

Chair's Update

Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB)

1 Future roles

- 1.1 At the last Board Meeting in July, Members agreed that the Hertfordshire Growth Board should evolve its role to support the county through the transition towards devolution and the potential creation of a Strategic Authority.
- 1.2 The Board would focus on three key areas: leading advocacy for Hertfordshire's growth ambitions, continuing delivery of short and medium-term mission work, and act as a strategic forum to shape future growth priorities. This approach ensures HGB remains aligned with the emerging Devolution Framework and supports the development of Hertfordshire's Local Growth Plan.
- 1.3 In response to this, we are now moving away from formal governance arrangements to a more agile footing, enabling the Board to respond flexibly to emerging opportunities, support the development of Hertfordshire's Local Growth Plan, and remain aligned with the evolving devolution agenda. This increased agility will be reflected in a refreshed meeting structure: sessions will be shorter, more focused, and directly aligned with the key elements of the Growth Plan.
- 1.4 From March 2026, meetings will be held outside traditional civic settings and rotated across key investment and development sites across the county, reinforcing our commitment to place-based leadership, visibility, and engagement with Hertfordshire's growth priorities. To complement this, HGB newsletters will follow a quarterly cycle, providing updates on key developments, championing success and and highlighting key activities.
- 1.5 Outside of these quarterly meetings, we will arrange a series of informal briefings to support Members' understanding of key locally led policy developments such as the Hertfordshire Healthy Placemaking Framework and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Working collaboratively with Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Development Board, we will also continue to support Lunch and Learn sessions on both countywide initiatives and key national policy changes likely to impact local growth.
- 1.6 To support this transition, we will undertake a light-touch review of the Board's Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding. This will ensure they reflect our more agile operating model and provide the flexibility to adapt further in response to Local Government Reorganisation. This approach will help maintain clarity of purpose while enabling the Board to remain responsive to the evolving political landscape.
- 1.7 A Missions Workshop for lead officers will take place on 10 November to ensure we continue to build on the strong foundations of our Vision and Missions and align future operational activity to HGB's evolving role.

2 Missions update

- 2.1 This section highlights notable updates from Mission leads.
- 2.2 The **Right Homes, Right Places Mission** continues to progress across four key goals. On **affordable housing**, recent mergers between housing associations in both the north and south of the county, alongside the proposed creation of unitary authorities, present new opportunities for coordinated delivery.
- 2.3 For **site development**, a refreshed pipeline of 479 sites with capacity for over 95,000 homes has been mapped and shared, with priority sites to be promoted to Homes England. Work under the LGR Estates and Assets Workstream will begin in November, supported by One Public Estate (OPE) funding.
- 2.4 On **design and sustainability**, the mission awaits updates to building regulations to meet the Future Homes Standard, with contingency plans to revise the Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter and explore stewardship models. Collaboration with the Healthy and Safe Places mission is informing the soon to launch Healthy Places Framework (see below).
- 2.5 On **strategic planning**, progress on Joint Strategic Plans is being considered for integration into the Spatial Development Strategy, with timing linked to the forthcoming Planning & Infrastructure Act and the potential election of a Mayor. The Hertfordshire Infrastructure Prospectus is nearing completion, with final reviews underway.
- 2.6 Arising from the **Healthy and Safe Places for All Mission**, the **Hertfordshire Healthy and Safer Placemaking Framework** is nearing completion. This framework guides the creation of healthier, safer, and more inclusive environments across the county by embedding principles of health, wellbeing, and safety into both local and strategic planning policy. It ensures that new and existing communities actively support physical, mental, and social health. Designed as a practical tool, the Framework will provide clear, consistent, and user-friendly guidance for Local Planning Authorities, and, in time, any Mayor or Strategic Authority, on embedding health considerations into Local Plans and Spatial Development Strategies.
- 2.7 By recognising planning's vital role in shaping the wider determinants of health, the framework becomes a key tool for improving health outcomes and reducing inequalities - now and into the future - as the planning and local government system evolves. It sets out a unified approach to embedding health in planning policy across Hertfordshire, enabling people to grow, live, move, connect, and thrive within the places they call home.
- 2.8 In collaboration with **Prior + Partners**, a countywide officer group has defined a shared set of **Healthy and Safe Placemaking Principles** and objectives to be used by Planning Authorities across Hertfordshire when developing Local Plans. The framework provides clear, concise, and user-friendly guidance for Local Planning Authorities - and, in time, any Mayor or Strategic Authority - on how to embed health considerations into Local Plans and Spatial Development Strategies.
- 2.9 Following the close of stakeholder consultation, the final framework document is expected by the end of October, with a **launch event scheduled for 13 November 2025**. The team is also developing a **web-based solution** to host the framework content alongside a range of datasets, enabling planning authorities to apply a health lens to future growth plans and influence the design of both new and existing places.

