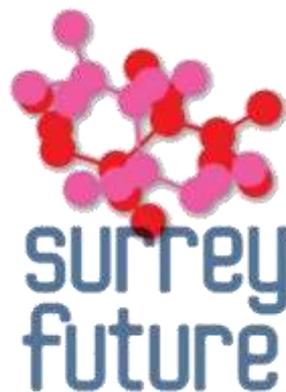




# SURREY'S 2050 PLACE AMBITION

**Surrey's Spatial Framework:  
A Strategic Vision for Place Leadership,  
Infrastructure & Good Growth**

**Draft Version 2**



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## Preface

The Surrey Place Ambition sets out a clear and coherent narrative about what Surrey's strategic partners want to collectively achieve over the next 30 years in terms of "good growth" but never have the challenges to deliver this been so great.

The county is home to some of the UK's most prosperous and economically successful places, but it also contains communities in need of support. Many of the challenges in these places are longstanding but the Covid-19 pandemic has brought these sharply into focus.

The need for a productive economy is important for Surrey's local communities. The county is also an important growth, innovation and exporting powerhouse for the UK and investment in Surrey is critical if the county is to maximise its contribution to the country's economic recovery and long-term sustainable growth. There is a need to address the existing infrastructure deficit which places significant limits on Surrey's investment opportunities and therefore its potential in contributing to national growth. The UK cannot have a levelled up north without a functioning south, there is a need for a redistribution of funding opportunities across the country.

Urgent global action is needed to address the impact of climate change. If we are to achieve net zero carbon emission targets by 2050, a big step change in how we think about, plan and deliver growth across Surrey, with the right type and level of supporting development and infrastructure, is needed now.

Despite these challenges, there are real opportunities for Surrey to grow and become even more attractive for residents and businesses alike. Across the county there is a deeply held ambition for the future which defines our approach to "good growth". This recognises the need to change the way we think about growth, placing the health and wellbeing of our environment and communities at the heart of our economic objectives. Vitrally, there is a shared determination to deliver this with all partners contributing proactively.

The Place Ambition provides a framework for this to happen in an integrated way but this requires strong leadership at a political level and a willingness to take difficult decisions in the interests of ensuring that long term prosperity and overall success is secured for Surrey. All our partners are therefore fully committed to continue to work together to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, respond to the challenges of climate change and deliver long term "good growth" for all our communities.



Rob Moran,

Chair, Surrey Future Steering Board

# Introduction

- 1.1 The Surrey local authorities and their strategic partners<sup>1</sup> have a track record of working together to achieve shared objectives. In 2017, Surrey’s local authorities agreed an Interim Local Strategic Statement<sup>2</sup> to facilitate cooperation on key strategic planning issues. In 2019, this evolved into Surrey’s 2050 Place Ambition which provides a framework to deliver our long-term ambition to support good growth across the county. Since 2019, however, we have had to deal with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our communities and economy, and the urgency in responding to climate change has been escalated. Whilst our overall ambition and strategic priorities remain largely the same, some of the interventions needed to deliver these have changed.
- 1.2 This document refreshes Surrey’s 2050 Place Ambition and considers the impact of the Covid pandemic, actions needed to support a zero-carbon future and new policy documents and other strategic work currently being undertaken across Surrey. We will continue to work together to ensure that Surrey plays a full part in the economic success of the country over the next 30 years, as a key driver of growth and an excellent place where people can live, work and learn. To do this we will continue to take an ambitious approach to facilitate delivery of “good growth”.

## Good Growth for Surrey ...

- Is proportionate and sustainable, focusing on the places where people both live and work.
  - Supports overall improvements to the physical and mental health and well-being of our residents.
  - Is supported by the necessary infrastructure investment - including green infrastructure.
  - Delivers high quality design in our buildings and public realm.
  - Increases resilience and flexibility in the local economy.
  - Delivers buildings and infrastructure ready for a zero-carbon future and builds resilience to the impacts of climate change and flooding.
  - Is planned and delivered at a local level while recognising that this will inevitably extend at times across administrative boundaries.
- 1.3 Building on our existing partnerships and collaborations is central to our approach, particularly on strategic planning and infrastructure priorities. Our shared ambition will help us deliver growth in the most effective way, maximising private sector investment and government funding opportunities and delivering efficiencies of scale. This will be underpinned by four shared strategic priorities that will inform and

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<sup>1</sup> The eleven Surrey Districts and Boroughs and Surrey County Council are working together under the auspices of the [Surrey Future Steering Board](#). Partners include Coast to Capital and Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnerships, Gatwick Diamond Initiative and Surrey Nature Partnership -

<sup>2</sup> [Interim Local Strategic Statement for Surrey 2016-2031](#) (PDF, 1.8KB)

support targeted delivery at a local level, within the context of our shared growth vision, principles, and values.

1.4 The purpose of the Place Ambition is to:

- outline a vision and spatial priorities for growth
- provide a framework to shape the future of communities and places across Surrey
- emphasise the need for an integrated, systemic approach to delivering good growth.

