

BUILDING CONDITIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL HEART OF BRITAIN

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN REFRESH (2016-2031)

Buckinghamshire
Thames Valley LOCAL ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP
THE ENTREPRENEURIAL HEART OF BRITAIN

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
2.0 WHAT HAS CHANGED SINCE THE LAST STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN?	4
3.0 THE IMPACT ON THESE DEVELOPMENTS ON OUR NEW STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN	7
4.0 OUR VISION	7
3.0 OUR MISSION	9
4.0 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS	9
5.0 OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	11
6.0 Objective 1: BUSINESS GROWTH & INNOVATION	12
7.0 Objective 2: SKILLS & TALENT	13
8.0 Objective 3: CONNECTIVITY	14
9.0 Objective 4: TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION	18

FOREWORD

Buckinghamshire stands on the cusp of a programme of growth, which will likely see in the region of 50,000 new homes created between now and 2033. In addition, a significant number of national infrastructure schemes (including the potential impact of Heathrow Airport, Crossrail, HS2, Western Access to Heathrow, The Oxford to Cambridge Expressway; East West Rail) are forecast to impact on the locality.

Experian forecasts suggest that Buckinghamshire's population will grow by 14.8% between 2013 and 2033, ranking us the 12th fastest growing LEP area in the country. BTVLEP Partners are concerned that our historical financial model has not recognised our past contribution to Treasury (HMT) and keen to ensure that government recognises the scale of investment we need to support the scale of future growth that is likely to impact on us.

To date, BTVLEP has used our existing Growth Deals to build stronger local economies and stimulate growth in the economy. Going forward, we are even more ambitious for the Buckinghamshire and the UK economy and believe that if our economy is to develop sustainably, we need to stimulate greater high-value employment growth; attract people back to work in the area; improve connectivity within the area and into neighbouring areas; and ensure our town centres develop as attractive, vibrant places that people want to live in.

We believe we have developed a strong platform on which to build and some new proposals which will help to increase growth in the area, over and above the impact of our existing Growth Deals and increase our overall contribution to HMT.

This refreshed Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) is owned by both political and business leaders in the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Region. We recognise governments aspiration for stronger, reformed governance structures, and our Local Authority partners have recently agreed to review local governance structures.

Our refreshed Strategic Economic Plan supports and underpins some of governments key objectives, including plans for housing delivery; the area reviews into further education; and the UK industrial strategy.

Our Strategic Economic Plan supports the work of England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance and their proposals for Local Transport Majors funding. It also aligns with our third Local Growth Deal submission, which has been developed in tandem with this strategy refresh.

Perhaps most importantly, we want government to recognise that this will be the last opportunity government will have to review our investment needs ahead of our Local Authority partners going out to open consultation on their Local Development Plans. With this in mind, we hope government will look favourably on our investment proposals and support us to take the growth message out to residents and local communities in Buckinghamshire.

Given this situation, and because our Strategic Economic Plan, Transport Majors, Housing Proposals, Local Growth Deal and our Local Development Plans are all interlinked, we think these documents are really important documents for communicating how Buckinghamshire's economy could evolve going forward.

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 In April 2014, Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) published its first Strategic Economic Plan. This plan, which was supported by a detailed evidence base, was borne of a process initiated by government, which asked each of the 39 LEPs around the country to develop a plan to set out their Strategic Economic Goals for their areas.

1.2 The 2014 version of the Strategic Economic Plan was also supplemented by;

- **A Local 'Growth Deal'**: which Identified a number of projects that the LEP had prioritised for investment in Buckinghamshire that could help stimulate growth in the economy; and
- **An Implementation Plan**: which identified how partners in Buckinghamshire would work together, and with other LEPs and neighbouring areas, to implement these projects.

1.3 Fast forward to 2016, and government is now asking Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to submit their third Local 'Growth Deal' to government for consideration, and has asked LEPs to consider refreshing their Strategic Economic Plans.

1.4 In light of this latter point, BTVLEP has chosen to refresh its current Strategic Economic Plan, tightening the original document and bringing it up to date to take account of any significant developments over the last two years.

1.5 This document can then sit alongside our 2016 Local Growth Deal, to explain a bit more about Buckinghamshire, the context in which the region finds itself and importance of our investment asks.

What is the purpose of this Strategic Economic Plan Refresh?

1.6 A Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) is a strategy which operates at the level of the place, which secures the commitment of the various stakeholders involved in delivering the future growth agenda, to an agreed;

- **Vision**: A clear vision for the future sustainable development of the Buckinghamshire economy;
- **Mission**: The role of the partnership in delivering that goal;
- **Strategy**: The broad strategic thrust of the partnership focus;
- **Objectives**: An agreed set of interventions to deliver the above goals;

1.7 As far as these last two points are concerned, it's important to recognise that Buckinghamshire has historically fared less well in terms of government investment than many other parts of the country and this has necessitated us needing to adopt a very focussed approach to prioritise 'game changing' investments in clear areas of market failure.

1.8 This is not to say that we do not value the contributions made by partners in areas not covered under this plan. It is merely an attempt to reinforce the point that we currently operate in a tight financial environment, and BTVLEP should really be focussed on intervening in the market in those areas of economic policy that are going to deliver significant 'added value' (above and beyond 'business as usual') and which plug clear market gaps and deliver.

1.9 Compared to the original SEP, this refreshed version has been designed to be much higher level (strategic in nature), much shorter and much more concise. If you are looking for more information about the tactics (i.e. the short-term projects that will deliver the above goals), you should look at our Local Growth Deal 3 submission. Similarly, if you are looking at how we will deliver various projects, you should look at the Implementation Plan which accompanies the Local Growth Deal.

2.0 WHAT HAS CHANGED SINCE THE LAST STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN?

2.1 A number of important developments have taken place since we published the last Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) which are worthy of particular consideration.

Increased economic uncertainty

2.2 According to Experian forecasts¹ the Buckinghamshire economy was forecast to grow by an average of 2.6% per annum between 2013 and 2023. However, in March 2016, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) revised UK growth forecasts for 2016 downwards, from 2.4%, to 2.0%; from 2.5 % to 2.2% in 2017; from 2.4% to 2.1% in 2018; and to 2.3% to 2.1% in both 2019 and 2020.

¹ Experian, Regional Forecasts (2015)

- 2.3 Whilst the amount the government is expected to borrow in 2016 has fallen, and the chancellor has confirmed that he is still on-track to meet his target of having a budget surplus by 2019-20, the amount the government is expect to borrow in 2017-2020 is forecast to increase.
- 2.4 In addition to impacting on business confidence and private sector investment patterns, these developments will also place increased pressure on government borrowing and serve to suppress public sector investment patterns in economic infrastructure.

