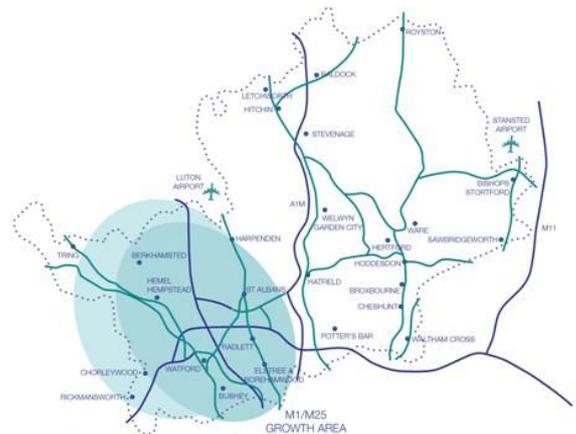


M1/M25 Growth Area Forum

How can SW Hertfordshire accommodate London's growth?

London's rapid growth is leading to a 'tidal wave of demand for homes' which could have a major impact on the future economy of South West Hertfordshire, employers, business and local authority leaders heard at our key debate on Friday at Rothamsted Conference Centre, Harpenden.

The forum with David Gauke, Financial Secretary to the Treasury and MP for SW Hertfordshire, and Richard Harrington, MP for Watford, was organised by Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to identify the key barriers and opportunities for growth in this vital transport corridor, which includes the three key towns of Hemel Hempstead, Watford and St Albans.



One of the biggest challenges facing South West Hertfordshire is the expansion of London, Barney Stringer, director of Quod, told delegates: "No British city has grown as fast as London before and that growth is spilling out way beyond its borders. Demographics and economics suggest that SW Herts could become a mini conurbation on the edge of London."

Roger Morris, Managing Director of Elstree Studios, said the creative industry generates around £74bn to the UK economy, with London alone contributing £21.4bn, according to the latest Government figures. But 'London's expanding creative sector cannot be accommodated' as many of those employed in the industry are being priced out of the housing market. In addition, there is a shortage of studio space in the South East with creative Industries also being pushed out of the capital by spiralling property prices and rents.

But SW Hertfordshire also faces significant skills and job opportunities too, according to Scott James-Eley, HS2 Skills & Employment Strategy Manager, who said the high-speed rail network would create a '20 year pipeline of work', with around 60 per cent of contracts expected to be awarded to SMES.

After listening to the speakers delegates were invited to have their say on these key issues:

- Employment and skills
- Infrastructure

- Business Growth
- Prioritising places/towns within the county

David Gauke MP said: “Part of the challenge facing this corner of Hertfordshire is that no one town dominates. Transport therefore is key, such as Croxley Rail Link, but there are other issues we need to wrestle with, such as Heathrow and London’s growth.”

Hertfordshire LEP Chairman John Gourd said: “This was a unique opportunity for business leaders to have their say on the key issues and potential barriers affecting future growth in this area and will help shape the LEP’s future investment priorities to help realise this corridor’s full economic potential.”

About Growth Areas

Hertfordshire LEP’s [Growth Deal](#) focuses on three Growth Areas which have been defined spatially around Hertfordshire’s principal road and rail corridors. These are:

M1/M25 – including Hemel Hempstead, Watford and St Albans

A1(M) – including Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Hitchin and Letchworth Garden City

A10/M11 – including Bishop’s Stortford, Hertford, Broxbourne and Stansted Airport

Growth Deal for M1/M25 Area

As part of its £221.5m Growth Deal with Government, Hertfordshire LEP has secured £93.35m from the Local Growth Fund for the M1/M25 area which is expected to deliver 1,400 jobs and create at least 1,470 skills places. For more information on Hertfordshire LEP’s current spending commitments in this area view the [M1/M25 Growth Area Infographic](#).

Economic Overview

The M1/M25 corridor is home to half of all people in Hertfordshire, with rapid population growth, high employment and activity rates and good workforce skills levels. Its three main towns of Watford, Hemel and St Albans together have city scale and it benefits from excellent national and international transport links, close proximity to London, a thriving creative industry and it is the chosen location for many global companies to base their UK and European headquarters.

Significant investment in Croxley Rail Link is set to deliver huge economic benefits to the area and the proposed construction of the new high speed rail network HS2 could bring substantial employment and training opportunities. But the area faces challenges too with high levels of out-commuting of its highly qualified and skilled residents, rising house prices and a shortage of new homes to accommodate growth.