

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN

Buckinghamshire Advantage

February 2016

1 The Purpose of this Plan

- I. This document has been commissioned by **Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP)**, with the plan production being overseen by the **Buckinghamshire Advantage (BA) Board**, working closely with Buckinghamshire's Local Authorities.
- II. **This Buckinghamshire Infrastructure Investment Plan (BIIP) is a living document that will evolve over time as existing investment priorities are met and new ones emerge. It will need to be shaped through consultation with stakeholders and politicians and updated on a regular basis.**
- III. The Buckinghamshire Infrastructure Investment Plan (BIIP) has been produced to:
 1. Establish clear agreement amongst Buckinghamshire partners about what the infrastructure priorities are in the area and align to respective activities in support of realising these schemes;
 2. Improve our ability to secure funding from central government, under whatever funding government has available to support local growth at any particular time; and
 3. Enhance our chances of securing local 'betterment' to put towards the costs of our infrastructure needs, thereby enhancing our chances of achieving our goals.
- IV. The BIIP is not intended to replicate the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), which sets out the medium to long term economic goals for Buckinghamshire and the high level plans for realising them. Similarly, this infrastructure plan is not intended to replicate the Local Development Plans or the Transport Plan.
- V. In order for us to be successful in securing central government funding, local partners need to come together to agree the schemes to prioritise, agree scheme designs and develop shared financial models under which those schemes can be delivered.
- VI. Because of the current scale of the national debt/deficit in the UK, many of the schemes that we aspire to are likely to require significant contributions from local public and private sector partners if they are to be delivered.
- VII. Recognising that local public sector finances are also under significant pressure as a result of the current tight national finances, we need to recognise that delivering viable infrastructure projects increasingly requires a contribution from new approaches including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and/or betterment generated from potential land uplift.
- VIII. In simple terms, this largely means that many of the infrastructure schemes in Buckinghamshire over the next decade and beyond will need to be development-led and need to be configured in such a way which maximises betterment to derive a contribution towards infrastructure.

- IX. The perception that public sector partners will be able to deliver local infrastructure improvements from balance sheet investment is becoming increasingly unrealistic.
- X. This version of the BIIP has been prepared in collaboration with officers and lead members from the five local authorities – Buckinghamshire County Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council, Wycombe District Council, Chiltern District Council and South Bucks District Council and Buckinghamshire Advantage and Buckinghamshire Business First.
- XI. **These partners will aim to draw on this plan to help shape their implementation activities, establish appropriate policy frameworks and prioritise elements of the plan.** The document will be reviewed regularly by the Bucks leaders and submitted to BTVLEP to help shape the further development of the Strategic Economic Plan.
- XII. In this way, the investment strategy will be used to identify critical business infrastructure investment and to form the basis of a future Local Growth Fund bidding platform. It sets out the key strategic investments in road, rail, economic and other infrastructure that Buckinghamshire believes it needs in order to enable sustainable growth in the County over the next 20 years.

2 Strategic Principles and Framework for Growth

- XIII. The Buckinghamshire Infrastructure Investment Plan defines a set of seven strategic principles to guide investment and ensure growth is delivered sustainably:
 1. **Integrate with existing policy and support the Local Plan making process, to ensure the investment proposed in this plan is consistent with local land use strategies;**
 2. **Support the delivery of the major national strategic transport infrastructure and local highway improvements we need to accommodate growth;**
 3. **Strengthen economic drivers and key sectors – targeting investment to support the needs of business, particularly ‘high value’ businesses;**
 4. **Protect the environment and the character of settlements – keeping Buckinghamshire a special place;**
 5. **Enable town centre regeneration and support the wider growth agenda – notably the major centres of Aylesbury and High Wycombe as well as smaller towns;**
 6. **Make provision for the appropriate expansion of existing settlements and strategic sites; and**
 7. **Promote SMART growth¹ - to strengthen and future proof our infrastructure.**

¹ Communities which use digital technologies to enhance performance and well-being in order to reduce costs and resource consumption, and to engage more effectively and actively with its citizens, creating places which are more “liveable” and resistant and, hence, able to respond quicker to new challenges such as climate change adaptation and planning for new communities, creating new ways to build stronger places and neighbourhoods.

