

Hertfordshire Local Area Retrofit Accelerator

Workshop 1 Report, October 2024

Executive Summary

The first of the Hertfordshire LARA workshops took place on Monday 14th October, bringing together key stakeholders from across Hertfordshire to start to build a shared understanding of the retrofit system and develop a collective vision for collaborating on retrofit in Hertfordshire.

Stakeholder Analysis: Who Are We?

The workshop began with a Constellation exercise, where participants positioned themselves based on how closely retrofit aligned with their work. This made visible the different interests represented in the room: installers, councils, energy charities, community organisations, Further Education & training, finance, policy-makers and housing providers. It also revealed three types of relationships: partnerships, commercial relationships, and funding relationships. This highlighted the potential for expanding cross-sector collaboration and leveraging existing partnerships. The exercise also identified under-represented stakeholders, including energy providers, property experts, architects, private finance, (some) district councils, and social landlords. Efforts are underway to engage these groups before the next workshop to ensure broader representation.

Shared Understanding: Where are we starting from?

Prior to the workshop, interviews with key stakeholders highlighted several challenges in the retrofit sector, including housing quality, fuel poverty, the dominance of large contractors in grant schemes, and a shortage of skilled professionals. Concerns also emerged about regulatory clarity, liability, and a need for planners to better understand the public benefits of retrofitting. During the workshop, discussions expanded on the retrofit system's readiness across six areas: community, homes, low-carbon tech, skills, funding and governance. While technologies and governance frameworks exist, gaps in coordination, skills training, community engagement, and funding hinder widespread adoption. The need for simplified messaging, targeted funding, and clearer pathways for workforce development to drive effective low-carbon transitions across Hertfordshire was emphasised.

Executive Summary

Developing a Vision: Where do we want to get to?

The Vision exercise revealed several key themes shaping individual and organisational aspirations, including achieving a net-zero Hertfordshire, fostering innovation, ensuring equity, financial and business sustainability, adaptability and resilience, and strengthening partnerships. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of inter-generational justice, affordable warmth, and community-centered approaches. The discussion then shifted to how stakeholders are already working together and how collaboration could be improved, focusing on spheres of influence. Councils can facilitate change through grants, policy-making, planning, multi-agency initiatives and as landlords, while businesses can influence customer demand, skills development, and investment in growth and new technologies. To enhance collaboration, participants identified the need to work together on accessing funding, data sharing, building consumer trust, and connecting and growing supply chains.

Working Groups: What do we need to do more work on?

At the end of the workshop, we discussed what areas of work we needed to focus on before we met again in November. Through this conversation the following four areas were identified: Governance, Procurement, Vision and Shared Understanding. Each of the groups will be meeting at least once before the next workshop in November, where a member of the core team will facilitate and guide the conversations around a specific brief.

Individual Commitments: What can we offer and what do we need to enable progress?

At the end of the workshop, participants shared needs and offers to ensure ongoing engagement and progress. To stay involved, the need for regular updates was emphasised. Offers included conducting a SWOT analysis, contributing to task groups, and aligning internal strategies.

Considerations for the project to keep in mind include Hertfordshire's diverse demographics, regional connections, long-term impacts of inaction, shifting government policies, inclusion of all relevant stakeholders, and the role of AI. These insights will guide future workshops and actions.

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LARA: History and purpose

The Local Area Retrofit Accelerator (LARA) was launched by the [MCS Foundation](#) in response to the Climate Change Committee's warning that progress in reducing carbon emissions from home heating and addressing fuel poverty is way off target. LARA introduces a systems and place-based approach to accelerate retrofit activity, transforming energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy in homes. It aims to improve the coordination of local initiatives, laying the foundation for expanding retrofit efforts across communities and kickstarting effective action.

The LARA pilot will test a process for rapidly co-developing Local Retrofit Strategies with key stakeholders to drive collaborative action and maximise funding and financing opportunities.

Dark Matter Labs was contracted to design the Strategy "Co-design" process, which has three phases:

- Developing Shared Understanding,
- Developing a Vision, a Theory of Change and a Strategy
- Review, Endorsement and Early Action.

