Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

We are pleased to see that this strategy document is being produced, to take forward the objectives of LTP4 specifically for the county’s rural areas. The document provides a good amount of supporting policy and statistical information, and clearly identifies the challenges facing attempts to improve accessibility by sustainable modes within rural areas.

At 2.1, we would question whether the Urban/Rural classification of boroughs and districts is overly simplistic. Welwyn Hatfield is characterised as “Urban with City and Town”, whereas there are significant rural areas in the borough, particularly to the south-east of the two towns, where there are significant issues of rural accessibility. The description of clusters of rural areas at 2.2 doesn’t seem quite geographically correct.

At 2.3 we would question the use of the terminology “Important Rural Settlements” and “Other Rural Settlements”, as the accessibility challenges are often even greater in smaller villages. Could “Larger” and “Smaller” Rural settlements be used as a distinction?

At 3.5, in the ‘Place and Movement’ assessment, rural lanes are considered to be ‘low in movement’, but of course there are exceptions where such lanes may be highly-trafficked e.g. on the urban fringe and when in use as ‘rat runs’. Coopers Green Lane between WGC and St Albans is a good example of this, but roads of even less width and specification can also be involved.

In Chapter 4, at the heart of the document, the main issue affecting the county’s rural areas is correctly identified – a lack of passenger transport options, due to the financially unviable position for commercial bus services, and the continuing reductions in HCC contract services due to local authority funding cuts. This is a difficult situation for HCC to address as both the local transport authority responsible for strategy and the bus service funder of ‘last resort’. With more and more pressure for new housing in and around the villages of the county, there may be some possibility of increased developer contributions towards bus service funding for rural areas but this is unlikely on its own to provide for significantly greater options for passengers. The document correctly identifies the role that community and demand responsive transport can play to reduce the shortage of travel options, but these areas could be explored further in the document, perhaps with examples of good practice.

The roles played by longer-distance walking and cycling routes (e.g. Alban Way, Cole Green Way) could be referenced and the possibility for enhancements to the network explored, as these routes provide a sustainable rural transport alternative for those whose physical ability allows them to use more active travel modes.
The section on technology is useful, however under 5.4 on ULEVs is it really true to say that in rural areas the infrastructure, cost and range barriers are “now mostly inconsequential”? If it is true, could there be more detail in the document as to the technology options currently available and why these make ULEV use in rural areas readily practicable? At 5.5 it is stated that “The emergence of autonomous ‘driverless’ vehicles will radically change the face of rural travel in the county”. This seems quite a sweeping statement. Will there in fact be technical challenges to overcome for the use of AVs along rural lanes (e.g. in terms of alignment and visibility) and in terms of remoteness of locations?

Pages 51-53 contain the ‘business end’ of the document and we recognise that the intention is presumably to expand these chapters in a subsequent draft. The link to Growth and Transport Plans to provide a route to implementation of schemes and projects is welcomed. We ask whether this could be expanded to indicate emerging examples of rural transport projects from the G & TP work? As the document points out, there are rural areas in the county potentially not covered by the G&TPs. What is the new “Rural Strategy” referred to under Chapter 7? Is it the current document?

The chapter numbering at this end of the document doesn’t seem to match up with the Contents page (p3).

Chapter 10 on Funding – this is a really important subject which needs a lot more exploration, with options and possibly examples of good practice. We are pleased to see however that HCC “will seek to obtain significant levels of external funding to deliver the objectives of this plan”, and that developer contributions are an important source of funding but by no means sufficient to deliver the required improvements to rural transport on their own. We would welcome the opportunity to learn more about the innovative funding mechanisms that HCC will use with partners to address funding shortages.