- XIV. In addition to the above, evidence suggests there is a **willingness to take a proactive role, working in partnership, in making and taking opportunities** for longer term strategic growth.

3 Buckinghamshire Today – “Planning for Growth”

Buckinghamshire Today

- XV. Buckinghamshire is a prosperous county in the Thames Valley, home to world-class businesses, a highly skilled entrepreneurial workforce and an outstanding natural environment. It is one of the most attractive parts of the country in which to live, work and do business.
- XVI. Buckinghamshire has an **exceptionally strong economy** worth around £14bn in Gross Value Added comprising over 30,000 businesses. Economic output per head of the working age population is 19% higher than the UK average. Buckinghamshire has been, and continues to be, a top performing net contributor to Treasury. This is unsurprising given the high numbers of residents educated to degree level, the high proportion of well-paid directors, senior managers and professionals, and high rates of labour market participation. Buckinghamshire is also an entrepreneurial county; 72 businesses are started per 10,000 of population, **the highest rate of any county in the UK.**
- XVII. Buckinghamshire is **already delivering significant growth.** In Aylesbury Vale District, circa 1000 homes are being built each year, among the highest completion rates of any district in the Country. In recent years, Aylesbury Vale District Council has invested significantly in the town centre including successful projects such as the Waterside theatre and conference centre. In May 2014, Arla’s state of the art dairy was opened, creating a one-billion litre fresh milk dairy as a focus of the agri-foods industry.
- XVIII. In Wycombe District, major retail and leisure development has taken place, most notably in High Wycombe itself both in the town centre at the Eden Centre and also along the M40 at Handy Cross and Cressex Island. These investments are transforming perceptions of the town and are encouraging further economic investment in the area. About 70% of the District is in the AONB, and about 50% in the Green Belt. Despite these constraints in the last 5 years around 450 dwellings have been built on average each year in the District, largely on brownfield sites.
- XIX. In Chiltern/South Bucks where land is at a premium due to Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designations, opportunities are emerging. The Secretary of State recently granted consent for Pinewood Studios to almost double in size.
- XX. The economic opportunities in the Thames Valley, the quality of life on offer and proximity to London are fuelling population growth and movement. The south of the County is more constrained by Green Belt and AONB designations, and while there are opportunities for intensification, redevelopment and release of new

land, there is also a strategic opportunity to redirect growth to the north of the County where there is greater land available to accommodate growth subject to addressing an infrastructure deficit and new movement patterns.

- XXI. Looking forward, there are additional significant opportunities for growth based around the priority sectors of **Creative Industries, Life-Science, Agri-Foods, High Performance Technology and Space** and through the development of innovation centres and Enterprise Zones strengthening links between business and academia and enabling our entrepreneurial base to scale up their businesses without having to move elsewhere. To do this we must provide the conditions for sustainable growth including business support services and networks, digital connectivity, better transport infrastructure and modern and flexible business premises in sought after locations.

4 Planning Policy : Current Position

- XXII. Our Local Authority partners have been working closely together on the evidence base to inform their respective Local Plans as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 'duty to cooperate' and ensuring Local Plans are aligned as closely as possible. To this end they entered into an MOU in the summer of 2015 to support closer collaboration and co-ordination in the production of Local Plans.
- XXIII. Much of the growth Buckinghamshire needs to accommodate will be indigenous growth. Housing pressures may also ripple through the County from local authorities further south, particularly Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead and other constrained Berkshire authorities, although their first port of call should be the unconstrained western Berkshire authorities and determined by Strategic Housing Market geography. There may be further pressures on Bucks from other neighbouring areas such as Oxfordshire; Milton Keynes; Luton/Central Bedfordshire and South Northants, again, if these different housing market areas cannot accommodate their own growth needs. London's rapid growth will also impact on the County: the capital's population is growing faster than previously forecast and property prices continue to rise. All of this means there are considerable variables governing the scale, location and pace of growth in Buckinghamshire.
- III. Based on the emerging Local Plans and the Strategic Principles, three broad 'Growth Corridors' emerge as potential focus for growth and enabling investment. The BIIP will aim to identify strategic interventions within each of these corridors and the corresponding infrastructure investments to enable growth.