Strategy Co-design is the second part of a broader process, which begins with engaging local system stakeholders and ends with delivering, reviewing and evaluating the Strategy.

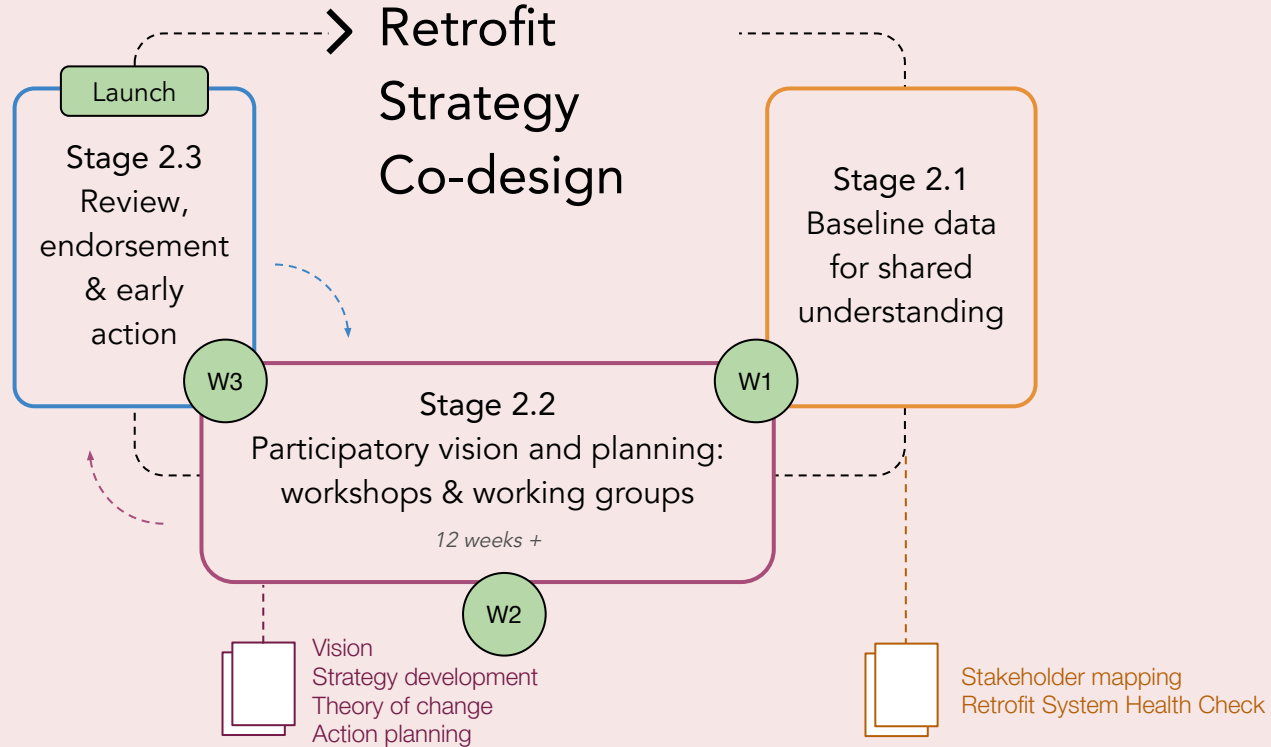
In summer 2024 there was an application process for local authority areas to join the pilot LARA process and four areas were selected, of which Hertfordshire is the very first to pilot the process.

Description of the LARA process

Hertfordshire stakeholders are coming together in a facilitated, participatory process to establish a shared vision for accelerating domestic retrofit, and develop a plan to move in the direction of the vision. The process will develop a Local Retrofit Strategy, which will include a summary of the current system, the vision, a theory of change, a three-year action plan, a monitoring and evaluation plan, and an approach to governance and accountability. The final draft of the strategy will be reviewed by senior representatives and once agreed, it is expected that stakeholders will want to sign up to the strategy, kick-starting effective, collaborative retrofit action.

Hertfordshire's LARA process is hosted by [Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership](#). It will run from October 2024 to January 2025. Workshop 1 took place on October 14th at Rothamsted Institute, Harpenden.

