

Chair's Update

Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB)

1 Advocacy

- 1.1 Over the past quarter significant progress has been made on our partnerships and advocacy activity focused on place-making, investment and positioning Hertfordshire within the regional and national landscape. Our approach has been targeted ensuring that we have the right members in the room to facilitate ongoing dialogue with Government and investors, gaining national traction and international recognition for our key sectors and other areas of strength. It has progressed on a number of fronts:
- 1.2 **UK Screen Investment Programme:** The inaugural summit was held at BAFTA on 26 October last year. This event provided a national platform to showcase Hertfordshire and other regions with significant film and TV credentials to Government, investors and industry partners. The event was immediately preceded by a local authority roundtable spearheaded by Cllr Jeremy Newmark and a high profile investors' dinner hosted by the Growth Board at The Grove.
- 1.3 Other highlights last year included the formation of a UK Screen Investment Programme Steering Group chaired by Pinewood Group CEO David Conway with significant input from studios across Hertfordshire alongside regional counterparts; Cllr Newmark and the University of Hertfordshire with major investors and industry bodies such as the British Film Commission, British Film Institute, Creative England and corporates such as Amazon. Due to the vast level of experience and expertise around the table, the Government called on this group to provide the UK sector response on the impact of US film tariffs.
- 1.4 This year the programme is being expanded to provide a year-long schedule of activity with Hertfordshire driving this agenda. This includes another local authority roundtable hosted at Elstree Studios; a platform of domestic and international events (UKREiiF; MIPIM); a capital investment roundtable; second UK Summit and Investors' Dinner with a DCMS Ministerial address. The thematic focus has also been broadened to address topical issues such as skills and AI; sustainability and regional investment.
- 1.5 Discussions are actively ongoing to pilot a Hertfordshire Film Festival over two weekends in July 2027 in the third year of delivery of the UK Screen Investment Programme. This would be seed funded by Watford Borough Council with additional investment secured from national partners such as National Lottery. Initial conversations with the BFI have been very positive, broadly indicating their support for an initiative that would bring local government, industry and education together via a programme of community outreach, industry roundtables and sector innovation.
- 1.6 **Healthy and Safe Places Framework:** Following its launch last year, we have developed a rigorous engagement programme to ensure that health in all policies approach is embedded in future planning. The framework is being socialised locally

on two fronts: internally with local planning authorities and externally with investors and developers via the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Development Board. The framework is also gaining national recognition, beating over 90 other submissions to be profiled at the annual [LGA/ADPH Public Health Conference 2026](#). This brings this holistic approach to an audience of over 700 public health practitioners. This campaign is ongoing with a local government roundtable planned in November to provide a 'best in class' example to other regional partners.

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Real Estate: As part of Hertfordshire's presence at UKREiiF and other investment forums this year, Growth Board members will represent the county at key events and senior-level discussions. This includes participation in a series of UKREiiF leadership dinners, starting this month with the first one focusing on intergenerational and affordable living. Wherever possible, attendance will be rotated among members to maximise the value we bring to these strategic forums. We will also continue to monitor and pursue further opportunities across the wider investment landscape.

2 Missions update

2.1 This section highlights notable updates from Mission leads including how this work is pivoting to support the development of the Local Growth Plan.

2.2 **World Class Economy Mission:** The Economic Strategy will be launched at Westminster on 12 March with Andrew Lewin MP on behalf of Hertfordshire Growth Board. A later domestic launch is being planned after the local elections focusing on Hertfordshire Futures' delivery plan and its investment propositions.

2.3 The **Hertfordshire Film Office** continues to make a significant contribution to the county's screen sector. Since April 2025, it has supported over 84 highway filming permits, alongside many referrals to private sites and district councils. Activity remains seasonal, with the summer peak continuing, though last October was unusually busy; filming is now entering its quieter winter period before rising again from April.

2.4 Forecasted highways-related filming income will exceed £125,000 this year, and Estimated Local Economic Spend is expected to double last year's total, with final figures due in April. This reflects the Film Office's growing impact in supporting productions, local businesses, venues and wider visitor engagement. High-profile releases supported by the team in January include Grantchester S10 and Red Eye S2, with more productions due for release soon — strengthening Hertfordshire's position as a leading UK filming destination.