5 Growth Corridors & Zones

M40 and Thames Valley Crossroads

- XXIV. The opportunity for the southern part of the County is to create a corridor for economic regeneration and growth focused on the M40 and the A404. This is already established policy within existing and emerging plans but additional sites, with development potential, are starting to emerge. Investment in this

corridor will strengthen Buckinghamshire's connections with the M4 section of the Thames Valley and consolidate Wycombe's position at the intersection of these two important routes. High Wycombe is already an important station on the Chiltern Line; improved services and connections will further enhance its potential as a development destination as a result of these improvements. These are particularly important opportunities to enable private investment to create more employment in this area.

- XXV. The growth opportunities extend from Pinewood Studios at the eastern end of the corridor through a string of strategic sites in Wycombe along the M40, near to its main junctions, and down the A404. These include existing business parks, industrial estates, retail parks and new 'reserve sites' emerging through the Local Plan process. The continuing programme of regeneration and redevelopment of High Wycombe town centre will be a key driver of growth within the corridor complementing development opportunities along the M40.
- XXVI. The connectivity that the M40 provides to the A34 and A43 also makes the M40 a very important corridor for neighbouring Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire LEAs. Junction 9 provides access to Bicester and Junction 10 is the main exit for Silverstone Racing Circuit. The opportunity for this area, therefore, is to maximise its potential arising from proposed improvements to existing highways and improved rail services, and to consolidate linkages with other parts of the Thames Valley.
- XXVII. Several potential projects in the M40 Corridor and Thames Valley Crossroads are included in the Investment Plan. It is possible to identify these projects, in part, because Wycombe District Council has made good progress in recent years in identifying the preferred locations for development. However, further technical work will be required before full business cases for investment can be submitted to Government.

Chiltern Line Connected Settlements

- XXVIII. The Chiltern Line is the principal railway line through Buckinghamshire. The effect of the railway has been to create a network of connected settlements, each with its own character and role within the economic structure of the County. In addition to the opportunities in High Wycombe (above), the main locations where growth is anticipated are:
- The Aylesbury Growth Area;
 - Aylesbury Town Centre;
 - Princes Risborough, Haddenham and
 - Chesham, Amersham, Beaconsfield.
- XXIX. Most development to date has taken place in and around the Aylesbury Growth Area where there has been substantial development to the north and north-west of the town, at Berryfields, close to the Parkway station and to the East at Arla. Other railway stations have been the focus of more limited development

and those in the southern-most part of the County have been restricted, in terms of their growth potential, by Green Belt and AONB designations.

