
Other ethnic group – any other	2
Prefer not to say	22

3.17 No information is available regarding the ethnicity of those who replied by email / letters.

Gender of respondents

3.18 For both the online survey and poll, respondents were asked to define their gender. Nearly a quarter of those replying to the online survey preferred not to say, compared to only about 3% of poll respondents. The majority of those who did provide this information for the online survey were male, whereas for the poll the trend was reversed, with the majority being female. This split was reinforced by the Google analytics data for all those who visited the poll website (see graphs below).

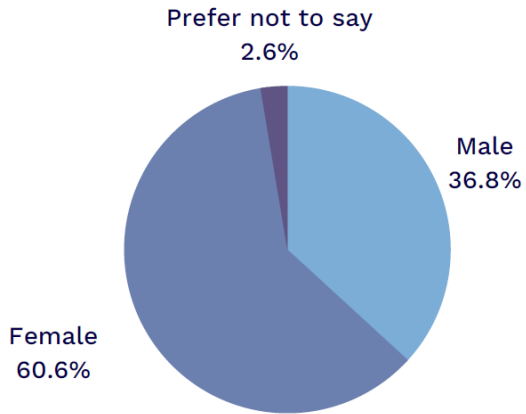
Figure 17: Gender of survey respondees



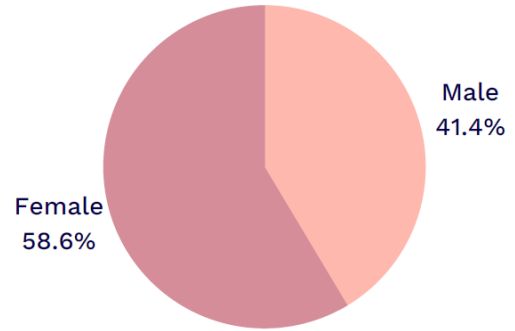
⁴ <https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/f589797e29b14c50a0f7cfd2c4420/E1000015?clear=true>

Figure 18: Gender of poll respondees

Based on the demographic section of the survey



Based on the Google Analytics



3.19 No information on gender is available for responses received via email / letter.

4. Response overview

- 4.1 This section of the report provides an overview of the feedback received throughout the course of the consultation. It summarises responses by the themes that formed the section headings within the consultation document, namely:
- (a) SW Herts today
 - (b) The draft vision
 - (c) Shaping the future
 - (d) Making it happen
 - (e) Other feedback
- 4.2 This feedback is then sub-divided by the feedback mechanism the respondents chose to use.
- 4.3 Whilst the paper and online survey asked the full set of consultation questions (25 in total, plus one relating to the SA Scoping Report), not all questions had to be completed by respondents. Response rates therefore vary, with broader questions about the SW Herts area now usually generating more feedback than the questions that asked more specifically about the draft vision and associated objectives, and the potential growth types. A full summary of the online survey responses is set out in Appendix 2.
- 4.4 The poll included a reduced number of questions, set out in a slightly simplified format, due to the restrictions placed on character length by the Give My View platform. Similarly, the workshop for sixth form students focussed on a more limited number of questions, in line with the poll. A full report of the poll responses is provided in Appendix 3 and the school workshop in Appendix 6.
- 4.5 In contrast, many of the email responses didn't directly address the questions asked within the consultation document. Whilst some did attach a copy of the survey questionnaire, the majority raised issues or concerns about the SW Herts area, or the planning system as a whole, in a more generalised way. Where responses did not specifically reference which section of the consultation document they related to, Officers have attributed them to the most relevant question. A full summary of email responses received is provide in Appendix 4.
- 4.6 A single response was received in letter form and covered all of the 25 questions posed. This is included as Appendix 5.
- 4.7 Many of the responses – from all sources - were very detailed in nature and may were also often quite place specific. Where matters are considered to be more relevant to informing Local Plans rather than a strategic plan such as this, they have been passed to the relevant district / borough for consideration. This includes site promotions submitted by developers and landowners (see Appendix 7).

(a) SW Herts today

Summary of key messages/issues and any changes arising

The vast majority of those who responded to the early consultation questions – which asked for views about SW Herts today under the themes of 'our world is changing,' 'our environment,' 'living,' 'working,' 'playing,' 'moving,' and 'planning for infrastructure' - agreed with the summary of issues set out in the consultation document. Where issues were raised about one particular section, it was often the case that they were picked up in subsequent sections of the consultation document - as many issues are overlapping.

Many comments reiterated concerns that had emerged from the initial 'Your Future' poll conducted in early 2020, particularly with regard to matters such as:

- Transport – especially the inadequacy of the current public transport network and the need to improve walking and cycling routes;
- Healthcare – including the need for improved hospital and GP provision locally;
- Affordability – particularly the lack of genuinely affordable homes;
- Green spaces - the need to protect the countryside (especially the Green Belt) and existing urban green spaces;
- Water - the increased pressures on water resources; and
- Ways of working - the need for the plan to recognise and reflect recent changes in working practices – both in terms of skills and premises requirements.

Many responses from specific interest groups / organisations not surprisingly wanted more detailed coverage and acknowledgement of their particular area(s) of interest – be that cycling, sports provision, the environment etc.

In terms of the changes recommended as a result of the feedback received, the majority of comments will be reflected in future iterations of the Plan. Comments relating to infrastructure will be passed to consultants carrying out relevant technical work. Some knock on changes are however suggested to the vision and objectives as a result of feedback received. These include more explicit reference being made to water resources and the historic environment.

A more detailed overview of comments follows below.

Our world is changing

Online survey

- 4.8 There were 148 responses to the question '*Are there any other national or global issues or trends that we should take account of when preparing the Joint Strategic Plan?*' 79% of these respondents thought there were other issues or trends that the vision should take account of. The majority of comments provided general feedback on the vision as a whole rather than comments specifically relating to the contents of the 'our world is changing' section. The comments requested an increased focus on climate change, biodiversity, energy efficiency, affordable housing, a limit to development on Green Belt, improvements to the use and quality of water resources and the provision of better physical and digital infrastructure across the area. The majority of these issues are included within the high level vision and will be expanded on as the plan progresses.

Poll

- 4.9 The poll did not ask a specific question about issues and trends occurring in the area that need to be taken into account when preparing the JSP.

Emails / letter

- 4.10 In total, 44 email responses addressed this question across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. Responses suggested that more reference should be made to the role of the open countryside and designated areas - especially the Chilterns AONB and the Green Belt - in conserving biodiversity, mitigating climate change, supporting food production and enhancing physical and mental health and wellbeing. The role of planning policy in helping to address future trends in healthcare delivery as set out in the NHS Long Term Plan was noted. Other global issues included concerns about both energy and food security, and encouragement to push not just for net zero carbon, but a negative carbon economy, infrastructure and lifestyle. The changing nature of work and shopping patterns with the move to more working from home / hybrid working was highlighted as an issue affecting the future level of demand for different land uses. The development industry responses primarily highlighted the issue of housing supply and lack of access to affordable homes in the SW Herts area.
- 4.11 The letter respondent considered that account should be taken of lifestyle and attitude influences from social media and other contraries.

School workshop

- 4.12 The workshop did not specifically discuss issues and trends occurring in the area that need to be taken into account when preparing the JSP.

