

PRODUCTIVE North Herts

Economic Development Strategy
Consultation Draft February 2015

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How to comment on this document...

Information on how to respond can be found at the end of this document. Please send response back to:

Economic Development
North Hertfordshire District Council
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 3JF

Or email: economic.development@north-herts.gov.uk

Foreword...

North Hertfordshire is a great place to live and work and has a diverse and strong economy with potential to grow.

“Productive North Herts” sets out the Council’s economic vision to ensure we have a thriving, vibrant and prosperous economy going forward and one which is underpinned by its strengths and enterprise.

The area hosts a number of internationally important businesses. Johnson Matthey in Royston is a world leader in environmental technologies and precious metal production. LV Insurance has major offices in Hitchin and Samsung has a key service presence in Letchworth Garden City. We also have important companies in pharmaceutical technologies as well as advanced engineering, information technology and in the service and business support sectors. Manufacturing forms a key part of our economy and “production” is a key part of what the economy does.

Our strengths are in the diversity of the economy and the resilience of our area to change, but also the support sectors and the education facilities that are integral in providing the right skills and opportunities for businesses to thrive. We were one of the first to introduce a Business Improvement District and we are now the only local authority with 3 BIDs ensuring our towns and town centres are important economic drivers and that the networks and partnerships are in place to make them successful business locations.

The Council has an important role to play in shaping our local economy but cannot achieve this in isolation and therefore a crucial element of our strategy will be to work in partnership with key stakeholders in the North Hertfordshire economy to support and grow new and existing businesses and to attract inward investment. This includes the Hertfordshire and Greater Cambridge, Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the Federation of Small Business, Chambers of Commerce, North Hertfordshire College, among many others. We wish to see the economy grow and prosper generating employment opportunities and we need to ensure we have a valued local skilled workforce in place to take advantage of those opportunities.

This consultation draft is the first step to the Council developing its economic strategy and I would encourage your early engagement. Your feedback and comments will inform the final strategy and action plans, marking a positive step on our journey to ensure economic prosperity and wellbeing, and to improve the quality of life for everyone.

Councillor David Levett
Planning and Enterprise Portfolio Holder
North Hertfordshire District Council

Introduction...

The purpose of Productive North Herts is to present, as the basis for delivery, the Council's aims and proposed actions for improving economic prosperity across the District so that residents and businesses can thrive and contribute to creating sustainable communities.

In developing the strategy the council recognises the importance of considering all aspects of community life and (as promoted by the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership) champions the concept of 'Smart Growth' rather than growth at any cost.

Smart Growth is based on knowledge and innovation, concerned with promoting a more resource efficient, greener and competitive economy that embraces and responds to the dynamic relationship between the district's economy, its' diverse communities and places and which recognises the need for "sustainable" growth.

The Council cherishes the area's economic heritage associated with the existing economic sectors such as manufacturing and will seek to ensure they remain drivers for local economic development as well as encouraging new sectors to flourish.

The Council will use the strategy to underpin joint working with partners and build better relationships with businesses in Hertfordshire and the wider economic geography to optimise the benefits of collaboration and unlock the full potential of the area's resources.

North Hertfordshire...

North Hertfordshire has significant assets:

- Excellent strategic location between Cambridge and London.
- The A1(M) and A10 bisect the district in a north- south direction and the M1 is only a couple of miles west.
- The A505 runs east - west through the district and directly connects the main towns in North Herts to the M1, A10, and Cambridge
- Rail links in all towns to London Kings Cross and Cambridge
- Luton Airport is on our borders and Stansted and Heathrow are within an hours drive.
- The attractive market towns of Baldock, Hitchin and Royston and the worlds first Garden City, Letchworth all set within a green, desirable rural environment.
- Internationally renowned schools.
- Knebworth House and the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation
- Internationally important businesses

There are some challenges, which need to be overcome:

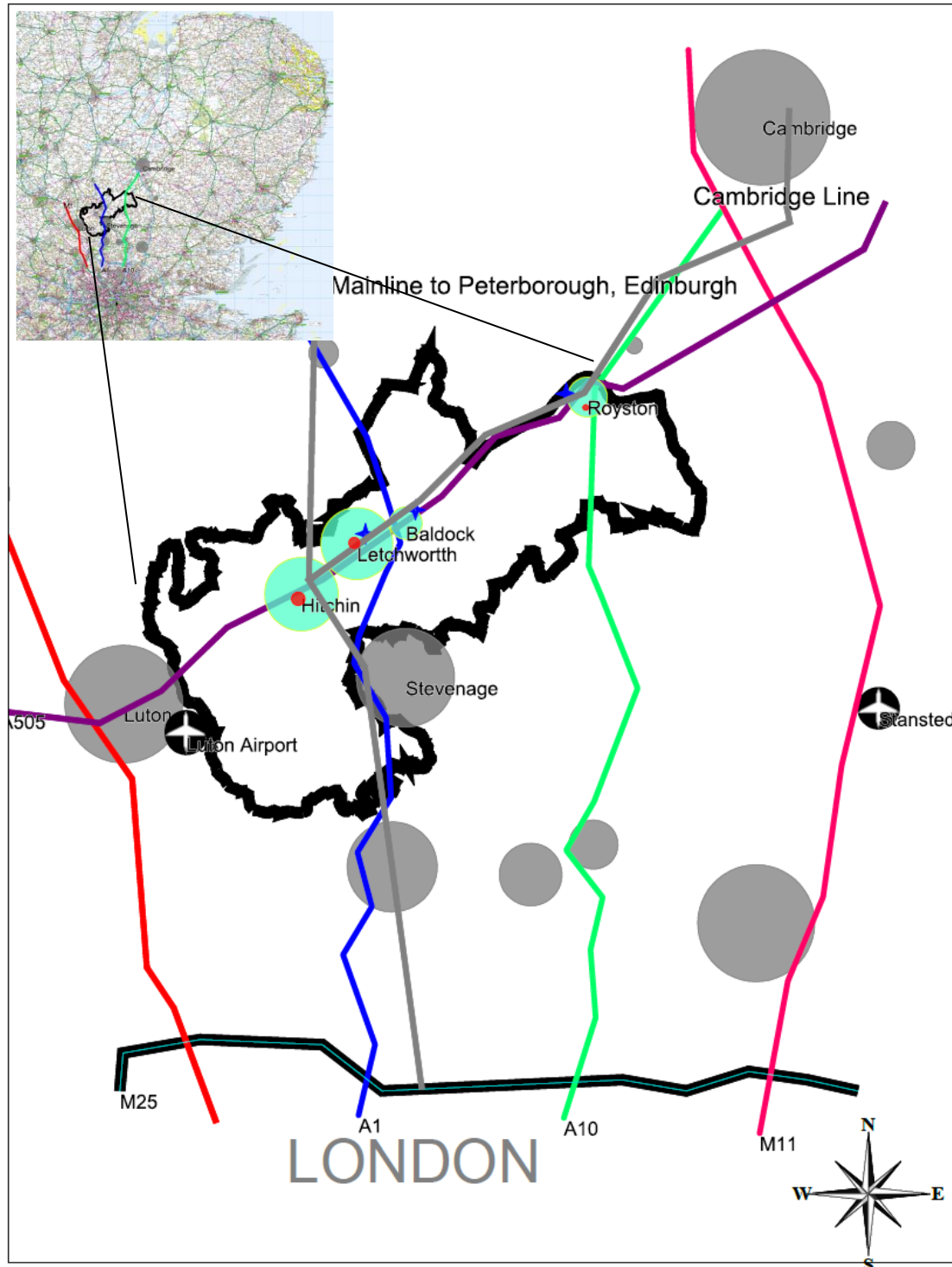
- The need for growth which reinforces the principles of Green Belt
- Tired looking employment areas, some with access issues
- Pockets of deprivation
- High levels of congestion on main transport routes
- High levels of out-commuting

But there are a number of opportunities:

- Potential for growth in high-end sectors such as advanced manufacturing and life sciences
- Growth of Cambridge

- Growth of Luton airport
- Highly skilled residents
- A1 and A10 Growth Corridors¹
- BIDs in 3 of the 4 towns

Strategic Context...



¹As identified in Hertfordshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)

The Draft Economic Vision...

We will support new and existing businesses to deliver smart, sustainable economic growth, encouraging entrepreneurship by building on our strengths, location and offer.

By 2025 North Hertfordshire will have an economy that provides a mix of jobs to meet the needs of the population and the requirements of the business community; we will do that through collaborating with partners to:

- Drive innovation and economic growth to deliver the Local Plan target of 3,600 jobs, reversing the trend of negative job growth
- Create a labour market where the educational institutions meet the current and future needs of the economy
- Revitalise our existing employment areas
- Provide a greater mix of skilled jobs
- Respond quickly to changes in the economic situation.
- Make North Hertfordshire a place to invest in

Strategic Priorities

To translate this vision into action the following priorities will be pursued:

Increase investment and business engagement

- 1. Make more of our location and develop more of an identity;**
- 2. Work more with businesses and strengthen business links;**

Working with the LEPs will be important to attract investment opportunities and improve our identity, making North Hertfordshire more attractive to business and employers.