2.5 The [Get Hertfordshire Working Plan](#) has also been published. This seminal document sets out a 10-year plan to reduce economic inactivity in Hertfordshire

2.6 **Transport for Hertfordshire Mission:** This continued to meet quarterly throughout 2025 and has confirmed it will maintain this rhythm in 2026. Over the past year its focus has shifted squarely towards development of the Local Transport Plan, a statutory requirement for the county council and a key lever influencing new housing, economic growth and environmental outcomes. The Mission has already examined the transport impacts of projected housing growth and helped shape both a long-term transport vision and a set of short- to medium-term objectives. In 2026, it will act as the main forum for refining the policies and priority projects needed to deliver that vision.

2.7 Reflecting this broadened remit, membership has expanded to include national partners such as National Highways, Network Rail, and Logistics UK, as well as local train operators and a wider range of district authorities. A further expansion is planned for 2026 to ensure

emerging transport policy aligns fully with the future needs of Hertfordshire's communities and the wider economy.

- 2.8 **Right Homes, Right Places Mission** is working with its Chair and Co-Chair to shape a delivery plan for 2026/27, aligned to its four core goals. Following Homes England's announcement of the Social and Affordable Homes Programme, Hertfordshire remains committed to accessing the funding once or a Mayor or Foundational Strategic Authority is in place. In the meantime, districts and boroughs are exploring direct engagement routes with the agency.
- 2.9 A countywide development pipeline has been assembled and will be regularly updated to track progress on local plan allocations and speculative proposals. This provides a clearer picture of future housing supply and supports more effective planning for the transport and infrastructure required to serve new communities.
- 2.10 Work is also underway to strengthen the Quality Development Charter, with ambitions for at least 30% of future homes to meet its standards. Embedding the Charter's aspirations — alongside those of the Healthy and Safe Places Framework — is expected to be best achieved through the emerging Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). Districts and boroughs will continue developing local Design Codes to secure high-quality and sustainable development.
- 2.11 On strategic planning, the Joint Strategic Plan process has now concluded, and its outputs are being integrated into the SDS. The Hertfordshire Infrastructure Prospectus is being expanded to include fuller district, borough and recently agreed NHS data, creating a more comprehensive evidence base for future infrastructure planning.
- 2.12 Preparatory work has also begun on the evidence base required to underpin the Spatial Development Strategy.
- 2.13 The **Healthy & Safe Places Mission** is now focused on embedding the newly launched Healthy & Safe Places Framework into practice across partners, ensuring it becomes a practical tool for shaping healthier environments. Work is underway to complete the interactive datasets on the hub site, with future additions dependent on data-sharing agreements and clear resourcing arrangements.
- 2.14 Looking ahead, the Mission is aligning its programme with major countywide strategies now in development - including the Spatial Development Strategy, Local Transport Plan, and Economic Strategy - to ensure health, wellbeing and safety are fully integrated into future planning and investment decisions. This includes early scoping of how a future Phase 2 of the Mission may evolve to reflect emerging devolution and governance structures.
- 2.15 The Mission is also beginning to identify priority areas for future action linked to wider health determinants, including healthy homes, safer communities, active travel, improvements in local environments, and support for residents facing barriers to work or learning. This forward-looking approach will help ensure Hertfordshire's place-shaping activity continues to consistently promote health, independence, inclusion and community safety.
- 2.16 The **Digital Mission** is continuing to progress under its refreshed identity, Digital Hertfordshire, replacing the previous 'Towards Digital Growth' branding to create a clearer and more accessible identity. A separate paper outlines progress to date on its key deliverable, the Digital Strategy 2026-2035.