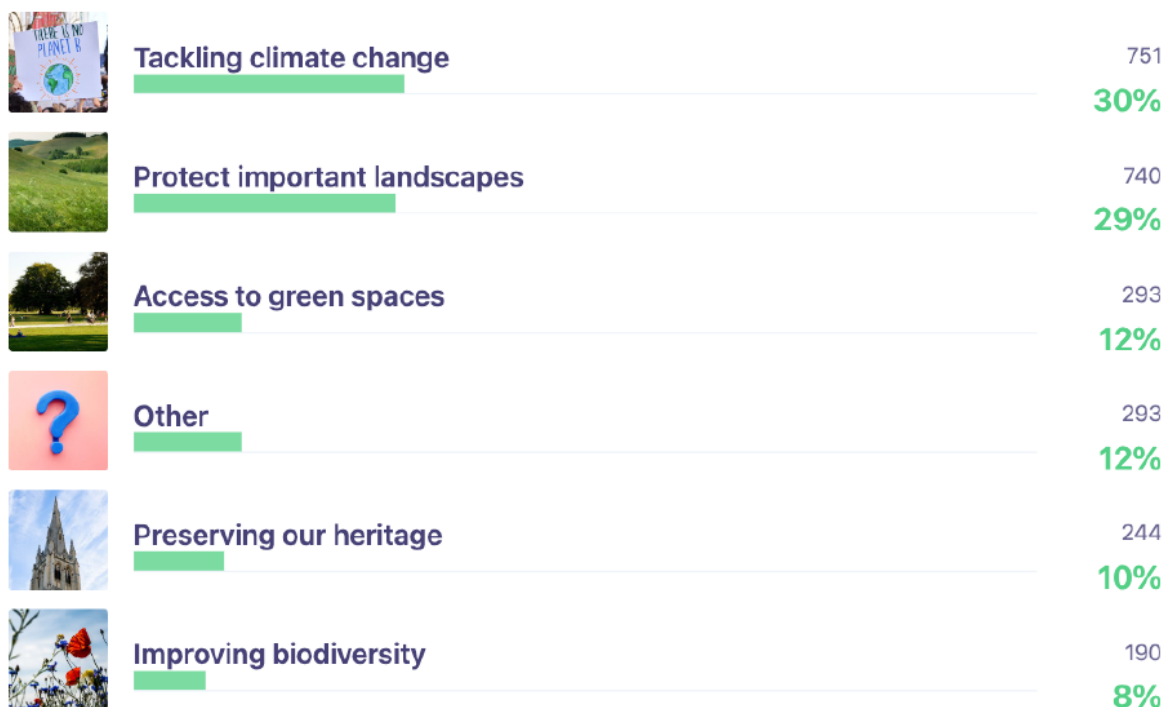
Our environment

Online survey

- 4.13 In total there were 100 responses to the question *‘Do you agree with our summary of the current issues relating to OUR ENVIRONMENT in SW Herts?’* with 74% agreeing with the summary of current issues relating to the environment. There were however suggestions that the document had omitted to include sufficient references to green infrastructure and that there was a failure to fully understand the linkages between different green assets, that the 2050 date for Net Zero was too far into the future, and that the vision failed to mention food security. There was broad support for the protection of the Green Belt, although there was some recognition that Green Belt designation should not represent a complete presumption against any development.
- 4.14 There were 122 responses to the question *‘Are there any issues or opportunities (relating to OUR ENVIRONMENT in SW Herts) we have missed?’* 73% of respondents suggested that there were additional issues and opportunities relating to the environment that had been missed in the vision. The majority of responses focused on increasing the emphasis on protecting green spaces and Green Belt land from development. There were a variety of other responses referring to issues of air pollution, green infrastructure, improving water efficiency and quality, and encouraging renewable energy and green construction methods.

Poll

- 4.15 When asked 'What do you think is the biggest issue for the environment in SW Herts?' the issues of 'Tackling climate change' and 'Protect important landscape' scored very highly across all authority areas. 'Improving biodiversity' scored the lowest on average, with 'Preserving our heritage' also scoring quite poorly. Those respondents who selected 'other' rather than any of the options given above cited issues such as infrastructure, design, safety, levels of policing and pollution as key areas of concern.



Emails / letter

- 4.16 In total 83 email responses addressed these two questions across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. Respondee suggested that greater reference should be made to the role of, and need for the protection of, the open countryside and designated areas especially the Chilterns AONB and the Green Belt. Some also rightly noted that the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC should be differentiated from the Chilterns AONB as the purpose of designation of each is different. The need for clarification of the term 'green space' was raised by a number of respondents, who wanted to understand whether it included the wider countryside as well as urban green spaces (which it does).
- 4.17 A number of respondents considered that the Plan should also refer to the higher than average levels of water use in the SW Herts area and the need to tackle the challenge of depleting water resources. Another issue was the role of the JSP in identifying strategic cross-boundary mitigation solutions to relieve existing visitor pressures on key landscape and natural assets, such as the Ashridge Estate.
- 4.18 The letter respondent agreed with the issues raised under the 'Living' topic, and reiterated concerns about water abstraction for local rivers and the need to protect all types of greenspaces.

School workshop

- 4.19 One student from the workshop said *“Tackling climate change incredibly important, if we don’t do anything now, we are all going to be doomed. Not doing anything is really irresponsible and I think it’s the most important aspect to improve.”* Students also said they wanted easy access to green space for a place to just breathe and relax. They also felt recycling facilities could be improved in the area.

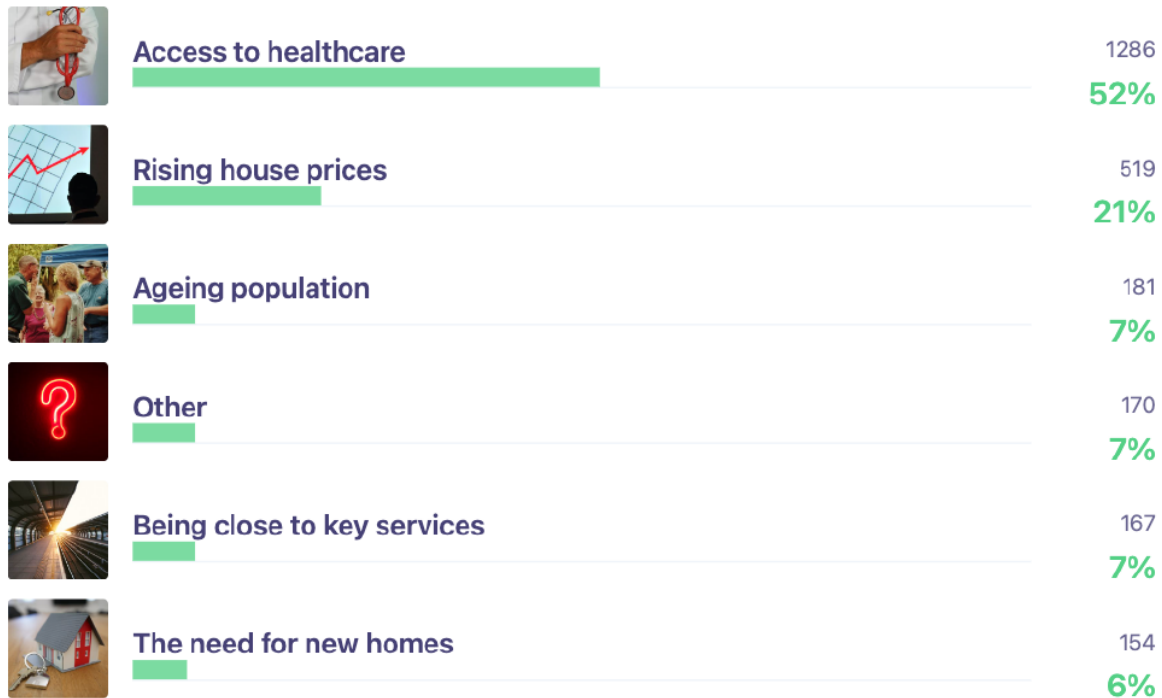
Living

Online survey

- 4.20 In total, there were 113 responses to the question *Do you agree with our summary of the current issues relating to LIVING in SW Herts?* with 65% supporting the summary of current issues. The majority of comments related to future growth in the area and the need to protect Green Belt by prioritising growth on brownfield land. Related to this were criticisms of the Government’s standard method figure which provides the basis for setting local housing numbers. The issues of housing affordability also arose as a key theme, with many comments promoting the delivery of social rented homes. There were also comments on the need to consider infrastructure needs alongside those of growth, particularly in relation to health and education, and access to public transport.
- 4.21 There were 110 responses to the question *Are there any issues or opportunities (relating to LIVING in SW Herts) we have missed?* with 68% suggesting some issues or opportunities for living in SW Herts had been missed. The majority of these responses related to housing growth both in terms of location and type, and a desire not to see development on Green Belt land, but wished to see more affordable housing delivered. There were also suggestions that social care and cultural diversity had not been referenced in the proposed vision.