LARA Process



Workshop 1

Purpose of LARA Workshop 1

The purpose of the workshop was to bring together a group of key stakeholders with an interest in retrofit, to start to build a shared understanding of the Hertfordshire retrofit opportunity and challenge, to identify areas that need more analysis, and start to develop a collective Vision for local retrofit strategy. We also aimed to make plans to progress specific pieces of work before Workshop 2 in November.

Summary of Workshop 1

We began the day by welcoming everyone to the workshop and oriented around the purpose of the day, how we would work together and the history behind the LARA process, to transparently situate the work and its aspirations. We did this through a fishbowl exercise, in which Andrew (MCSF Lead) and Helen (HCCSP) sat in the middle of the circle and answered questions regarding the programme.

We then took part in a constellation exercise to help to understand how people would situate themselves in relation to their/their organisation's proximity to the retrofit topic, and everyone was then given the opportunity to feedback as to why everyone had positioned themselves in their respective positions.

During the workshop, we built a shared understanding of the retrofit system in Hertfordshire, laying the foundation for recognising key factors. We then also began refining and prioritising areas of focus.

The group transitioned from discussing individual visions to developing a collective vision. A case study was presented to gain insights into working with different perspectives on retrofit. Common themes for building a shared vision were collected, and imagination exercises helped identify where a shared vision was already guiding work. The strategy's strengths were noted, and areas for further development were identified.

In preparation for Workshop 2, we agreed on tasks to complete beforehand, set expectations, established the structure, and formed working groups.

Finally, we explored engagement strategies, discussed next steps, and considered needs and considerations for future actions.

Who are we?