- 2.10 The **Digital Mission** is progressing under its refreshed identity, **Digital Hertfordshire**, replacing the previous 'Towards Digital Growth' branding to create a clearer and more accessible identity. New webpages are being launched on the Hertfordshire Futures website, with communications planned to promote the rebrand and raise awareness of digital initiatives.
- 2.11 Despite delays to some **Project Gigabit delivery contracts**, gigabit broadband coverage in Hertfordshire has now reached 90.9%, keeping the county on track to meet - and potentially exceed - the Government's target of 99% coverage by 2032. Following recent recruitment and increased team capacity, mobile connectivity is now under review, with an action plan in development to improve 4G and 5G coverage and capacity across the county.
- 2.12 In May 2025, the **Digital Inclusion Shared Service** was launched in partnership with Essex County Council. Since then, the team has been developing the Digital Help Finder - an online assessment and triaging tool to support residents with basic digital skills. This will be rolled out alongside new Digital Hubs, providing in-person support and access to the tool, helping bridge the digital divide and improve inclusion across Hertfordshire.
- 2.13 As part of the **Sustainable County Mission**, the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) continues to drive forward collaborative climate action across the county. Under the Adaptation strand, officer training took place in summer 2025 to align local authority climate risk assessments with national Adaptation Reporting Power requirements. In **Carbon Reduction**, the successful completion of the Local Authority Retrofit Accelerator (LARA) pilot led to the launch of a countywide **Retrofit Strategy**, endorsed by over 40 stakeholders. A [dedicated retrofit hub](#), including a Home Retrofit Guide, is now live on the HCCSP website, with officers progressing priority actions.
- 2.14 In **Energy Planning**, greenhouse gas emissions mapping is now available via Herts Insight, and a baseline energy profile has been developed as part of the Local Area Energy Plan. Under Collaboration and Partnership, HCCSP has supported senior leadership in embedding climate priorities into Hertfordshire's Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposals.
- 2.15 Leadership updates include the appointment of Donna Nolan, Chief Executive of Watford Borough Council, as Lead CEO following Matt Partridge's retirement, and Cllr Ian Stotesbury as Chair, with Cllr Tim Hoskin as Vice Chair, confirmed at the July HCCSP meeting.

3 Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Development Board

- 3.1 At the HIDB Annual Review Meeting in September, steering group members reflected on progress and looked ahead to the priorities for 2025/26. Officers agreed to adopt a more campaign-style approach for the coming year, with a strong emphasis on delivery and visibility of new development across Hertfordshire. Events will be designed to be more dynamic and engaging, featuring high-profile speakers from government, civil society, and the private sector, and incorporating formats such as debates and roundtable discussions.
- 3.2 There was a clear steer towards increasing private sector involvement, with a focus on attracting senior decision-makers rather than suppliers. Membership fees will rise next year, though the existing tiering structure will remain. Public sector representation will be strengthened through coordinated engagement with local authorities.

- 3.3 HIDB will also explore opportunities to showcase its work more widely, including through external events such as building on mutually supportive activity with HGB demonstrated at UKREiiF this year, strategic partnerships with developers, and targeted PR activity.
- 3.4 Looking ahead, meetings in March and September 2026 will continue at The Riding School, Hatfield House, with the next meeting taking place on **3 December 2025, 8-11am**.
- 3.5 An updated Terms of Reference is appended to this report.

