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Emerging Economic Strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire 2025-2036

Pre-design copy
December 2024



Swindon and Wiltshire
BUSINESS AND GROWTH UNIT

Wiltshire Council

Contents

Vision	1
Foreword	2
Introduction to Swindon and Wiltshire	3
Growth Zones	6
Opportunities and barriers to economic growth	7
Our economy	9
Infrastructure	10
Place-shaping	13
Skills and employment	16
Business	18
Priority sectors and emerging clusters	21
Governance, monitoring and evaluation	24

For further information, please contact:

Debby Skellern
Swindon and Wiltshire business and Growth Unit
Debby.Skellern@wiltshire.gov.uk

Our Vision to 2036

To ensure all our communities benefit from inclusive and sustainable growth, making the Swindon and Wiltshire area world-renowned for its convergence of innovation, entrepreneurialism and great quality of life.

Final draft for approval

Foreword – Add photos of Leaders?

We are pleased to publish the Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy for 2025-2036 which presents our shared commitment to driving the sustainable and inclusive growth of the area. This strategy represents the next chapter of Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council working together on our common goals to deliver a better and thriving economy, a fairer and more resilient society, and providing our communities with greener and sustainable infrastructure.

Our geographic location underpins our competitive advantage and for decades the area has attracted innovators, manufacturers, producers, and defence and security experts. Our wonderful setting remains the foundation for our future economic growth. We open our doors to new investment, which is key to delivering jobs growth, attracting talent and ensuring we have vibrant and inclusive settlements and communities, and a great quality of life.

We have sectorial strengths and capabilities that align with the government's priorities in advanced engineering, creative industries, digital technologies, finance and professional services, as well as green industries. Moreover, we want to drive the development of our emerging clusters in life sciences and pharmaceuticals, defence, and cyber resilience positioning ourselves at the cutting edge of innovation, research and supply chain development. Our priority sectors will provide high-value jobs, secure additional investment and stimulate new business development across Swindon and Wiltshire.

To maximise our opportunities to deliver sustainable and inclusive growth we need to:

- Provide the infrastructure required to deliver economic growth;
- Make places work;
- Address skills gaps and demands to support economic growth and increase aspiration;
- Support the start-up, survival and growth of businesses with the potential to grow and deliver good quality products and services; and
- Harness research and innovation to underpin growth.

In this strategy, we have set out our ambitions and the priorities we want to deliver over the next decade. These can only be realised by securing the necessary additional public sector funding as the enabler. This in turn will unlock access to large scale, new private investment that will drive resilient, long-term economic growth and deliver greater, more inclusive outcomes for our residents and businesses. We have worked in collaboration to agree our priorities against the backdrop of the government's emerging growth policy framework and in anticipation of the 2025 spending review. We will keep this strategy under review to ensure we use our resources efficiently to contribute to national growth aspirations.

We are keen to explore the opportunities that devolution presents, allowing us to unlock new investment and increase decision-making at a local level to achieve improvements to transport, infrastructure resilience, and skills and education provision.

We are extremely proud of our area, our businesses, people and communities. Our economy has continued to grow despite difficult economic conditions in recent years. We know there is more to unlock, and the Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy 2025-2036 provides a clear pathway for us to realise that potential.

Jim Robbins, Leader
Swindon Borough Council

Richard Clewer, Leader
Wiltshire Council

Introduction to Swindon and Wiltshire

The Swindon and Wiltshire area prides itself for its long-standing economic resilience and breadth of economic growth assets.

Swindon has benefitted from being an attractive location for the global headquarters of internationally mobile companies and the town is a long-established location for the ICT, advanced engineering and manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and financial services sectors. As a result, it has out-performed similar towns of its size, far exceeding national average productivity rates.

Wiltshire is the sixth largest local authority area in the country and is proud of its sector strengths in advanced engineering and manufacturing, its defence and military presence. It is also home to internationally significant expertise in life sciences research and development, couched in an outstanding landscape and vibrant market town and rural economy.

Our central southern location, framed by the M4 to the north and by the A303 to the south, means we are a prime location in terms of access to London and the south east, to Bristol, Newport and Cardiff looking west and as an important entry point to the rest of the south west region and routes to and from the south coast ports and Avonmouth.