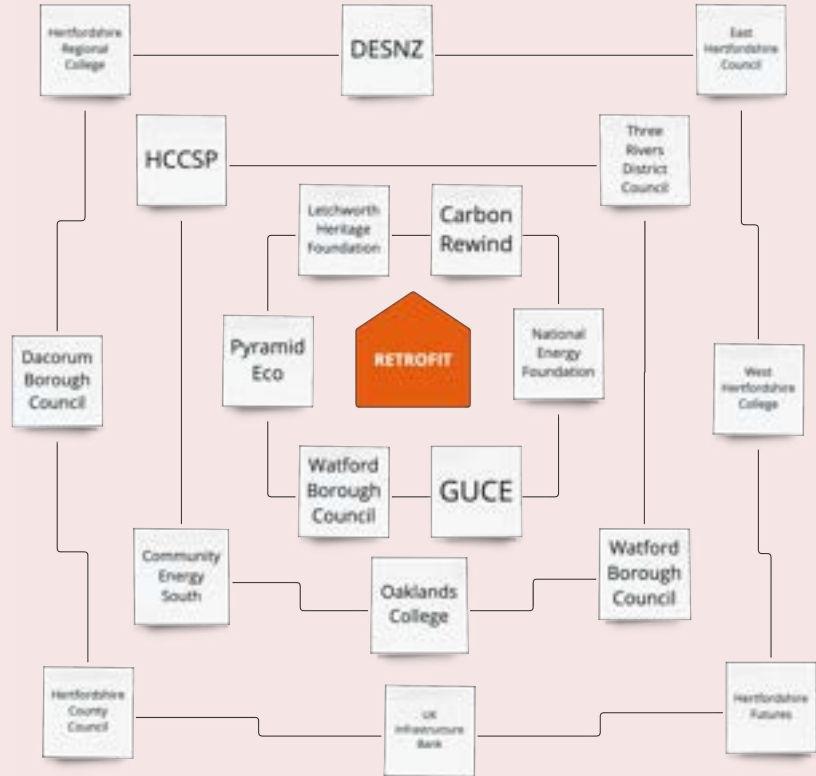
Workshop 1 Attendance List

Adam Morse (Sustain Homes)	Joanne Wheeler (UKGBC)	Nikki Dekker (Greater South East Net Zero Hub)
Amanda Washbrook (West Herts College)	Jonathan Geall (East Herts Council)	Oliver Burrough (Dacorum Borough Council)
Andy Rosser (Oaklands College)	Julie Greaves (Hertfordshire County Council)	Oliver Waring (Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council)
Anna Hollyman (UKGBC)	Katrina Dougherty (North Hertfordshire College)	Ollie Pendered (Community Energy South)
Cara Jenkinson (Ashden)	Kris Karslake (Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation)	Paul Ciniglio (National Energy Foundation)
Chamu Kuppuswamy (University of Hertfordshire)	Laura Hayter (HCCSP)	Sally Hodgkinson (National Energy Foundation)
David Adams (UKGBC)	Laurence Diment (UKIB)	Sam Bosson (Greater South East Net Zero Hub)
Donal Brown (Ashden)	Linda Meehan (East Hertfordshire Council)	Sarah Burgess (Grand Union Community Energy)
Eche Badifu (Oaklands College)	Michael Zohouri (Pyramid ECO)	Sarah Jarman (MCS Foundation)
Farah Afzal (Oaklands College)	Natalie (Pyramid ECO)	Susheel Rao (Watford Borough Council)
Flavie Whetman (Herts County Council)	Neil Walker (Watford Borough Council)	Tim (Pyramid ECO)
Helen Burridge (HCCSP)	Niall O'Rourke (Settle Housing)	Tom O'Rourke (Carbon Rewind)
Helen Pollock (Hertfordshire LE Partnership)		Victoria Letner (Hertfordshire County Council)
Jo Hewitson (Three Rivers District Council)		

Stakeholder Analysis - Constellation Exercise

We started the workshop with a Constellation exercise.

Stakeholders were asked to move closer or farther from the centre in accordance with how close or far retrofit felt to their work, in order to understand how people saw their/their organisation's positioning or part to play.



Stakeholder Analysis

Through the constellation exercise, current or pre-existing collaborative relationships came to the surface which fell under the following three categories:

- Current and Former Partnerships: e.g. SuperHomes, Solar, Together, Tackling Carbon Offsetting in Hertfordshire
- Funding/Commercial Relationships: e.g. Marketing
- Past Funding Relationships: e.g. Fuel Poverty

There was a clear appetite for further cross-sector collaboration and building on pre-existing relationships.

After getting an understanding of who was in the room through the constellation exercise, we gave some thought to who was missing or under-represented, and the following professions/expertise were noted:

- Energy Providers
- Estate agents
- Property Experts
- Private Finance
- District Councils
- Social landlords

A conscious effort is now being made in the interim before Workshop 2, to connect with and invite stakeholders who would fall under these categories.

Where are we starting from?

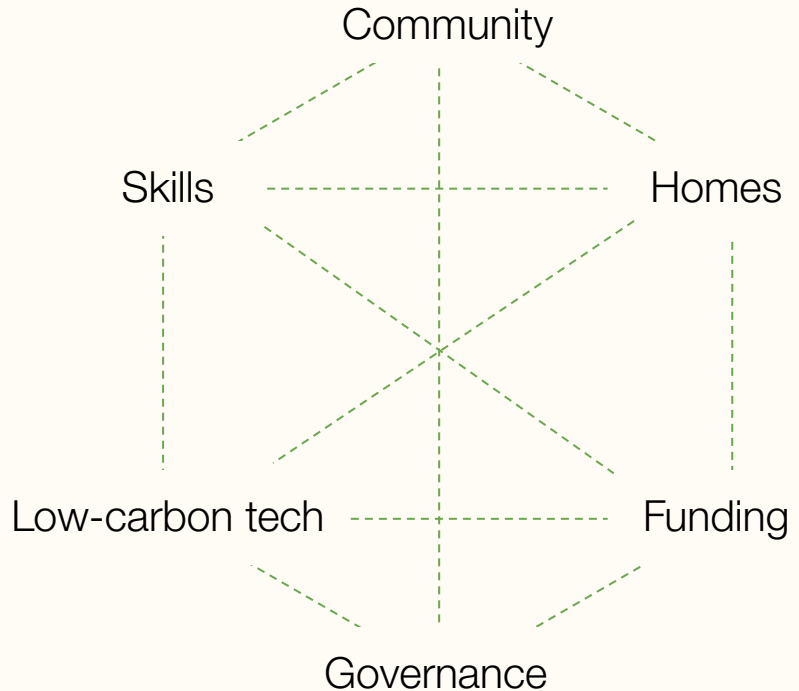
Broadening our shared understanding of the retrofit system in Hertfordshire

The retrofit system extends beyond homes and sits across six broad categories.