1.5 The benefits of the Place Ambition are:

- to promote a long term and co-ordinated approach to growth and infrastructure planning
- demonstrate a firm commitment to future growth
- demonstrate collaborative working
- enable cross boundary solutions for meeting development needs
- link to the longer timescales needed for infrastructure investment and effective delivery of infrastructure priorities
- increase investor confidence through long term clarity about growth.

1.6 The Place Ambition has been developed to provide us with the opportunities to proactively manage growth while at the same time investing in the right infrastructure and assets and enhancing the character of the natural environment that makes Surrey the unique and attractive place it is for residents, businesses and visitors alike. It will help underpin the local plans developed and implemented by boroughs and districts across Surrey and align these with infrastructure priorities of the county council and those of other strategic infrastructure providers, for example in areas such as transport, education and utilities.

1.7 Key to our ambitious approach will be making full use of our own existing assets, plans and strategies. But we will need the help of our strategic partnerships across Surrey and support from our wider sub-national partners and Government, particularly in relation to accessing additional funding and investment opportunities. We will also need to work with our local communities, making sure that there is wide ranging choice in housing, services and jobs across Surrey, and that our places are distinctive, attractive, well designed, full of character and are of the highest quality. Underlying all of this will be our ambition to improve the overall quality of health and well-being across Surrey, recognising that healthy places and people are a key factor in our long-term prosperity.

1.8 We cannot be complacent about the opportunities and challenges ahead and the need to tackle the wider issues that will be fundamental to the success of our approach, particularly mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change, supporting the health and well-being of our residents and addressing disparities across the county. To do this we need strong strategic leadership at a political level

and a willingness to take difficult decisions in the interests of ensuring that long term prosperity and overall success – good growth - is secured for Surrey.

# Context

## Understanding the County

- 2.1 Surrey's unique strategic position with its proximity to London and to Heathrow and Gatwick airports, access to the South Coast, its excellent road and rail connectivity, its highly skilled workforce, diverse and increasingly digital business base, its world class education facilities, and its excellent quality environment are all valuable assets which will be used to grow our businesses and talent base year on year. However, the very assets that make Surrey such an attractive place to locate to and visit are the ones that need proactive management to ensure that existing challenges are addressed and that they receive the right level of investment to enhance Surrey's offer for existing and future generations.
- 2.2 Urgent global action is needed to avoid dangerous climate change. This has been recognised through Surrey councils declaring climate emergencies. County and local climate change strategies set out how carbon emission reductions will be achieved, which includes reducing carbon from transport, promoting energy efficiency improvements, and supporting the creation of green technologies.
- 2.3 Surrey's population of nearly 1.2 million is forecast to grow significantly by 2043, including a 25% increase in those aged over 65. Surrey is largely an affluent county, but there are pockets of deprivation both in larger towns and rural areas. In 2019, an estimated 23,000 children in Surrey were living in poverty and Covid-19 is likely to have worsened this situation.
- 2.4 Most people in Surrey lead healthier lives than the average UK citizen. However, this strong average performance masks areas of underperformance. 22% of all adults and 13% of all children in Surrey are obese with obesity and excess weight rates being 13.5% higher in deprived wards than the average Surrey ward. An estimated 10,600 5- to 15-year-olds in Surrey have a mental health disorder<sup>3</sup>. The Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out priorities for helping people to lead healthy lives which includes ensuring that everyone lives in good and appropriate housing and improving environmental factors that impact people's health and wellbeing.
- 2.5 Surrey covers an area of 1,663 km<sup>2</sup>, with 87% urban and 13% rural and 74% of the land is covered by national and international designations such as Metropolitan Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The county benefits from having many different landscape habitats including rivers and areas of woodland, heathland, and chalk grassland, some of which are nationally/internationally rare. Effective planning is needed to make best use of land to protect and conserve the county's natural environment. This green infrastructure is also a resource which offers opportunities to help mitigate climate change and contribute

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<sup>3</sup> Statistics from the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy, 2019

to health and wellbeing. Access to green space and countryside is essential for both good physical and mental health and leads to an improved quality of life.

- 2.6 Surrey has a very strong, productive, and innovative economy, contributing over £40 billion per year to the national economy. The workforce is highly skilled and attracted to live in the area by Surrey's rich natural environment and high-quality services. Our key assets include a strong business base and three universities - University of Surrey, Royal Holloway, University of London and University for the Creative Arts. Surrey's economy does not rely on one dominant sector, but has strengths in several high-value, knowledge-based and innovative sectors. Nevertheless, the economy is expected to take time to adjust to the impacts of covid-19. Some sectors, such as aviation, have been particularly severely impacted and changes in working patterns may lead to longer term adjustments in commuting and the use of our town centres.