- 2.17 The **Sustainability Mission** continues to make strong progress in supporting countywide decarbonisation and climate resilience. Following the launch of the Hertfordshire Retrofit Strategy, delivery is now moving at pace, with partners shifting from planning to implementation. Over £15m of Warm Homes funding has been secured to support residents, and the programme is now exploring options for a countywide Retrofit One-Stop Shop to help streamline access to advice, funding and delivery.
- 2.18 Significant progress has also been made on energy transition projects. The Solar Together Hertfordshire scheme has delivered more than 2,167 installations, generating over 40,856 tonnes of lifetime CO₂e reduction, and work is now underway to strengthen the county's evidence base, including a baseline energy profile and the Green Assets Study to support future strategic energy planning.
- 2.19 Hertfordshire's role as a national pilot for the Local Area Retrofit Accelerator has seen the county share best practice across regional and national networks, helping to raise public-sector standards and build capacity across the system. Officers continue to support emerging retrofit pilots elsewhere and contribute to wider regional climate work.
- 2.20 Looking ahead to 2026, the Mission will focus on accelerating delivery of the Retrofit Strategy, enhancing carbon-accounting capability, and aligning climate-ready policies across planning, transport, housing and infrastructure. Priorities include scaling collective action where economies of scale exist, embedding regional connections, and ensuring decarbonisation remains central to place-shaping and future investment planning.
- 2.21 Hertfordshire officially launched its first Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in January with an over-subscribed event at the Riding School, Hatfield House. The strategy is a county-wide, statutory blueprint required under the Environment Act 2021. It sets out what needs to be done to support nature's recovery, where action will have the greatest impact, and how partners will work together to deliver it.
- 2.22 The LNRS was developed over two years by the Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Partnership, led by Hertfordshire County Council with extensive collaboration across public, private and voluntary sectors. Public engagement reached record levels, with 751 consultation responses - the highest of any LNRS nationally - and over 70 sites submitted by landowners for consideration. Access the web viewer and download the PDF version [here](#).

3 Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Development Board

- 3.1 Over the past quarter, the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Development Board has delivered a substantial programme of work for its target membership. Members explored **Hertfordshire's Healthy and Safe Places Framework**, which is supporting a more consistent and health-focused approach to planning across the county. They also took part in the **Planning Resilience Symposium**, where planners and development professionals discussed lessons from other regions, the importance of local identity and community voices, and the opportunities connected to the forthcoming reorganisation of local government.
- 3.2 December's HIDB meeting reinforced the urgency of local housing challenges, highlighting high living costs, long waiting lists and pressures on temporary accommodation. Presentations covered the complete journey of creating a new home - from early land promotion to construction and occupation - and demonstrated both the progress made and the need for continued collective action to meet Hertfordshire's long-term housing needs.

- 3.3 Looking ahead, preparations continue for the **11 March HIBD meeting**, which will focus on the latest draft of the National Planning Policy Framework. The agenda brings together speakers from local government and the development sector to examine how proposed national policy changes could influence design decisions, engagement approaches and development strategy across Hertfordshire. Members will hear perspectives from both larger and smaller developers, followed by practical workshops exploring how adjustments to national planning policy might play out in real-world scenarios. These discussions aim to strengthen collaboration across the county and support more coordinated, evidence-led planning in the months ahead. If you would like to attend, please contact **Emma Tasker**: emmatasker@meeting-place.uk

4 In the News

- 4.1 **Harlow Gilston Garden Town Moves Forward:** National attention has focused on Gilston, where construction is now beginning on a 10,000-home, seven-village new town after two decades of delays. The scheme, described as 'immense' in The Guardian, includes £1bn in upfront infrastructure, walkable neighbourhoods, schools and health facilities, and is projected to create over 2,000 jobs and contribute £6bn to the UK economy.
- 4.2 **Three Rivers Local Plan Put on Hold by Government:** The Minister for Housing and Planning has issued a holding direction preventing Three Rivers District Council from progressing to Regulation 19 consultation. The government cites concerns that the plan meets only 56% of assessed housing need, leaving a shortfall of 5,000+ homes, and may not be legally compliant. The council must now supply further evidence before next steps are determined.
- 4.3 **Autolus Breakthrough in Leukaemia Treatment:** Stevenage-based Autolus has achieved NICE approval of its CAR-T therapy for NHS use. The treatment offers higher remission rates and fewer side-effects for adults with B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukaemia and represents a landmark UK life-sciences advance. Autolus now employs 450+ staff at its Stevenage manufacturing centre. The therapy has also received a positive EU regulatory opinion, paving the way for wider European authorisation.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of HGB will take place on **1 June** – venue and timing to be confirmed.