4 Key developments

- 4.1 **Film & TV:** Sky Studios Elstree has received planning approval for a £400m expansion, adding 10 new sound stages and growing the site to 22 stages across 65 acres. The project is expected to create over 2,000 jobs and attract £2 billion in production investment, reinforcing Hertfordshire's position as a global production hub.
- 4.2 BBC Elstree Centre will be transformed into Fairbanks Studios, a 266,000 sq. ft. media campus with five sound stages, a media hub and public green spaces. The redevelopment will support high-end TV and independent film production and generate £80 million in annual investment.
- 4.3 **Google Data Centre:** Google has officially opened its new data centre in Waltham Cross as part of a £5 billion UK investment. The facility will support AI-powered services and is projected to create over 8,000 jobs annually. It includes advanced energy systems and a partnership with Shell to deliver 95% carbon-free operations by 2026.
- 4.4 **DC01UK – Europe's Largest Data Centre:** Outline planning permission has been granted for the £3.75 billion **DC01UK** data centre in South Mimms. Set to be Europe's largest, the 2m sq. ft. facility will support cloud and AI infrastructure, generate £1.1 billion in annual GVA, and create over 13,000 jobs (direct and indirect). Construction is expected to begin in 2027.

5 Upcoming events and other activity

- 5.1 **UKREiiF:** The launch of Invest Hertfordshire at UKREiiF in 2024 marked a significant milestone in presenting a unified and confident investment offer to the market. By bringing together public and private sector partners, Hertfordshire positioned itself as a serious contender on both the national and international stage. In 2025, this momentum was strengthened with a more targeted proposition, securing £22.5k in sponsorship and showcasing a £12.9bn gross development value pipeline. Our presence was well received, with strong attendance and deeper, more strategic engagement with investors.
- 5.2 Looking ahead to **UKREiiF 2026**, the focus will be on refining our approach to maximise impact. Strategic sites will be clearly defined in terms of scale and timing, supported by an updated investment prospectus early in the year to ease delivery pressures. Commercial sponsorship will be secured in advance to shape a realistic and effective budget.
- 5.3 Strategic oversight will be strengthened through a dedicated Steering Group, and delegation will be streamlined to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities. Investor engagement will be prioritised through pre-arranged meetings and panel sessions for senior representatives, supported by early diary planning and briefings.
- 5.4 Rather than relying on a single showcase event, Hertfordshire will host multiple sessions, panels, roundtables, and dinners, broadly aligned with the Hertfordshire Economic Strategy, ensuring visibility across the conference. Branding will remain unified under the

Invest Hertfordshire identity, with media efforts focused on targeted outreach to investors and developers.

- 5.5 The inaugural **UK Screen Investment Programme**, sponsored by Hertfordshire Growth Board, Hertfordshire Futures and University of Hertfordshire is holding its summit on **26 November** at BAFTA, Picadilly. This event will profile the UK and Hertfordshire as a global hub of film and TV production – historically significant and globally leading. An investors' dinner, hosted by HGB, will take place at The Grove on **3 November**.
- 5.6 The Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) will hold its next Annual Event on **Tuesday 13 January 2026**, from 9.30am to 4pm at the Hertfordshire Development Centre, Stevenage. This year's theme, Powering Change, will explore the future of energy systems and local governance in shaping climate resilience across Hertfordshire. For further information and to book your place, please contact: Laura Hayter: laura.hayter@eastherts.gov.uk

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of HGB will take place on **4 March, 2-4pm**, at Theobalds Enterprise Centre, Innovation Place, Platinum Way, Cheshunt, Waltham Cross EN8 8YD. Tours of Google will be offered on a first-come, first served basis.

Hertfordshire Infrastructure & Development Board

Terms of Reference

September 2025

Hertfordshire Infrastructure & Development Board (HIDB) is a subsidiary group of Hertfordshire Growth Board. Its key objectives are to:

- Unlock barriers to the delivery of high quality, new and sustainable, development across the county;
- Bring together the private and public sectors to encourage regional growth and attract investment into Hertfordshire.

HIDB plays a key role in supporting the delivery of Hertfordshire Growth Board's long-term vision. It provides a structured forum for collaboration between the public and private sectors, helping to translate strategic ambitions into practical delivery. Its work ensures that the development sector has a voice in shaping policy, identifying barriers and accelerating the delivery of sustainable growth across the county.

About Hertfordshire Growth Board

Formed in 2018, the Hertfordshire Growth Board brings political, civic, health and business leadership together to form a long-term place perspective for Hertfordshire's growth. The Growth Board is a statutory body that speaks for Hertfordshire and operates with the aim to deliver the high-quality, sustainable and inclusive places and infrastructure needed by our residents and businesses over the next 15 years and beyond.