Greater clarity over future population and housing growth

- 2.5 The scale and quantum of population and housing growth that Buckinghamshire will experience in the next economic cycle has become much clearer since we published the last SEP.
- 2.6 According to DCLG based housing projections for 2012, the number of households in Buckinghamshire are projected to increase by 74,000 (or 9.8%) between 2012 and 2022², a figure which is broadly consistent with England as a whole. Similarly, recent Experian forecasts also suggest that Buckinghamshire's population will grow by 14.8% between 2013 and 2033, ranking us the 12th fastest growing LEP in the country³.
- 2.7 This data is broadly consistent with the findings of the 2015 Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA), which identified that the full objective assessed need for housing in the Buckinghamshire Housing Market Area (HMA) is 50,000 dwellings over the 20-year period 2013-33, a figure equivalent to an average of 2,500 dwellings per year (a figure which is consistent with the 1.1% growth required across England to deliver 253,600 dwellings annually).

Increased need for local Jobs Growth

- 2.8 In 2013, Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP was the 2nd most porous LEP in the country (with only 62.3% of residents working in the LEP area and 92,000 people out commuting). According to Experian forecasts⁴ the total (workplace-based) employment in Buckinghamshire will grow by an average annual rate of 1.1% a year⁵. This data, when combined with population forecasts set out above, indicates securing local jobs growth should continue to be a priority for Buckinghamshire, going forward, if we are to achieve sustainable economic growth.
- 2.9 As far as potential employment land is concerned, Buckinghamshire's 2015 HEDNA also indicates that *"the industrial floor-space market is performing well with a steady stream of investment activity for B1c/B2 industrial units from local businesses in the Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA)"*.
- 2.10 It goes on, *"However, there is considered to be a lack of supply of suitable B1c/B2 stock across the FEMA area. Local commercial agents consider that additional sites need to be brought forward for B1c/B2 class development, in order to accommodate SMEs"*. That said, the authors suggest that the Buckinghamshire *"office market is much smaller when compared to the industrial market With the area not considered to be a prime office market."*
- 2.11 Using Oxford Economics forecasts, the HEDNA also identifies potential growth in B class employment of around 14,360 full time equivalent employees for over the period 2013-2033 (with an additional 2,270 jobs for the period 2033-2036). Employment growth is anticipated to come primarily from B1a/b sectors (mainly office based jobs), with a smaller number coming from B8 growth and potential further decline in employment in industrial sectors.
- 2.12 This forecasting data is being supplemented by a wealth of anecdotal evidence from businesses in Buckinghamshire which indicates that the changes to office to residential permitted development rights is combining with a lack of suitable commercial property development, to make it very difficult for firms in Buckinghamshire to find suitable business premises when their leases come to an end.

Continued requirement for improved transport connectivity

- 2.13 Whilst the first round of BTVLEP transport investments under LGF1 and 2 are starting to deliver on the ground, there is still much to do if Buckinghamshire's economy is to function effectively. The graph overleaf, which is taken from Buckinghamshire County Council's recently published LTP4, shows that

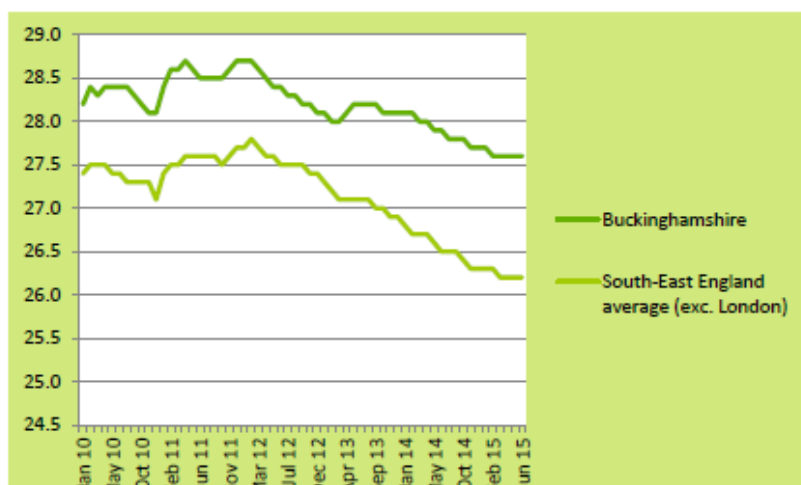
² DCLG 2012-based Household Projections: England (2015)

³ UK Local Market Forecasts Quarterly, Experian, March 2016

⁴ Experian, Regional Forecasts (2015)

average speeds on local A-roads during morning peak times have been decreasing, illustrating some of the local transport issues we have.

- 2.14 Looking forward, there are a number of potential major transport developments proposed in Buckinghamshire which will have a major impact on travel in the county more generally. If progressed, Phase One of HS2 will have a huge effect on Buckinghamshire, as it runs for approximately 60kms from the Colne Valley in south Buckinghamshire to Westbury & Turweston in north Buckinghamshire. The expansion of Heathrow, with the introduction of a third runway, was recommended by the Airports Commission in 2015 and is currently awaiting a response from Government. The proposed construction of a Western Rail Access to Heathrow will also impact on the county. Crossrail, which is scheduled to be completed by 2019, will transform connections from the south of the county through London.



Average speeds on local A-roads during the morning peak (mph) 2010-15 (Source: DfT)

- 2.15 The East West Rail project will provide train services between Milton Keynes, Oxford, London Marylebone, and Aylesbury. Highways England is planning a range of improvements, including: its M4 'Smart Motorway' scheme; investigating the possibility of an Oxford – Cambridge Expressway, which would cross the county; and exploring transport issues around the South-West Quadrant of the M25. Housing and employment developments will also have a significant impact on our transport networks
- 2.16 In addition to the above sub-regional Transport Bodies have emerged to drive sub-regional transport planning and delivery (in our case through 'England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance');

Continued challenges aligning the labour market

- 2.17 As far as Skills Strategy & Delivery is concerned, the FE Commissioner has led an Area Based Review into FE structures in the Thames Valley and recommended a type 2 merger between Aylesbury College and Amersham and Wycombe College.
- 2.18 BTVLEPs own skills programme - supported by Careers & Enterprise Company investment - is active in seeking to enhance the linkages between employers and students.
- 2.19 Details of the Apprenticeship Levy is starting to emerge. Whilst the government remains committed to driving up demand for Apprenticeships and Higher Level Apprenticeships, LEPs have struggled to wrestle control of the adult skills budget from Whitehall, to improve the coherency of adult skills provision locally.