**East Herts District Council**

Objects to the draft LTP in respect of how, despite identifying shortfalls in bus provision and risk of social exclusion in rural areas, it largely ignores the needs of rural communities and is currently deficient in respect of inclusion of measures that would enable sustainable journey choices to be made. It is unacceptable that over a third of the county will have no targeted schemes to reduce trip generation (which impacts on urban settlements) through sustainable journey improvements. The Council therefore requires that an additional section be added to the LTP detailing a strategy for rural communities. This should include support for innovative solutions, e.g. demand responsive services; community transport initiatives; and, the potential to introduce ‘mini park and ride’ schemes to provide access to, and increase patronage of, bus services around hub and spoke principles, etc.
Therefore, the Council welcomes the production of a Rural Transport Strategy to address rural specific issues outside of urban areas, which other LTP documents largely major on. However, while the document brings together various rural issues in one place, it is actually little more than a synopsis of policies in LTP4 and other initiatives, and does not fulfil the role of a strategy, which would provide a plan of action designed to achieve specific aims and objectives.

The basis of a good Rural Transport Strategy would be to diagnose the challenges, develop guiding policies and create coherent measurable actions. The current document is very strong on the first matter, but does not build on more generic LTP4 policies (where rural issues are referred to) and does not contain the latter stage at all. It should be borne in mind that this document runs to 2031 and it would be expected that it should provide a framework to bring forward specific initiatives, while providing flexibility for potential future innovations.

From the response that this Council made to the LTP4 consultation, it is clear that East Herts is seeking specific schemes to enable sustainable journey choices to be made. Saying that it’s difficult and that services are likely to continue to be cut (page 5) is simply not good enough. While the Council acknowledges the constraints that apply in rural transport provision, the document should be looking for innovative solutions, even if these are applied to partial journeys – hence the reference to hub and spoke principles, etc. The introduction of such initiatives could also help reduce the numbers of trips into the main settlements and act towards the alleviation of congestion.

In terms of the potential to achieve increased rural sustainable transport provision through any planning applications for future development (e.g. through site allocations, Neighbourhood Plans, windfall, etc), it is important that specific schemes should exist for them to be linked to for S.106 purposes. For urban areas, the current and emerging Growth and Transport Plans (GTPs) will provide a good basis for this. However, while some rural areas on the periphery of urban settlements receive some coverage via GTPs, there is nothing in the draft Strategy to specifically target the remaining approximate 1/3 of the county. For East Herts, which contains several ‘deep’ rural areas, the situation is worse in that around 2/3 of the district is not covered by GTPs, including the town of Buntingford, which itself will provide a minimum of 1,074 new homes by 2033.
Therefore, while acknowledging that the draft RTS brings together a wealth of data and information on the characteristics of rural areas and their present transport challenges, the Council objects to the document in its current form as not providing a coherent strategy to tackle rural transport deprivation and address deficiencies, or a monitoring framework to assess progress.

North Hertfordshire District Council

In Section 4.9 Air Quality I think that it is important to note that although the people living in rural areas are not as a rule exposed to elevated levels of air pollution they do contribute to the exposure of those living in areas of elevated air pollution. They will do so by traveling to or through those locations and by receiving goods and services that originate from or move through those locations.

Also in Section 4.9 there is reference to HCC continuing to monitor and assess air pollution. To the best of my knowledge HCC does neither of these things. Therefore, the wording in question should be changed to reflect the fact that the 10 local authorities carry out the monitoring and assessment.

It is good to see that ULEV have been identified as having a role to play and that the benefits of infrastructure and support for home working is recognised.

1. Introduction:
Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback to HCC’s (Hertfordshire County Council) draft Rural Transport Strategy 2019-2031. NHDC (North Hertfordshire District Council) is supportive of the vision for Hertfordshire contained within LTP4, in turn we welcome the publication of this important draft strategy to understand and identify the means by which to improve the rural transport network across the County, including North Hertfordshire.

It is not clear from the Strategy as to the next stages and if this will be going out for more formal consultation and if there will be a presentation offered to local Councillors for further input. Please note therefore that these are officer comments and we reserve our position to make more detailed comments on behalf of the Council assuming that there will be a formal consultation phase.

Rather than comment on the whole document, we have focused on the key points most relevant to the District. Please note that these are in addition to comments submitted by David Carr, (email dated 6 June 2019) section 4.9 covering air quality.

