

**Environment & Economy Select Committee**  
**13 January 2021**

**Composite document of research evidence requested by Members to assist with the review**

<b>Area investigated</b>	<b>Page number and evidence contributed</b> (whether included in this report, in a supplementary agenda paper or 15 February meeting)
(1) Impact on self employed	This evidence and input from witnesses from Self Employed based at the Business Technology Centre will be provided at the meeting on 15 February 2021.
(2) Impact on SMEs	This evidence and input from witnesses from Small to Medium Sized Businesses (SME's) based at the Business Technology Centre will be provided at the meeting on 15 February 2021.
(3) Impact on larger companies	This evidence and input from witnesses from larger Companies based in Stevenage will be provided at the meeting on 15 February 2021.
(4) Impact on different sectors	<b>Appendix 1 PowerPoint Slides (1 to 4)</b> - Claimant count March to Nov 2020; Employment by Occupation July 2019- June 2020 and July 2018- June 2019; CJRS Furloughed employments; SEIS for 2 <sup>nd</sup> grant 31 Oct – provided by Mena Caldbeck, Business Relationship Manager.
(5) (i) Impact on Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The E&amp;E Member Sub-group looking at the impact on young people will provide a verbal update to 13 Jan meeting.</li> <li>• <b>Page No. 4.</b> Statement from Helen Spencer STEM Point East (Set Point Hertfordshire). Helen is attending the 13 Jan meeting as witness.</li> <li>• Kit Davies, Principal NH College – is providing a presentation on the impact on post 16 Education at 13 Jan 2021 meeting.</li> <li>• Judith Sutton, Youth Connexions – to attend 15 February meeting.</li> <li>• <b>Page No. 5 to 7</b> – A written statement to questions raised by Members is provided by the Larwood SEN School</li> </ul>

(5) (ii) Impact on Young People - Generation Stevenage / Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adrian Hawkins Independent Chair of Stevenage Development Board to attend 15 February meeting</li> <li>• Norman Jennings Herts LEP to attend 15 February meeting</li> </ul>
(5) (iii) Impact on Young People - Job Centre Plus – YP targeted Kickstart Scheme (6 month job placements for 16 – 24 year olds)	(Response from Mena Caldbeck, Business Relationship Manager re data from Job Centre Plus to be included in a supplementary agenda for 13 01 21 meeting)
(6) Impact on Women	<b>Page No.8</b> – Data on Gender split for new Universal Credit Claimants provided by Gareth Wall, Corporate Policy & Research Officer.
(7) Impact on BAME	(Response from Gareth Wall, Corporate Policy & Research Officer to be included in a supplementary agenda for 13 01 21 meeting)
(8) Impact on lower Socio Economic background	(Response from Gareth Wall, Corporate Policy & Research Officer to be included in a supplementary agenda for 13 01 21 meeting)
(9) Impact on Private Investment (Planning & Development activity)	<b>Page No. 9 to 13</b> - response provided from James Chettelburgh, Principal Planning Officer
(10) Impact on Town Investment Plan	(Response from Chris Barnes Assistant Director Regeneration to be included in a supplementary agenda for 13 01 21 meeting )
(11) Impact on Recovery Plan	<p>Follow the link to the Recovery Plan provided to the Executive 8 July 2020</p> <p><a href="https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s25707/Item%20%20-%20Appendix%20%20-%20Draft%20Town%20Recovery%20Plan.pdf">https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s25707/Item%20%20-%20Appendix%20%20-%20Draft%20Town%20Recovery%20Plan.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="#">Agenda for Executive on Wednesday, 8 July 2020, 2.00pm</a></p>
(12) What is being offered as on the ground support	<b>Page No. 14</b> - Information of the offer from Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal - response provided from Mena Caldbeck.
(13) Job Centre Plus (JCP) – all groups	(Response from Mena Caldbeck, Business Relationship Manager to be included in a supplementary agenda for 13 01 21 meeting)
(14) Grants	<b>Appendix 2 – PDF doc (1 – 3)</b> - Covid 19 Resource Dashboard 04 01 21 - response provided from Clare Fletcher, Strategic Director.
(15) External research:	<b>Page No. 15 to 16</b> – Centre for Cities – UK Unemployment Rate Dec 2020

(16) CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) / Stevenage Works	(Response from Chris Barnes Assistant Director Regeneration to be included in a supplementary agenda for 13 01 21 meeting)
(17) Co-operative Economy Charter:	(Response from Paul Cheeseman, Community Development Officer to be included in a supplementary agenda for 13 01 21 meeting)
(18) Lloyd Briscoe Exec Portfolio Holder Econ, Enterprise & Transport & the Leader of the Council	<b>Page No. 17</b> – Questions set for Cllr Lloyd Briscoe and the Leader Cllr Sharon Taylor

## **(5) Impact on Young People**

Statement from Helen Spencer – STEM Point East (Setpoint Hertfordshire)

Thank you for getting in touch; I believe the work you're doing is so important at this time.