Poll

- 4.22 When asked *‘What do you think is the biggest issue to address for those living in SW Herts?’* the issue of *‘Access to healthcare’* was by far the most common response. This was followed by *‘Rising house prices.’* Issues related to *‘Ageing population’*, *‘Being close to key services’* and the *‘Need for new homes’* all received relatively few votes. The relatively small number of respondents who selected *‘other,’* rather than any of the options given above cited issues such as development and construction, protecting the Green Belt and natural environment and various issues related to transport and travel as key areas of concern.



Emails / letter

- 4.23 In total 64 email responses addressed these two questions across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. Responses raised similar issues as those who replied to the online survey, whilst also stressing the need to ensure sustainable development – balancing the needs of a growing population with environmental constraints. Some considered that the Plan should make greater reference to issues of rural deprivation and of the cost of housing in the area which is unaffordable to those on average household incomes. The development industry responses advocated a Green Belt review and release of Green Belt land in order to address the acute housing shortage across the area. It was also suggested that the vision could also be enhanced with greater reference to the historic environment.
- 4.24 The letter respondent agreed with the issues highlighted under the ‘Living’ themes and highlighted the need to take account of those residents living in private rented accommodation.

Schools workshop

- 4.25 One student who attended the session, said: “*Buying my home will only ever be a dream.*” They wanted to stay living the area and buy a home after attending university, but believed it would be too expensive. Other comments were that “*Homes will always be built, but where they are built is the point that matters*” and one noted fewer new homes being built makes existing homes more expensive.

Working

Online survey

- 4.26 There were 89 responses to the question is question *Do you agree with our summary of the current issues relating to WORKING in SW Herts?* with 66% agreeing with the summary of current issues relating to working in SW Herts. There were comments relating to the need to encourage more jobs for local people and

the need for suitable infrastructure to support different types of employment. The importance of good public transport connectivity was referred to specifically. The changing patterns of work were referenced in some responses and the need for improved provision of digital infrastructure to support more working from home and more agile forms of working space and working patterns.

- 4.27 There were 90 responses to the question *Are there any issues or opportunities (relating to WORKING in SW Herts) we have missed?* with 63% providing details of issues or opportunities that had been missed in relation to working in SW Herts. Comments varied considerably in terms of the types of employment that respondents thought should be encouraged in SW Herts, the scale of units required and the types of uses that are needed. Other comments related to an increased need for physical and digital infrastructure, particularly public transport and access to high speed broadband in support of both traditional and agile working patterns. There were some broad comments on the potential locations for employment growth in the area both in terms of where additional floorspace should be provided and where development should be restricted, such as on Green Belt land.

Poll

- 4.28 When asked *'What do you think is the biggest issue to address for those working in SW Herts?'* the issue of *'Ensuring a skilled workforce'* was the biggest issue, followed by *'Keeping unemployment low.'* *'Support for agile working'* and *'Supporting creative industries'* both received around 11% of the vote, with the least popular issue being *'Support research.'* Quite a high proportion of respondents selected *'other'* rather than any of the options given. They explained their answers by reference to issues such as the costs and unreliability of public transport to get to work, the need for a wider range of employment opportunities – particularly in higher paid roles - and concerns about the lack of affordable homes for local workers.



Emails / letter

- 4.29 In total 54 email responses addressed these two questions across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. Responses highlighted the lack of reference to rural employment opportunities. A number of respondents commented that large scale employment growth on greenfield land is unnecessary as the area has virtually full employment with local labour shortages. Responses suggested potential future employment opportunities, such as life sciences linked to large scale investment in healthcare. A number of respondents suggested that the vision should give more emphasis to changing working patterns, accelerated by the Covid pandemic, including home and hybrid working, which are reducing the need for additional office space. Conversely, other respondents highlighted the ongoing need for industrial and logistics locations to meet national demands of online shopping and changing manufacturing needs.
- 4.30 The letter respondent agreed with the issues highlighted under the ‘Working’ theme and stressed the need to support small businesses and provide public transport discounts to enable students to access local further education facilities.

School workshop

- 4.31 Students complained about a lack of research jobs in the area, but also added they weren’t yet fully aware of what alternative jobs were available locally.

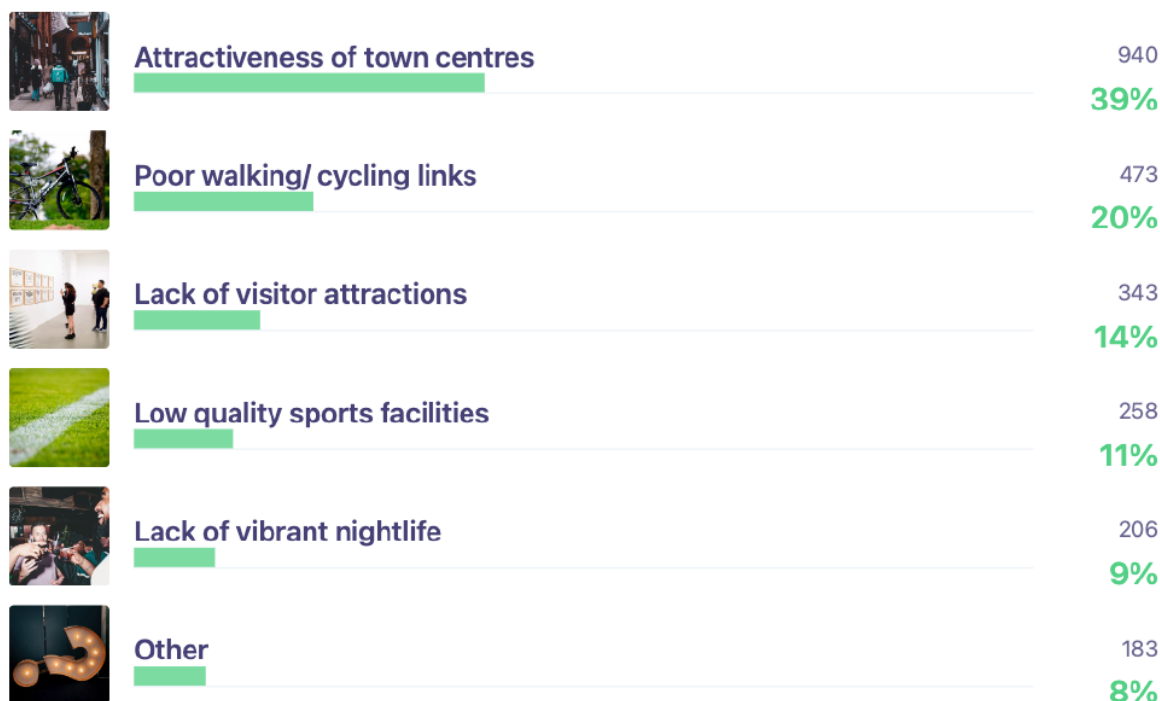
Playing

Online survey

- 4.32 In total, there were 100 responses to the question ‘*Do you agree with our summary of the current issues relating to PLAYING in SW Herts?*’ with 70% agreeing with the summary of current issues relating to play in SW Herts. The majority of comments referred to the need to create good quality cycling and walking routes across the area. There were also comments relating to the need for specific sports and leisure facilities, and play facilities for specific age groups. There were also several comments that were not directly planning related.
- 4.33 In total there were 99 responses to the question ‘*Are there any issues or opportunities (relating to PLAYING in SW Herts) we have missed?*’ with 55% of these responses suggesting that there were key issues and opportunities relating to play in SW Herts missing from the vision. The main comments referred to the need to create good quality cycling and walking routes across the area. There were also comments relating to the need for specific sports and leisure facilities, and play facilities for specific age groups. The role that the natural environment could play in terms of providing tourism opportunities was highlighted, as was the need to support retail units and markets.

Poll

- 4.34 When asked ‘*What do you think is the biggest issue to address for those playing in SW Herts?*’ the issue of ‘*Attractiveness of town centres*’ was the most popular responses. This was followed by ‘*Poor walking / cycling links*’. Only a small number of people chose the ‘other’ option, and those who did so referred to issues such as concerns over personal safety, the lack of community spaces and issues related to public transport costs and links as key areas of concern.