2. Rural Characterisation:
As a local authority that is seen as having a significant rural area, NHDC welcomes the recognition and support that HCC is giving to the challenges of transport provision for rural residents.
We both welcome and share the aspiration for the Rural Transport Strategy to support the delivery of the following strategies and policy aims:

- The Growth and Transport Plans and Integrated Transport Programme Schemes.
- The Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- The Intalink Bus Strategy.
- To improve the quality of Rural Passenger Transport.
- To improve rural accessibility.

Additionally, we believe that the Rural Transport Strategy also shares many aspects of the strategies and policy aims contained within the following NHDC documents:

- Local Plan Proposed Submission 2011 – 2031 (October 2016)
- North Hertfordshire Transport Strategy (October 2017)

We also anticipate that the anticipated North Central Hertfordshire Growth and Transport Plan will also be consistent with the Rural Transport Strategy.

However, in terms of Settlement categorisation, recognition needs to be made with regard to housing growth in rural areas within emerging Local Plans, where for example some 364 homes are planned within Codicote by 2031, which will increase the local population to above 4000, therefore falling within the category of ‘important rural settlement’, Codicote, after Knebworth is the second largest rural settlement in North Hertfordshire with a population of circa 3344 (2011 census). We request that Codicote should be included in this categorisation.

3. Links to External Plans, Documents and Strategies:

**Place and Movement assessment:**
NHDC welcome’s the development of the Place and Movement assessment; how this will assist with the prioritisation of road and network users, as well as understanding where interventions maybe required in the future. We would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the development of the Place and Movement concept given North Hertfordshire’s significant rural area and its large settlements of Knebworth and Codicote.

We request, following the formal adoption of the introduction of the Place and Movement assessment process, that the rural road network will continue to receive adequate investment and maintenance to ensure it is in serviceable condition.

**Sustainable Travel Towns:**
NHDC welcome’s this initiative for the potential that it provides, both in encouraging local communities to consider and raise awareness of the wider sustainability agenda as well as having the means by which to undertake practical steps to this end. It is hoped that the criteria will give favourable consideration to the smaller urban areas as we would wish to encourage as many of the towns within North Hertfordshire to take up this opportunity, to work with and offer reasonable support, in the preparation and submission of bids, as well as the successful delivery of schemes and initiatives, thereby linking in with the North Hertfordshire Transport Strategy and LTP4. Given the close relationship of Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock to that of Stevenage there is the opportunity to improve and promote inter-urban routes that will benefit the local villages.

**Context and Challenges:**

**Strategic Road and Rail Network:**
NHDC welcomes the recognition of the current challenges of the trunk, primary and main distributor road network, and the railway, as they mainly run north-south through Hertfordshire, including North Hertfordshire and that the key challenge is east-west connectivity.

Population:
NHDC note that the population growth for North Hertfordshire is expected to be one of the highest, being projected to rise by 16% by 2041. From NHDC’s perspective, this emphasises the need to prioritise investment in the transport network in order to be able to accommodate the additional demand that is anticipated.

Car Ownership, Rural Travel Patterns and Access to Key Services:
We note that car ownership across Hertfordshire is 9% higher than the national average, which brings its own challenges with regards to trying to encourage modal shift and active travel, further, within North Hertfordshire car ownership, is higher still. This serves to highlight both the need to ensure a viable sustainable transport network, both within the District and to key destinations in neighbouring local authorities, so as to encourage modal shift as well as meeting the needs of those residents that don’t have access to a car.

Compounding this is high number of trips undertaken by car in rural areas, 60.1% compared with sustainable modes, (Walk 19.8%, Cycle 2.1%, Bus 5.2%, Train 4.9%). Whilst this in part reflects the current lack of realistic alternatives to the car, this also emphasizes the challenges faced in encouraging modal shift to more sustainable modes and the importance of following through with bold measures. Ideally, having access to a car should not be a determining factor as to whether it is an option to live in rural locations in North Hertfordshire.

Likewise, this also emphasises the need to ensure that residents in rural locations are able to access key services, such as employment, education, health and onward travel connections by both rail and coach. Ensuring reasonable access for all residents, irrespective of location by sustainable means should be a target for HCC to achieve as one of the outcomes of the Strategy by 2031, particularly in the case of access to health services.