## Key Influencers

- 2.7 Our 2050 Place Ambition has been shaped by a number of **climate and environment, economic, spatial, infrastructure and health and wellbeing influencers** at the local, county, regional and national levels. These include district/borough local plans, Surrey Climate Change Strategy, Surrey County Council's emerging Local Transport Plan (LTP4), One Surrey Growth Board's Surrey's Economic Future – Towards 2030, the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Transport for the South East's emerging Transport Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework. Our focus, however, is on what we can realistically influence where there is a shared view about drivers of change and desired outcomes.
- 2.8 We recognise that our level of influence depends on how robust, coherent and deliverable our Place Ambition is seen to be and how compelling our place offer is considered by others. In both, we have major advantages; Surrey is strategically one of the most connected places both nationally and internationally in the UK which, combined with our high productivity (and potential to increase this) and our outstanding environmental assets, offers a highly attractive and competitive investment proposition. We must capitalise on this in securing and delivering good growth for our communities by providing clear strategic leadership and direction, influencing the priorities of other relevant organisations at a local, regional and national level, and ensuring that delivery happens on the ground.

# Surrey in Facts and Figures

## Surrey's People

- Surrey is one of the most densely populated shire counties in England with a population of 1.2 million. This is set to grow by 38,000 people by 2043 (3% increase). In the year to June 2020 about a third of the moves into the county were by people leaving London.
- One in five of Surrey's population is aged 65+ and this group is expected to grow by 90,000 by 2043, which will present significant challenges for future care provision across the county.
- Although Surrey has one of the highest life expectancies in the country there are considerable challenges around maintaining and improving health and well-being. In 2019, 10.7% of all households in Surrey were at or below the relative poverty line, with some areas of the county reaching as high as 26% of residents.

## Surrey's Economy

- Surrey's GVA in 2019 was £46 billion, contributing 16% to the South East's GVA. However, the rate of growth is low and is expected to continue to be low or negative. New businesses in Surrey have been created at a lower rate than the national average. GVA per person has also grown more slowly than in the rest of the country over the last 20 years. The pandemic has highlighted the risk of taking our economic success for granted. For some sectors, particularly aviation, the changes have been severe and the ongoing decline of retail on the high street was also accelerated by the changes during 2020 and 2021.
- The average annual household income across Surrey in 2017/18 was £38,678 which was £3,301 higher than the average across the South East. The figure after housing costs falls to £34,263 but is still £2,906 higher than the South East average.
- More than 1 in 3 of the population are educated to NVQ4+ (equivalent to degree level or above). In 2018, 54.6% of the population aged 25-64 were educated to NVQ4+ which compares to 46.7% for the South East and 43.2% for England.
- Over half of the residents in Surrey are in high-skilled professional occupations, a figure which is higher than for the South East as a whole. 52.0% of people in employment in Surrey work in managerial, professional, or associate professional occupations. The figure for the South East is 44.8% and for England is 41.1%.

## Surrey in Facts and Figures (continued)

### Surrey's Environment

- Surrey has many different landscape habitats. The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) stretches across a quarter of the county to include the chalk slopes of the North Downs and extending south to the Greensand Hills which rise in Haslemere. A small section of the High Weald AONB occupies the south-east corner of Surrey. The county also has habitat that is nationally and internationally rare such as the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, which covers significant parts of north and west Surrey.
- The county is the most wooded in Great Britain with 22% of the area being woodland, compared to a national average of 12%. 25.3% of people in Surrey live within 500 metres of an accessible woodland area, compared to 16.8% in England.
- On average, Surrey's air quality is better than the national average, with an index of accessibility to air quality score in 2018 of 26.1 compared to 26.8 nationally. However, there are over 30 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) identified across Surrey and particulate emissions were estimated to account for 5.7% of mortality in Surrey in 2018.
- Surrey's carbon emissions are falling, but not quick enough to meet net zero emissions targets by 2050. Currently, 46% of Surrey's emissions come from the transport sector, with housing responsible for 28% of emissions, public/commercial buildings 15%, and industry 11%.
- Surrey is a county at high risk of flooding with in excess of 30,000 properties at risk from fluvial and surface water sources. It has experienced several major flooding incidents in the last ten years, with much of this occurring in the floodplain of the lower River Thames and its tributaries. There are also many localised areas prone to surface and ground water flooding or the emergence of groundwater.

### Surrey as a Place

- The county is characterised by a polycentric settlement pattern of large and small towns but with no one dominant city or conurbation. Guildford is the most significant urban settlement and county town. Other major towns are Camberley, Epsom, Redhill, Staines-upon-Thames and Woking. Some 87% of the population live in urban areas.
- Government calculates that over 6,300 new homes a year are needed in Surrey. An 80% increase on the number of new homes required in current local plan housing targets and an increase on current levels of housing completions (3,100 per year).

## Surrey in Facts and Figures (continued)

- Adding to these challenges, will be pressures on Surrey's infrastructure arising from its proximity to London, which is expected to deliver 65,000 new homes each year, many of which are expected to be built in neighbouring outer London boroughs, such as Kingston upon Thames and Croydon.
- Significant growth is also being planned and delivered in neighbouring areas in Hampshire and Sussex, including a new community of 4,000 homes at Whitehill/ Bordon and 2,750 homes in North Horsham.
- Surrey has some of the most expensive places to live in the country with housing affordability (ratio of median house price to median gross annual residence-based earnings) in 2020 of 11.48 compared to 9.57 for the South East of England.