I'm not sure I'm the right person to ask about the impact on young people, simply because the services we offer tend to be through schools and colleges, and we don't normally have contact direct with pupils. However, I've attended a few meetings recently where teachers and head teachers are commenting that they have seen the economic disparity between disadvantaged and better-off families widen in the last few months. There is also a general view that whilst some families were willing and able to ensure their children still had some kind of education at home during the first lockdown, many pupils will have been further disadvantaged because this support was not present or encouraged and those pupils are now really struggling to keep up at school. Again, this obviously has a further impact on young people who may be doubly disadvantaged by parents' loss of earnings as well as a gap in educational attainment. The worry is that this will lead some pupils to become demotivated and left behind. The economic and social implications of this are worrying and I believe we need to make every effort to include these students in programmes that help raise their aspirations and enter the job market.

As you know, we recently jointly organised the Generation Stevenage event (which Stevenage Borough Council kindly helped support), and whilst we were pleased with the numbers of local students attending, the results of a survey showed that most students attending already had an interest in STEM education and careers, even if they feel they need more advice on jobs etc. I always feel we are missing the disengaged young people of Stevenage, who really need to hear about local opportunities, but who don't sign up for this kind of event, perhaps because digital poverty, or through disinterest and/or lack of parental awareness and guidance.

## **(5) Impact on Young People**

**Information for Cllr Sandra Barr  
From D Pearce Larwood School 14/12/2020**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Feedback</b>
The sort of issues that you are picking up in relation to this age group and Covid	<p>Many of our students suffer from anxieties and struggle to form positive relationships with adults and peers. We have many families with multiple siblings in small houses. Extended periods in this environment has resulted in increased breakdowns in relationships and some psychological and physical abuse between siblings and/or parents and their children.</p> <p>Some parents are also relying on older siblings to look after younger ones when they are not really equipped to do this.</p> <p>Increased social media use due to being stuck at home has also shown an exponential rise in conflict between peers. Students struggle to consider consequences of comments made in the virtual world when they meet again in the real world. They seem to think they can be quite vicious to one another with impunity.</p> <p>Some of our students are still quite anxious about the virus and the impact it may have on their own and their family's health. As feelings are so varied between groups it is difficult to encourage and support students to talk about it.</p> <p>There are several families experiencing real financial hardships. We have our own foodbank and are regularly distributing food to families.</p>
What short/long term projects may help with such youngsters	<p>The D of E is an excellent vehicle to support students in working together and building relationships with people from many different walks of life.</p> <p>Creatives in Hitchin is a good Alternative Provision for work-based learning in Music and Food. They also offer Level one Foundation Courses and mentoring.</p> <p>Listen to Learn is a good Therapeutic provision where students work with horses and build relationships with others.</p>

	<p>Enemy Of Boredom is a good provision on Wednesdays for students interested in Computer Programming.</p> <p>The Skills Centre at NHC is good for students who are looking for work-based learning. We struggle to access this as they want us to provide a member of staff with the students as well as pay for the provision. This makes it extremely expensive for us.</p> <p>Marsh House Studios are an excellent provision for DJ work and Level 1 and 2 foundation courses in Maths and English.</p> <p>The Sports Leader Programmes are very good for students to build skills in Leadership and work with peers. They help students develop organisational skills and take responsibilities. Coaching and refereeing badges through Sports Governing Bodies are also excellent ways to encourage student involvement in activities across a whole range of sports. Many are aesthetic and not competitive which appeals to a varying demographics.</p> <p>We have a Graffiti Artist that works with some of our boys. This has a real positive impact on engagement and is something different and outside the mainstream.</p> <p>Forest Schools have been popular for a while and the David Muir award is an excellent accreditation that can be achieved through this.</p> <p>Many of our boys have bought into War Hammer and similar fantasy games. This is good for co-operation, teamwork, and relationship building.</p> <p>The Fire Service offer weeklong programmes and Cadets.</p> <p>First aid courses are good for short term accredited activities that help build responsibility and thinking about others.</p> <p>The Prince's Trust also run programmes throughout the holidays that are excellent for student engagement.</p> <p>There are several Cadet Forces in the local area.</p>
<p>Sandra made the point about inequality for 16+ SEMH pupils in our area</p>	<p>The main issue here is that students diagnosed with SEMH needs and are taught in a specialist SEMH provision, must then try to cope in a mainstream college. Even with a comprehensive transition programme and pastoral support at the college, this is still a massive undertaking with many students who struggle with change. Students with behavioural issues and a lack of parental support find it extremely difficult to cope with the more relaxed framework of a college environment. Many also have a historical lack of self-efficacy, resilience etc. necessary to cope</p>