Emails / letter

- 4.35 In total 44 email responses addressed these two questions across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. Respondee raised concerns about visitor pressures on the natural landscape, especially at locations such as Ashridge, which would only worsen with further population growth. The JSP was considered by some respondents to provide an opportunity to plan strategically to manage visitor impact by providing alternative destinations. The lack of reference to the Public Rights of Way network was highlighted by a number of respondents and although respondents welcomed the reference to the importance of green corridor networks and the link between active travel and connections with nature, others noted the poor quality and connectivity of many cycleways. The impact of social inequalities on access to sport and recreation opportunities was highlighted, together with the impact that this has on the health and wellbeing of the most deprived members of the community. The role of new, especially large scale development in delivering new recreational opportunities was highlighted.
- 4.36 The letter respondent agreed with the issues highlighted under the ‘Playing’ theme, but noted that the area will never be able to compete with London’s leisure offer and that cycling was realistically only an option for younger age groups.

School workshop

- 4.37 Students considered there were not enough places of interest locally. They complained about littering and shop closures and a lack of affordable facilities or services for teenagers or year-round sports and activities.

Moving

Online survey

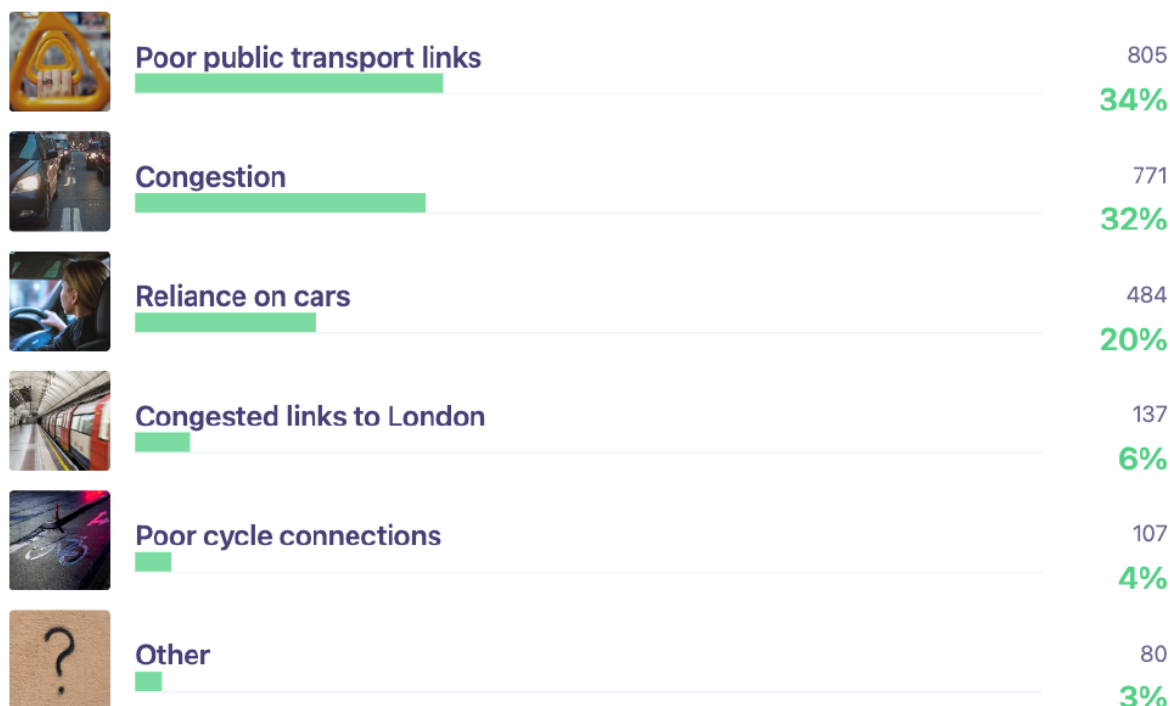
- 4.38 In total, there were 110 responses to the question *Do you agree with our summary of the current issues relating to MOVING in SW Herts?* with 66% supporting the summary of key issues relating to moving in SW Herts. The majority of comments

referred to the current inadequate transport system particularly east to west travel the level and quality of bus services and poor quality cycling and walking routes. There was an acknowledgement that cycling and walking will not be a solution for some sections of the population. There was a suggestion that any improvements to transport would need to be cross boundary and consistent across the area, as well as being supported by infrastructure.

4.39 In total there were 107 responses to the question *Are there any issues or opportunities (relating to MOVING in SW Herts) we have missed?* with 66% stating that there were additional issues or opportunities that should be dealt with in the vision. The majority of comments referred to the current inadequate transport system particularly poor quality and unsafe cycling and walking routes. There was also an acknowledgement that cycling and walking will not be a viable solution for some sections of the population and that any interventions such as promoting electric vehicles will need to be supported by infrastructure. There were also many specific suggestions of schemes and enhancements to the local transport network.

Poll

4.40 When asked ‘*What do you think is the biggest issue to address for those moving in SW Herts?*’ the issues of ‘*Poor public transport links*’ and ‘*Congestion*’ were almost equally popular choices, followed by ‘*reliance on cars.*’ Surprisingly ‘*Poor cycle connections*’ was considered to be a big issue with regard to this question, despite being the second highest issue of concern with regard to the ‘*playing*’ question above. Of the very limited number of people who selected ‘*other*’ rather than any of the options given above, most cited issues such as unreliable public transport links, the cost of transport, parking issues and the poor condition of roads in the area as key areas of concern.



Emails / letter

4.41 In total 60 email responses addressed these two questions across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. A number of respondents agreed that east-

west travel is a significant issue for the area, with support expressed for the HERT scheme. Issues raised included the difficulty of squaring encouragement of a shift away from use of the private car to alternative forms of transport, bearing in mind the current background of cuts to bus and train services. Poor rural public transport was noted as increasing visitor cars on rural roads and the lack of a frequent and reliable bus service, that is integrated with other forms of transport limits its usefulness to rural residents. The lack of reference to the Public Rights of Way network was highlighted again here, as was the need to improve cycle connections generally, including making links to green infrastructure and green corridors. In terms of growth opportunities, it was suggested that these should focus on locations where sustainable transport can be facilitated.

- 4.42 The letter respondent agreed with the issues highlighted under the 'Moving' theme, but considered that the HERT scheme would do little to increase the overall uptake of public transport.

School workshop

- 4.43 The students felt there were a lot of one-way roads without cycle paths, buses were unreliable and routes were confusing and they wanted to see fewer people using cars for short journeys. They also wanted to see the quality of public transport design improved.

Planning for Infrastructure

Online survey

- 4.44 The online survey asked respondents '*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?*' This question generated one of the highest response rates of all the survey questions – highlighting the importance that those who live and/or work in SW Herts place on this issue. In total there were 130 responses to this question, 78% of which stated that there are long term infrastructure challenges or opportunities that they would like to make us aware of as we begin work on the plan.
- 4.45 The issues relating to healthcare were most frequently mentioned. The principal concerns related to Watford Hospital and the fact that this was hard to access - especially for those with mobility issues. Concerns were also raised about local healthcare facilities such as GPs.
- 4.46 Educational facilities were also referenced by a number of respondents, with feedback alluding to the fact that these needed to be located close to demand. The lack of local school places was noted as a factor in increasing congestion in the area.
- 4.47 Another frequently raised issue was the need for safe, reliable and affordable public transport that connects with the right places and serves more rural areas. There were a number of references to the Hertfordshire Essex Rapid Transit (HERT), as it was provided as a case study in the consultation document. The general consensus from those who referenced it was that it seemed a good idea, but further detail was needed to ensure it connected with where people live. The need for high quality pedestrian and cycle links – especially those connecting to rail stations and services was noted.

Poll

4.48 The poll did not ask a specific question about infrastructure.

Emails / letter

- 4.49 In total 58 email responses addressed this question across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. Responses welcomed the strategic approach to infrastructure provision across the SWH authorities and here was further support for the HERT, as above. Comments included the need to ensure that current infrastructure in the area (notably water infrastructure) is adequate to meet additional demand and where required new infrastructure can be located. Some responses suggested that the JSP should promote the transition to a more circular economy with an emphasis on waste reduction, reuse and recycling. The need for more and improved health facilities, both at community / GP level and more strategically, i.e. hospital provision, was raised by a number of respondents.
- 4.50 The letter respondent considered the key infrastructure challenge for the area was to ensure local hospitals were served by expanded bus provision.