Prior to the first workshop we undertook a data review and interviews with some key stakeholders.

The findings were used to make a baseline assessment of system, which was shared in the workshop. A link to the presentation given can be found [here](#).

Following the presentation, groups were formed for each of the 6 areas, and were asked to consider what they could add to the understanding shared, and then developing a statement summarising the readiness for accelerating retrofit. The readiness statements can be found on slides 18-23.



A Baseline Assessment of the Hertfordshire Retrofit System



Good

Community

High number of civic organisations with a wide range across the County.

Skills & training

An active, wide ranging market for retrofit services.

Homes

Good understanding of housing types and the archetypal approaches retrofit.

Low carbon technology

An active heat pump market and supply chain.

Financial resourcing

Successful experience in accessing UK Gov funding schemes (SHDF, HUGS/ LADS).

Governance

Established coordination and decision making structures at County level.



What could be next?

Designing trust-building and participation into retrofit programmes.

Differentiation of scale and quality of services needed for different delivery models, as well as the wider benefits that may bring.

House type segmentation at a neighbourhood level matched with retrofit market segmentation and persona types.

Analysis of heat pump readiness with existing housing datasets. Analysis of planning constraints for domestic heating electrification.

Developing offers for private housing finance and funding of retrofit works.

Testing procurement and ownership models to maximise spillover benefits eg. local economy, health benefits, etc.

Shared Understanding - Stakeholder Interviews

Some key themes from the interviews:

- There are two priorities in this area: the quality of housing and the cost of living and fuel poverty
- Big grant schemes bring big contractors, but there's a need to create space for smaller SMEs too
- Progress in retrofit is funding driven and dependent on short term grant schemes
- There is a significant issue around liability in the sector, due to concerns around finding reliable and trained contractors to complete the work
- There is a lack of clarity in regulation/rules, and preserving conservation seems to weigh more heavily than energy efficiency; so we need to help planners see the public benefit of retrofit
- There are a lot of contractors that could transition to the retrofit sector, however, it is currently depleted of people who have the skills and qualifications to actually deliver the work
- More focus on private landlords engaging with smaller landlords is needed
- Increased collaboration between stakeholders and organisations, guided by a county-level strategy, is crucial for aligning infrastructure, governance, skills, and resources, driving fundamental changes and enhancing retrofit activity

Shared Understanding - Community

Readiness statement:

Communities are not yet ready to fully engage with low-carbon initiatives, largely due to a lack of awareness and understanding of where to start. Effective marketing and guidance from trusted individuals or organisations are needed to build confidence and drive action. There is potential in harnessing low income loan funding from credit unions. While some efforts are being made by tenant associations, there is untapped potential to catalyse broader engagement through the existing network of community groups. This presents fertile ground for building momentum and creating a grassroots movement toward low-carbon living.

Community: What do we need to understand better?

Personas and their needs and likely journeys through retrofit

How to build trust and where are the trusted intermediaries

How to align decarbonisation with affordable warmth (and cooling)

The work of three active community energy groups in Hertfordshire

The potential of promoting through faith groups and through social landlords

The role of smart technology

The potential for Energy Hubs supporting clusters of activity

The role of planners

Shared Understanding - Homes

Readiness statement:

We are beginning to think holistically about homes, focusing not only on energy savings but also on the relationship between home efficiency and health. While some parts of the system are ready to go, significant gaps remain, particularly in funding and understanding the diverse needs of households. It's crucial to assess not just the ability, but also the willingness of residents to invest in low-carbon solutions. Every home requires a tailored approach, and for widespread adoption, we must ensure that the right solutions are available and accessible to all, supported by adequate funding and outreach.

Homes: What do we need to understand better?