A strengthened industrial strategy in the face of a continued shift towards a service economy

- 2.20 Whilst BTVLEP partners have successfully secured Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone, to build on some of its sector assets (including High Performance Technologies at Silverstone Park; Space Propulsion at Westcott Venture Park and Agri-Food / Health at Arla/Aylesbury Woodlands), and specialist facilities like Pinewood Studios and the National Film and Television School continue to expand, the shift towards a service based economy continues.
- 2.21 As far as business support is concerned, whilst the Buckinghamshire Local Growth Hub goes from strength to strength, national services like the Business Growth Service & the MAS have been wound down.

Emerging governance developments

- 2.22 In common with many other parts of the country, Buckinghamshire partners have committed to review the current public service delivery arrangements, with a view to examining the potential for more effective/efficient arrangements, going forward

3.0 THE IMPACT ON THESE DEVELOPMENTS ON OUR NEW STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN

3.1 The impact of these developments on our activities going forward is considerable, and given government's clear message to us about the need to demonstrate how our proposals will significant 'added value' (over and above the 'business as usual' baseline) should lead us to prioritising;

- **Projects which generate a return, or enable us to recycle funds within Buckinghamshire, rather than simply providing grant funding to unviable projects just to get them over the line.** If we are passionate and committed to genuine localism and we want to demonstrate the considerable added value that the devolution of funding to the local level can deliver, we need to recognise that one of strengths of the localism model (compared to a simplistic national 'grant awarding' model) is that local partners should be able to use their local knowledge and the funding awarded in development activities which generate a return, or enable us to recycle funds for Buckinghamshire to reinvest back into our future programme. In suggesting we adopt this approach to scheme prioritisation, this would – for example – lead us to prioritise investment in infrastructure projects which were linked to development activities, over 'sunk infrastructure' projects. Given the tight financial environment we all operate in, utilising funding in this way – and ensuring the returns recycle back to Buckinghamshire, rather than the project sponsor - will also help us to plug a growing infrastructure deficit, and generate greater returns to UK Plc.;
- **Partnership projects which successfully integrate business support, skills and/or infrastructure development.** Infrastructure projects put forward by project sponsors which work on the principle of 'build it and they will come' can often struggle to find end users to occupy them and/or take longer to achieve viability. Put slightly differently, projects which successfully integrate the capital funding required to build the infrastructure together with the revenue funds needed to generate the pipeline of users can often achieve viability quicker. That said, the capabilities to do this often sit across different organisation. For example, in the case of incubation, the people who own the building are not always the same people delivering business support or skills programmes which aim to accelerate firm growth. With this in mind, we should prioritise investment which can demonstrate they can successfully integrate business support, skills and/or infrastructure development to generate returns more quickly;
- **Infrastructure projects which enable the creation of affordable business premises and starter homes.** Given the increasing outflows of businesses and young people that Buckinghamshire is suffering from, and recognising this places increasing pressure on our transport infrastructure, our goal should be to prioritise projects which create local employment and or starter homes for young people. Investing in these kind of projects will arrest the increasing sub-urbanisation of Buckinghamshire, ensure the vibrancy and sustainability of our local communities.
- **Projects which secure and/or support the growth of mid-range and larger firms in Buckinghamshire, to develop greater resilience in the economy.** Whilst Buckinghamshire's micro-firm economy has a particularly high GVA per hour worked (symptomatic of an above average number of self-employed workers), the downside of these kind of firms is that they don't really provide suitable employment opportunities for young people and/or support your economy to be as resilient as you might like. Similarly, a high micro-firm economy suppresses commercial development and potentially (in light of imminent changes to the funding of local authorities) threatens to undermine the quality of public service delivery.

2.11 Whilst these investment criteria are unlikely to provide a definitive list of BTVLEP investment priorities, they give a flavour of the kind of projects we believe should be prioritised, and why they will demonstrate to government significant 'added value'

4.0 OUR VISION

4.1 Our Vision for the Buckinghamshire Economy is that;

By 2032, the Buckinghamshire economy will be a vibrant, balanced and resilient economy, underpinned by innovative, high-value, globally-orientated firms.

- 4.2 This is a slight iteration on our previous vision, which merely stressed our desire to create a balanced and competitive Buckinghamshire economy.
- 4.3 As far as balanced is concerned, our previous work on developing the vision identified that many residents wanted the Buckinghamshire economy to be both environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive. Whilst this is clearly important if we are to create sustainable communities, the prioritisation of securing and growing our mid-range and larger firms could also be described as striving for greater balance and resilience in the local economy.

Why add the vibrancy and the high-value, globally orientated firm elements?

- 4.4 Given the natural population growth Buckinghamshire is likely to experience over the next economic cycle, it's clear that the overall size of the local economy will grow over the next economic cycle.
- 4.5 Indeed, Experian Forecasts suggests our economy will grow from being a £16bn economy in 2015 to being a £20bn economy by 2025. However, this scale of growth is not guaranteed. In addition, the quantum figure itself is largely, fairly irrelevant.
- 4.6 Ultimately, the key question is not will we will we grow, but what kind of growth does Buckinghamshire want and what is good growth? The reason for wanting to articulate these goals at this stage in the strategy formulation process is simply to try and agree what kind of growth Buckinghamshire aspires to, and to set that level of aspiration.
- 4.7 One thing which is particularly worthy of note about being successful in stimulating mid-range and larger firms to Buckinghamshire, is that this is likely to result in a fall in the GVA per hour worked in the area (as medium and larger firms generally pay lower salaries than self-employed entrepreneurs), but (if we are successful at retaining more of our indigenous workforce in the county) result in an increase in the GVA per capita, as we arrest the high levels of out commuting.
- 4.8 In light of this scenario, our belief is that we should be striving to significantly grow our GVA per capita, and in order to do this, we will need to attract high-value, globally orientated firms to Buckinghamshire and stimulate the vibrancy of the local economy

Supporting and stimulating innovative, high-value, globally-orientated firms.

- 2.12 The reason for including the specific reference to innovative, globally orientated firms is because these kinds of firms are going to be increasingly important to Buckinghamshire going forward, if we are to reverse the current level of out-commuting and ensure the economy develops sustainability.
- 2.13 Recent analysis by the Enterprise Research Centre (ERC)⁶, shows that whilst the number of 'high-growth firms' (HGFs) across the UK has risen to circa 12,000, Buckinghamshire has consistently been one of the worst performers in the country for generating HGF's.
- 2.14 High-Growth Firms (HGFs) are a very small proportion of the UK business population (often referred to as the Vital 6%⁷) yet they have a disproportionate impact on job creation (with some evidence indicating they generated half of the UK's employment growth between 2002 and 2008). For the purposes of this analysis, ERC uses the OECD definition of High-Growth Firm⁸, which includes 'continuing firms' (firms which are born before the beginning of a designated three year period and are alive at its end) with at least 10 employees at the beginning of the period, and which record average growth of 20% in employment per annum over the three year period.
- 2.15 The ERC analysis ranks Buckinghamshire as the 3rd highest LEP of all LEPs in the country for our HGF Rate between 2009-12 (at 6.5 percent) although notes that we have plummeted to joint 32nd (with Cumbria and New Anglia) for our HGF rate between 2012-15 (at 6.4 percent). Worse still, the ERC identifies that Buckinghamshire has the lowest growth rate of the percentage of HGFs of all firms of 10+ employees between 2009-12 and 2012-15, at 2 percent.