School workshop

4.51 The workshop did not specifically discuss infrastructure.

One change required by 2050

Summary of key messages/issues and any changes arising

The question of *'What one change would you like to see happen in SW Herts by 2050'* was asked via the poll and at the school workshop, as a way of focussing on the issue of most concern to respondents.

The results generally reflected the feedback received through the previous questions, with health and transport being the most commonly cited issues. Responding to climate change was however of greatest importance to the sixth formers, who were also concerned about the need to ensure job opportunities for young people.

A more detailed overview of comments follows below.

Poll

4.52 The poll asked an additional question to that posed through the questionnaire and in the online survey. This was *'What one change would you like to see happen in SW Herts by 2050?'* This was a free text question and over 2,250 people gave their views. The most commonly noted change related to health facilities and services (mentioned by 509 respondents), with issues around transport and traffic (465 comments) and reduction in construction and high rise development being the third most commonly requested change (251 comments). As the full poll report in Appendix 3 shows, there were some differences in the nature of responses depending upon where the respondents lived / worked.

(b) The draft vision

Summary of key messages/issues and any changes arising

This section is considered to be the key element of the consultation, as it is critical to have a clear vision and set of objectives to guide future stages of plan-making.

The majority of respondents either supported the draft vision, or had neutral views. Many suggested that it should more explicitly address issues that they felt strongly about – such as the approach to the Green Belt, or include more locally-specific issues. However, the vision is intentionally high level, as is appropriate for a strategic scale plan. Some of the detail requested is included in the objectives that sit below the vision, whilst other detail will be added through the articulation of the spatial strategy and thematic policies that will follow in due course. All of these will be subject to further consultation.

Some changes are however suggested as a result of feedback received – including adding reference to ‘health’ and making sure that the wording is clear that sustainable growth needs to benefit both people and the environment.

The vast majority of those who responded to the questions on the pillars and associated objectives supported these, although a lot of amendments to the detailed wording were put forward for consideration. Many of the issues that were flagged as missing from one pillar were however picked up through the wording of the other pillars – as there are overlaps between the themes and a lot of cross cutting issues.

The feedback did however raise a few areas where it is considered the objectives need clarifying or expanding. This includes ensuring that they appropriately reference:

- The historic environment;
- Air quality;
- Both urban and rural jobs; and
- Water resources.

In terms of priority order for the six pillars, there was consensus that the most important pillar was *‘Living green in a healthy natural environment.’* The relative priorities for each of the themes after that differed a little between the poll, survey and email responses.

A more detailed overview of comments follows below.

Vison

Online survey

- 4.55 46 of the 93 respondents to the online survey who responded to the question *‘Does the draft vision statement summarise your aspirations for the future of South West Hertfordshire in 2050?’* answered yes. However, both those who answered yes and no responded to the question *‘Are there any changes you would like to see to the vision statement?’* The most commonly raised issue was that the words were too generic and could apply to many other areas. Others considered that the vision should explicitly say that the Green Belt and green spaces should not be built on. Many used the question to express concerns that the area is already full, with services and infrastructure at capacity.

Poll

- 4.56 The poll used a 'slido' approach to enable respondents to answer the question '*Do you agree with the vision statement for the future of SW Herts?*' 2843 people answered this question, with 63% of votes cast in the neutral to positive range.
- 4.57 Interestingly, of the respondents who gave their age, those in the 18-24 age range viewed the vision statement most positively, with those aged 55-74 being the least positive.
- 4.58 This poll question did not have the facility for residents to leave any free text explanation for their answers.

Emails / letter

- 4.59 In total 44 email responses addressed the question '*Does the draft vision statement summarise your aspirations for the future of South West Hertfordshire in 2050?*' across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. Of these, 21 respondents answered yes. 41 respondents provided comments to the question about whether any changes were required to the vision. There were requests for 'health' or 'healthy' to be included in the vision and for a strengthening of the commitment to sustainable development through the addition of the word 'environment'. A number of respondents wanted to see the climate emergency placed at the front and heart of the plan's aspirations and for some, the vision was too focussed on growth, rather than protecting and enhancing the area's existing character and assets. A number of responses noted that the objectives should be SMART and measurable in some way in order to enhance the effectiveness of the vision.
- 4.60 The letter respondent did not support the vision and suggested alternative wording – focusing on progressive thinking and fair dealing and a genuine interest in all the area's citizens.

School workshop

- 4.61 The workshop did not specifically discuss the draft JSP vision.

Pillar: Living green in a healthy natural environment

Online survey

- 4.62 The online survey asked "*Do you support the draft objectives relating to LIVING GREEN IN A HEALTHY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT?*" and then gave respondents the opportunity to explain their answers more fully. 75% of the 101 respondents agreed with the draft objectives. The explanations given were quite varied. The most frequently mentioned concern was about the loss of green space and Green Belt that could result from housing pressures, and the fact that the protection of these areas needed to be a key plan objective. Linked to this was a reference to the fact that the loss of agricultural land could negatively impact food security.
- 4.63 Several respondents noted that they were pleased that the declaration of a climate emergency was being taken seriously. However some noted the tensions between the environmental and commercial aspirations of the plan.
- 4.64 A lot of reference was made to the need for very specific actions, such as helping those on low incomes insulate their homes, the need to support micro energy generation and the need to add solar panels to all housing association properties.

Poll

4.65 The poll did not ask a specific question about this pillar.

Emails / letter

- 4.66 In total 49 email responses addressed this question across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. As already raised in relation to previous questions, responses highlighted the need to protect water resources. There was also a request for the addition of an additional objective for new development to have regard to the historic environment. The JSP was also felt to have a strategic role in supporting nature recovery networks and to protect and enhance designated landscapes, the Green Belt and urban green spaces.
- 4.67 The letter responded supported the ‘Living green in a healthy natural environment’ pillar but considered that reducing the use of sand a gravel would not be compatible with current building methods.

School workshop

4.68 The workshop did not specifically discuss the draft pillars.

Pillar: Growing opportunities to work locally

Online survey

- 4.69 When asked “*Do you support the draft objectives relating to GROWING OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK LOCALLY?*” almost all respondees (61 out of 79) supported the suggested draft objectives. In terms of the free text explanation, there were no consistent emerging messages. Comments varied from suggestions that commercial space should be converted to affordable housing, to the need to support small businesses and start-ups, rather than juts big companies. Some feedback was contradictory, with respondents both supporting the visitor economy whilst another questioned if this sectors should be encouraged in an area that is already busy. The need to ensure the JSP reflected changes in how people worked e.g. the increase in remote working, was noted, with emerging trends and sectors such as online retailing needing particular consideration.

Poll

4.70 The poll did not ask a specific question about this pillar.

Emails / letter

- 4.71 In total, 45 email responses addressed this question across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. Support was expressed for new working patterns including home working and working closer to home, due to the wider benefits – to the local community and businesses as well as helping reduce road congestion. This pillar was considered by some respondents to fail to address the need for industrial/logistics floorspace. The need to achieve a balance between homes and jobs was also noted, especially the need for affordable homes. A number of respondents felt that more reference should be made to the value of the rural economy to the area’s economic base.

- 4.72 The letter responded supported the 'Growing opportunities to work locally' pillar but considered new restrictions on permitted development were required.

School workshop

- 4.73 The workshop did not specifically discuss the draft pillars.

Pillar: Living in healthy, thriving local communities

Online survey

- 4.74 A huge majority (85%) of the 80 respondents to the online survey answered 'yes' when asked "*Do you support the draft objectives relating to LIVING IN HEALTHY, THRIVING LOCAL COMMUNITIES?*" The reasons given were varied but quite limited in number.
- 4.75 It was noted that the objectives set out very broad ambition and there as little to disagree with. Other comments ranged from an observation that healthy, thriving communities are dependent on good access to a range of services and facilities and that it was important to create places that people were proud of, as this means they will be well looked after. Some respondents made reference to very specific places and these are of more relevance to district / borough Local Plans rather than the JSP.