	<p>with any negative feedback from lecturers.</p> <p>There is an obvious dichotomy in students needing the very personality traits required to leave the house to access support groups, join clubs, etc. that these activities are there to develop.</p>
Is this a forum to bang the drum about space and the need for further investment in building/new school?	<p>There has be a comprehensive building programme throughout this area and an exponential rise in people moving into the area as a consequence. As school numbers rise the number of students with Special Educational Needs rises. When I arrived at Brandles in Oct 2015 there were 42 students on roll. We now have 62 and there has been no investment in infra-structure. There is also a huge waiting list. We need more buildings to cater for the students we have, and then further investment to allow us to expand.</p>
Your experiences with Stevenage based pupils that have left the school into positive pathways-what worked and should be done more to help them.	<p>Our most successful students are those that have a clear work-based goal in mind and know what courses they need to undertake to make this happen. We have examples of students that are interested in construction, catering, vehicle repair and teaching that have accessed college courses and succeeded well in them. Some students have entered jobs with training such as landscape gardening and have been equally successful.</p> <p>The importance of a high-quality careers programme is so important to provide students with direction and the confidence to know they can succeed.</p>

(6) Impact on Women

Local area data

Under Universal Credit a broader span of claimants are required to look for work than under Jobseekers Allowance. As Universal Credit Full Service is rolled out in particular areas, the number of people recorded as being on the Claimant Count is therefore likely to rise.

CC01 - Claimant Count<sup>1</sup> by unitary and local authority  
(experimental statistics)

(experimental statistics)														not seasonally adjusted							
CLAIMANT COUNT ON 8th OCTOBER 2020														Change on year						% Change on year	
Levels						Percentage of Pop <sup>2</sup>			Levels			Percentage <sup>2</sup>			Levels						
		Men	%	Wom en	%	People	Me n	Wom en	Peo ple			Men	Wom en	People	Me n	Wom en	People	Men	Wom en		
		1		2		3	4	5	6			7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		
E92000001	ENGLAND Hertfordshire	1,311,410	58.9%	916,740	41.1%	2,228,150	7.5	5.2	6.3	746,675	60.2%	493,935	39.8%	1,240,610	4.3	2.8	3.5	132.2%	116.8%		
E10000015		21,255	57.4%	15,810	42.7%	37,060	5.8	4.2	5.0	14,000	58.9%	9,760	41.1%	23,760	3.8	2.6	3.2	193.0%	161.3%		
E07000095	Broxbourne	2,200	55.9%	1,740	44.2%	3,935	7.6	5.6	6.6	1,510	59.1%	1,045	40.9%	2,555	5.2	3.4	4.3	218.8%	150.4%		
E07000096	Dacorum	2,780	56.7%	2,115	43.2%	4,900	5.9	4.4	5.1	1,915	57.9%	1,390	42.1%	3,305	4.0	2.9	3.4	221.4%	191.7%		
E07000242	East Hertfordshire	2,065	56.7%	1,580	43.3%	3,645	4.5	3.3	3.9	1,480	57.6%	1,090	42.4%	2,570	3.2	2.3	2.8	253.0%	222.4%		
E07000098	Hertsmere	1,970	55.0%	1,615	45.0%	3,585	6.5	4.9	5.7	1,285	55.4%	1,035	44.6%	2,320	4.2	3.2	3.7	187.6%	178.4%		
E07000099	North Hertfordshire	1,970	58.3%	1,615	41.7%	3,585	6.5	4.9	5.7	1,285	60.6%	1,035	39.2%	2,320	4.2	3.2	3.7	194.4%	148.8%		
E07000099	Hertfordshire	2,105	57.4%	1,505	42.6%	3,610	5.2	3.6	4.4	1,390	59.7%	900	40.0%	2,295	3.5	2.2	2.8	183.7%	140.3%		
E07000240	St Albans	2,085	57.4%	1,550	42.6%	3,635	4.7	3.4	4.0	1,350	59.7%	905	40.0%	2,260	3.1	2.0	2.5	183.7%	140.3%		
E07000243	Stevenage	2,010	61.3%	1,270	38.7%	3,280	7.2	4.5	5.9	1,240	63.4%	715	36.6%	1,955	4.4	2.6	3.5	161.0%	128.8%		
E07000102	Three Rivers	1,490	56.4%	1,155	43.8%	2,640	5.3	4.0	4.6	1,015	58.3%	720	41.4%	1,740	3.6	2.5	3.0	213.7%	165.5%		
E07000103	Watford	2,435	58.5%	1,725	41.5%	4,160	7.8	5.6	6.7	1,505	58.6%	1,060	41.2%	2,570	4.8	3.4	4.1	161.8%	159.4%		
E07000241	Welwyn Hatfield	2,120	57.7%	1,555	42.3%	3,675	5.3	3.8	4.5	1,305	59.3%	895	40.7%	2,200	3.3	2.2	2.7	160.1%	135.6%		
E92000001	ENGLAND	1,311,410		916,740		2,228,150	7.5	5.2	6.3	746,675		493,935		1,240,610	4.3	2.8	3.5				