Creating a vibrant place, where people want to live, work and play

- 2.16 In a world where talent is becoming an increasingly scarce commodity - particularly high-value technical talent – it's vital to make sure Buckinghamshire develops as an attractive, vibrant place, in which people want to live work and play.

⁶ ERC Insight, Spatial Incidence of High Growth Firms (February 2016)

⁷ The vital 6 per cent, How high-growth innovative businesses generate prosperity and jobs, NESTA, October 2009

⁸ Anyadike-Danes, M; Bonner, K and Hart, M (2013) 'Getting the lie of the land: exploring the incidence of High Growth Firms in the UK', NESTA.

- 2.17 One of the major challenges currently facing many high technology firms is how best to win ‘the war on tech-talent’. According to Business Europe⁹ the lack of STEM-skilled labour will be one of the main obstacles to economic growth in the coming years .
- 2.18 In spite of crisis, demand for people with Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills is increasing across the Globe. Many STEM workers are approaching retirement age. Some forecasts suggest around 7m job openings will emerge in the period between 2016 and 2025 .
- 2.19 Whilst demand for tech professionals continues to increase exponentially, the number of people choosing to pursue tech careers continues to diminish. Whilst the share of STEM University graduates has increased in 15 Member States and at European level since the mid-2000s, the number of STEM Technicians (VET graduates) has decreased over the same period. Skills shortages are particularly acute in technological occupations (Engineering and ITC) and for professionals.
- 2.20 In addition to the above, we have included a specific reference to the need to stimulate a vibrant economy in the Vision.
- 2.21 Quite simply, this is because if Buckinghamshire wants to be successful at developing, retaining and attract innovative, high-value, globally-orientated firms to the county, it needs to ensure the area is particularly attractive to the kind of ambitious, talented young people that want to work for these kind of firms.

Ensuring a balanced economy through sustainability and inclusiveness

- 2.22 Because trying to stimulate a balanced economy is also a key feature of our vision, there is also a strong argument to suggest that organisations like BTVLEP (and its partners) should use the resources at their disposal to ensure that everyone can participate in, and benefit from, growth in the local economy.
- 2.23 This is particularly true for an area like Buckinghamshire, where the cost of living and the lack of starter homes can act as a barrier for young people.

3.0 OUR MISSION

- 3.1 Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership's mission is;

To create the conditions that support our business to compete more effectively in the Global Race.

- 3.2 This remains unchanged from our original mission.

4.0 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AS A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

- 4.1 Buckinghamshire sits at the heart of the Golden Triangle, linking Oxford, Cambridge and London and is intersected by the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. The Golden Triangle is a recognised global innovation ‘hot-spot’, occupied by an above average concentration of innovative firms, research establishments and professional/scientific skilled people. The Golden Triangle is home to Europe’s top four universities, Europe’s largest health technology cluster and the world’s leading financial centre. Its universities have significantly contributed to the number of companies spun out of UK universities, and a large majority of venture capital funds invested in the UK are based in the region.
- 4.2 Because of these characteristics the Golden Triangle is one of the few net contributing regions to UK Plc, meaning that each resident of the region contributes more in tax to the Treasury than they take out¹⁰.
- 4.3 That said, numerous authors have recognised that the O2C Arc (and the UK more generally) punches well below its weight in terms of its positioning in the global innovation economy;
- When the Joint Venture Silicon Valley Network mapped the world’s innovation regions in its ‘Index of Silicon Valley’¹¹, the UK did not feature among the 16 knowledge-based ‘spikes’ it identified.
 - Similarly, the ‘World Knowledge Competitiveness Index’ ranked Eastern UK 54th out of 145 regions and South East UK 74th.

⁹ Business Europe (2011): Plugging the Skills Gap – The clock is ticking (science, technology and maths). Business Europe, Brussels.

¹⁰ Taken for granted: why Britain needs a fair deal for the South East, Oxford Economics (2007)

¹¹ Joint Venture Silicon Valley Network (2007)

- Whilst the Buckinghamshire had the 17th highest GDP per capita of the 139 regions in the UK¹², we only rank 256th out of the 1,342 regions of Europe and 117th out of 412 regions in Germany.
- In the 2015 Global Innovation 1000 study, Strategy& (PwC's strategy consulting business) analysed the flows of R&D spending among companies and countries worldwide. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they found that the geographic footprint of innovation has expanded dramatically in the years since their last study (2008), with Asia ranked now the number one region for corporate R&D spending, followed by North America and Europe, which is a change from 2007, when Europe was the top region for R&D spending and Asia was third.

4.4 According to Miles & Daniels (2007¹³) the main factors that underpin the relatively poor innovation performance of the UK includes;

- The UK's over dependence on contracting sectors (pharmaceutical, defence, aerospace etc.) and its retreat into niche markets;
- The difficult business environment and a lack of critical mass in the UK innovation economy;
- The relatively small size of some emerging sectors and the players within them, which limits our scope for commercialising ideas and taking them to scale;
- Our inadequate skills performance;
- Significant physical and economic infrastructure constraints; and
- The lack of a coherent innovation strategy (and national-regional linkages);

4.5 Whilst some might argue that many of these challenges are structural and/or that numerous past policy interventions have failed to shift them, our own evidence suggests that a number of them are capable of being overcome, with the right mix of investment, structural reform and integrated (national-regional) policy intervention.

4.6 Indeed, given the scale of the natural growth that is likely to occur within the Golden Triangle in the next economic cycle, there is a strong case to be put for arguing that the scale of investment needed to unblock these growth inhibitors really needs to flow in this next phase of the development of the Golden Triangle, if we are to ensure that the UK doesn't slip even further down the global innovation index.

4.7 Our evidence base indicates that whilst Buckinghamshire has traditionally been a net contributor to UK Plc., the continued shift of resources away from the county is starting to impact on the competitiveness of our economy and weakening our ability to go on generating the tax revenues that have become so vital to the rest of the UK.

4.8 Our conclusion from this evidence is that if Whitehall reinvested a higher proportion of the billions of pounds of taxes we generate into Treasury coffers every year, Buckinghamshire would be much better placed to tackle some of the structural weaknesses that are starting to emerge in the local economy and deliver so much more contribution to national prosperity.

Where are we now?