A history of partnership working has been formalised through the Growth Board, which comprises the County Council, Hertfordshire's 10 district and borough councils, Hertfordshire Futures (formerly LEP), Herts and West Essex Integrated Care System, University of Hertfordshire, Homes England and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

About HIDB

Formed in 2021, HIDB provides a meaningful link between the Growth Board's constituent local authorities and the development and construction sector, with the primary aim of working in partnership to deliver sustainable economic growth and high quality placemaking.

Benefits of HIDB membership

- **Shape the future of Hertfordshire** by contributing to the delivery of strategic growth priorities - housing, infrastructure and employment - through engagement with Hertfordshire Growth Board.
- **Gain access to senior decision makers** at district, county and regional level, fostering dialogue on key critical issues.
- **Expand your network** through regular, high-level events that connect you with developers, planners, infrastructure providers and local authorities with exclusive insights into key planning, sustainability and environmental updates as well as legal matters.

External Liaison and working arrangements

Hertfordshire Infrastructure & Development Board (HIDB) operates as a **subsidiary group of the Hertfordshire Growth Board**, with a clear remit to support the delivery of the Growth Board's strategic priorities. HIDB will seek the support and engagement from relevant parts of government, particularly Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Homes England, to help deliver shared strategic objectives. These relationships support HIDB's role in unlocking investment, influencing policy, and accelerating the delivery of sustainable development across Hertfordshire.

Meeting Place is the Hertfordshire Growth Board's chosen agency to ensure the effective delivery of HIDB's programme. This includes event coordination, member engagement and communications. Meeting Place operates under the governance of the Growth Board to ensure HIDB's activities remain aligned with countywide strategic priorities.

Membership

Developers, house builders, promoters, housing associations, agents, lenders and investors, construction firms and consultancies (planning, master planning, planning communications, architecture, transport, project management, ecology, heritage, drainage) together with the constituent members of Hertfordshire Growth Board, and all those with an interest in construction, development, infrastructure and regional growth in Hertfordshire.

Member subscriptions are based on the number of employees in an organisation, with rates set for 2025/26 as follows:

1-20	- £660
20-49	- £1,980
50+	- £3,960

Membership subscriptions entitle the member organisation to two places at each meeting of the Board. Attendees must be employees of the member organisation.

Membership will be charged on a pro-rata basis in accordance with the financial year (October-October).

Declarations of interest

All members must give a declaration of interest at the beginning of the meeting in relation to any specific agenda items where it might be considered they have an interest.

Rules of engagement

To protect the integrity of the organisation's objectives, members must not use HIDB meetings for personal lobbying efforts. This is a crucial guideline to maintain the focus on building relationships and fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors. This approach helps create a more inclusive and effective platform for all members involved.

Election of the Chair

The Chair will be appointed by the Hertfordshire Growth Board for a period of one or two years and is solely responsible for the management of the meetings and stimulation of discussion on key topics. Thereafter chairing arrangements will be agreed by the partners.

The Chair for 2025/26 is: **Cllr Richard Henry, Leader, Stevenage Borough Council**

Meeting arrangements

The group will meet three times per year (or more frequently as required). Subsidiary meetings will take place in a format appropriate to the subject and to the attendees.

A HIDB Working Group has been established, made up of officers from constituent authorities, Meeting Place representatives and private sector representatives to help administer the programme of events and ensure smooth running of HIDB. The working group will also review membership subscriptions annually in October.

Format, content and speakers will be agreed by the working group in advance of each meeting. The working group may also introduce sponsorship opportunities to existing member organisations.

Funding and operational matters

Infrastructure & Development Board Limited will act as the vehicle through which member subscriptions will be paid. It will also be responsible for the payment of suppliers and other administrative costs as required.

Sponsorship opportunities

At the discretion of the HIDB Working Group, member organisations as well as prospective member organisations will be able to sponsor quarterly meetings. Any proposed sponsorship of a meeting will be scrutinised, discussed and determined by the HIDB Working Group, including the nature and format that this sponsorship will take.

The HIDB Working Group will reserve the right to refuse enquiries from organisations which do not align with the values and missions set out by the Growth Board.