1. The experimental Claimant Count consists of claimants of Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) and some Universal Credit (UC) Claimants. The UC claimants that are included are 1) those that were recorded as not in employment (May 2013-April 2015), and 2) those claimants of Universal Credit who are required to search for work, i.e. within the Searching for Work conditionality regime as defined by the Department for Work & Pensions (from April 2015 onwards).

Levels are calculated using the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance from table JSA01 plus the number of people claiming Universal Credit benefits who are required to seek work. Note due to rounding people may not add up to the sum of men and women; and higher level geographies may not equal the sum of their lower level geographies.

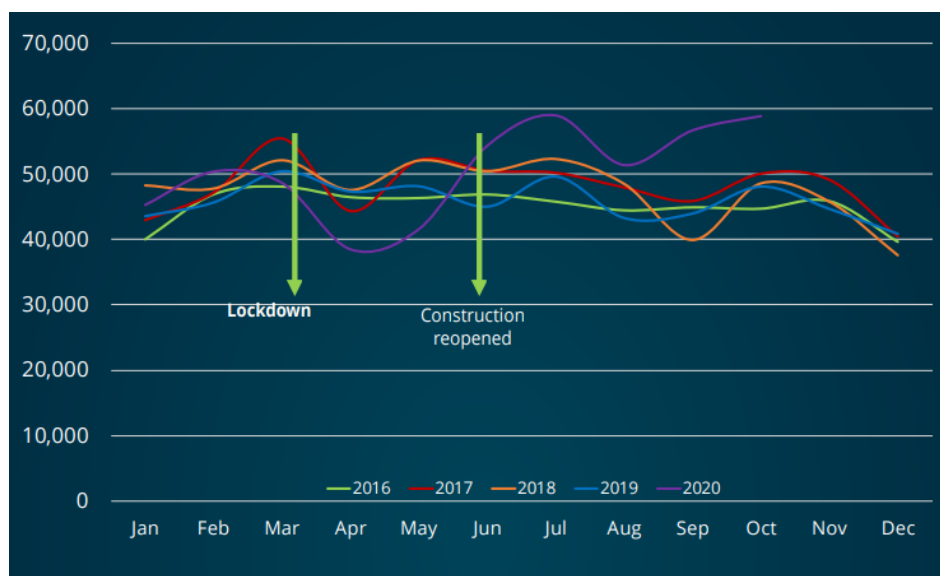
2. Percentages of population aged from 16 to 64 based on mid-year 2018 population estimates.