Establishing a greater presence and building relationships with businesses will help ensure that we are more aware when businesses have problems and issues and can help facilitate growth opportunities when funding and incentives become available.

Improve the business environment

- 3. Improve the condition and look and access of our existing employment areas;**
- 4. Encourage recycling of manufacturing land, premises and jobs;**
- 5. Improve infrastructure and connectivity**

Manufacturing is forecast to decline in terms of land requirement (due to further mechanisation), therefore surpluses of land will need to be recycled and managed to ensure that areas with concentrations of this use do not become derelict and unattractive. These sites may also provide opportunities for redevelopment to occur to provide more modern buildings and facilities

The district's infrastructure and communication networks need to be improved to keep pace with population and economic growth and to make sure that we are a location to invest in.

Championing learning and skills

- 6. Encourage entrepreneurialism and retention of skilled workers;**
- 7. Work with other public sector, community and business groups to improve skills and job prospects of our residents**

We will seek to provide opportunities to retain more skilled people, increasing our levels of enterprise and provide more jobs and business locally as we have high levels of skills and high levels of enterprise.

We will seek to provide our residents with the skills and capabilities to find work and employment will help increase prosperity and improve quality of life.

Business support

- 8. Support and develop the rural economy and business links;**
- 9. Work with BIDs and stakeholders to support our town centres;**
- 10. Work with schools and colleges to increase opportunities for pupils and businesses arising from an increase in vocational skills for those below school leaving age;**

Improving links with the rural communities and provide opportunities for project funding to help strengthen business communication and provide increased support to rural businesses.

Continuing support for BID and town centre managers and other relevant parties will be important to facilitate the changing town centre environment.

Continuing to work with organisations such as North Hertfordshire College will help ensure that pupils and school leavers have the appropriate skills to provide them with opportunities for employment. Conversely we also need to encourage businesses to provide opportunities through apprenticeships and training for school leavers.

Sector focussed projects

- 11. Increase opportunities arising from the increased use of the area as a location for local and international film production.**

Recent filming successes should be built on and developed as should the associated industries for example we have part funded the Private Members Bill for filming on public streets following the recent filming of the World's End in Letchworth.

Action Plan

Following this consultation an action plan will be drafted to sit alongside Productive North Herts, which will include projects to help deliver the strategy and priorities. This forms a key part of the consultation process detailed below as we are seeking help to identify the most appropriate projects to take forward.

The Economic Development Strategy will form a key tool to help deliver the Corporate Priority of “Promoting sustainable growth”.

It will also help towards both “Working with our communities” and “Living within our means”.

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Consultation Arrangements...

The Council wants to capture the thoughts, ambitions and actions of our partners so that together we are able to drive delivery through effective joint working.

Feedback is therefore sought on all aspects including content, structure and branding. The following questions are presented to help prompt discussion and feedback:

Name and Address:

Company:

1. Do you agree with the overall vision and priorities (please tick)?

Yes

No

Reasons:

2. What are the key actions that we as a Council should be prioritising? (Please tick from the list below)

Grants programmes

Environmental improvements to employment areas

Skills and training

Creation of business incubation facilities

Award sponsorship

Applying for regional funding

More business engagement

Other (please specify)

If you would like to be involved in the creation of an action plan to sit alongside this strategy please add your contact details to the box below:

3. What are the barriers preventing business growth in North Herts?

Please feel free to contact the Economic Development team if you wish to discuss any related matters.

All comments received will be collated, analysed and presented in a feedback matrix that will consider each comment with a response and an indication as to how it will inform the final version.

It is envisaged that the final version will be published in Autumn 2015, after which focus will be placed on:

- Putting in place governance and joint working arrangements to oversee and drive delivery
- Ensuring Productive North Herts is reflected and reinforced through other key policies including, in particular, the Council's Local Plan and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan and associated delivery arrangements
- Ensuring Productive North Herts is reflected and reinforced in the business and operational plans of partner organisations
- Putting in place performance management arrangements to monitor progress and update actions as required

Comments should be sent by XXX via post or email to:

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