



# HERTFORDSHIRE | ESSEX RAPID TRANSIT

HERT Our transport system **re-imagined**

A CLEANER, GREENER, HEALTHIER FUTURE



Public Engagement Brochure, **Autumn 2021**

# Foreword



**RICHARD ROBERTS**

Leader of the Council  
Hertfordshire County Council

“As a county council, our primary aim is to improve the quality of life for everyone in Hertfordshire. Our vision is to do this by creating a cleaner, greener, healthier Hertfordshire, where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential in thriving communities, and our precious environment is protected for the future.

Creating a sustainable transport network across Hertfordshire and connecting into west Essex is central to this vision, with the Hertfordshire to Essex Rapid Transit (HERT) presenting one of our biggest opportunities to reduce our carbon emissions, support our county's growth, and connect our communities like never before. ”



**PHIL BIBBY**

Executive Member for  
Highways and Transport  
Hertfordshire County Council

“The county council's A414 Corridor Strategy highlighted our transport related challenges, including increasing traffic congestion, and their impact on communities in the future if we cannot provide viable alternatives for some private car journeys. The HERT is being developed in response to these challenges, modernising our transport network to serve the needs of our residents, businesses, and visitors in the future.

The HERT is an ambitious east-west transport infrastructure project that will cross urban and rural environments in our diverse county. This makes it a hugely exciting, pioneering project that provides the opportunity to reset people's perception of transport and also their behaviours in the future. It will need support from our communities and businesses. ”



**LESLEY WAGLAND OBE**

Cabinet Member for Economic  
Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning  
Essex County Council

“Harlow and the wider West Essex areas are vital parts of the Essex economy. Harlow is the largest town in the area, is growing quickly and has some fantastic advantages in terms of its location along the nationally important London to Cambridge Innovation corridor. However, economic growth and new housing must be supported by sustainable transport of good quality, that provides fast, frequent and reliable connections to key locations and opportunities. That is why Essex County Council plans to deliver a sustainable transport network across the Harlow Gilston Garden Town itself and also why we believe that HERT offers further opportunity to link existing and new Essex residents to jobs and services in neighbouring Hertfordshire and likewise for Herts residents to travel sustainably to Harlow .

Together, the benefits of an integrated rapid transit network in Hertfordshire, into Harlow, and perhaps even further to locations such as Stansted Airport, could be huge. The HERT is at an early stage but now is the time to start thinking how this scheme can support our vision of inclusive and sustainable economic, healthy growth. ”

# Have your say on the HERT

**This is the first period of public engagement on the Hertfordshire to Essex Rapid Transit (HERT). It will run from 18 November 2021 to 28 January 2022**

We would like your feedback on whether you support our vision and ambitions for the HERT and what you think it should provide to meet your aspirations for a high-quality transport system in the future.

This public engagement will focus on our plans within Hertfordshire and the aim to link into west Essex. It will not include details for Essex passenger transport improvements. As we are at the early stages of development and details, like the specific route of the HERT, have not yet been decided.

To have your say, complete the online survey and to access more information, please visit [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/HERT](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/HERT). For enquiries and requests for hard-copy materials or alternative formats, contact us [HERT@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:HERT@hertfordshire.gov.uk) or phone **0300 123 4047**.

## The HERT vision

**The HERT will deliver a step-change in the passenger transport network through an accessible, reliable and affordable east-west transit system which connects people easily to where they live, work and visit and will support economic growth, improve the environment and positively impact our existing and new communities. The HERT will connect with north-south rail lines to create new sustainable journey options across the whole of Hertfordshire and beyond.**

**This is the vision of what we want to achieve for our local residents and businesses.**

We cannot address the challenges of today and the long-term changes ahead by building more roads for private vehicles. Road widening will only worsen the current high levels of car dependency, resulting in more congestion, carbon emissions and environmental damage to our local communities.