Our approach

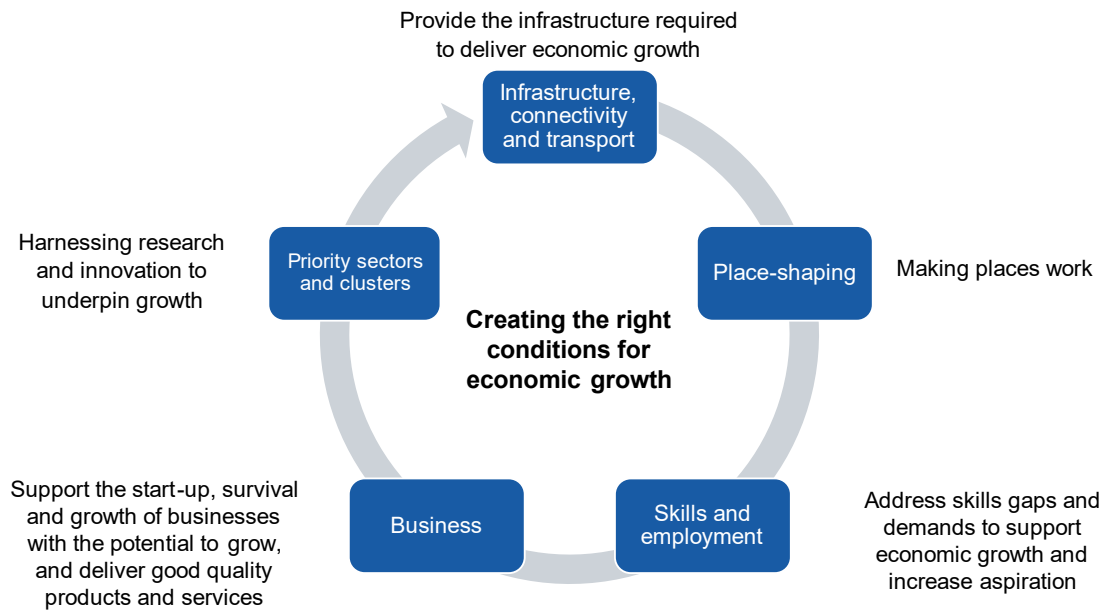
There is a framework of national and local strategies which forms the backdrop for the development of our local economic growth approaches. This strategy replaces the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Industrial Strategy which was published in March 2020. It represents the next chapter of Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council working together on our common goals to deliver a better and thriving economy, a fairer and resilient society, and communities underpinned by greener and sustainable infrastructure.

In doing so, we set out our priorities for economic growth and investment under five objectives: infrastructure; place-shaping; transport and connectivity; skills and employment; business; and priority sectors and cluster development. All five of these are underpinned by innovation activity and driving clean, productive growth.

To be successful, we will continue to work creatively to maximise the impact of local government resources and strive to secure additional private sector investment. We encourage government to deliver the conditions necessary for economic stability and growth through timely and joined up policy development and efficient funding mechanisms to unlock our growth potential. The economic strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire sits at the heart of a wide framework of national and local strategies, drawing together priorities to support the delivery of economic growth. The strategy clearly presents our goals alongside:

- what we want to deliver across Swindon and Wiltshire to enable growth to take place;
- what we need from government in order to deliver the strategy effectively;
- where we need public sector funding to undertake enabling work; and
- where we are looking to the private sector to invest.