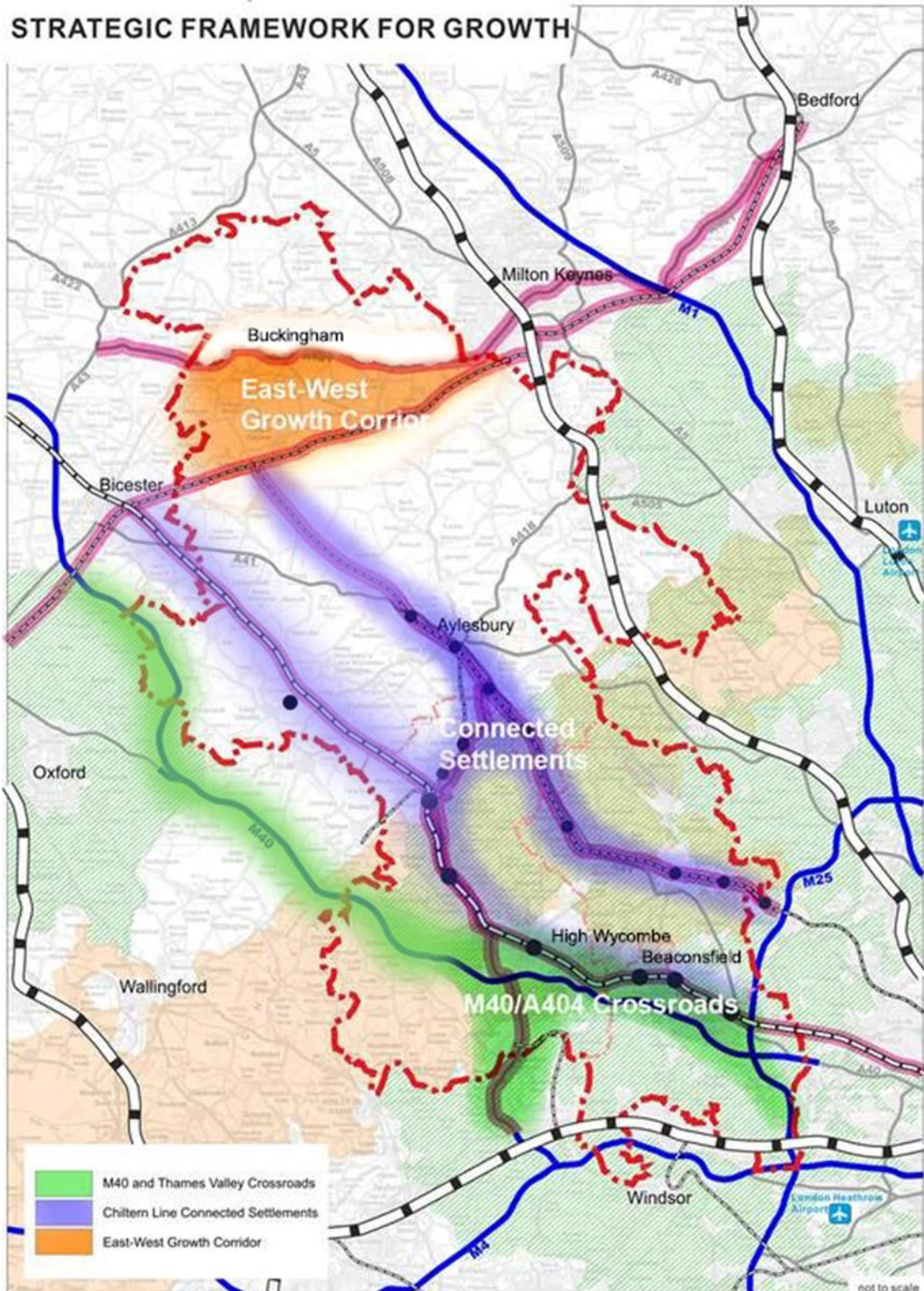
- XXX. Emerging plans in the southern part of the County, however, suggest that stations on the Chiltern line will increasingly be the focus of new development as the Districts seek to accommodate growth. Significant changes are to come with the completion of East-West Rail which will enhance the status of all of these settlements as connected locations. The first effect will be felt in late 2015/2016 when the first phase of the Western Section of East-West Rail provides a new link to Oxford. Settlements south of Bicester will therefore become more attractive as growth locations as a result of the faster connection to London.
- XXXI. More importantly, the second phase of the Western section of East-West Rail will extend the Chiltern Line northwards, beyond Aylesbury, to link up with East-West Rail, at the intersection of which will be a new station in Winslow. At that point, Aylesbury will cease to be the end of the line and, instead, will be on both north-south and east-west national rail routes; this will significantly enhance its potential as a development location as set out below. East-West Rail also allows for better connectivity north-south within the County by allowing train services to be scheduled from Milton Keynes, through Aylesbury, Princes Risborough and High Wycombe to Marylebone. Investment in the track between Aylesbury and Princes Risborough - preferably dual tracking - is necessary for this to be effective.
- XXXII. There is a further opportunity to connect East West Rail and Cross Rail, through the opening up of the High Wycombe to Bourne End London Rail Bypass.
- XXXIII. As set out below, based on the current position with each of the Local Plans, some potential projects in the Chiltern Line Connected Settlements Corridor have been identified for inclusion in the Investment Plan. However, the identification of other projects and supporting business case submissions will depend on further progress being made with the preparation of Local Plans. For those projects already identified substantial further technical work is required before they can be included in future funding bids to Government.