## **(9) Impact on Private Investment – Planning & Development activity**

### **1. Covid-19 Impact on Planning.**

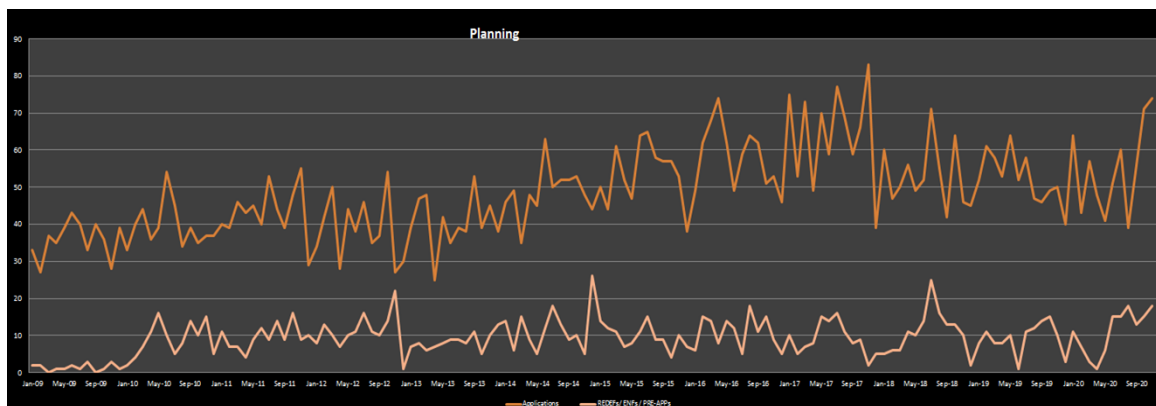
- 1.1 The global pandemic remains a major issue to all those who are involved in the planning and construction industries. The full impact this pandemic will have on planning will not be known for some time. A report by the Planning Portal in April 2020 undertook market analysis and when we entered Lockdown from 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, there was a 20% drop in planning applications across the Country. However, as restrictions were being lifted, construction sites started to re-open from May 2020 along with suppliers and merchants supporting the construction industry with increased levels of deliveries. Construction sites have become more flexible in their working hours to ensure there is a productive operation in place combined with putting in measures to be Covid secure.
- 1.2 Since construction sites have re-opened across the country and have remained open since (even during the most recent lockdown), confidence has increased in the construction and planning industry. The Planning Portal in their most recent report (November 2020) identified that the deficit in applications throughout lockdown has more than recovered during the summer months. As we are seeing in Stevenage, as is across the country, it is the level of householder applications which have made up the deficit where according to the Planning Portal, overall numbers in terms of Household applications are up 23% on October 2019. Figure 1 shows the trend in planning application numbers across the country from 2016 to 2020.



**Figure 1:-** Application numbers in England and Wales (Source:- Planning Portal 2020)

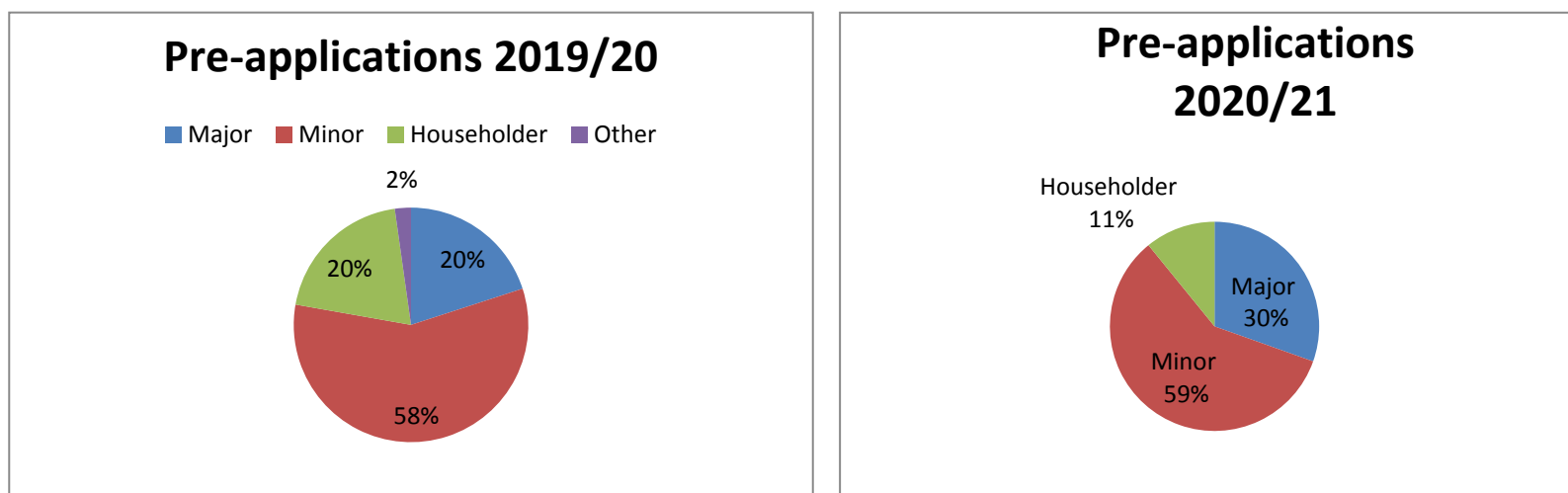
- 1.3 Turning to Stevenage, since January 2009, the Planning Department has seen a steady increase in the number of planning applications which has been received. As shown in Figure 2, the Council was had on average 35 planning applications a month in 2009. However, by September 2020, the Planning Department had 51 planning applications a month. The most recent data from Technical Support that in October of this year, the department had 71 planning applications and in November, it had 74 planning applications. This is an increase from 2019 where in October, the department had 49 applications and in November it had 50 applications.
- 1.4 Looking at the impact of the first lockdown, between March 2020 and June 2020 during lockdown, the Council had a total of 146 applications. However, in the same period in 2019, there were a total of 175 applications. As such, the department did see a reduction of 29 applications or 16%. However, when we entered the Second Lockdown in November, the Council had 74 applications; this is an increase of 24 applications from the same month in 2019. The Council was also receiving very similar numbers of applications over the summer months to those received in 2019. This reflects the trend identified by the Planning Portal where the deficit of applications has more than recovered. In fact, as set out above, the Department is receiving more applications than it did at the same time last year.