Carbon Emissions and Air Quality:
We note that North Hertfordshire experiences some of the highest transport-related CO2 emissions in Hertfordshire, again reflecting the current lack of alternative options given the rural nature of the District and the challenges this brings as residents are ever more reliant of their cars.

With the growing awareness both by policy makers and the general public of the damage to health and quality of life, due to increased carbon emissions and poor air quality, NHDC welcomes HCC’s commitment, as outlined in the Rural Transport Strategy to address these twin issues for the benefit of rural communities, by delivering schemes to improve both the sustainable and active travel offer for residents. Again, we see this as being consistent with the vision and aims outlined in NHDC’s Transport Strategy; to that end we welcome the opportunity of working with HCC on the successful development and delivery of suitable measures and schemes.

Bus Services:
NHDC welcomes the important recognition HCC gives to bus services, both for those residents that don’t have access to a car and as a means to encourage modal shift. At the same time identifying the challenges of being able to provide a comprehensive network of services, in rural areas of Hertfordshire, where operators have limited opportunities to provide commercial services. Additionally, the ongoing pressure on HCC’s budget for supported services, presents its own challenges in being able fund supported services.

NHDC is very supportive of the Intalink Partnership, acknowledging the derived benefits and good practice of partnership working that has been an ongoing since it was originally established. We look forward to continuing to be actively involved in Intalink and support HCC’s ongoing investigation of the potential benefits made available by the Bus Services Act 2017.

We would add that HCC should give active consideration to the potential for improving the inter-urban bus network within North Hertfordshire and to key destinations in neighbouring local authorities, as a means of developing the bus network locally. As a District with a large rural area, as noted above, this has and continues to prove an ongoing challenge to the provision of sustainable bus services. However, good practice elsewhere in comparable areas, such as Lincolnshire with the InterConnect interurban bus network and the Coastrhopper bus service along the Norfolk coast, has demonstrated the potential benefits of improving inter-urban corridors as a successful means of providing rural communities with improvements to bus services. Should HCC decide to consider this approach, NHDC would welcome the opportunity to be involved and possibly considered for a trial area within Hertfordshire, subject to further discussion with HCC and approval by NHDC Councillor’s.

Community Transport, DRT (Demand Responsive Transport) and Shared Mobility:

NHDC notes the recognition that HCC gives to community transport, DRT and shared mobility. Given the rural nature of large parts of Hertfordshire and North Hertfordshire, the challenges this poses for providing conventional bus services, we certainly see the potential for community transport and DRT services having an active role in the public transport network within the District, and consider that every effort should be made by HCC to support such services. As was referred to above, a model where conventional bus services focus on the inter-urban corridors, with community transport or DRT style services acting as a feeder services from the more rural and remote areas of the District, enabling connections for onwards travel at key hubs, may prove to be more appropriate and cost effective, as has been adopted both by Kent County Council and Lincolnshire County Council. As with the suggestion for trialling improvements to inter-urban bus services, likewise NHDC would welcome the opportunity to be involved and possibly considered for a pilot area if adopting this approach.

Further, NHDC recognises the role that both community transport and shared mobility schemes can provide in providing those residents and communities, who are not able to use existing bus services.

We welcome the establishment of the Community Transport Herts website to provide a central point of information on community transport schemes throughout Hertfordshire.

MaaS (Mobility and Mobility-as-a-Service):
NHDC welcomes the interest that HCC is giving to the concept of MaaS and the potential it may have to offer in the future for providing a means of transport for rural communities. Whilst acknowledging the potential offered, NHDC believes that it is important to emphasise that the focus on MaaS as a solution for enabling rural connectivity isn’t detrimental to existing modes, such as bus and community transport. At this stage we feel MaaS is most likely going to perform a niche role as a transport mode available to rural communities.

Freight:

NHDC welcomes the recognition by HCC to managing freight traffic on the road network, through the support given to the PRN (primary route network). Whilst recognising the importance that a successful freight and logistics sector has for the wider economy, this also needs to be weighed up against the needs of local communities’ quality of life to be safeguarded from large volumes of freight traffic passing through villages and along unsuitable rural roads, as much as possible.
Further, NHDC welcomes HCC’s support for the use of improved highway signage and the further expansion of ITS (intelligent transport systems) as part of their Network Management Strategy.
We also welcome the proposal for the establishment of Freight Quality Partnership.