Poll

- 4.76 The poll did not ask a specific question about this pillar.

Emails / letter

- 4.77 In total 35 email responses addressed this question across the 4 respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. As raised in previous questions, the need for affordable housing was raised by numerous respondents. The recognition of the value of links between health, wellbeing and access to the natural environment was supported. The delivery of infrastructure before new homes was also advocated to ensure that new residents have access to services and capacity of existing services is not exceeded. Access to the countryside was seen as an important factor in creating healthy, thriving communities.
- 4.78 The letter responded supported the 'Living in healthy, thriving local communities' pillar, but noted that safety concerns are often a result of perceived dangers rather than actual dangers.

School workshop

- 4.79 The workshop did not specifically discuss the draft pillars.

Pillar: Moving easily in connected places

Online survey

- 4.80 The online survey asked "*Do you support the draft objectives relating to MOVING EASILY IN WELL CONNECTED PLACES?*" and then gave respondees the opportunity to explain their answers more fully. This pillar and associated objectives was supported by 68% of the 87 respondents. Surprisingly, relatively few

respondents provided an explanation for their answers. Those who did noted that there must continue to be a commitment to both cars and car use, as other options were often not feasible, especially in rural areas. It was considered that public transport needed to be improved before car dependence would be reduced. One respondent noted the importance of considering wider initiatives such as increased remote working, online shopping and car clubs when planning for the future of the area.

Poll

4.81 The poll did not ask a specific question about this pillar.

Emails / letter

4.82 In total 38 email responses addressed this question across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. Responses supported ambitions to improve public transport and the active travel network but some noted the poor quality, infrequency and unreliability of services will hamper achievement of that aspiration. As on previous questions, the lack of reference to the Public Rights of Way network was noted. There was generally support for the focus of growth at sustainable locations. The role of 15 minute neighbourhoods as a means of reducing the need for car journeys and encouraging more local sustainable journeys was noted.

4.83 The letter responded supported the ‘Moving easily in well connected places’ pillar, but considered the area was still a long way away from a radical travel transformation.

School workshop

4.84 The workshop did not specifically discuss the draft pillars.

Pillar: Building homes and places that people are proud of

Online survey

4.85 When asked “*Do you support the draft objectives relating to BUILDING HOMES AND PLACES THAT PEOPLE ARE PROUD OF?*” 62% of the 92 respondents said ‘yes.’ A range of issues were raised by those who chose to explain their answer. The most commonly mentioned issue was the need for more affordable housing – especially social housing. The importance of considering the scale and location to reflect local infrastructure capacities was noted, as was the need to provide homes for younger people and downsizing opportunities for older generations. Also mentioned by many respondents was the need for both existing and new housing stock to be more sustainable and respond to the challenges of climate change.

Poll

4.86 The poll did not ask a specific question about this pillar.

Emails / letter

4.87 In total 50 email responses addressed this question across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. Support was expressed for the objective to secure high quality, well designed homes, as well as the need - expressed before - for more affordable homes across the area. Many of those objecting to this pillar did not want to see

more building at the expense of the natural environment. Responses emphasised the need to maximise use of brownfield land and for the provision of infrastructure to keep pace with growth.

- 4.88 The letter responded supported the 'Building homes and places that people are proud of' pillar, but considered that the energy efficiency of buildings was more important than their architectural merit.

School workshop

- 4.89 The workshop did not specifically discuss the draft pillars.

Pillar: Delivering robust and sustainable infrastructure

Online survey

- 4.90 80% of the 90 respondents replied 'yes' to the question "*Do you support the draft objectives relating to DELIVERING ROBUST AND SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE?*" There were however a number of caveats and comments provided as explanation by those who answered both 'yes' and 'no.' The need to acknowledge the relationship of the JSP to Hertfordshire County Council's Minerals and waste Local Plans, as well as district / borough Local Plans was noted by one of the general consultation bodies.
- 4.91 Some respondents considered that many issues related to infrastructure were due to failures at national Government level to force developers to provide sufficient funding from new development to support infrastructure. Others noted the importance of encouraging renewable energy generation – including small scale schemes.
- 4.92 Other comments were varied in nature and related to issues such as electric vehicles, digital infrastructure and the need to support the circular economy, not just when considering infrastructure but across all new development.

Emails / letter

- 4.93 In total 31 email responses addressed this question across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. Support for the provision of infrastructure was key to achieving sustainable development although some respondents wanted to see better use made of existing infrastructure as a more sustainable approach. There was encouragement for strategic and integrated approaches to resource and infrastructure management, especially where resources cross-boundaries and the need for a 'larger than local' approach. Support was expressed for recognition of the circular economy and aspirations for waste reduction, as well as for investment in public transport and non-car modes of transport. As noted above, many were concerned that the provision of infrastructure needed to keep pace with growth.
- 4.94 The letter responded supported the 'Delivering robust and sustainable infrastructure' pillar and noted that more public participation around proposal was required at the outset.

School workshop

- 4.95 The workshop did not specifically discuss the draft pillars.

Pillar priorities

Online survey

- 4.96 In response to the question ‘Which of the six topics covered by the ‘pillars’ is of most importance to you?’ a significant majority of the 87 responses to the online poll (51%) chose ‘Living green in a healthy natural environment.’ This was followed by ‘Living in healthy, thriving local communities’ and ‘Building homes and places that people are proud of.’ One respondent considered all six pillars to be of equal importance and noted that they were mutually dependent. One respondent who chose the ‘Living green in a healthy natural environment’ pillar noted that “Having declared a climate emergency it is important to do something about it.”

Poll

- 4.97 The poll question was worded slightly differently from the online survey, but was seeking the same feedback, asking ‘What should be the highest priorities for SW Hertfordshire in the next 30 years?’ The results are shown below and highlight that, whilst the top three pillars were the same as for the online survey, their order was different. In the poll both the ‘Sustainable infrastructure’ (abbreviated from ‘Delivering robust and sustainable infrastructure’) and ‘Natural and green living’ pillar (abbreviated from ‘Living green in a healthy natural environment’) received the highest number of votes (56% each), followed by the ‘A healthy and thriving community’ pillar (abbreviated from ‘Living in healthy, thriving local communities’). The pillar relating to ‘Local employment opportunities’ (abbreviated from ‘Growing opportunities to work locally’) was the fourth most popular choice, whilst this was the least popular on the online survey. ‘Well connected living’ (abbreviated from ‘Moving easily in well connected places’) received the least number of votes. However, this may in part be a result of how the wording was abbreviated to fit the poll’s word limit specifications and many people picked up transport concerns through choosing the ‘Sustainable infrastructure’ option – especially due to this being illustrated by a transport-related image.



Emails / letter

4.98 From those who responded to this question, 15 responses felt that all six pillars were equally important. Several respondents noted that all pillars are interconnected and required to create sustainable development in the future. Of the individual pillars, responses were as follows:

- Living green in a healthy natural environment: 15 responses
- Building homes & places people are proud of: 8 responses
- Growing opportunities to work locally: 3 responses
- Living in healthy, thriving communities: 2 responses
- Delivering robust and sustainable infrastructure: 2 responses

4.99 The letter respondent considered the 'Living in healthy thriving communities to be the most important of the six pillars.

School workshop

4.100 The workshop did not specifically discuss the pillar priorities.

(c) Shaping the future

Summary of key messages/issues and any changes arising

This section of the consultation was perhaps the most technical in nature, as it asked respondents for their views on a number of generic growth types that could form the basis of a potential spatial strategy for the JSP.

The views expressed varied depending on the category of respondent and also between the poll, survey and email. Many individuals expressed a strong desire to protect green spaces and the Green Belt, and some considered there should be no further growth in the area at all. Unsurprisingly, responses from developers and landowners were often influenced by the location of the site(s) they were promoting – although some did offer more balanced observations about the relative sustainability of the options suggested.

Growth of existing large settlement was generally the preferred growth type, although with clear caveats regarding density, additional infrastructure needs, the protection of greenspaces etc.

No realistic alternative growth types arose through the consultation. Many suggestions were outside the scope of what planning can influence, or were relevant to all growth types i.e. making best use of previously development land and considering densification.