Who lives in the homes, their attitudes and needs

Retrofit options for different properties

Who is 'able to pay'

Access to finance and opportunity for savings

Holistic health of a home

How to market retrofit, word of mouth opportunity

Co-benefits

How to ensure quality of installations

Shared Understanding - Low Carbon Tech

Readiness statement:

While key low-carbon technologies like electric heating and smart tariffs are readily available, their adoption is hindered by a shortage of skilled professionals for installation and sales endorsement, as well as a lack of knowledge among both consumers and industry experts. Rising energy costs are driving homeowner demand for energy-efficient solutions, but the focus on whole-house retrofits can be overwhelming and costly, slowing uptake. To accelerate adoption, we need better marketing and educational efforts that simplify the message, highlight step-by-step approaches, and clearly communicate the practical and financial benefits of low-carbon technologies.

Tech: What do we need to understand better?

Property types and suitability for heat pumps and other technologies

Planning constraints and impacts

Public understanding and levels of trust

Understanding and perspective of architects and estate agents

Grid capacity and additional capacity needed

Co-benefits and ways to improve financial benefits

Shared Understanding - Skills

Readiness statement:

Colleges have the capacity and infrastructure to support the transition to low-carbon skills training, but the lack of government funding and clear employment pathways is a significant barrier. Without sufficient financial support, there is no straightforward way to train and fund individuals to become retrofit assessors, leaving a critical gap in the workforce needed for widespread low-carbon adoption. To bridge this skills gap, targeted funding and stronger employment opportunities are essential for creating a pipeline of trained professionals ready to meet the growing demand for retrofit and sustainability expertise.

Skills: What do we need to understand better?

The likely demand from all sectors (council, social, private) for skills

Access to advice - where from and how is it being used?

Potential for public sector procurement to support growth in supply and job opportunities

How to improve the stability of funding for training and job opportunities e.g assessors

How to influence young people's training choices

Shared Understanding - Funding

Readiness statement:

We are at a very low level of financial readiness for large-scale low-carbon upgrades. Although significant funding exists, it is not flowing effectively from institutional sources due to barriers like lack of scale, poor risk allocation, high financing costs for both customers and housing providers, and procurement challenges. Skills funding remains a major obstacle, further slowing progress. Current financing approaches tend to cherry-pick the most viable elements, such as solar projects, leaving more complex or costly upgrades even harder to tackle. This pattern is common across the UK, requiring systemic changes to unlock broader investment and action.

Funding: What do we need to understand better?

How to aggregate different sources of funding to create scale and stability

Where is investment most needed (e.g. skills, installation, marketing etc)

Different financing and ownership models e.g. supplier owns and loans installation back to home-owner

Shared Understanding - Governance

Readiness statement:

While the key elements for effective governance around retrofit and Net Zero initiatives exist, they are not yet fully coordinated, similar to an orchestra without a conductor. Devolution deals, which include provisions for these initiatives, are under discussion, but resourcing remains a significant challenge, particularly in terms of coordinating efforts across multiple stakeholders. De-risking strategies are also necessary to align Local Authorities with the overarching goals, ensuring their capacity to participate effectively. A platform for funding needs to link to government structures, but further alignment and leadership are essential to unlock its full potential.

Governance: What else do we need to understand?

Who has the mandate to lead for different sectors ?

What powers do Councils have to drive change?

How to effectively coordinate with business sector and facilitate their contribution?

Is new governance needed or can an existing partnership provide accountability, coordination and leadership functions ?



Case Study

Retrofit Balsall Heath

We welcomed John Christopher who joined us via Zoom to inspire is with a community initiated area-based retrofit of over 900 homes in Birmingham using LADS funding. Retrofit Balsall Heath is a volunteer organisation that helped coordinate residents through local faith organisations and community groups. Read about the project [here](#) and [here](#).

Where are we heading?

Developing a Vision

We began to develop a vision for a coordinated retrofit initiative in Hertfordshire. We began by sharing individual organisational visions in the room that relate to retrofit in some way..