5. Technology:
Digital Connectivity, Internet and Broadband and Mobile Internet Networks:
NHDC shares HCC’s view that whilst technology developments will have an important and increasing role to play in transport provision, currently it is difficult to predict future trends and requirements, so at this stage it is important to maintain a watching brief on developments, understanding the potential benefits for transport provision.

ULEV (Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles):
NHDC welcomes the support that HCC have given to support the take up of ULEV’s in Hertfordshire, working closely with NHDC to facilitate the installation of charging points for EV (electric vehicles).
Whilst recognising the current barriers for the update of EV’s in rural locations, such as range due to limited battery life and the current shortage of charging points in rural locations, it is anticipated that as the technology develops, so both the purchase cost of a ULEV will become more affordable and the range between charges will increase. At the same time, we would anticipate that the cost of the installation and maintenance of charging points will reduce, making them more cost effective for installation in rural locations.

AV (Autonomous ‘Driverless’ Vehicles):
NHDC shares HCC’s view that the emergence of AV’s offer the potential to radically change how people travel, especially in rural areas; at this stage we perceive that the realisation of Stage 5 AV’s (fully autonomous) is still very uncertain and such we don’t consider this to be a priority at this stage.

6. Growth and Transport Plans:
We welcome the development of Growth and Transport Plans that have been adopted by HCC, replacing the previous Urban Transport Plans. NHDC believes that these offer the opportunity to understand future growth and transport trends at a more sub-regional level, enabling more informed planning and policy development going forward. It is to be noted that we have previously expressed our concern regarding the emerging North Central Growth Transport Plan regarding the lack of coverage of the rural area to the west and south–west of the District (i.e. west and south-west of Hitchin) and to the south of Royston. While those rural areas aligned with the urban corridors are accommodated within the packages of interventions, there are large areas where no interventions have been identified, and it is therefore our concern as to how HCC propose to accommodate these areas as part to this Rural Strategy. Under LTP4 Policy 23 reference is made to typical schemes, NHDC would like to see more work undertaken to demonstrate some assurance that these areas will be given to these areas.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, while NHDC welcomes HCC’s draft Rural Transport Strategy 2019 – 2031 and believes it offers a clear and exciting vision for the future of transport provision for rural residents and communities in North Hertfordshire, we do express some concerns regarding the delivery of the strategy and would welcome the opportunity discuss these in more detail.

In due course when the Strategy is formally adopted we look forward to working in partnership with colleagues at HCC to design and deliver suitable schemes, promoting sustainable transport modes and active travel measures that will ultimately improve the quality of life and sense of place in North Hertfordshire.

Colney Heath Parish Council

02/07/2019 The Rural Transport Strategy is very optimistically described as a strategy document, but fails due to -

a) Several key issues affecting Rural Transport and those who depend upon it are not included.

b) It fails to propose any strategy as to how priorities should be identified. It also fails to identify any legal requirements for services to be provided within a fixed time scale.

c) It fails to offer any cost or budgetary implications to the issues identified.

d) It fails to propose any strategy as to how to prioritise how and when money should be spent and over what time scale.

1.3 The Parish Council are very concerned that the strategy does not identify many key issues –

a) The increasing number of older people and their ability to drive in the longer term.

b) Loss of doctor’s surgeries.

c) Location of many healthcare facilities’ in relation to the public transport network, many are well away from the city/town centres and so are well away from the transport hubs.
d) Appointment / required attendance times at healthcare facilities v public transport service times.

e) How changes will be made and the budget implications that will bring.

f) Much is made of technology in delivering services, but the strategy does not indicate how this will be delivered to older people when they have poor historic uptake of new technology.