- 1.5 It does need to be caveated that the stats include all application types including applications not completed due to being withdrawn, not proceeded with and invalids in each months figures, but are included as they are still being worked on by the Technical Support Team. However, it is important to note even when an application is invalid, or it has been withdrawn, it has still been worked on by either the Technical Support Team and / or officers.



**Figure 2:-** Applications received between January 2009 to September 2020 (Source- Technical Support).

- 1.6 In terms of pre-application submissions to the planning department, the number which have been submitted have also increased since the last financial year (2019/2020). Between April 2019 to March 2020, the Council received a total of 45 pre-applications which included 9 Majors, 26 Minors, 9 householders and 1 other. These are set out in more detail in Figure 3. In terms of the pre-applications which have been received between April 2020 to 10th December 2020, the Council had received 46 pre-applications. These included 14 Majors, 27 Minors and 5 Householders. These have been broken down in more detail in Figure 4.



**Figure 3:-** Pre-applications received between April 2019 and March 2020.

**Figure 4:-** Pre-applications received between April 2020 and December 2020.

- 1.7 As shown from the data, whilst the Council did notice a reduction of planning applications during the first lockdown. It is evident that confidence has returned in the planning and construction industry where applications quickly recovered in the summer months. Furthermore, the department is also starting to see more planning applications and pre-applications being made to the Council. The department has also dealt with the large scale regeneration project known as SG1 as well as a number of large scale residential (including North Stevenage) and commercial applications which have been to the Planning and Development Committee since May 2020. This further reflects the continued confidence in the market despite the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the Country.
- 1.8 Turning to the applications themselves, it is important to note that not all applications submissions are equal. This is because Major Planning applications, including applications such as the Town Centre Regeneration Project (Planning Reference:- 19/00743/FPM) and North Stevenage (Planning Reference:- 17/00862/FPM) can be very resource intensive at officer level. Furthermore, the 10% increase in the number of pre-application Majors will have a significant impact on workload for the team. This is because a number of these Major pre-applications are likely to follow through to the planning application stage in the coming year. Therefore, such applications will need to be planned for when being managed by the Planning Department (including the Technical Support Team when they validate the applications) as well as have implications on the Planning Committee in terms of its workload as well. However, these applications will also generate

additional fee income into the Council. But, these fees will not only need to cover officer time, they will also need to cover the costs of any consultants the department needs to appoint when determining such applications.

- 1.9 Further to the above, the Government has recently published its White Paper on Planning Reform. It has emphasised that applications will need to be determined within the statutory timeframes (8 weeks, 13 weeks and 16 weeks). If these are not met in these strict timeframes, they have recommended the planning fee is returned in full to the applicant. As such, if this does come into force, it will have implications on the Planning Department in terms of managing these applications in a timely manner as it will affect the Council's income. It must be noted that the current rule is to refund the planning fee if an application takes more than 26 weeks under the "Planning Guarantee" unless otherwise agreed in writing with the developer. Moreover, it also puts pressure on the Technical Support Team to turn around validations in an expedient timeframe so that officers do not lose too much time in processing and determining application. Therefore, it is equally important they are properly resourced to handle the increase and management of planning applications coming through.