In order to meet the national legal requirement to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, we need a well connected transport system that uses clean energy and provides a real alternative choice to using private cars to help us achieve a cleaner, greener and healthier county. The challenge is huge, but our ambition is clear, we need to tip the balance in favour of walking, cycling and passenger transport by transforming our transport system. It is only by planning and investing in transformational infrastructure schemes like the HERT, that we will deliver a sustainable transport system.



# The HERT corridor

The HERT will form an east-west transport corridor that runs from Watford and Hemel Hempstead in the west to Harlow (Essex) in the east.

The key settlements that will be served by the HERT are connected by the A414 east-west transport corridor, the A405 North Orbital Road and Abbey Rail Line between St Albans and Watford. These transport corridors provide vital local, regional and strategic connections. They enable residents, visitors, workers and goods to access our main towns and provide links between the M1, A1(M), A10, M11 and M25. Currently roads in Hertfordshire suffer from traffic congestion due to high levels of car dependency because of a lack of attractive alternative travel options.

**Over the next 15 years, we will be supporting the District and Borough Councils plan for more than 100,000 new homes and 100,000 new jobs across the county to meet our needs. A significant number of these homes will be built along this corridor.**

This means there will be further demand on our already congested road and rail network as more people travel.

**The corridor will be split into three sections:**

## ➔ Hemel Hempstead - Gilston

This is the main east-west section that will serve the main settlements between Hemel Hempstead and the new Gilston Garden Town. It will also improve connections to Luton Airport via interchange in St Albans.

## ➔ St Albans - Watford

This north-south section will operate between St Albans and Watford. This corridor is currently served by the Abbey Line with potential onward connections to west Watford.

The development of this section will depend on the outcome of our application for funding through the Government's Restoring Your Railway Fund for the Abbey Line, which aims to increase frequency on the route. The funding will enable further studies to be carried out on the Abbey Line, which will be combined with investigations into connections to west Watford. These studies will influence the solutions we put forward for consideration. We will seek your feedback on this section in the later stages of the scheme development.

It is likely these sections will be delivered in phases as funding becomes available and in line with planned development.

## ➔ Gilston - Harlow (and onwards to Stansted Airport)

Essex County Council along with Harlow & Gilston Garden Town partners are developing proposals for rapid transit type services operating across Harlow on Sustainable Transport Corridors, integrating with a future Hertfordshire rapid transit scheme at the Gilston Garden Town. A new bus interchange will be created in Harlow town centre offering integration between rapid transit and local bus services, and providing improved onward connections to Stansted Airport. Although service patterns and vehicle types are still to be determined, ECC and HCC will work closely to ensure that rapid and seamless journeys can be made across the entire rapid transit network.