1.4 Colney Heath Parish Council recommends the following changes and/or additions.

a) A clear strategy for the review on a regular basis with local bus operators rural bus routes. Considering how routes link to existing transport hubs, shops and healthcare facilities notably doctors’ surgeries and hospitals.

b) A clear strategy for the provision of details of services, not solely relying on the internet or smart phones for those not able to access these technologies in rural areas.

c) A strategy showing how any proposed changes and services are prioritised.

d) The cost and budgetary implications of the issues identified.

Colney Heath Parish Council are very concerned about the smaller settlements which have limited facilities, single or no shops, no doctor’s surgery and a very limited public transport service. These smaller rural communities still require access to services and have a considerable number of people requiring access to these services.

Chapter 3 - Links to External Plans and Strategies

3.1 The Intalink Bus Strategy

Colney Heath Parish Council expresses concern over the loss of buses within the rural part of the Parish and feels that poor timetabling and network design are a significant factor in the current levels of usage.

The current routes stop in either Colney Heath or Welham Green, well short of the good public transport hubs at Potters Bar, Hatfield and The Forum (University) Hatfield.

In this case minor rerouting and a short extension to the route, we feel this would result in a significant increase in users with marginal increase in costs.

Colney Heath Parish Council feels that the strategy should include a clearly defined approach working with local operators to review public transport routes and timetables on a regular basis. This would include links to transport hubs, loss of healthcare facilities effecting all communities including rural ones. Then any HCC contract run services would integrate more successfully with commercial network.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan
Colney Heath Parish Council feel that priority should be given to off road and lesser used road routes which run similar routes to those using busy main roads e.g. A414.

Otherwise Colney Heath PC supports the Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Chart 4 – Context and Challenges

Population Challenge

As a strategy document Colney Heath Parish Council are disappointed that more has not been considered on the long-term problems from an aging population affecting rural communities the document shows the number:

- aged over 75 increasing by between 70% and 90%
- aged over 90s increasing by 155%
- There is also significant increases in the under 18s.

Much is made of the use of the car by rural communities but when the increase in younger and elderly are combined with the reduction in driving licenses held by the elderly the scale of the problem becomes clear.

No attempt has been made to consider the budget or infrastructure requirements in meaningful way.

The increasing number of older people and their ability to drive in the longer term.

The Department for Transport 2017 estimates for licences held are:

- For all persons aged 70 and over 64%
- For all males aged 70 and over 80%
- For all females aged 70 and over 50%

As these figures includes all people over 70 the true level is higher, thus the rate of loss of driving licences is even higher than this data would appear.

Estimates for Hampshire holders of a driving license (unable to find data for Hertfordshire)

- All persons aged 80-89 56.9%
- All persons aged over 90 23.3%

Holding a driving licence starts to decline in the over 80s and drops rapidly in the over 90s

4.4 Car Ownership

LTP4 Policy 1: Transport User Hierarchy

Colney Heath Parish Council expresses concern over the loss of buses within the rural part of the Parish and feels that poor timetabling and network design are a significant factor in the current low levels of usage.
The current routes stop in either Colney Heath or Welham Green, well short of the good public transport hubs at Potters Bar, Hatfield and The Forum (University) Hatfield.

In this case minor rerouting and a short extension to the route we feel would result is a significant increase in users with a marginal increase in costs.

Colney Heath PC feels that the strategy should include a clearly defined approach working with local operators to review public transport routes and timetables on a regular basis.

This would include links to hubs, loss of healthcare facilities effecting all communities including rural ones.

Then any HCC contract run services would integrate more successfully with commercial network.

4.6 Access to Key Services

Millions could lose GP next year as staff shortages and stress force doctors to close surgeries, study claims. Survey suggests hundreds in England could walk away from profession next year citing poor working conditions. Millions of patients could lose their GP surgery within the next 12 months as factors such as stress contribute to a shortage of doctors, a new study has warned.

More than 350 practices in England alone could face closure within a year as doctors quit the profession over working conditions, according to a new survey by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RSGP).

In its study of 1,094 doctors across England, the RSGP found almost a third said they would not be working in general practice in five years, with stress and retirement cited as the most common reasons.

A total of 37 per cent of doctors surveyed said there were GP vacancies at their surgery that had been open for at least three months. Five per cent of respondents said their practice was likely to close within the space of a year and would not merge with another surgery.