**Report Author** – James Chettleburgh

## (12) What is being offered as on the ground support – Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal

The Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal provides a one stop Skills resource to support employers, residents and students access a wide array of resource and support including details of current job and volunteering opportunities, as well as details of sectors currently recruiting. HOP also provides support for employers to upskill staff and careers and skills-related guidance and educational resources for students to make informed career decisions in order to support Hertfordshire with a pipeline of talent. [HOP](#)



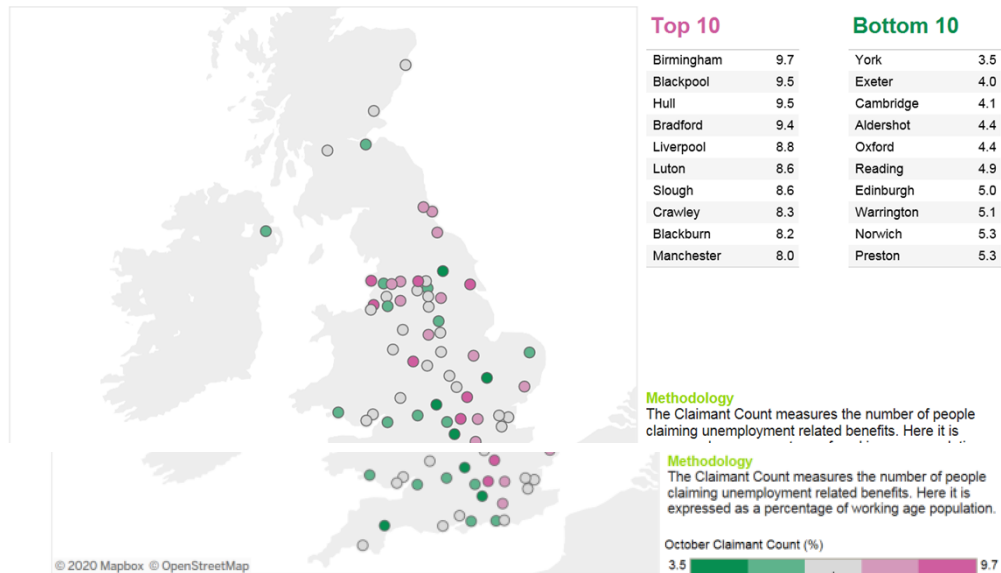
## (15) External Research – Centre for Cities – National & City Unemployment levels

### UK Unemployment Tracker

#### How is the Coronavirus pandemic affecting unemployment in cities and large towns?

As the COVID-19 pandemic sends shockwaves through the labour market, Centre for Cities tracks the latest unemployment claim statistics across the UK's cities and largest towns.

Data period: November 2019 - November 2020  
Data updated: 15 December 2020

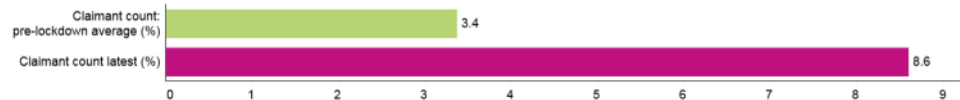


#### Explore by city or large town

Select a city or large town to find out more

Luton

#### Luton



#### Local labour market statistics

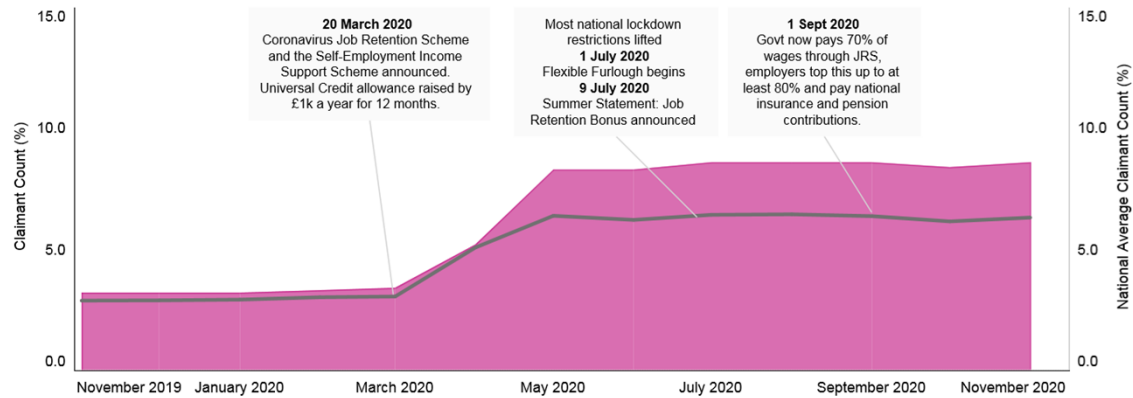
- Since March, Claimant Counts have increased by **5.3 percentage points**
- In the past month, Claimant Counts have increased by **0.3 percentage points**
- 35%** of people in this city or large town have high-skilled qualifications
- From June - August 2020, local CVs outnumbered job postings by **2.1**