### Surrey's Infrastructure

- Although Surrey's transport connections are a key strength, they also have limitations and constraints. Before Covid-19, high traffic levels on Surrey's main roads led to unreliable journey times and congestion, that was estimated to cost businesses £550 million per year. Traffic levels are now returning to pre Covid-19 volumes.
- Rail services experienced overloading before Covid-19. About 131,000 of Surrey residents (19% of the working population) commuted into London, leading to significant crowding on peak services. It is not yet clear whether these levels of demand will return post Covid-19, but it is likely that some employees will commute less frequently.
- Car ownership in Surrey is 86% compared to the national average of 73% and continues to rise. Electronic vehicle uptake has increased in the UK and Surrey. There is a relatively high concentration of charge points in Surrey with over 200 charge points in 60 locations. This is set to increase going forward.
- Surrey has over 98.0 % coverage of superfast broadband (>24 Mbps) which is slightly higher than the coverage for England which is 96.3% (June 2019). Only 25% of residential and business premises were able to access Gigabit speeds (October 2021), relative to a UK average of 50%. Nearly 40% of Surrey's employed residents worked from home in April 2020.
- Estimated infrastructure costs in 2017 to support planned growth were £5.5 billion with a funding gap of £2.5bn.

## Our Vision, Principles and Values

- 3.1 Our **Vision** is for a county of well-functioning and connected places, with healthy communities and a high quality of life. Surrey recognises its important role in the wider South East economy and will build on its strengths while retaining the qualities which give the county its distinctive character. Through collaborative working, local authorities and partner agencies will seek positive and innovative solutions to shared challenges to meet the need for new homes, secure greater economic prosperity and infrastructure improvements and to maintain and enhance the natural and built environment and tackle climate change.
- 3.2 Our shared **Principles and Values** will guide the strategic priorities developed through our 2050 Place Ambition, helping to mitigate any negative impacts and maximise the benefits for our local communities. We aim to do this by:
- Taking an ambitious place-based approach that reflects functional relationships and not necessarily administrative boundaries.
  - Leveraging our unique location, skills base and strategic transport connectivity to secure “good growth”.
  - Focusing growth and infrastructure investment in areas that, with the right interventions, offer the greatest potential to support long term sustainable growth and increased productivity, including through enhanced connectivity.
  - Addressing the significant challenge of housing affordability across Surrey and the resulting lack of housing for essential workers, by building more, well-designed affordable homes.
  - Supporting a strong economy through the retention and expansion of existing local businesses and increasing opportunities for growth sectors and new businesses to locate and invest in Surrey.
  - Maximising opportunities to enhance the health and wellbeing of Surrey’s residents by improving air quality, mitigating the impacts of climate change on our environment, improving access to high quality green spaces and ensuring that new development contributes positively to community amenities and infrastructure to help create high quality and healthy places where people want to live and work.
  - Safeguarding, investing in, restoring and creating new natural habitats which support biodiversity.
  - Ensuring that all development is high quality and well-designed and ready for a zero-carbon future, with local authorities leading by example in delivering

development that contributes positively to the value of our places and is resilient and adaptable to meet current and future needs.

- Using our own resources and assets to directly drive, influence and support growth across Surrey and specifically, to facilitate a more equitable access to homes and wider choice of housing to meet local needs.
- Taking a positive, proactive and responsive stance towards the opportunities for growth across Surrey to help demonstrate our individual and collective place leadership roles in overcoming and responding to the challenges ahead. We will ensure that this approach is embedded in our organisational cultures and in our local plans, policies and strategies.
- Capitalising on the opportunities provided by enhanced digital connectivity and associated transformation of business processes to maximise value from our assets and enhance the quality of the public service offer in both urban and rural areas.

## Our Strategic Priorities

- 4.1 Our four **Strategic Priorities** for delivering the 2050 Place Ambition have been shaped by our shared Vision, Values and Principles, together with the key influencers, recognising that there is a need to align priorities from the local to the national level and across different organisations within Surrey. The priorities are based around improving connectivity both within Surrey and with strategically important hubs, enhancing the place value of Surrey's towns, maximising the potential of our strategic opportunity areas and investing in natural capital and delivering nature recovery. By committing to deliver on all four, our aim is that Surrey will be a place that is resilient and responsive to future changes and external impacts, with a flexible approach to development which delivers high quality places, a strong economic offer and improves health and well-being.
- 4.2 The four Strategic Priorities are not mutually exclusive and should therefore be considered together. For example, although some of the Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOAs) proposed in Strategic Priority 3 are broadly defined on the map (p.24), the focus for investment will be the existing and proposed new urban areas within each area and the main connecting transport corridors, as set out in Strategic Priorities 1 and 2. Equally, although some urban areas are not within any of the proposed SOAs, investment will continue to be directed to improve urban areas overall both strategic and local, as set out in Strategic Priority 2.