The East-West Corridor

- XXXIV. Together, East-West Rail and the East-West (A 421) Expressway, two nationally significant national network improvements, will make North Buckinghamshire a far more attractive location for growth. North Buckinghamshire is at the centre of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, and this proposed East-West Corridor will have Milton Keynes - one of the economically strongest urban conurbations in the UK at one end - and Oxford/Bicester at the other end. The implementation of East West Rail is well underway and the route for East West A421 Expressway is now being studied. When both are complete, these improved links in the national road and rail networks will enable frequent, fast journeys across North Bucks and between major UK cities.
- XXXV. The scale of this growth opportunity is emerging in local and sub-regional planning policies. Moreover, whilst there is pressure for development in

Aylesbury Vale district as a whole, as yet, there is only very limited market interest in growth in North Buckinghamshire due to current planning constraints.

XXXVI. As yet, given that Aylesbury Vale District Council has not yet formulated firm planning policies for the the East-West Corridor, no detailed projects have been identified for inclusion in the Investment Plan. It is recommended that an outline study of the Corridor should be undertaken to feed into the process of preparing the Local Plan.



6 Business Critical Infrastructure

Strategic Transport Infrastructure

- XXXVII. In December 2014 the Leaders of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire County Council's set out their proposal for a Strategic Alliance (England's Economic Heartland) to form a sub-regional partnership. As of January 2016 the Strategic Alliance has grown to accommodate local authorities covering Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire, Luton and Cambridgeshire.
- XXXVIII. With a combined total population of 3.5m and an economy valued at £92.5bn Englands Economic Heartland area covered by the Strategic Alliance is a national economic powerhouse that rivals any other outside of London. The work undertaken since the inception has explored three strategic issues identified in the Strategic Economic Plans as being barriers to delivery of growth: strategic transport and infrastructure, skills and strategic economic development, and funding certainty. These work streams complement and support the individual Strategic Economic Plans and other key spatial and planning strategies and plans across the new geography.
- XXXIX. 'England's Economic Heartland' proposition is currently focused on addressing **Strategic Transport and Infrastructure** and presents a new and innovative opportunity for Government to deliver its growth agenda more quickly and efficiently by supporting locally governed public and private sector alliances to oversee the development and infrastructure implementation programmes across the Strategic Alliance area.
- XL. The scale of strategic road, rail and air transport investment that could potentially land in and around Buckinghamshire over the next economic cycle is on a scale that could transform the area. The most significant projects that are either agreed, under consideration or being consulted on include:
- **Heathrow Airport Expansion** – The Airports Commission has concluded that expanded airport capacity is crucial for the UK's long-term prosperity and that the proposal for a new northwest runway at Heathrow Airport, combined with a significant package of measures to address its environmental and community impacts, presents the strongest case and offers the greatest strategic and economic benefits – providing around 40 new destinations from the airport and more than 70,000 new jobs by 2050;
 - **Crossrail** - delivering a major new heavy-duty suburban rail service for London and the South-East, it will connect the City, Canary Wharf, the West End and Heathrow Airport to commuter areas east and west of the capital. Stations at Iver and Taplow lie within Buckinghamshire and are expected to be in operation by December 2019;
 - **High Speed 2 (HS2)** – a planned high-speed railway to link the cities of London and Birmingham, and then to extend to North West England and Yorkshire. If approved, the first phase of HS2 could begin in 2017 with an indicated opening date in 2026, completion of the entire network is expected in 2033. The route runs through significant parts of Buckinghamshire including the Colne Valley, across the Chiltern Hills and across the Vale of Aylesbury. There are limited direct benefits for Buckinghamshire and a focus to date has been on

maximising the mitigation benefits should the proposals be approved by Government. These benefits could include improved road connectivity for construction traffic and enhanced access for the Chiltern Rail network into London.