As these were shared we began to identify the cross-cutting themes for a shared vision for retrofit for Hertfordshire:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Accelerated and scaled up decarbonisation for a Net-zero County● Innovation and opportunity● Equitable retrofit solutions● Financial and environmental sustainability● Healthy, safe homes and improved quality of life● Trusted advice | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Adaptation and resilience● Partnership, alignment and connectivity● Local business growth and jobs● Generational justice● Smarter homes, energy efficiency and affordable warmth● Galvanised communities |
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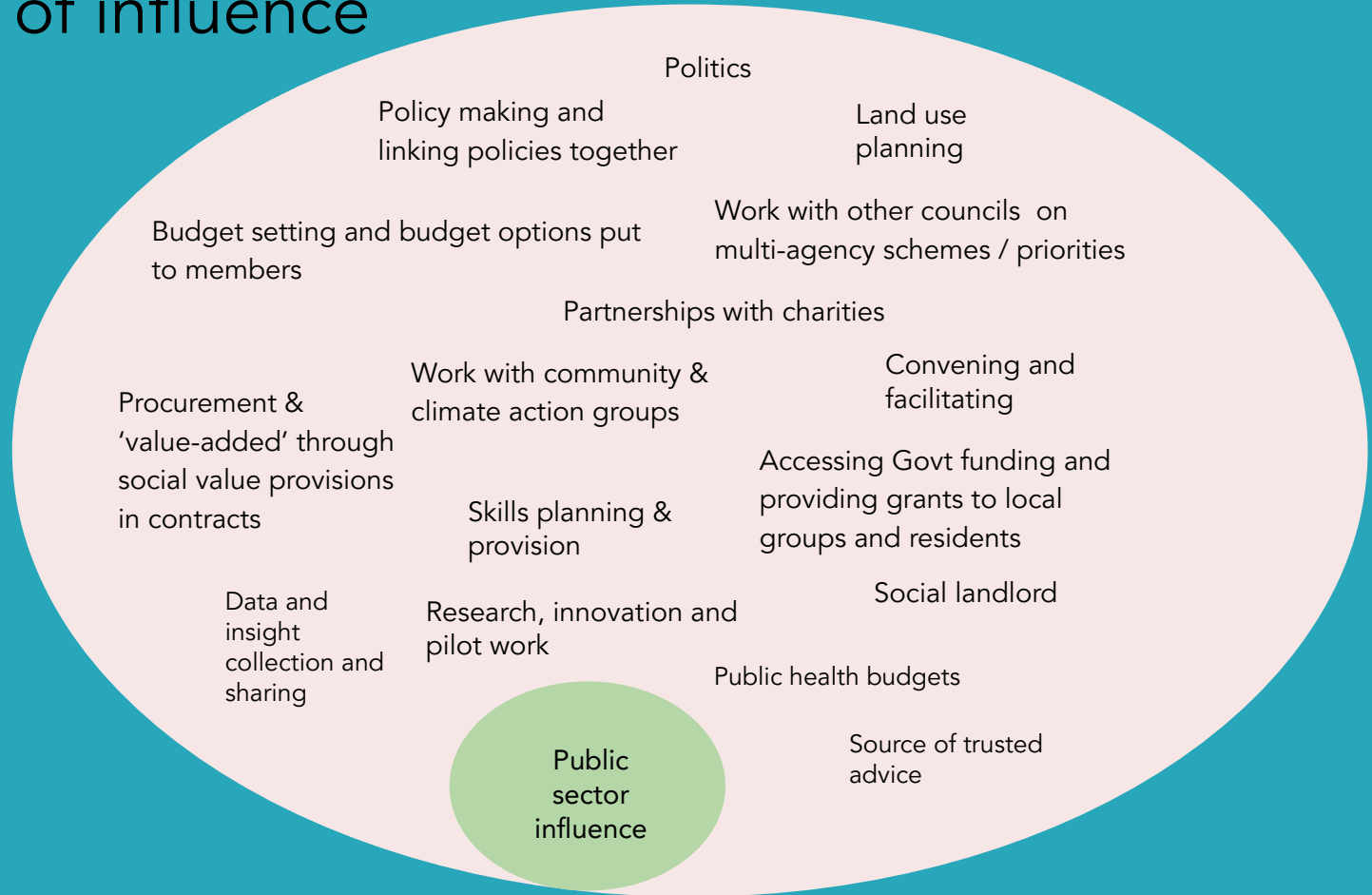
Spheres of influence

The second session to inform the development of a collective vision for Hertfordshire focussed on two questions:

- How are we working together already and how can we work together even better?
- What do we have influence over individually and what could we have more influence over collectively?