4.9 In order to better understand what good growth looks like, better understand what kind of policy interventions are needed in Buckinghamshire to achieve the stated vision and, ultimately, evaluate the effectiveness of our planned interventions, it's important to develop a solid understanding of Buckinghamshire's starting point as an economy.

4.10 One of the ways of doing this is through a SWOT Analysis, as per the (slightly updated) one that was included in our 2014 SEP, which identified Buckinghamshire had the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Strengths

- An **outstandingly productive economy, particularly driven by a higher proportion of self-employed people** than the national average;
- Some of the best **performing schools in the country** and one of the **best trained workforces** in the country;
- A **superb quality-of-life in rural Buckinghamshire**, particularly attractive to families and older workers;
- **High levels of economic activity & low levels of unemployment;**

¹² Eurostat, NUT3s Analysis (2011)

¹³ The State of the Innovation Economy in the UK - Problems, Opportunities and Solutions, Miles & Daniels (2007)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong locational advantages, at the heart of the ‘Golden Triangle’ and close to major transport hubs;
<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the largest micro-firm economies in the country, with low levels of firm growth; • A significant undergraduate brain drain leading poor graduate availability locally; • Weak export & international trade performance (particularly mid-larger firms); • A weakening industrial structure, with an increasing shift towards a service economy; • Weak public sector research infrastructure & low graduate population to underpin a local incubation offer; • A shortage of technician & higher level workforce skills to support R&D led companies; • Difficulties businesses experience in accessing finance; • Weak specialist business networks (sector-focussed innovation etc.); • Poor transport connectivity of north Buckinghamshire to other key economic centres, traffic congestion in the south of Buckinghamshire and in our major urban conurbations; • A large amount of aged commercial property stock; • The weak quality of life offer of our urban centres, which struggle to attract young people and compete with more vibrant cities; • The high numbers of out commuters; • Poor mobile telephone coverage, particularly in rural areas; • High cost of house prices and rents, particularly for young people; • Weaknesses in the quality of Careers Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) and the poor work readiness skills of young people;
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forecast housing growth between 2013 and 2033 of circa 50,000 new homes¹⁴; • The release of a new employment sites in the emerging local plans to accommodate the development of higher quality business parks and commercial premises; • Development linked to national infrastructure investments (such as the Oxford to Cambridge Study, being undertaken by the National Infrastructure Commission; the M25 Western Quadrant Study; Western Access to Heathrow and Cross-Rail (particularly their impact on Iver); and Hs2 Mitigation) • High-value, research based business activities which require ‘open space’ in which to operate (for example, film production, space propulsion, motorsport etc. – which sit at the heart of the emerging Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone proposition and the expansion of Pinewood Studios); • High-Tech Business Incubation and Acceleration, linked to nationally unique industrial/research assets; • Business Centre facilities which take advantage of the fact we have the second highest proportion of homeworkers of any LEP area in the country;
<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiscal pressures result in a further drain on the resources needed to fuel sustainable growth; • Lack of integration between local and national policy; • Increasing levels of deprivation and worklessness, particularly in our urban centres; • An increasingly ageing population; • Weak rural public transport provision; • Poor energy security, poor energy efficiency of aged building stock and high costs of supply, potentially undermining business competitiveness; • Over reliance on car transport; • The high carbon footprint of the county;

4.11 In addition to considering the nature and shape of the current Buckinghamshire economy it’s also vitally important to consider where Buckinghamshire is heading.

5.0 OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

5.1 In order to develop a clear menu of strategic priorities, our 2014 SEP built on the SWOT Analysis contained in the previous section of this report. At that time, we identified our major priorities as being;

- Stimulating Sustainable Business Growth
- Business-critical Infrastructure
- Skilled Flexible Workforce

¹⁴ Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment 2015, Consultation Draft (January 2016)

5.2 Through our recent work to refresh our SEP we have expanded these priorities to encompass;

- Business Growth & Innovation;
- Skills and Talent;
- Connectivity; and
- Town Centre Regeneration

5.3 In the next few sections of this strategy, we set out;

- What we said our strategic priorities were in our original SEP;
- What we have achieved so far;
- What new developments we need to take account of since the production of the last SEP; and
- What we envisage the key priorities being for the Buckinghamshire economy, going forward.

5.4 In adopting this approach, we are seeking to highlight some of the goals we have achieved and set out how we envisage our strategy needs to develop, going forward.

6.0 Objective 1: BUSINESS GROWTH & INNOVATION

6.1 In the 2014 BTVLEP Strategic Economic Plan, we said we would prioritise;

- **Forcing a step change in Buckinghamshire's export performance:** particularly in mid-sized and large businesses, which appear to be lagging behind.
- **Accelerating innovation in ambitious, growth orientated companies and our priority sectors:** particularly High Performance Technology (Micro-electronics, Test and Measurement; and Aerospace, Defence and Space); Life-sciences & Medical Technologies (Drugs Manufacture & Delivery Technology; Medical devices and Healthcare systems & services); Information Economy (Cyber Security and Big Data); Creative Industries (Film, Digital Media; and Games Development); Food and Drink; Business Services; Tourism; Retail and Care.
- **Operating the most professional "Open for Business" planning service in the Country.**
- **Stimulating more ambitious high growth start-up businesses:** particularly in the 'Plan for Growth' sectors in which our skills system and our strong industrial base excels.
- **Plugging identified gaps in access to finance for high growth potential firms.**
- **Promoting business resource efficiency & resilience;** to support businesses to reduce costs and waste.

6.2 Particularly notable developments linked to these investments include the establishment of Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone, covering three key specialist 'engines of growth' in the north of the county, Silverstone Park (Motorsport/High Performance Engineering), Westcott Venture Park (Space Propulsion/UAV's) and Arla/Aylesbury Vale Woodlands (Agri-Food).

6.3 In addition, the expansion of Pinewood Studios and the development of Handy Cross Hub - both of which BTVLEP supported - will serve to further support the growth of high value firms in the economy.

6.4 In addition, in our first two Local Growth Deal's and through our European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) we also said we would;

1. Establish a first-stop-shop of business support, in the form of a Local Growth Hub;
2. Establish an Access to Finance Programme, to help business get the support they needed to access expansion finance;
3. Increase Front line 'Adviser' capacity, linked to our Local Growth Hub;
4. Establish a Design & innovation Hub;
5. Establish a Sustainability Programme to help businesses with improving energy efficiency;
6. Establish a number of high-growth incubation support services in key sectors;
7. Establish a strengthened Aftercare Service, to engage with strategic businesses;
8. Establish a dedicated capacity to accelerate rollout of Business Improvement Districts; and
9. Establish a strengthened Support Service for Foreign Direct Investors;

6.5 At the time of writing, we have utilised the Local Growth and ERDF funding received to date, to establish the first six of these services, although some are still in procurement.