Our goals



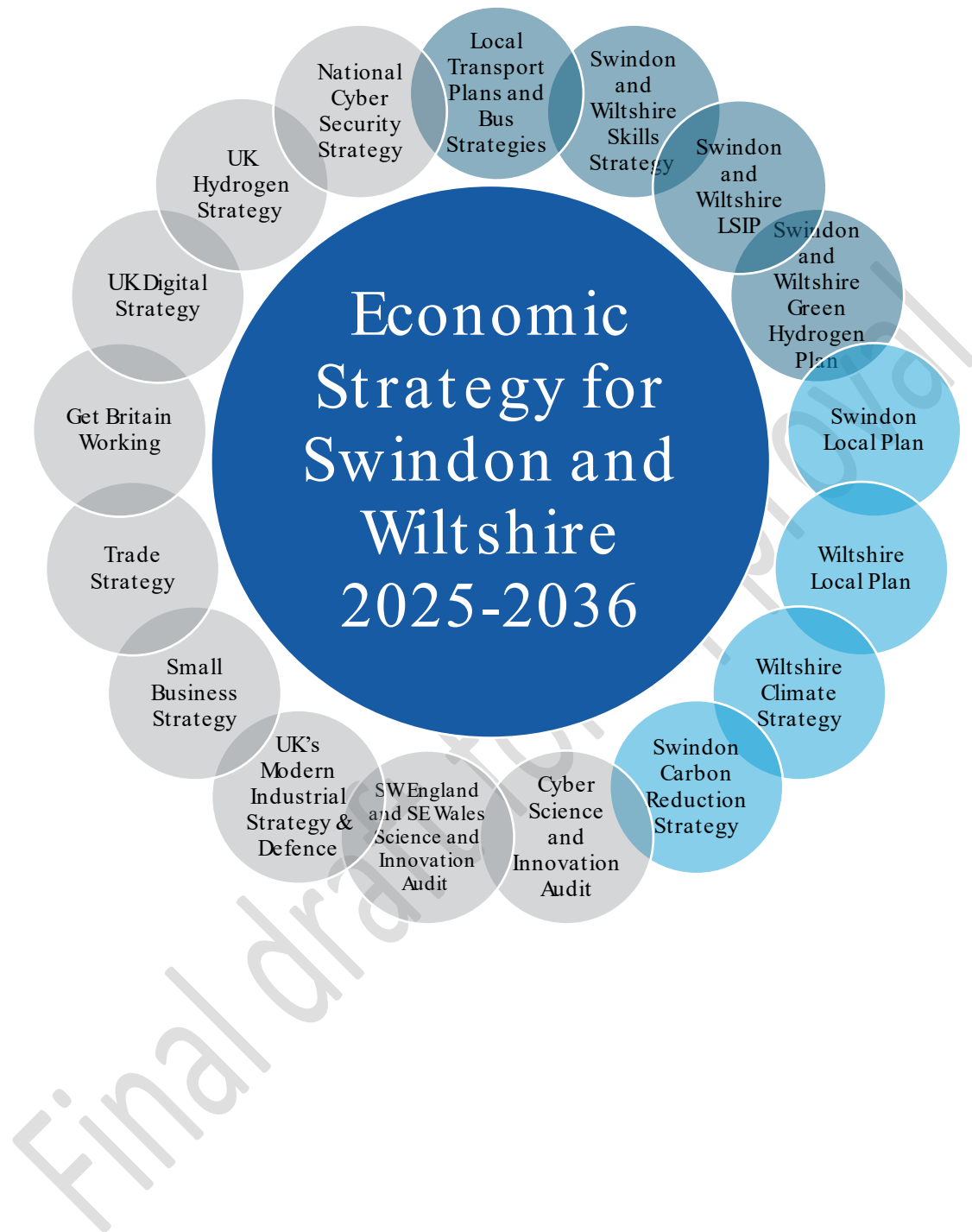
Priority sectors and clusters

- Professional business services
- Advanced manufacturing and engineering
- Low carbon
- Life sciences
- Creative industries
- Digital ICT and cyber
- Defence

Our productivity challenge

Our productivity performance varies greatly within the area; Wiltshire's long-term position relative to the national average has not kept pace and Swindon's recent performance, although strong, has shown signs of levelling out. This economic strategy has been developed to address this position and set the framework for longer-term sustainable economic growth.