### **Strategic Priority 1: Improve connectivity both within Surrey and between strategically important hubs**

- 4.3 With investment focused on levelling up, it is vital that we have a clear and agreed set of shared strategic infrastructure priorities which offer the best opportunity to improve connectivity within and between our existing urban centres, and between Surrey and other key national and international destinations. Covid-19 restrictions affected the nature of the relationship between London and Surrey, with many people who worked in London working from home. Going forward, the full impact on travel patterns is unknown but with an anticipated increase in 'hybrid working' there is likely to be less frequent commuting and a renewed emphasis on creating compact places in which most of people's daily needs can be met within a short walk or cycle and a need for greater investment in active travel and new transport technologies. This will help deliver the actions needed to support a low carbon economy. We are working together with our partners to develop a coherent long term infrastructure investment strategy through the Surrey Infrastructure Plan. We will continue to review infrastructure priorities to:
- Ensure that investment in strategic infrastructure is focused in areas where it can unlock development opportunities or support better connectivity between

Surrey's main economic centres and key hubs, and between Surrey and other key destinations within the wider South East and nationally.

- Ensure a more reciprocal relationship with London on common interests, recognising that Surrey's proximity to the capital will remain one of its greatest economic assets and continue to work with the Mayor of London, Transport for the South East and partners across the Wider South East to address regional challenges and deliver strategic infrastructure priorities.
- Build on existing measures and develop new measures that align with the "avoid, shift, improve" approach of LTP4.
- Improve rail connectivity between Surrey's main towns and other key economic centres by securing investment in the North Downs Line, capacity improvements at Woking and Guildford Stations and Southern Rail access from Heathrow Airport to Surrey and beyond.
- Focus on improving stations within Surrey so they benefit local communities and support sustainable local economic growth. Develop stations by improving access to them by public transport and active modes and enhance overall quality of services, for example through use of digitalised signalling and better timetabling.
- Enhance the quality of bus services through investing in infrastructure to allow faster journeys by bus, improving the coverage of the network, providing more coordinated bus services which integrate with other transport modes and improving service frequencies, reliability, fares and customer experience.
- Support the provision of a high-quality network to increase walking/cycling uptake. The network would serve and link urban and rural built-up areas to public transport connections. Where possible this would involve the development of active travel and green corridors and making improvements to rights of way.
- Promote the operational efficiency (and in some cases safety) of our transport network through securing improvements along our strategic movement corridors and junctions, including the Strategic Route Network, the Major Road Network, and key transport hubs. Develop new and innovative infrastructure funding solutions and ensure that we are in the strongest position to compete for new infrastructure funding and investment opportunities. Maximise the opportunities provided by technological advances in mobility.
- Develop county-wide digital infrastructure through working with commercial and public sector partners to enable access to fibre and gigabit capable services.
- Build on the potential for digital technology to enhance connectivity, helping to reduce congestion on our roads and improve the vitality of our urban areas

including those rural communities that face the greatest connectivity challenges. This will increase our ability to address the impacts of climate change and improve the overall health and well-being of our residents.

## **Strategic Priority 2: Enhance the place offer of Surrey's towns**

- 4.4 Our urban areas will continue to be where most of Surrey's homes, services and jobs are located. Focusing growth in these areas will provide the greatest opportunity to support access to services and cultivate changes in the way that we travel, both within urban areas and between different places. With three quarters of the land in Surrey being covered by Green Belt and national and international environmental designations there is a need to make effective use of our urban areas.
- 4.5 Surrey has a large number of town centres, with varying roles and different housing, employment and retail offers. These will continue to play a significant part in supporting growth in the next 30 years, although they will have to adapt if they are to be 'liveable' centres, providing a healthy and safe environment to live and work in, and respond to external impacts on their roles and vitality. The larger centres of Guildford, Reigate/Redhill, Staines and Woking in particular, will continue to provide the greatest potential for delivering a strong residential and economic offer, and will be key in enhancing Surrey's transport connectivity.
- 4.6 Surrey has a greater number of medium-sized towns than neighbouring areas and, so far, these have proved to be more resilient to Covid-19 than many larger towns and cities. Investment in active transport and public transportation will make them healthier, more attractive places to live.
- 4.7 An analysis of population and employment data, information on the function and location of towns and future growth plans has been used to identify towns of strategic significance. This analysis is also informed by the hierarchies of town centres that local planning authorities identify within their local plans, but as a county wide assessment it is intended to illustrate the roles that individual towns play when considered as part of a Surrey network. It is important to recognise that it does not replace any local proposals and priorities but is intended to supplement and assist local plan development.
- 4.8 These towns will often be the focus for investment to unlock sites, improve movement and connectivity, support economic development and create sustainable places. In a number of the towns such as Farnham, Horley, Staines and Weybridge place based collaborative working is already underway, involving a range of partners. The identified towns will also be the focus for monitoring work to understand how they are developing and changing. Monitoring will include changes in land use including the impact of the expansion of permitted development rights (PDR).
- 4.9 Within Surrey there are 25 towns of strategic significance. Nine of these are primary centres that serve the wider regional economy and are a focus for development in

Local Plans and emerging plans and often the subject of masterplanning activities. A number are also a focus for LEP activity, given their strategic role. These centres are:

- Guildford
- Woking
- Epsom
- Reigate
- Redhill
- Staines-upon-Thames
- Farnham
- Egham
- Camberley (including Frimley)

4.10 16 Surrey towns can be classed as secondary centres that play a significant function but serve a less extensive catchment. The growth potential of these towns is set out in the local plans and many of the centres have the potential to accommodate growth which will enable residents to meet many of their retail and leisure needs without having to travel to larger neighbouring centres. These centres are:

- Leatherhead
- Walton-on-Thames
- Caterham
- Dorking
- Godalming
- West Byfleet
- Haslemere
- Banstead
- Chertsey
- Horley
- Addlestone
- Weybridge
- Oxted
- Cranleigh
- Cobham
- Esher

4.11 Surrey's key centres include market towns steeped in history and high streets with a mix of independent and national shops and restaurants. Covid-19 has accelerated a number of trends that were bringing about changes to Surrey's high streets. There are vacant units across Surrey's towns and a need for new visions/strategies to revitalise them. We are seeing a new focus on revitalising high streets and using public sector assets to deliver multi-functional space and the co-location of different services.

- 4.12 For all our town centres there is a need to promote planning of service provision and land use to support significant localisation of activity in attractive local communities, supported by high quality connectivity based on provision for public/shared/active travel. The potential of our high streets will be developed through engaging with people to drive creative thinking, test new ideas and ensure that outcomes are locally owned and tailored. We will ensure that we deliver resilient high streets which are adaptable to long term changes. There will be a move away from an over reliance on retail and exploration around opportunities linked to commerce, council and health service provision, community uses, the location of more homes and people in town centres and experiential opportunities.
- 4.13 Changes to permitted development rights that allow the change of use from commercial, business and service uses (class E) to residential use (C3) came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021. The government intends for the expansion of the PDR regime support the creation of homes whilst also giving high streets a new lease of life.
- 4.14 PDR can have a positive effect on local commercial property markets by removing poor quality, unoccupied space which no longer meets business requirements as well as providing a much needed supply of housing. However, given the constraints on development opportunities in Surrey there are some town centres where higher quality office space has been lost as a result of PDR and in others there is significant pressure for residential development in established office locations. The permanent removal of office stock which could have been refurbished in the future represents a real risk to the long-term economic growth of these places. This is an issue which is having implications across the whole of Surrey and future work will compile evidence to report on the situation county wide.
- 4.15 It is recognised that given Surrey's close proximity to London there are no options for delivering sustainable development and large new settlements of the same scale that is possible in other parts of the country, without compromising some of our most valuable assets or redirecting investment away from the main urban areas. However, there are a number of opportunities to deliver some completely new settlements to help meet housing needs and support our economic priorities between now and 2050. Four new communities have therefore been proposed across Surrey in the following locations:
- Dunsfold
  - Longcross
  - South Godstone
  - Wisley
- 4.16 Strategic Priority 2 is to maximise the potential of our existing and new urban areas by making sure land is used in the most efficient and versatile way, and meets our identified needs, as far as possible. It is vital that, in focusing growth in these areas, the overall place value is enhanced through high quality development, provision of

green spaces and access to a wide choice in services, leisure, culture, jobs, housing and travel options, meeting the different needs across all generations.

4.17 Therefore, we will continue to develop an approach to unlocking the potential of all Surrey's towns – of strategic and local significance; established and new - which aims to:

- Enhance the built environment by ensuring that all new development and the redevelopment of existing buildings contribute positively to the overall place value of urban areas in terms of building design and quality including the conservation and reuse of heritage assets and street design that focuses on a Healthy Streets approach creating streets that are pleasant, safe and attractive.
- Promote healthy, inclusive, and safe places which contribute positively to people's wellbeing by ensuring all new development and the redevelopment of existing buildings allow for active travel, enhance walkability, build complete and compact places, enhance connectivity with safe and efficient infrastructure and provide access to and engagement with the natural environment.
- Increase the overall provision and choice of new homes offered, with the emphasis on diversifying the types of new homes provided to meet our needs, including more affordable homes and homes to meet our ageing population. Work proactively with developers and consider the role of a residential offering as part of town centre revitalisation.
- Safeguard our valuable economic assets, particularly employment land and premises within town centres and close to sustainable modes of transport, ensuring that there continues to be a flexible supply to meet changing economic needs, catering for established, growing and start-up businesses and attracting new employers.
- Depending on the specific details and locations of development, allow the removal of poor-quality stock from the employment land supply where sites are poorly located.
- Manage and dispose of public sector land and assets in a way that contributes to meeting identified needs and improving overall quality of place.
- Promote high street revitalisation through diversification and encouraging the development of multi-functional space and the co-location of different services.
- Maximise the contribution Surrey's natural capital makes to securing 'clean' growth, by improving the overall quality and accessibility of our green and blue infrastructure within and between our urban areas, through the proactive management of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, securing additional provision

through development contributions and making better use of non-operational land.