6.6 Whilst the above issues are all positive, there is still much more to do, and a number of potential future developments/issues are worthy of particular consideration;

- To date, ERDF and Growth Hub monies have been the only revenue funding that BTVLEP has received to invest in front line business support and innovation activities. Going forward, this funding will

continue to become increasingly tight in Buckinghamshire and we need to find other funds to invest in these priorities;

- ESIF Commissioning has not always been as fast as we would have liked & time to market is an issue;
- BTVLEP still needs to invest in local partners capacity and appetite to work with EU funding. Regardless of the outcome of the referendum, EU funding is likely to be with us for a number of years, so we need to find ways to be better at securing it;
- ERDF likely to be fully expended by 2019, so sustainability is a key issue for all the services we have established under the first wave of ERDF (but we knew this when we commissioned them)

6.7 In light of the above, our key business growth and innovation priorities going forward need to focus on activities which are largely capable of being self-financing. These include;

BTVLEP Business Growth & Innovation Strategic Priorities to 2020

- Strengthening our **Local Growth Hub** as the first stop shop of business support in the county through the investment of allocated 2016/2018 Local Growth Funding and other support;
- Maximising the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) structure of the **Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone**, to ensure we have a sustainable income stream for supporting the growth of some of our key sectoral innovation assets;
- **Accelerating innovation in ambitious, growth orientated companies and our priority sectors:** particularly High Performance Technology (Micro-electronics, Test and Measurement; and Aerospace, Defence and Space); Life-sciences & Medical Technologies (Drugs Manufacture & Delivery Technology; Medical devices and Healthcare systems & services); Information Economy (Cyber Security and Big Data); Creative Industries (Film, Digital Media; and Games Development); Food and Drink; Business Services; Tourism; Retail and Care.
- **Encouraging investment in key research infrastructure**, particularly facilities linked to our sector assets;
- Continuing to establish and expand the range of **Financial Instruments** in the County, to provide a sustainable source of funding business growth and expansion;
- Developing a systematic approach to the delivery of **Aftercare Support**, to ensure those businesses that do operate in Buckinghamshire are supported and locked into the local economy;
- **Strengthening the role of Buckinghamshire Advantage as the provider of land and property support to potential inward investors looking to locate into the area;**
- Enhancing **Entrepreneurship Programmes** in the skills system, to improve our graduate retention and indigenous start up rates;
- Stimulating **'Design and Tech' incubation and acceleration** (particularly linked to industrial/research assets and suitable talent pipelines);
- Improving the **support available to scale up micro-businesses with growth potential;**
- Encouraging **peer-peer learning amongst SME leaders**, particularly in key sectors;
- Securing funding to support businesses to **invest in capital machinery**, automate and improve their productivity;
- Forcing a step change in Buckinghamshire's **export performance:** particularly in mid-sized and large businesses, which appear to be lagging behind.
- **Promoting business resource efficiency & resilience;** to support businesses to reduce costs and waste.

7.0 Objective 2: SKILLS & TALENT

7.1 In the BTVLEP 2014 Strategic Economic Plan, we said we would prioritise;

- **Improving the market intelligence about the local labour market:** to help providers meet employment need & provide high quality information & advice to young people/adults looking to enter employment.
- **Continuing to develop the number and range of apprenticeship opportunities within Buckinghamshire:** with a focus in key employment sectors e.g. engineering, digital ICT. Develop a much wider range of opportunities at Advanced and Higher apprenticeship levels.
- **Developing a more effective local system of careers advice and guidance:** to work with the local schools, colleges, providers & local employers to develop a more effective careers information system.

- **Improving the work readiness of young people:** to help our young people gain the employability skills they need to succeed in the workplace.
- **Promoting a skills system that is more responsive to the needs of local employers:** working with the local provider network to review the local curriculum offer increase the level of collaboration.
- **Providing a reference point for future skills needs:** to keep abreast of the innovation and skills needs of the future and to support the sector with help with innovation including plans for capital investment.

7.2 As far as operational delivery is concerned, BTVLEP has invested £220k of its own resources in a two year skills programme, which has been matched by £150k of Careers and Enterprise Company investment, to put towards a programme of work which has largely focussed on trying to improve the work readiness skills of young people. We have established the Buckinghamshire Skills Board and the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub, have some ESF Employability and Workforce Development activity in commissioning and have been an active participant in the Thames Valley Area based review.

7.3 Moving forward, we are going to turn our attention to stimulating demand for Apprenticeships and Higher Level Apprenticeships.

7.4 The lack of any concerted devolution of adult skills funding is perhaps a little disappointing, given that it could be argued that some of the major challenges that Buckinghamshire faces in stimulating higher levels of economic growth and improved business productivity can partly be attributed to the fact that much of the education provision that does exist locally is quite strong on local, personalised and/or public services as opposed to international, private sector 'technology' based activities.

7.5 We know we atrophy undergraduate talent; our graduate retention/entrepreneurship policies would benefit from being strengthened; and central government investment in our public sector research base has been virtually non-existent. Investment in these elements of our skills system are vital, if we are to improve the number of High Growth Firms we generate in Buckinghamshire and those that we can assist to scale-up. Ultimately, as a location that sits at the heart of the Golden Triangle, investment in these kind of facilities would appear to have a strong business case.

7.6 In light of the above, our key skills and talent priorities going forward are;

BTVLEP Skills & Talent Strategic Priorities to 2020

- **Delivering high quality STEAM¹⁵ inspiration activities** targeted on children younger than secondary school age, to ensure young people develop the skills that business need;
- **Encouraging business incubation in FE and HE** to stimulate more youth entrepreneurship, business start-up and graduate retention;
- **Delivering more business-school challenges in STEAM and technical areas**, and more generally in areas where we want to expand apprenticeships;
- **Establishing enhanced work based qualifications especially at Levels 4 and 5;**
- **Establishing systems to improve the articulation and aggregation of employer skills needs;**
- **Improving the provision of student placements and projects** in business;
- **Identifying strategic firms interested in establishing new partnerships to provide degree or undergraduate provision in current gaps;**
- **Place making** – making Bucks an attractive place to study;

8.0 Objective 3: CONNECTIVITY

8.1 In the BTVLEP 2014 Strategic Economic Plan, we said we would prioritise;

- **Making our major transport infrastructure fit for our economic purpose;**
- **Improving broadband connectivity in the county;** and
- **Fixing the utility constraints that prevent commercial site developments**

8.2 As far as transport infrastructure is concerned, we prioritised investments in transport solutions which:

- Improved connectivity between national road network & key employment hubs;
- Improved connectivity between major settlements & key economic centre's;
- Improved connectivity between major settlements & rail connections;

¹⁵ STEAM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics

- Supported employment & housing enabling transport infrastructure;
- Supported the regeneration of Town Centres;
- Reduced congestion, improving journey times & journey time reliability;
- Maintained a high quality of life and natural environment, by promoting sustainable travel;
- Delivered a more co-ordinated and commercial approach to transport infrastructure and land-use planning.