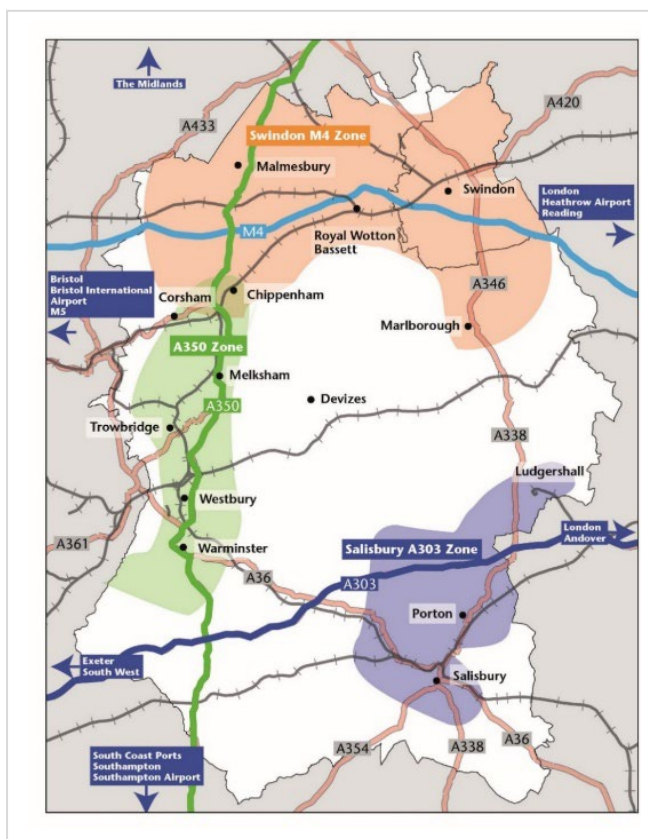
National and local strategic backdrop



Our Growth Zones

We have three growth zones which are the areas with the capacity for future growth and surrounding them, our wider rural communities. The growth zones are: Swindon and the M4, the A350, and Salisbury and the A303. Principal settlements in the area are Swindon, Chippenham, Trowbridge and Salisbury.

The Swindon and M4 growth zone is the largest and has the highest density of businesses. Swindon is the biggest settlement followed by Chippenham and other market towns include Corsham, and Malmesbury. Key sector strengths in this zone are: advanced engineering, financial services, pharmaceuticals and defence including cyber. The M4 underpins the importance of this zone in multiple ways including its role in transport, logistics and distribution. The zone is also well connected by rail especially east-to-west with a mainline route from London stopping at Swindon and Chippenham to Bristol and routes through to Cardiff and Swansea.



The A350 growth zone connects north and south Wiltshire by road and also benefits from the most railway stations. This growth zone is strong in advanced engineering and high value manufacturing, ICT and the visitor economy. Trowbridge is the county town, and other important settlements for economic activity and connectivity include Melksham, Westbury and Warminster. The A350 is one of the most important roads in Wiltshire; it is a primary north-south route with regional significance, connecting the south coast with the M4 and national motorway network. This growth zone connects to the Swindon M4 growth zone at Chippenham and Corsham.

Salisbury and the A303 growth zone excels in life sciences and defence technologies and can boast the largest concentration of MOD defence research in the UK and a significant life sciences

presence. The medieval city of Salisbury is the largest settlement with a rich history, attractive retail and visitor environment alongside the health research and technical expertise at the hospital's Foundation Trust. Military settlements in this zone include Bulford, Amesbury, Tidworth, Ludgershall, Porton and Boscombe Down. The A303 is a primary route in the area connecting southern England with the south west region, and this connectivity has established Amesbury as an important regional distribution centre. Salisbury is connected by rail through another direct route to London and through to the south west.

The rest of the Swindon and Wiltshire area which does not fall within a growth zone also plays an important role in our economy, and its diverse environment contributes 14% of total GVA. It has the capability to grow especially as the result of improvements in digital connectivity, roads, and better and timely connections to the national grid.

Growth Zones snapshot

Growth Zone	% Total GVA	Employment top 3	% LSOAs in 20% most deprived in England, IMD	Deprivation domains LSOAs in 20% most deprived in England
Swindon-M4	60%	39% Professional, scientific and technical 11% Health 11% Retail	11%	19% Crime 18% Education and skills 14% housing and services
A350	14%	16% Manufacturing 14% Retail 11% Professional, scientific and technical	6%	18% housing and services
Salisbury-A303	12%	18% Professional, scientific and technical 11% Health 11% Retail	6%	20% education and skills 15% housing and services
Rest of area	14%	16% Manufacturing 14% Retail 11% Professional, scientific and technical	0%	44% housing and services 25% living environment

Opportunities and barriers for economic growth

Our area performs well compared to the national average on a wide range of economic indicators, and we have identified opportunities where this performance can be developed further with the right mix of investment, ambition and creativity. That said, economic growth opportunities vary geographically, and some of our people, communities and sectors experience particular barriers.

