



Hertfordshire Growth Board sets ambitious vision for sustainable future

Hertfordshire's leaders have set out a shared vision for sustainable growth that will benefit residents, businesses and communities for future generations.

By **Lucy Gravatt**

Made up of representatives from across Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire LEP, the 10 district and borough councils, the police and health, Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB) works together to deliver a thriving and sustainable economy, environment and society across the county.

Over the past year, HGB leaders have come together around a shared purpose and set of countywide goals to help identify opportunities that will unlock and boost investment, take a more joined up approach to growth challenges and respond to wider societal pressures. These six goals, known as missions, were then developed further after the public fed back their views via a survey which attracted 4,379 responses.

Hertfordshire is a dynamic county generating over £46bn GDP every year with world-leading strengths in advanced manufacturing, creative industries, digital and technology and green industries powering the UK economy and its future priorities. Recognised as a leading destination to start and scale a business, and home to many global and rapidly expanding companies, the county exports goods and services daily across the world, driving commercial success. This creates high-value jobs and drives appetite to invest.

Its road and rail links to other parts of the UK, proximity to London and four international airports, makes it easier for companies to retain and recruit staff attracted by Hertfordshire's diverse mix of old and New Towns, Garden Cities and planned garden communities, green spaces and range of quality schools and FE options.



But there are real challenges too. Hertfordshire's 1.2m population is growing faster than the national average, placing increased demands for more housing, healthcare, schools and transport. In 2022, 17% of Hertfordshire's population was aged over 65; this is expected to rise to nearly a quarter by 2043.

There are disparities across the county relating to lower-level skills, low pay, pockets of deprivation, health inequalities, and rates of crime, digital exclusion and difficulty accessing quality affordable housing. The rising costs of living continue to significantly impact many residents, while the impact from rising inflation, economic instability following Brexit and Covid-19, the availability of employment land and grow-on space are also posing potential threats to business and jobs growth.

Better transport links, particularly east to west, are required to connect people to where they live, work, and visit and make it easier to access healthcare and education, offering improved choice that is reliable, accessible and safe.

And, of course, like the rest of the world, the county is suffering the effects of climate change. This requires us to radically rethink how we can make our existing homes and buildings more energy efficient, reducing fuel costs for the most vulnerable and embracing modern methods of construction and other new technologies to build greener new homes. Wherever possible, people should be encouraged to use more sustainable forms of transport to reduce carbon emissions.

In response to these opportunities and challenges, HGB leaders have developed a shared vision that will help guide and steer the focus of the Growth Board over the coming years.

This vision sets out a collective ambition to create:

- **A vibrant and resilient economy that seizes the right opportunities, enabling Hertfordshire's residents and businesses to succeed.**
- **Healthy, inclusive, safe and better-connected communities who thrive, and enjoy Hertfordshire's quality of life**
- **A place that grows responsibly, and celebrates its heritage, diversity, rural and green landscapes that makes Hertfordshire special.**



Six core missions were then identified to take forward this new vision:

World Class Economy



World Class Economy

Enhance Hertfordshire's reputation as a world-class economy by improving skills and job opportunities for residents, growing our key sectors and accelerating business investment into the county;

Healthy and Safe Places for All



Healthy Places for All

By 2040, Hertfordshire's residents and communities will benefit from neighbourhoods that are designed and regenerated with physical health, mental wellbeing, safety and social connectedness at the heart;

Digital Access



Digital Access for All

Every Hertfordshire resident to have access to best-in-class connectivity, essential digital skills, and the device or support that they need to be online by 2030;

Sustainable County



Sustainable County

By 2050, Hertfordshire will be a prosperous, low carbon economy with a thriving natural environment, having maximised the benefits of sustainable growth for our residents and businesses, and achieved net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Transport for Hertfordshire



Transport for Hertfordshire

Deliver a safe and integrated transport system which unlocks growth and enables communities and businesses to thrive;

Right Homes, Right Places



Right Homes Right Places

Deliver the right homes, including increasing the provision of social/affordable and specialist homes, in the right locations and with associated infrastructure, to support the county's socio-economic prosperity;

These missions were road-tested with the public to ensure they were representative of local views. The results of the survey, which ran for one month between November-December 2023, demonstrated that an overwhelming majority were strongly in favour of the missions, in particular Healthy Places (88%); World Class Economy (85%) and Transport for Hertfordshire (85%).

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Respondents were able to leave more detailed comments on each mission to provide much richer insight. These included:

- **World Class Economy:** "Local economy is very important to both help fund and sustain a thriving and stable society."
- **Right Homes, Right Places:** "Decent homes for the less advantaged and more vulnerable members of our community must come first."
- **Sustainable County:** "We need to do something worthwhile to protect this environment for the future generations."

Feedback analysis on the engagement findings have helped to shape the final report with sustainable goals, actions and success measures defined for each mission.

The Vision and Missions report was officially launched at a meeting of the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Development Board at Sopwell House, St Albans, on 28 February. The focus now will be taking forward the actions and reporting back on progress to residents and stakeholders, with a series of 'Meet the Leaders' business breakfasts scheduled to start later in the year.



Cllr Richard Roberts, Leader, Hertfordshire County Council and Chair, Hertfordshire Growth Board, said: "The Vision and Missions represent a significant step change in how this county will work together to deliver good, sustainable growth. Hertfordshire's leaders across place, policing, health and the economy are united by a common purpose that will guide our future direction. We will continue to ensure Hertfordshire remains a world class economy where residents and businesses thrive, that we have the best in class digital connectivity in all parts of our county and that residents

benefit from improved access and choice in passenger transport, quality sustainable homes and access to natural green spaces."

Cllr Elizabeth Dennis, Leader of North Herts Council and Vice Chair, Hertfordshire Growth Board, said: "This has been a huge undertaking taken together in partnership with our businesses, district and borough colleagues to ensure that the Vision and Missions are representative of local views. For us to deliver on the issues that really matter, we first had to listen to our communities about the needs and challenges they faced. This broadened our understanding and will help us to deliver lasting and profound benefits for the many not just the privileged few, widening access and participation to all. This is just the start of a countywide conversation and I look forward to updating businesses and residents on our progress later in the year."

Cllr Chris White, Leader of St Albans City and District Council and Vice Chair, Hertfordshire Growth Board, said: "This joined up approach to growth will help us to create a more resilient economy so that our businesses are better equipped to succeed, our communities thrive, and that we ensure a sustainable future for Hertfordshire. Our missions will help Hertfordshire to reach its full economic potential and in doing so, raise living standards for its communities and towards a more sustainable and inclusive definition of economic success."

The full Hertfordshire Vision and Missions Report and the findings of the Engagement Survey are available to view at www.hertfordshiregrowthboard.com



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Cllr Richard Roberts, Leader, Hertfordshire County Council, and Chair, Hertfordshire Growth Board