- **East-West Rail** - a nationally significant project originally conceived as connecting the two university towns of Oxford and Cambridge (part of 'the O2C Arc') its importance is now of much wider significance. By electrifying the line from Southampton, the route will link the south coast ports with the Midlands and effectively create an outer-orbital passenger and freight route around London in one of the most highly pressurised parts of the country. The section from Bicester to Bedford, with north-south links to Milton Keynes and Aylesbury, will be operational by 2019. This link will also allow for significantly improved rail services within the County between High Wycombe and Aylesbury;
- **East-West Expressway** - HM Treasury's National Infrastructure Plan (NIP) (December 2014) includes proposals to upgrade the country's most important A-roads to 'Expressways including the A421 which runs through the north of the County;
- **Western Rail Access to Heathrow** - the proposed new rail link will provide a direct service from Reading via Slough to Heathrow airport which could accelerate growth benefits in the south of the County;
- **Chiltern Line upgrade** - enhancing its role as a key radial route connecting London with the West Midlands. The most recent improvements in 2011/12 resulted in the dualling of the line between London and Birmingham, faster services, and parkway stations at Aylesbury and Haddenham & Thame;
- **M25 South West Quadrant Study** – the study of long-term options for improving conditions on the south west section of the M25.

XLI. Configured appropriately, these potential investments/transport studies could open up significant new development opportunities across Bucks. However, without linked improvements to the local highway network; suitable investment in business parks and research infrastructure; and investments in digital infrastructure and enabling utilities, Buckinghamshire may not achieve sustainable growth.

XLII. 'England's Economic Heartland' is innovative and unique given that this is the first time that a major sub-national geography, outside of the traditional conurbations, has come together at a strategic level to articulate a shared, integrated and transformational approach to transport and infrastructure. An overriding goal is to support regeneration and deliver sustained economic growth. Through our Strategic Alliance it is proposed that there will be a single platform for engagement on strategic transport and infrastructure issues affecting the area and impacting on the success of UK plc. The proposition also recognises that a barrier to the delivery of planned and sustained economic growth, and indeed the National Infrastructure Plan, is the lack of a truly integrated approach to the planning, implementation and operation of our transport system at a sub-national level. This document will help to identify the infrastructure priorities for Buckinghamshire which are a key building blocks of this sub-regional dialogue.

- XLIII. The proposed approach complements the activities undertaken by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEPs) and supports the delivery of the Local Plans prepared by the local planning authorities in the area. It provides a refreshed approach and set of proposals specifically designed to accelerate the delivery of the aims and objectives set out by these bodies, many of which would otherwise have been undeliverable in the timescale in which they are needed to support growth. The latter point is particularly important given that our businesses operate in a global market that is becoming increasingly competitive.
- XLIV. However, there remain significant issues to be resolved, mainly in relation to the 'A' roads which remain the backbone of communication routes in the County, but are often poor quality and in need of significant upgrades. The A404, linking the M4 and the M40, still has one junction that is not grade separated. This is just outside the County, at Bisham in Berkshire, but has significant impacts in terms of the interconnectivity of the south of the County to the Thames Valley. The A4010, which links the two principal towns in the County, Aylesbury and High Wycombe, is also poor, and unable to be upgraded to provide the strategic route that is needed. Alternative routes to the A4010, making better use of the M40, therefore need exploration as part of the dialogue with neighbouring partners to address infrastructure constraints on the Bucks Economy