- Place Surrey in the best position to respond to and mitigate against the impact of climate change, by anticipating the risks in the way we plan and deliver services in future and ensuring new buildings and infrastructure are ready for a zero-carbon future.
- Improve flood resilience in our towns, working with key bodies such as the Environment Agency to open up new opportunities for development.
- Focus transport investment in active transport and public transportation, improving overall mobility and accessibility within and between our urban areas.
- Monitor and report on the towns of strategic significance particularly to consider changes in land use as a result of new permitted development rights.

### **Strategic Priority 3: Maximise the potential of our Strategic Opportunity Areas**

4.18 The greatest long term potential for delivering “good growth” across Surrey will be by investing in places that offer opportunities to boost productivity by maximising the value of strategic assets such as universities, transport hubs and strategic employment sites/centres to support our economic strengths and priority industrial sectors<sup>4</sup>. Our third priority will therefore be to focus strategic interventions in eight Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOAs) that have been identified as areas to support long term prosperity. This includes investment in new strategic infrastructure and to address existing infrastructure deficiencies and improving connectivity both within Surrey and between other strategically important economic areas.

4.19 Our eight Strategic Opportunity Areas are (see the separate implementation framework for a profile of each SOA):

- SOA 1: Longcross-Staines-Heathrow Corridor
- SOA 2: Woking Hub
- SOA 3: Guildford Hub
- SOA 4: Blackwater Valley Corridor
- SOA 5: Cranleigh-Dunsfold Corridor
- SOA 6: Epsom-Leatherhead Corridor

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<sup>4</sup> Surrey’s economic strengths are outlined in Surrey’s Economic Future – Forward to 2030: Our Economic Strategy published in November 2020. They include nationally significant innovation and R&D assets, a strong presence in industrial research and development and an extensive stock of international corporates. Priority industrial sectors for Surrey are professional & business services, life sciences, ICT, aerospace & defence, 5G, satellite and cyber security.

- SOA 7: M23- Gatwick Corridor
- SOA 8: M25 J6/A22 South Godstone

4.20 Although most of the SOAs are centred on existing and proposed new urban areas (which will be the main focus for investment), particularly the larger urban centres within Surrey, some reflect the significance of key transport corridors where there is priority being given regionally to long term investment and improvements. In many cases the areas cross over the boundary into neighbouring authorities and will require strong collaboration to ensure priority outcomes can be delivered.

4.21 For each of the SOAs, a number of strategic interventions will be delivered over the next 10, 20 and 30 years. These will be developed within a common framework which aims to:

- Support the delivery of a diverse supply of new homes to meet housing needs including those of a changing workforce and help boost productivity.
- Support a small number of carefully planned urban extensions and new communities to boost the supply of new homes and employment land.
- Focus the right interventions, such as investment in infrastructure, to unlock sites and improve movement and connectivity between key hubs and along strategic movement corridors.
- Support our economic strengths and priority industrial sectors by ensuring that the right type of premises and land is readily available, by attracting inward investment, by improving the links between priority sectors and the skills, education and training opportunities (schools, FE, HE, private training providers) available in Surrey to ensure a productive and agile workforce.
- Protect strategically important land and premises, particularly within town centres that are well served by public transport, taking into account what the potential future needs may be to maintain a flexible and adaptable land supply, provide flexible workspace and multi-functional space and ensure resilience in the ongoing health of these important locations.
- Reflect these areas in our own plans and strategies for strategic investment decisions, asset management and land disposal and highlight the importance of these areas through our work with partners and Government to support a proactive approach to growth and maximise all investment and funding opportunities.
- Explore how future business models which aim to boost productivity will impact on the type and supply of land and premises needed in future, to ensure a flexible and responsive approach to market demands, as well as the type of

business support needed and the role of the Universities and their research priorities.

- Support the development of new collaborative working arrangements and the coordination and sharing of best practice across the SOAs.

#### **Strategic Priority 4: Invest in natural capital and deliver nature recovery**

4.22 Surrey has a wealth of environmental assets ranging from those with international and national status, to those of local importance. However, according to the 2017 State of Surrey's Nature report, Surrey also has one of the fastest declining wildlife populations of any county in England. Nature is being increasingly confined to small, fragmented areas with little or no connectivity.

4.23 The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out a natural capital approach, giving the environment its due regard as a key contributor to the overall economy. Legally binding targets for Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Recovery Networks are being introduced and will focus activities on environmental improvements in the coming years.