- From March - July 2020 there were **32.6%** of eligible local jobs being supported by the Job Retention Scheme (JRS)

## How have unemployment claims changed over time?

### Claimant Counts have risen sharply since March 2020

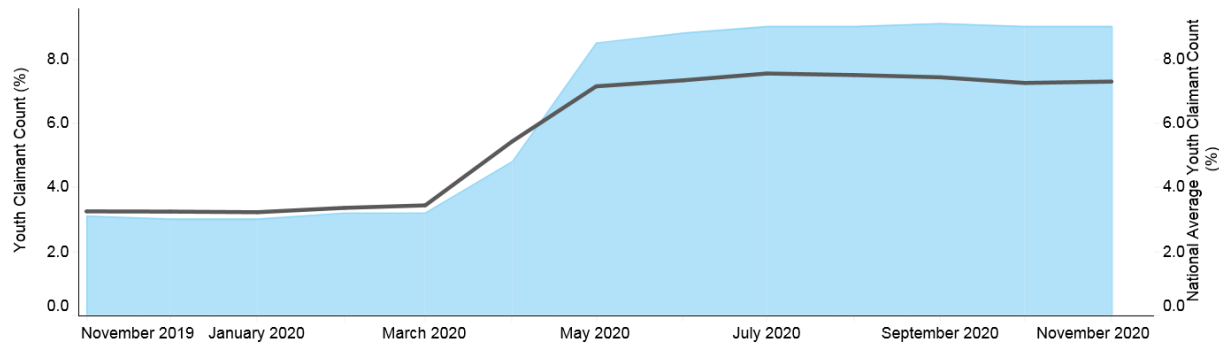
Claimant count rate, November 2019 - November 2020 (%)



### Youth Claimant Counts have risen rapidly

Youth claimant count rate, November 2019 - November 2020 (%)

Youth claimant count rate, November 2019 - November 2020 (%)



#### Sources

Claimant count: ONS, Claimant Count. ONS, Population Estimates. Note: Data differ to NOMIS claimant count rates as latest available population estimates are used to calculate the figures.

Furlough data: HMRC, Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Competition for jobs: Indeed, Job postings and CVs June-August 2020. Share of population with high-level qualifications: ONS, Annual Population Survey, resident analysis. Department for the Economy (DfE NI), District Council Area Statistics for Belfast.



Environment & Economy Select Committee  
13 January 2021

Questions for the Leader of the Council, Cllr Sharon Taylor and Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport , Cllr Lloyd Briscoe:

- Members are aware of the work that various departments at the Council such as Revenue and Benefits and Planning & Regulation, Business Support are doing in terms of business support with access to government grants and advice and the work of Environmental Health to support retail, not to mention all of the flexibility and work that many Members and officers are doing to tackle the pandemic and support our community, with this in mind, how long can the Council keep on this emergency footing and at the same time largely carry on a “business as usual” service to residents when it may need to make difficult budget choices?
- Members have heard that there could be potentially high numbers of redundancies in Hertfordshire as a result of the pandemic, with this in mind, how confident are you that Stevenage will be able to recover and in the future thrive in a difficult economic climate?
- In terms of supporting our local business community what can the Council and its partners do to make Stevenage a business friendly destination? And is there anything that the Council and its partners can do to help create employment?
- Members undertaking this review are particularly concerned about the economic prospects for the town’s young people, as well as promoting STEM subjects in education and for the job opportunities linked to this, what needs to happen to help the low skilled (in terms of academic qualifications, but potentially high skilled in other ways), young people who could be described as the “left behind”?
- There is emerging evidence that the economic impact of the pandemic is adversely effecting many groups such as those from lower socio economic backgrounds, the young, women in part time zero hours work, the disabled and people from the BAME community who are needing to shield. What should the Council and its partners be doing to address this?
- What lessons have been learnt about the Council's ability to respond to events like this, particularly given that there is potential for pandemics to become a recurring feature of life in the future?