Opportunities for economic growth

- **Place:** renewing and regenerating our principal settlements, supporting the revival of our high streets, cultural, and visitor offer through greater and improved town centre living and better working environments. This will ensure Swindon and Wiltshire can support new growth and continue to attract investment and good quality employment. For example, Swindon is one of the UK's economic powerhouses, far exceeding the national average for output per hour worked and is an important economic growth asset in our area.
- **Infrastructure and transport:** we are a predominantly rural area which has an important role as part of the UK's strategic transport and logistics network. Investing in our strategic road and rail network would open-up access to new employment sites, tackle bottlenecks in our towns and support additional economic growth.
- **Skills:** improving the employability and employment prospects of our residents and workers will help deliver economic growth and increase the wellbeing of our people through access to good jobs, and the creation of new high value employment opportunities.
- **Priority sectors and clusters:** delivering strategic employment sites to drive the growth of our priority sectors, attracting new investors as well as extending Swindon's strengths in exporting. This includes opportunities to grow our emerging clusters in life sciences, defence and low carbon technology, and explore options to repurpose airfields for new employment uses.
- **Green growth:** offering lower-carbon travel aligned to new housing and employment opportunities underpinned by the development and delivery of Local Area Energy Plans. Access to a low carbon refuelling infrastructure for vehicles and investment in sustainable passenger transport would make it easier for people to access employment, education, housing and services, as well as reduce emissions and improve air quality.

Barriers to economic growth

- **Improving economic opportunity:** we have areas of nationally significant deprivation in our larger settlements, as well as dispersed deprivation in our rural areas which is harder to identify and to support. Social mobility and access to transport and services are issues and rural connectivity to centres of employment needs improvement. We have seen a rise in the number of workless households since 2022, a persistent number of residents who are not in work due to long term sickness, and constrained disposable household incomes.
- **Education:** We have areas where educational attainment is low, and we need to raise aspirations as well as increase participation in technical, vocational and higher education.
- **Infrastructure:** access to the national grid and connection capacity, within the necessary timescales, is a major challenge and hinders new investment and job creation in the area.
- **Investment:** access to the capital investment required for enabling works to attract private investment is constraining our economic growth potential and limiting the ability to bring forward key sites and new housing developments etc. In addition, the limited availability of angel networks and other private investment to support business scale-up is another limiting factor for economic growth, with regional investment deals being concentrated in the south east and Bristol.
- **Development constraints:** development challenges and costs, including environmental mitigation and infrastructure requirements in Wiltshire, are constraining the ability to attract investment.
- **Net Zero:** reducing carbon emissions from domestic properties is a significant issue, particularly in more rural areas which are off-grid. The cost of alternative low carbon heating options and retrofit, is proving to be a barrier to adoption.
- **Demography:** we have an ageing population and a reducing number of people of working age, which places pressure on recruitment and access to services. We also struggle to retain our young talent to live, learn and work in our area, particularly those who leave to study at university.
- **House price affordability:** access to good quality housing, as well as affordable housing, also impedes economic growth and tackling this issue is imperative, especially if we are to attract key workers, particularly in Wiltshire.
- **Image:** some of our town centres, which includes Swindon, are struggling to attract inward investment because of their poor-quality environment.