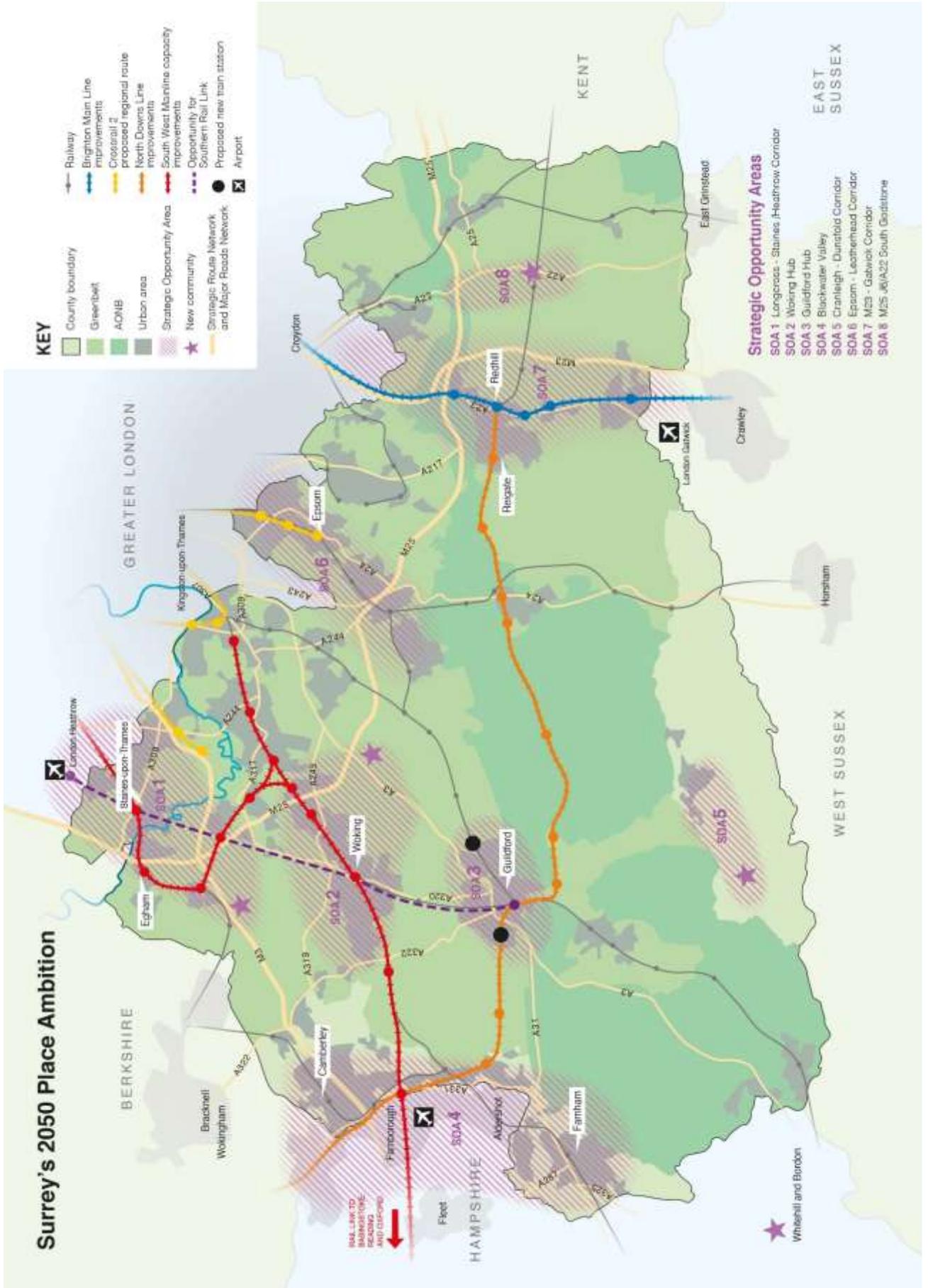
4.24 Within Surrey there will be increased focus on spatial strategies for nature guiding funding decisions and enabling the delivery of multi-functional benefits in prioritised areas. Surrey Wildlife Trust is already leading on innovative work to drive private investment in natural capital through the development of a Natural Capital Investment Fund.

4.25 Organisations such as Surrey County Council, Surrey Wildlife Trust and district and borough councils will continue to work together to avoid adverse effects on the environment, improve resilience to climate change and invest in natural capital by:

- Positively managing and improving the condition of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites of nature importance.
- Conserving and enhancing the distinctiveness of Surrey's landscapes and the natural beauty of the Surrey Hills AONB and High Weald AONB having regard to landscape character assessments and AONB Management Plans.
- Ensuring that land used for mineral working is restored to an appropriate future use and managed so that it brings value to the environment and local community.
- Recognising the importance of natural capital and the role of ecosystem services and pursuing opportunities for improving biodiversity and the air and water environment alongside new development.
- Articulating biodiversity improvement priorities, including the enhancement of the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas identified within the county.

- Creating a coherent connected network of accessible multi-functional greenspaces.
- Further developing the collective evidence base to include baseline natural capital accounts and mapping to identify enhancements for delivery of multiple benefits.
- Developing approaches for facilitating systemic investment in natural capital, including through a Natural Capital Investment Fund to trade biodiversity credits in a suite of habitat banks.
- Making use of public sector land for investment in natural capital.
- Providing Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace to mitigate the impacts of new housing development on the SPAs which also delivers new accessible and good quality green infrastructure.

# Surrey's 2050 Place Ambition



## Delivering our 2050 Place Ambition

- 5.1 Delivering “good growth” requires long term commitment and investment and collaboration with many different stakeholders and partners. A detailed implementation framework, available as a separate document, has been produced that sets out how we propose to do this.