Spheres of influence and opportunities for collaboration in Hertfordshire are detailed on the next three slides.

Spheres of influence



Spheres of influence



Reasons and opportunities for collaboration



What is the work we need to do next?

Working Groups

At the end of the workshop, we discussed what areas of work we needed to focus on before we meet again in November. Through this conversation the following four areas were identified:

- Governance
- Procurement

- Vision
- Shared Understanding/Baseline

Working groups for each of these four areas were then set up, and discussions began. Between now and workshop 2, the general brief for the groups is to:

- Meet for at least 1.5 hours; ideally meet at least twice
- Ensure everyone knows who is in the group - and find out a little about everyone's motivation and interest in the topic
- Clarify purpose and roles
- Ensure everyone is able to participate
- Work towards bringing something back to Workshop 2 or 3 for testing and/or endorsement by the wider group
- All the work should feed into the Hertfordshire Retrofit Strategy we are developing

A more specific brief for each of the groups will be circulated prior to the first meeting, and each group will be supported by a member of the core team, who will help to facilitate and guide the conversations.

To join a working group, please contact Andrew at MCSF: andrew.rice@mcsfoundation.org.uk

Working Group Briefs

Shared Understanding: *Where are we now?*

Develop a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the retrofit system in Hertfordshire to share and test at Workshop 2. This will form the Retrofit Strategy's Baseline, as well as point towards focus areas of the Strategy moving forward.

Vision: *Where are we going?*

Develop a draft Vision to share, test and finalise at Workshop 2. This will become the Retrofit Strategy's Vision. The vision should be no longer than a few sentences and should aim to create a sense of common purpose and inspire collective action on retrofit.

Governance: *How will the Strategy be adopted and taken forward?*

Prepare governance options to be considered and agreed in Workshop 3. Consider and propose a process for finalising and adopting the Hertfordshire Retrofit Strategy. Consider options for the status of the Strategy and where leadership and accountability for the Strategy should / could sit. Consider where decisions around funding and progressing actions (prioritising) should / could sit and how the Strategy will be reflected upon and updated in future years.

Procurement: *How do we develop and match up supply and demand for retrofit skills and services?*

Bring back suggestions for actions to feed into the system change work for the afternoon of Workshop 2 (we won't ask you to present but will ask you to share your thinking as part of table discussions). Consider how to develop an integrated supply chain of retrofit skills and services in Hertfordshire

Individual Commitments

At the end of the workshop we wanted to create a space to understand the needs, considerations, and commitments in the room. In order to do this, three flip charts were set-up so that stakeholders were able to jot their thoughts down. The statements can be found below and on the following slide:

What will keep you engaged?

- Ongoing updates/progress reports - 'direct call to action'
- Making a difference
- Actions and how they specifically relate to me and my role

What will you do next?

- SWOT analysis of the retrofit landscape for shared understanding meeting
- Contribute to the working groups to ensure progress and provide support/expertise
- Liaise internally to prime organisation for the strategy as it develops
- Look at the implications for our organisation

Considerations

What do we need to keep in mind?

- Diversity of Hertfordshire: Urban/Rural, Affluent/Fuel Poor etc
- Connections across Hertfordshire
- Where people's affinity is
- Cost of not doing it now: What are the impacts now, in 20 or 50 years
- Government strategy and Policy changes (GB energy, NPPF, WHLG etc)
- Inclusion - Ensure those who need to be part of the solution are included in planning 'the system'
- The other stakeholders in the room
- AI

These lists will form a useful resource that can be referred to and continually added to at the upcoming workshops.

Next Steps

Workshop 2: Developing the Retrofit Strategy for Hertfordshire

Tuesday 19th November

- Walkthrough of the story so far
- Review the draft Vision and SWOT
- Changing the retrofit system: interventions, shifts, priorities, actions
- Forward planning: what is the work we need to do before Workshop 3

Workshop 3: Retrofit Strategy Agreement

January 2025

- Building mutual accountability
- Commenting on the draft Local Retrofit Strategy
- Agreeing next steps

Thank you for coming!