It was also noted that (a) not all growth types suggested were necessary alternatives, as many overlapped with one another and (b) that more than one growth type would probably need to be taken forward through the JSP.

No changes are proposed to the growth types that will be considered as the JSP progresses as a result of the feedback received. However the responses will be passed to consultants advising the JSP programme on potential spatial strategies, as the information is very helpful in articulating the likely pros and cons, and the broad acceptability or otherwise, of the different approaches.

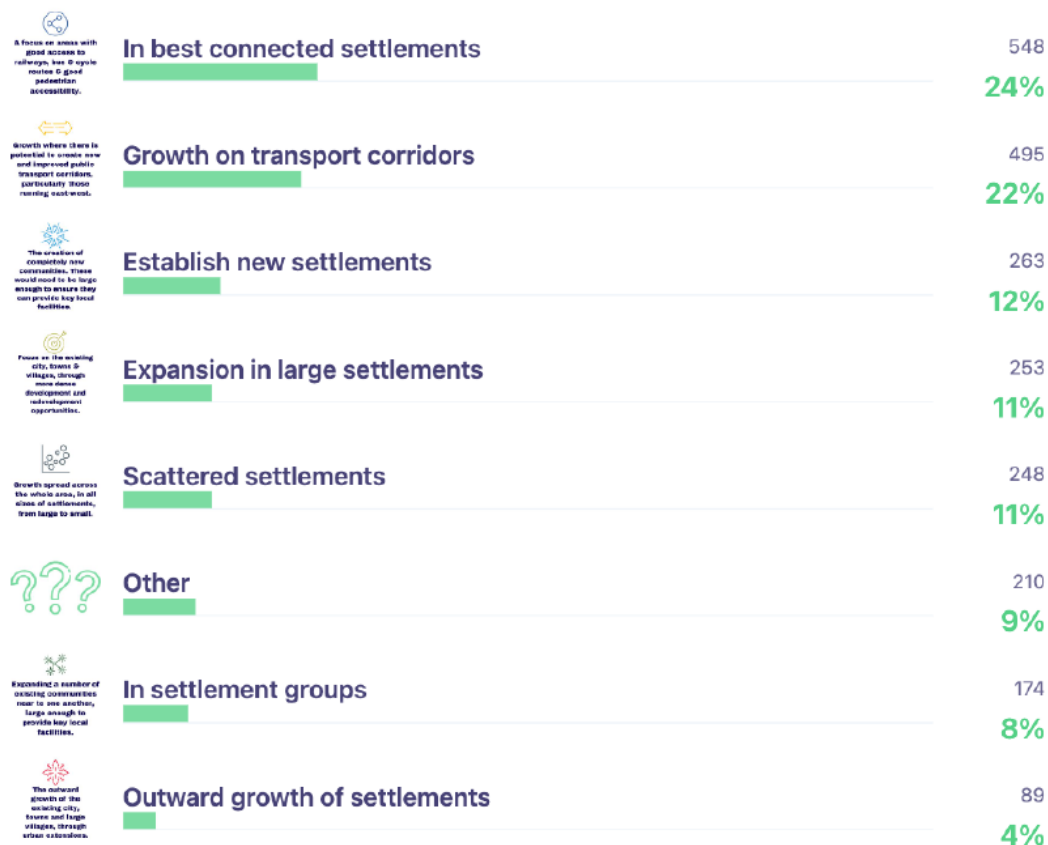
A more detailed overview of comments follows below.

Online survey

- 4.101 There were 111 responses to the online survey question which asked ‘*Which option or options do you think is the most appropriate way to shape future growth in SW Herts?*’ The most popular choices were (a) *Growth within existing large settlement* (61), (e) *Growth along transport corridor* (28) and (f) *Growing the best connected places* (26). The least popular option was (d) *Growth of groups of settlement*, with only five individuals and three developers / landowners supporting this.
- 4.102 As expected, views expressed by developers / landowners reflect the potential development sites they were promoting. The reason given for people’s choices varied, but common themes were the fact that larger settlements tended to have the necessary services and facilities present. However it was also noted that much of this infrastructure was ageing and was hard to replace. There were also concerns about the impact of increased development densities. The need to protect green spaces and the Green Belt was raised several times, together with the importance of making maximum use of brownfield land. Some respondent notes that there shouldn’t be growth at any price and there needed to be further discussions with Government regarding housing numbers, in order to protect the quality of life for existing local residents.
- 4.103 In response to the question ‘*Are there any other growth types we have not mentioned that you think should be considered?*’, no realistic alternative options were put forward by the 90 respondents. Suggestions ranged from encouraging people to downsize, increasing densification and supporting a no growth approach. It was also correctly noted that not all of the options put forward within the consultation were necessary alternatives – as many overlap with one another.

Poll

- 4.104 Those who completed the poll were asked ‘*What do you think is the best way to achieve sustainable growth in SW Herts?*’ and were given the same list of growth types as the survey, albeit in abbreviated form due to the word limits imposed by the poll structure. The icon images did however contain a further explanation of each growth type.
- 4.105 The answers given via the poll varied quite a lot from the answers given via the full online survey. ‘*Growth on transport corridors*’ was the second most popular choice in both the poll and the survey. However the most popular choice in the poll was ‘*In best connected settlements*’ rather than ‘*Expansion of large settlements*’. The idea of establishing ‘*New settlements*’ was a much more popular approach amongst poll respondent than survey respondents. The growth of groups of settlement was an unpopular approach, as it was for the survey.



4.106 None of those who chose ‘other’ and explained their answer actually suggested an alternative growth type. The free text comments mostly articulated the view that there should be no further growth in the area, and/or commentary around the issue respondents considered accompanied growth – such as concerns about healthcare, transport issues and the need to restrict levels of development in order to protect green spaces, the wider landscape and infrastructure capacity. Many advocated the need to make use of brownfield sites. Others suggested actions that are outside of planning controls, such as heavily taxing second homes and encouraging people to have smaller families.

Emails/ letter

4.107 In total 74 email responses addressed this question across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. Responses varied between those which identified a preferred option and those making comments without expressing a preference. A significant number of responses identified multiple growth options, considering that a combination of options would be necessary in order to achieve the levels of housing growth needed for the area. Comments included requests for the plan to make the best use of brownfield sites, avoid building on Green Belt land, avoid encroaching onto farmland and expressed the view that research has shown urban extensions to be unsuccessful forms of sustainable growth as they promote car dependency. Key considerations should include the capacity of the historic and natural environment to accommodate new development.

4.108 Of the individual growth options, the most popular was ‘Growth in existing large settlements.’ Reasons given for this choice were that this would be the best way to prevent unnecessary harm to the special qualities of the AONB, its setting and the wider countryside. As above, views expressed by developers / landowners reflect

the potential development sites they were promoting with many of them preferring a combination of different options, rather than one single approach.

- Growth within existing large settlements 15 responses
- Outward growth of existing large settlements 5 responses
- New settlements 2 response
- Growth of groups of settlements 0 responses
- Growth along sustainable transport corridors 1 response
- Growing the best connected places 3 responses
- Scattered growth 2 responses
- Combination 27 responses

4.109 The letter respondent agreed with the majority view that 'Growth within large settlements' was the best option, but with caveats regarding building densities and height, and the impact on the historic environment.

School workshop

4.110 The workshop did not specifically discuss the potential growth types.

(d) Making it happen

Summary of key messages/issues and any changes arising

This section of the consultation received a low response rate compared to others. This is partly due to the fact that the poll did not include the question. Survey responses were also lower in number than for other sections of the consultation. This may reflect that fact that specialist organisations are perhaps more likely to have knowledge of relevant national and international good practice examples than individuals.

Consideration will be given to the examples highlighted as the JSP progresses.

A more detailed overview of comments follows below.

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

Online survey

4.111 There were 75 responses to this question, 43% of which said that there are other good practice examples that should be considered in the development of the JSP. These included examples of an eco-village in Bedfordshire, the impacts of the significant Green Belt development that has occurred around Nuneaton and Hinckley and examples of sustainable transport infrastructure in France and the Netherlands including metro systems, cycling infrastructure and car clubs.