8.3 In addition, in our first Local Growth Deal, we brought forward proposals for;

- **Nationally significant and local transport infrastructure improvements** – which utilised the available Local Transport Majors (LTM) and Integrated Transport Block (ITB) funding to put in place transport infrastructure which reduces congestion, improves journey times /journey time reliability and regenerates our town centre transport infrastructure; and
- **Nationally significant sustainable transport infrastructure** - to improve connectivity between new and existing rail stations and major settlements in the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP region (and beyond); encourage modal shift; integrate transport systems and promote low carbon vehicles;

8.4 This led to us prioritising the following schemes to improve North-South Connectivity through the County; Connectivity from major settlements to stations; and broadband technology

- Stocklake Link & Eastern Link Road;
- High Wycombe TC & Southern Quadrant Transport Strategy;
- A355 Beaconsfield Relief Road;
- 3 Sustainable Travel Schemes;
- The 5G Test-bed and Connected Counties Broadband Rollout on key business sites; and
- The Marlow – Maidenhead Rail Upgrade.

England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance

8.5 However, since the submission of our LGF1 and 2 bids, we have witnessed the emergence of England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance, as a sub-regional transport body. BTVLEP is an active partner in this sub-regional transport body, together with Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Northamptonshire County Council, Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership, Buckinghamshire County Council, Milton Keynes Council, South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership, Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Luton Borough Council and Cambridgeshire County Council.

8.6 The Alliance partners share a common aim: to look beyond current success and through collaborative work look to raise productivity to match, and where possible exceed, that of our global competitors and tackle barriers to the delivery of economic growth.

8.7 It is an initiative that is driven by recognition of the fact that strategic transport issues (and solutions) extend beyond any one local authority boundary; and there is a need for stronger integration of investment by local authorities, Government (and its agencies), infrastructure owners (such as Highways England and Network Rail) and service providers (such as train operating companies and bus companies).

8.8 There is a need to make the case for sustained levels of investment in infrastructure and services in response to pressures arising from economic success and to provide the capacity for economic growth;

8.9 In this way the Strategic Alliance partners look to strip away duplication and remove inefficiencies, enabling faster, more agile decisions; simplify funding streams wherever possible so that the time (and cost) taken to develop proposals and get them delivered on the ground is reduced; and provide greater certainty for private sector investors thereby encouraging them to commit sooner to investments with greater confidence

8.10 England's Economic Heartland is an economically successful area: with an economy valued at £92.5bn, it is as large as the Welsh economy. Home to 3.45m people, the Heartland's 175,000 businesses employ 1.65m people. We know that a failure to maintain our infrastructure or to invest in additional capacity will put our current success at risk: we know that our competitive position globally will decline.

8.11 We know all of this from our evidence base: our levels of economic productivity are amongst the highest in the country and yet there remains a gap with the best of our global competitor regions. Pressures on

our strategic transport infrastructure and services continue to grow: a consequence of our economic success.

8.12 Without investment in our strategic transport infrastructure or services the levels of service we can offer will decline, making it harder to attract future private sector investment.

8.13 But we also know that tackling the pressures on our strategic transport system will also benefit the UK as a whole. For the strategic transport corridors that criss-cross England's Economic Heartland are the arteries that also support ambitious plans for economic growth in the Midlands, the Northern Powerhouse and beyond.

Strategic Transport Connectivity

8.14 One thing many partners in Buckinghamshire agree on is that our transport infrastructure is woefully inadequate for our current needs. Only 1.45% of the road network in Buckinghamshire is dual carriageway, serving as an illustration of how the traditional infrastructure funding models have impacted on our the local economy;

8.15 Buckinghamshire is the least self-contained of all the LEPs with only 62.3% of working residents employed in the county . Roughly twice as many people commute out of Buckinghamshire as commute in. Out-flows are generally to the south, in flows generally from the sides.

8.16 BTVLEP was one of the first organisations to feed into the Strategic Alliance Transport Strategy highlighting the importance of the following schemes going forward;

- East West Rail
- Access to Old Oak Common / Crossrail
- HS2/EWR Interchange
- A421 Expressway
- M40/A404 Corridor
- A418 East – M1/A5 – A41/M25 Link
- A41 – Aylesbury Ring Road
- OneTransport

8.16 As far as the first four of the above schemes are concerned, they all broadly fall into the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Growth corridor, an area of the country that the Chancellor has asked the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) to look into the potential of.

8.17 As an area of unique economic potential, BTVLEP welcomes the NIC review of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. To fully realise this potential we would hope that the NIC recognises the potential of the area as a whole will have to be addressed. In particular, the largely rural area between the cities has both the desire and potential to enhance this sub-regional growth.

8.18 Investment in this region can have benefits significantly beyond the immediate growth area. Radial connectivity in particular will reduce the existing over-reliance on the London Hubs for cross-regional



** These issues / solutions are all connected. They are divided up here simply to make the map easier to use*

movements but will also facilitate growth from East Coast through to the South Coast of England. Investment in this region is not only supporting the resilience of the capital's transport network but will provide the umbilical-cord to enable sustainable growth throughout the nation.

8.19 In light of these issues, BTVLEP believes the ambition of the commission should be to support investment that not only unlocks the potential of the region as a whole but also fulfils the promise of other national infrastructure projects such as HS2, Cross-rail and Airport Expansion.

8.20 To do this BTVLEP believes the NIC must ensure that the East West Rail investment is fully electrified and delivered without unnecessary delay, that further consideration is given to passenger rail connections linking HS2 to the wider network and that the strategic road investment is not limited to connections between the 3 core cities but enables better movement between all growth areas.

Other important transport schemes

8.21 In addition, through the work Buckinghamshire Advantage has been doing to develop its Infrastructure Plan, in the first part of 2016, we have identified another 30 or so more localised schemes which are also important for the smooth running of the Buckinghamshire economy.

8.22 Some of these will be brought forward as Local Growth Fund proposals.

8.23 The somewhat localised nature of some of these schemes leads us to believe there may still be potential for some of these schemes to be brought forward, promoted and delivered by Buckinghamshire partners as part of a local development activity and/or as part of our Local Growth Fund Proposals.

Digital Connectivity

8.24 Digital Technologies are a significant enabler of business growth. Not only can it help businesses to inject greater value into their organisations (through the introduction of new, innovative, value-added products, services and processes) but it can also help businesses cut costs. Digital Technologies can also stimulate the development of new markets, create new jobs and reduce mismatches in the labour market.