7 The Productivity Challenge for Buckinghamshire

- XLV. Buckinghamshire is already recognised as an Engine for Growth for the national economy and a top performing contributor to Treasury, when compared with City Deal areas, we make a larger contribution to national output and drive higher levels of productivity. These impressive statements should not, however, mask the capacity of our economy to grow. Whilst we are consistently at the top of the UK rankings for GDP according to Eurostat Analysis, Buckinghamshire would only rank as 117th out of 412 regions in Germany.
- XLVI. To help our businesses meet their productivity challenges and to support growth in our high value sectors we need to provide the right conditions and timely support enabling our outstanding businesses to scale-up and rapidly expand.
- XLVII. We need to ensure that our investment helps improve the research linkages between academia and Buckinghamshire businesses, provides incubation and innovation centres providing the conditions for closer collaboration in locations that are well served by transport corridors and the latest digital infrastructure.
- XLVIII. The successful Enterprise Zone submission by BTVLEP is a good example of a the direct intervention that is required. This initiative, based on three sites in the north of Buckinghamshire, will advance development in locations that benefit from recent or planned transport infrastructure and is driven by our high growth business sectors, all feature innovation centres and the development of academic and commercial links at the heart of the proposition.

8 Smart Bucks

- XLIX. **Digital Infrastructure** – For many people Digital Infrastructure is the railway of the 21st century. Buckinghamshire partners have invested heavily in supporting

the national BDUK Superfast Broadband programme to deliver improved digital services to at least 95% of Buckinghamshire residents. BTVLEP have prioritised its investment into key business park sites and are looking at how targeted investment for the latest 5G and ultra-fast services can be provided for the businesses with the greatest need. Virgin Media have recently chosen Chesham as a pilot for a comprehensive Wi-Fi connectivity programme for the town centre, a pilot we would like to see extended to all of our urban areas. Our digital infrastructure group will support the prioritisation of future investment not only in broadband, Wi-Fi and voice technologies that are essential to supporting business productivity and smart growth but in all emerging digital technologies.

- L. Each of the Bucks District Councils is considering how best to promote more sustainable development as they prepare their Local Plans. In addition, Buckinghamshire County Council (on their own and as part of the Heart of England initiative) sees the advantage of promoting “Smart Growth” principles; this work is at a relatively early stage. Going forward, the opportunity exists for the partners in Buckinghamshire Advantage to develop a series of policies and investment projects to promote smart growth across all of Buckinghamshire.

9 Recommendations and Next Steps

- LI. Moving forward, it is recommended that the Buckinghamshire partners should:

1. Endorse the growth opportunities arising from major national infrastructure investments and agree that these can best be realised by working with neighbouring localities (through initiatives like ‘England’s Economic Heartland’) to improve the productivity of the Buckinghamshire Economy.

- LII. Buckinghamshire offers significant growth opportunities – from High Wycombe and the M40 to Buckingham and beyond. The Infrastructure Plan shows how, in many respects, these complement one another; it re-iterates the need to improve transport, broadband and employment opportunities to accommodate the likely housing demand. Investments in national infrastructure projects provide an opportunity to realise these growth opportunities, for the benefit of the whole of Buckinghamshire.

2. Endorse the strategic principles and the ‘Corridor’ framework for infrastructure and growth and consider how best to incorporate these in their Local Plans.

- LIII. Embedding the strategic principles and the three growth corridors that comprise the “Framework for Growth” in emerging Local Plans will provide the foundation for a shared agreement on how growth in one part of Buckinghamshire will provide benefits for other communities across the County.

3. Commit to contributing to regular updates of the projects in the Infrastructure Plan and an agreed prioritisation process using agreed criteria.

- LIV. The first draft of the Buckinghamshire Infrastructure Investment Plan should include a agreed set of infrastructure priorities and agreement around the investment models needed to realise them. However, as each of the Local Plans evolve, it will be essential to update this Investment Plan; initially, this should be done on a 6 montly basis.

4. Build on current efforts to co-operate and establish a joint working arrangement to oversee the prioritisation process and updating of the Infrastructure Plan.

- LV. The preparation of the first draft of the Infrastructure Investment Plan has highlighted the willingness of officers across Buckinghamshire to cooperate in making plans for the benefit of all of Buckinghamshire’s communities. This positive approach to planning for growth also underpins efforts to exercise the “duty to cooperate.”