Poll

4.112 The poll did not ask a specific question about this how to deliver future changes and improvements to the area.

Emails / letter

4.113 In total 21 email responses addressed this question across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. A number of good practice examples were put forward, including

underground waste systems in NW Cambridge, promotion of the TV and film industry at Borehamwood and the Danish cycle super-highways which are also used by equestrians. The Cambridgeshire Plan was given as a good example of multi-user paths on the service road alongside the tramway.

- 4.114 The letter respondent considered the 'Café 1759' case study example, which included co-located community services, was a concept that should be taken forward in the area.

School workshop

- 4.115 The workshop did not specifically discuss good practice examples.

(e) Other feedback

Summary of key messages/issues and any changes arising

The final question of the consultation was included to enable respondents to raise any issues that they had not had the opportunity to raise. However, most of the points highlighted repeated things mentioned under previous questions. Some landowners / developers used this questions to promote potential development sites. A list of all land promoted through this consultation is included in Appendix 7. This information has been passed to districts to inform their Local Plans, as the JSP is not considering development sites at this stage.

No changes are proposed as a direct result of feedback received to this section of the consultation.

A more detailed overview of comments follows below.

Online survey

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

- 4.116 There were 86 comments received in response to this question. This was a broad question and as such there were a wide range of comments covering a wide variety of issues. The comments mainly related to the future growth options for housing of different types to serve the needs of different groups, and the location of this growth particularly in relation to Green Belt land. There were also comments on the need to protect biodiversity and key habitats.
- 4.117 Three documents were submitted as attachments as part of the online survey responses. These were as follows:
- A word document duplicating responses made by a resident to the online survey.
 - A copy of The Countryside Agency document 'On the right track: surface requirements for shared use routes – Good Practice Guide (publication date unknown).
 - A copy of Cycling UK campaigns briefing – Public Footpaths (May 2017).

Emails / letter

- 4.118 In total 40 email responses addressed this question across the four respondent types – statutory consultees, general consultation bodies, the development industry and residents. A broad range of matters were covered in the responses, including the need to acknowledge the impact of the cost of living crisis, the lack of reference

to the Public Rights of Way network which has been raised previously and the need to balance sustainable growth with the protection of the natural environment. The need to both protect the Green Belt and undertake a review were also reiterated here. A number of responses requested clarification as to the role and status of the JSP in relation to Local Plans and other related documents.

- 4.119 The letter respondent noted that travel to school was a key factor in increased car use, noted the importance of flood prevention schemes and good public transport for low paid workers and expressed concerns about the sufficiency of public sector funding available to deliver the suggested plan objectives.

5. Sustainability Appraisal feedback

5.1 A total of different 41 groups / individuals gave feedback on the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report through the consultation. This included responses from the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, who are statutory consultees for Sustainability Appraisals and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) matters. The number of replies by type of respondents is illustrated below.

Figure 19: Response to the SA Scoping by respondent category

Category of respondent	Number of responses
Statutory Consultees <i>(for the purpose of Sustainability Appraisal)</i>	3
Other consultation bodies	5
Residents / individuals	17
Landowners / developers	16
Total	41

5.2 Four additional respondents made reference to the SA Scoping Report in their responses, but did not make any comment on its actual content.

5.3 The feedback received has been considered by both Officers and the JSP's specialist consultants, LUC.

5.4 The responses from the statutory consultees was generally supportive in nature. A number of changes have however been suggested to the SA Scoping Report to ensure it is as robust as possible. This includes referencing additional key publications and baseline information, together with some changes to the Sustainability Appraisal issues and associated framework, to ensure it is as comprehensive as possible.

5.5 Feedback from other parties was more varied in nature. Many comments related to the JSP document and process rather than the SA Scoping Report itself. Lots of feedback related to needing more detailed information and justification relating to various matters within the report. The SA is not the appropriate place for this detail – especially an SA for what is intend to be a strategic-level plan. Several comments related to a misunderstanding about the role and regulatory context that surround SA Reports and why issues such as Green Belt designations and housing needs aren't assessed in the report. Others respondees stated that they found the document hard to follow. Whilst the content and coverage of SA/SEA Scoping Reports is determined by legislation, consideration will be given to how future iterations of the SA are presented to try to make it more accessible to as wide a readership as possible. This might include providing a glossary of terms and a non technical summary.

5.6 A number of the comments from developers / land promoters related to the growth types and expressed concerns that the assessment of these was not sufficiently nuanced and didn't take account of the perceived benefits they think their site(s) would bring. However, the assessment of growth types was not intended to be site specific. Once detailed site options are known, then the will be assessed in more detail through the ongoing sustainability partial process.

5.7 Appendix 8 provides a summary of all comments received, together with a response to key issues and whether or not any changes are required to the Scoping Report as a result of the feedback. Some additional clarification changes will also be made to the document as a result of suggestions from Officers from the JSP partner authorities.

- 5.8 Some further changes will also need to be made to the SA Scoping to reflect the proposed changes to the vision and objectives outlined in Appendix 9. An updated SA Scoping Report will be issued in advance of the JSP reaching its next Regulation 18 stage, which is scheduled to consider a draft set of spatial options (see Figure 2).

6. Summary of changes proposed in response to feedback on the R18 document

Contextual information

6.1 Whilst many helpful comments and suggestions have been provided relating to the 'SW Herts today,' 'Shaping the future' and 'Making it happen' sections of the consultation document, it is not proposed to update this text at the current time. This information was provided as context for the consultation and to ensure that those involved in the JSP programme had a full understanding of the issues and challenges faced in the area. The wording will not be carried forward into the next iteration of the JSP document in its present form. However, as set out in Appendix 9, it is recommended that many of these suggestions are noted and taken forward through:

- Information being passed on to relevant consultants to inform technical work;
- Amending / updating the Topic Papers that will continue to accompany and inform future iterations of the JSP;
- Reflecting the points in the wording of future iterations of the JSP itself; and/or
- Influencing responses to consultation documents published by third parties.

Draft vision

6.2 The sections of the R18 document that will be directly carried forward are the vision statement and associated objectives. It is important that any necessary changes to this text is made as soon as possible so that a final version, endorsed by all of the JSP partner authorities, is available to inform technical work and help shape consideration of the next plan preparation stage. This next stage is scheduled to be another Regulation 18 document setting out spatial options for growth (see Figure 2).

6.3 Some small but significant changes are suggested to the both vision statement itself and the objectives that sit below the six pillars. These recommended changes are set out in Appendix 9, and summarised below:

- **Vision:** Amend wording to include reference to 'healthy' and make sure that the vision seeks to make the future better for both people and the environment.
- **Pillar: Living green in a healthy natural environment:** A minor wording change to the objective 'Commit to net zero carbon' to ensure its phrasing matches that of the other objectives, and the addition of reference to the protection of water resources under the 'Create sustainable buildings and infrastructure' objective.
- **Pillar: Growing opportunities to work locally:** Add clarification to 'Create space to growth' objective to make sure it is clear that it applies to employment sectors in both urban and rural areas.
- **Pillar: Living in healthy, thriving local communities:** Add a new objective to refer to the need to improve air quality.
- **Pillar: Moving easily in connected places:** A minor wording change to refer to 'neighbourhoods' in the plural under the 'Create walkable neighbourhoods' explanatory text.
- **Pillar: Building homes and places that people are proud of:** Add a new objective to refer to the historic environment.

- 6.4 The fact that the list of proposed changes is relatively short is in part due to the fact that the consultation was closely informed by the informal 'Your Future' poll carried out in 2020⁵. This asked a number of questions about what respondents liked about the SW Herts area and what were their concerns for the future. This provided a good basis for formal work on the JSP to progress. The vision and objectives were also drawn up following a series of stakeholder workshops held in early 2022 involving a Youth Forum, Officers, elected Members and key stakeholders⁶. This previous informal engagement has helped ensure key issues and challenges were appropriately reflected within the 'Realising our Potential' document and reinforces the importance of maintaining a regular, open dialogue with those who the plan will most impact.

⁵ <https://www.swhertsplan.com/what-you-have-already-told-us>

⁶ <https://www.swhertsplan.com/sw-herts-vision>