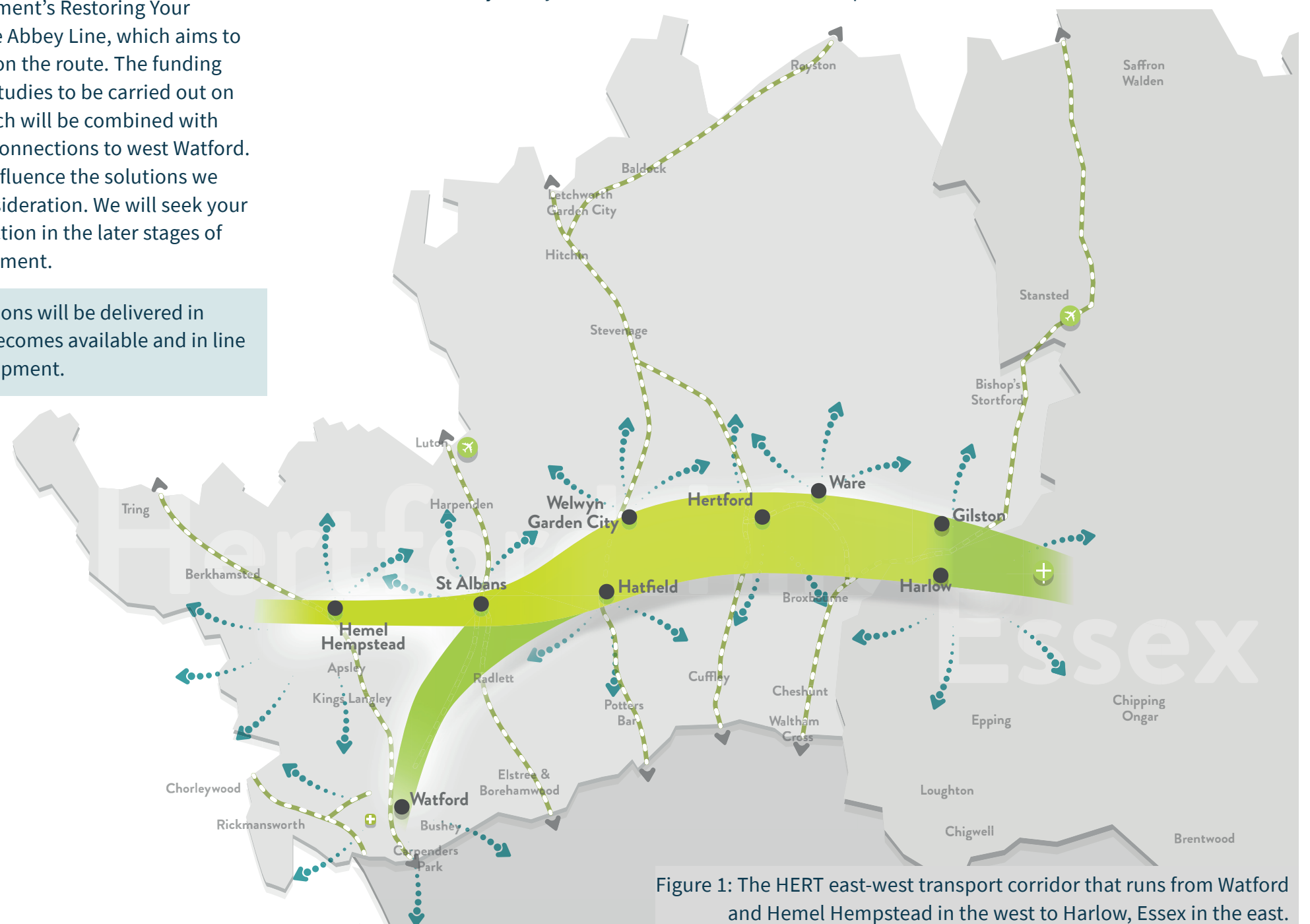


Figure 1: The HERT east-west transport corridor that runs from Watford and Hemel Hempstead in the west to Harlow, Essex in the east.

# Why the HERT?

The HERT is being developed to improve Hertfordshire's transport network in a sustainable way, and to do this, we need to strike the balance between looking after our environment, our people, and our economy to deliver positive outcomes for our communities.

**JOBS** - The A414 corridor and its surrounding areas currently supports around 700,000 jobs<sup>1</sup>. The HERT will make travel easier to access current and future job opportunities and services.

**SUSTAINABLE GROWTH** - Around 530,000<sup>2</sup> people live within 1km of the east-west A414 corridor. The HERT will give communities attractive travel choices that help manage the impacts of expected growth in new homes and jobs.

**ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT** - Creating a cleaner, greener, transport system to provide people with better air quality and less traffic noise to improve quality of life.

**NET ZERO** - Significantly reducing the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced by transport to achieve the net zero legal requirement before 2050.

**MANAGING CONGESTION** - Pre-pandemic, the A414 was the most heavily trafficked A-road in Hertfordshire and peak journey times could increase on average by 25% by 2031<sup>3</sup>. HERT will provide a sustainable alternative and reduce trips made by private car for all types of journeys.

**TRAVEL CHOICE** - Currently around 76% of journeys on the A414 corridor are by car<sup>4</sup>. The HERT will re-shape transport networks to provide seamless journeys across all forms of mobility and by improving walking, cycling, and passenger transport integration. Meeting the commitments set out in The Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy 2020.