8.25 BTVLEP recognises the importance of Digital Connectivity to the future smooth running of the Buckinghamshire economy. In particular, we foresee five key elements of our digital infrastructure needing particular attention going forward, including;

- **Final 5% coverage:** Continued investment will be needed to support the programme of universal coverage of superfast broadband within Buckinghamshire. This is particularly important to create viable locations for business investment, particularly in areas like Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone;
- **Mobile Phone 'not-spots':** ensuring good mobile phone coverage, particularly along major transport corridors, business parks and urban centres;
- **Open Access Town Centre wi-fi Networks:** developing a programme of open Access wi-fi provision within market town locations across Buckinghamshire;
- **Ensuring that all new housing developments have broadband to home provided as standard:** Developing a programme for new home standards relating to digital connectivity;
- **HS2 Broadband Opportunity Corridor:** Given the commitment of HS2 to provide a corridor of high-speed broadband connectivity along route of HS2, the opportunity exists to develop a programme of application opportunities supported by this connectivity;

8.26 Not all of the above issues will necessarily require public investment, but may be capable of being addressed through closer collaboration/joint working with telecommunications companies.

Energy Connectivity

8.27 Energy connectivity is also likely to be a significant barrier to growth going forward. In common with many other parts of the country, feedback from some of the Electricity Distribution Network Operator's (DNO's) suggests that much of the existing grid is at, or near, full capacity. This can often be a problem for any new developments, who can sometimes struggle with viability issues if they also need to also invest in increasing grid capacity.

8.28 Encouraging and promoting smart energy, the establishment of energy consortia (made up of large energy users), the development of decentralised energy networks and localised energy storage solutions are just some of the ways this issue can be overcome.

8.29 BTVLEP envisages energy is likely to be an important area of focus, going forward.

8.17 In light of the above, our key connectivity priorities going forward are;

BTVLEP Connectivity Priorities to 2020

- **Making our major transport infrastructure fit for our economic purpose** by ensuring transport investment programmes are focussed on overcoming current capacity bottlenecks and linked to the scale and location of planned future housing and employment growth;
- **Supporting the work of the National Infrastructure Commission** in relation to east-west connectivity through the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor
- **Recognising the importance of transport corridors across Buckinghamshire and into the “heart of England”** (which also includes Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire)
- **Improving digital connectivity in the county** by investing in clearly defined areas of market failure, plugging mobile ‘not spots’, developing a programme for new home standards and working more closely with telecommunications providers;
- **Fixing the utility constraints that prevent commercial site developments** in the county by exploring the potential for innovative localised/distributed energy networks;

9.0 Objective 4: TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

9.1 Given Buckinghamshire is likely to need to develop a further 50,000 new homes to cope with the forecast growth in the population between 2013 and 2033; aspires to attract and grow more mid-range/large business; and encourage more people to live, work and play in the county, BTVLEP is keen to ensure the communities that are created here are thriving, sustainable and vibrant communities, that promote people's health, happiness, and wellbeing.

9.2 With that in mind, we envisage a number of key investments are important in helping us achieve these goals over the next economic cycle.

Employment Opportunities

9.6 Given that Buckinghamshire is already the most porous LEP area in the country, with the pull of London, Oxford, Reading and Milton Keynes acting as a significant pull for people who live in the county, its vitally important we invest in the creation of suitable employment sites locally, to ensure Buckinghamshire develops sufficient, suitable jobs for its growing population.

9.7 Whilst the award of Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone, together with assets like Pinewood Studios, could support the stimulation of higher value-added jobs, there are also plenty of other employment sites in the county which are also available for prospective employment sites.

9.8 Going forward, given that much of our infrastructure is already at breaking point, we are particularly keen to see that employment sites being brought forward that are located close or near to linked housing growth and that can offer high value employment to the large number of people that are currently out commuting.

9.9 Creation of high quality employment opportunities will help us reduce our porosity, reduce the strain on our transport infrastructure and deliver higher level of sustainability.

Housing Development

9.10 BTVLEP is working with the county council and the district councils to understand what growth will be proposed in their local plans and will continue to support them to complete these Local Plans within the deadline set by the government.

9.11 The Buckinghamshire ‘Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment 2015: Consultation Draft: January 2016’ assessed that Buckinghamshire will need 50,000 new dwellings over the 20-year period 2013-33, equivalent to an average of 2,500 dwellings per year.

9.12 It splits this figure by district:

- 21,300 in Aylesbury Vale;
- 7,300 in Chiltern;
- 7,800 in South Bucks; and
- 15,100 in Wycombe.

- 9.13 Once the final numbers and locations for growth have been agreed, we will continue to work with local authorities to try and ensure that funding (via initiatives like the HCA Garden Villages and Suburb initiative) opportunities are maximised to enable the creation of high quality development and sustainable communities.

Vibrant Town Centres

- 9.14 In order for Buckinghamshire to develop as a place in which people want to live, work and play, we need to ensure our town centres (like Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Aylesbury, Buckingham, Haddenham, Princes Risborough, High Wycombe and Chesham) develop as sustainable, vibrant and liveable urban areas.
- 9.15 Quality of life - as embodied in a city's vibrancy and liveability - is becoming an increasingly important factor influencing business location decisions, especially among high-value and knowledge intensive firms, as well as the people that work in them. Stimulating independent retail, the evening economy, street life, the arts and the creative milieu are all important elements of making our town centres attractive to knowledge based firms and the people that work in them.
- 9.16 In many cases, making our main urban centres attractive to the 'creative class' requires a mix of physical development, social action and business investment. It is not just about spatial planning. In light of this BTVLEP will seek to support the creation of holistic place based partnerships that can support the development of our main urban centres which involve a range of partners.

Green and Blue Infrastructure

- 9.17 Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns has a most attractive natural environment and many places of historical and cultural interest. The landscape and the outdoor opportunities for walking, cycling, water sports and canals, wildlife-watching, camping; history and heritage, including the great houses and gardens and National Trust properties; and local food and drink, especially gastro-pubs and micro-breweries; all make up part of the excellent rural quality of life offer.
- 9.18 In light of this strength, it's vital we preserve, maintain and enhance our natural environment, which in turn helps strengthen a core component of our competitive advantage. It's also vital that our main urban centres contain sufficient high quality green and blue infrastructure.
- 9.19 In light of the above, our key town centre regeneration priorities going forward are;

BTVLEP Place-making Priorities to 2020

- **Supporting the delivery of new housing and business space which has been permitted by the planning system**, for example through securing funding for access or infrastructure improvements;
- **Ensuring employment growth develops linked to the scale and location of planned future housing growth;**
- **Stimulating sustainable, vibrant and liveable urban centres**, that are appealing to knowledge workers and young professionals.
- **Ensuring our main urban centres contain sufficient high quality green and blue infrastructure;**

Contact

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