The figures were described as “gravely concerning” by the college’s chair, Helen Stokes-Lampard, who warned more GPs would walk away unless something is done to combat stress and reduce workloads.

“All GPs are overworked, many are stressed, and some are making themselves seriously ill working hours that are simply unsafe, for both themselves and their patients – it is making them want to leave the profession,” Dr Stokes-Lampard said.

“It is forcing some GPs to hand back their keys and close their surgeries for good. “This is having a serious impact on many of our patients, who are waiting longer and longer to secure a GP appointment.”

Of the 7,148 surgeries operating in England according to the most recent NHS figures released in July 2018, some 357 could face closure if the RSGP survey proves to be an accurate representation of the situation across the board.

Independent Sunday 2 December 2018

In light of financial pressures on the public sector, in recent years budgets for contracted bus routes have seen reductions, particularly revenue spending for bus subsidies. Other sources of funding for
contracted bus services in the county will be explored, which include developer contributions and bids to specific national government grants.

Access to healthcare

Colney Heath Parish Council believe the key issue is not only the time required to travel by bus but the available appointment times vs bus times.

In the St Albans - Hatfield area most doctors’ surgeries are away from the main town/city centre so require multiple changes to travel by public transport.

Hospitals suffer from the same problem for A&E Lister Stevenage or Watford General both require multiple changes when using public transport.

Loss of doctor’s surgeries.

In recent months much has been reported in the media of the potential loss of doctor’s surgery’s in the coming years, the impact could be disproportionate in rural areas due to the smaller number of rural surgeries which currently exist.

If this were to happen the rural communities would suffer from considerable additional travel problems and this would hit the young, elderly, disabled and less well-off the hardest.

4.11 Community and Demand Responsive Transport

Colney Heath Parish Council expresses serious concern over the use of technology as the principal source of information and requesting services as many of those in greatest need have least access to the required technology.

In a recent survey carried out for our Neighbourhood Plan we discovered very considerable lack of knowledge of current services offered.

Searching on the internet requires a level of skill to find the required information due to the low current level of usage by the elderly and they will find it difficult even if they have access to the internet.

The Parish Council believe that a single printed document would assist all residents to access services this should include all national and local government services with both internet and phone contacts, rather than the piecemeal way that information is currently distributed.

This should form part of the Rural Transport strategy when budgets are under-pressure and services are being cut.

Chapter 5 - Technology

Office for National Statistics (ONS) Internet users, UK: 2019

1. Main points

Virtually all adults aged 16 to 44 years in the UK were recent internet users (99%) in 2019, compared with 47% of adults aged 75 years and over.

7.5% of adults had never used the internet in 2019, down from 8.4% in 2018.
91% of adults in the UK were recent internet users in 2019, up from 90% in 2018.

In 2019, the number of disabled adults who were recent internet users reached over 10 million for the first time, 78% of disabled adults.

London and the South East were the UK regions with the highest recent internet use (93%) in 2019, while Northern Ireland remained the lowest at 87%.

95% of adults aged 16 to 74 years in the UK in 2018 were recent internet users, the third highest in the EU.

Since the survey began in 2011, adults aged 75 years and over have consistently been the lowest users of the internet. In 2011, of all adults aged 75 years and over, 20% were recent internet users, rising to 47% in 2019.

Much is made of technology in delivering services, but the strategy does not indicate how this will be delivered to older people when they have poor historic uptake of new technology.

Colney Heath Parish Council must express concern over the use of technology to as the principal source of information and requesting services as many of those in greatest need have least access to the required technology. In a recent survey carried out for our Neighbourhood Plan we discovered very considerable lack of knowledge of current services offered. Searching on the internet requires a level of skill to find the required information and due to the low current level of usage by the elderly they will find it difficult even if they have access to the internet.

The Parish Council believe that a single printed document would assist all residents to access services this should include all national and local government services with both internet and phone contacts, rather than the piecemeal way that information is currently distributed.

This should form part of the Rural Transport strategy when budgets are under-pressure and services are being cut.