Figure 2: The three key themes to achieve a sustainable transport network in Hertfordshire - our environment, our people, and our economy.

**SKILLS** - Providing businesses with greater access to skilled people and each other.

**RELIABLE AND EFFICIENT JOURNEYS** - Currently east-west passenger transport journeys across the corridor take over twice as long as private car. The HERT will provide an attractive alternative to the car connecting people easily to where they live, work and visit.

**AFFORDABLE** - Providing a convenient and competitively priced system that is attractive to people.

**ACCESSIBLE** - Enabling people to access a wider range of education, jobs, services, health care and social facilities.

**VIBRANT AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES** - Half of all journeys from the main settlements along the east-west corridor are under 10km and can be done by walking or cycling<sup>5</sup>. The HERT aims to improve quality of life in our communities by creating high-quality, safer links to cycling and walking routes. Increasing access and vitality in our town and city centres.

**CONNECTED** - Unlocking new journey options by connecting the main railway lines, serving towns and communities across the corridor.

**INCLUSIVE** - Delivering an accessible transport system fit for all ages and caters for a wide range of abilities and our diverse communities.



# The HERT solution

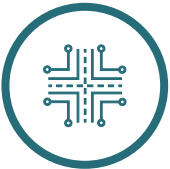
Investment in the HERT system will provide a new transport system that helps create better links with bus services, walking and cycling routes, making it a real alternative to using the car for local journeys.

For the east-west section, our vision for the HERT includes:



## The vehicle

- A modern, comfortable and spacious design that is easy for passengers to use
- Zero-emission vehicles to reduce environmental impact and help improve air quality
- Step-free access at each stop allowing passengers to enter and exit with ease, wide aisles to freely move around inside and comfortable seats for a relaxing journey
- Full digital connectivity that allows passengers to get online while on the move
- Accessible for all passengers.



## The infrastructure

- Priority on the network to ensure that journey times are reliable and efficient through segregation of the route where possible
- Easy links for onward journeys by rail, bus, walking and cycling
- Live travel information and high-quality waiting facilities
- Fewer stops than a conventional bus service to provide a faster journey times between key destinations.

Figure 3: Proposed HERT pulling up in front of Hatfield Station



## Fit for the future

- Scalable and flexible to adapt to long-term changes in future travel patterns and travel demand – for example extending routes to serve new developments
- Flexibility to adapt to new technology changes and new route developments.



## Information and ticketing

- A ‘turn-up-and-go’ service with easy and convenient ticketing options available online, through mobile apps and at stops which can be purchased in advance to avoid delays.



## Capacity

- Ability to move large numbers of people efficiently.

Figure 4: Proposed HERT pulling up at stop in front of Hatfield Station



## Considerations for selecting vehicle technology

There are a number of technologies we are considering for the east-west section of the HERT corridor.

There is a balance to be struck between delivering an attractive end-to-end east-west service, the infrastructure costs to deliver such a service, and the flexibility to effectively expand the service to reach other destinations outside the HERT corridor in the future.

We considered the following factors:

### Cost

The need to secure funding is critical to develop the scheme further and it will need initial investment from across central government, local government and the private sector. The HERT will need to operate commercially so the system must demonstrate value for money within the business case, and be commercially viable in the long term.

### Capacity

The types of vehicles under consideration will have to provide more room for more passengers.

### Flexibility

We need to consider a system that would be able to reach other destinations outside the HERT corridor and integrate with other future transport schemes proposals, such as the Essex bus rapid transit (BRT), and future development. It would be easier to deliver in phases, as funding becomes available and in line with other planned development, meaning it can be delivered sooner.

### Convenience and Customer Experience

Providing a turn-up-and-go service combined with prioritisation at key junctions and segregation from other traffic.



# Making HERT a reality



**Figure 5: Stages of developing the HERT scheme from early options to construction**

A project of this scale will take some years to develop and needs substantial investment from local and central government, together with private sector partners. We are in the early stage of developing proposals on the HERT and have a number of steps to go through before it can be built. We will be consulting the public at each stage, with ongoing stakeholder engagement throughout the duration of the scheme.

## ➔ Step 1: Early options: The Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC)

We are currently creating the Strategic Outline Case (SOBC) for the scheme to submit to government. This will explore what benefits the HERT could provide, the different options available and potential costs. The aim of the document is to secure funding to develop the project further. Your feedback from this public engagement will be carefully considered and feed into the development of the SOBC for the scheme to access government funding.

## ➔ Step 2: Consultation (2022 onwards)

Following the submission of the SOBC, and subject to funding from central government, we will ask for your views on the short-list of different route options that have been identified. This will be your chance to help us select a preferred option for the routeing and how it will operate.

## ➔ Step 3: Developing the scheme: The Outline Business Case (OBC)

Once we have an agreed option, we will complete an OBC, which will set out: what is required to build and operate the new transport system; how much it will cost; the resulting benefits. This will allow us to start the process of seeking funding for the scheme. We will also create a more detailed technical design.

## ➔ Step 4: Planning consent and creating the Full Business Case

Once we have confidence that the scheme is fundable, we will seek statutory powers and approvals, such as planning permission. We will also identify who is going to build and operate HERT. This information will feed into a final Full Business Case to unlock funding to allow HERT to be delivered.

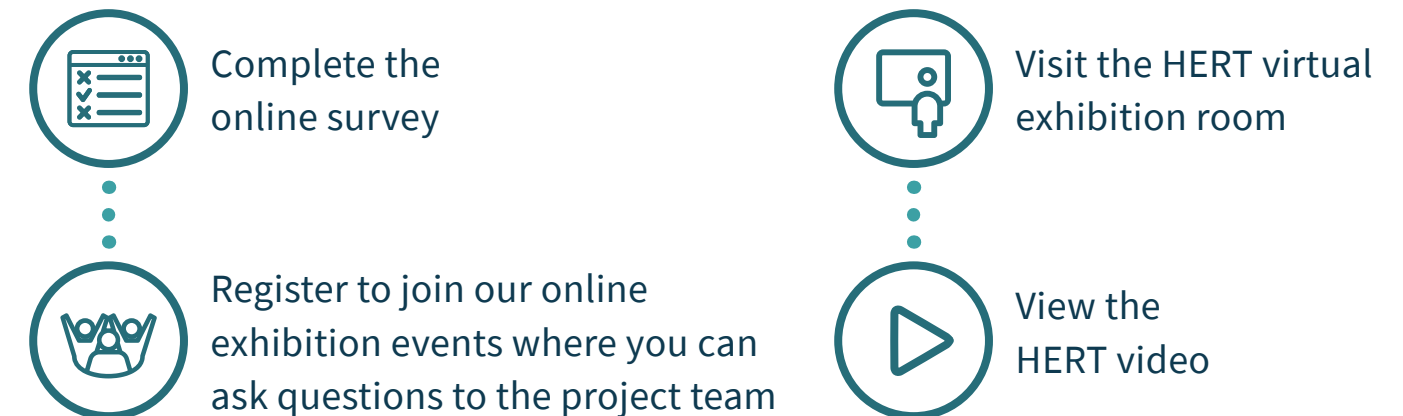
## ➔ Step 5: Construction

Construction can start once we have all the necessary powers, approvals and funding in place and is likely to be done in phases. Given the ambitious scale of the project it is expected that it will take several years to reach this stage.

# Have your say

This public engagement runs from - **18 November 2021 to 28 January 2022.**

Please visit the HERT website at [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/HERT](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/HERT) to:




For transport schemes in Essex, please visit <https://www.essexhighways.org/highway-schemes> or phone **0345 743 0430**.


**Figure 6: HERT virtual exhibition room**





 [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/HERT](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/HERT)

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