Our economy

Business and output

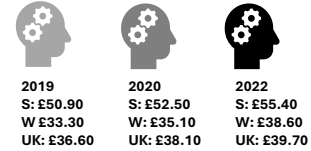
Employment



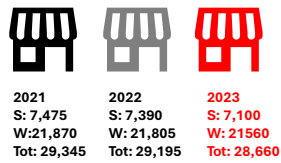
GVA (inflation adjusted)



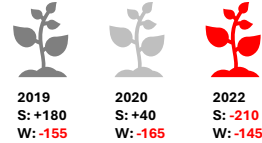
GVA per hour worked



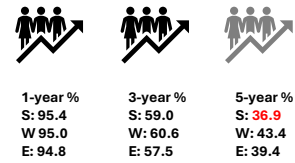
Business count - enterprises



Net business births vs deaths

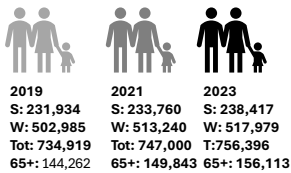


5-year business survival rate 2018-23

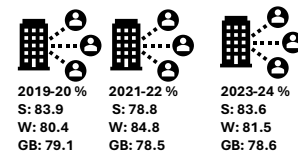


People

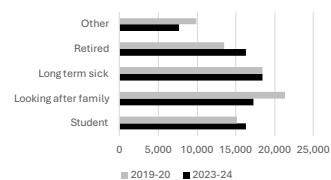
Population: forecast 800,000 in 2043



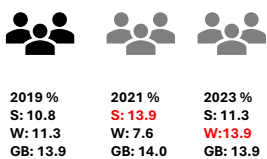
Economic activity rates



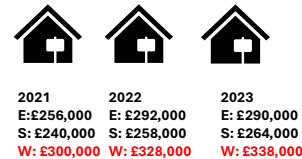
Economic inactivity 2024: 77,700



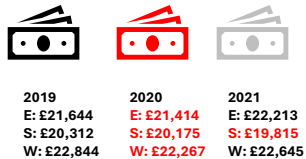
Workless households: 22,900



Median house price



Disposable household income



Priority Sector	Employment	Business Count
Professional Business Services	40,000	6,355
Creative Industries	16,000	2,825
Low Carbon	20,000	1,020
Life Sciences	14,000	90
Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	36,000	1,975

Infrastructure

Provide the infrastructure required to deliver economic growth

Creating the conditions to realise our economic growth potential by having the right physical, digital and transport infrastructure in place to meet the needs of our settlements, businesses, residents and workers and welcome new investors into Swindon and Wiltshire.

Our priorities

National grid constraints: tackle grid capacity constraints and connection times, which restrict economic growth and impede new investment in our area.

Digital connectivity: improve digital connectivity for hard-to-reach communities to improve their productivity and inclusion in a digitally enabled future.

Employment land supply: improve access to sufficient and suitable employment land so businesses can expand and attract new, higher value employment into the area.

Roads: tackle congestion and carbon emissions on our roads and improve the flow of goods and people especially on primary routes between the north and the south of our area, and along the A303. This includes continuing our programme of road dualling and town bypasses.

Rail: improve rail provision and open new railway stations to support better connectivity and greener options for travel to work, education and tourism and leisure purposes.

Passenger transport: extend the provision of greener passenger transport options and services to improve connectivity and access to employment centres.

Low carbon energy and refuelling infrastructure: reduce the carbon footprint of the area through the development and delivery of the Local Area Energy Plans for Swindon and for Wiltshire, and work with neighbouring areas to enable the future fuels refuelling infrastructure, including electric vehicles and hydrogen, to be delivered.

Our achievements

Digital connectivity: overall digital connectivity in our area is good, however, there are rural areas which have consistently fallen behind. Project Gigabit funding has been secured for delivery in south Wiltshire and more recently for north Wiltshire through a regional contract.

Employment land: secured the acquisition of the former Honda site as a strategic investment location by Panattoni with the aim that the site will be developed for transport and logistics, and potentially some manufacturing uses. In addition, we have capital investment prospectuses for sites across Wiltshire to attract private and public sector investment which will create new jobs and support economic growth.

Road: sections of the A350 have been dualled around Chippenham, as well as sections of the A420 between Swindon and Oxford, which have unlocked new housing and employment sites. In addition, we have invested in improvements at Junctions 15, 16 and 17 of the M4 to ease traffic flow and enable the New Eastern Villages and Wichelstowe schemes to progress. We have also invested in the use of smart town technologies to improve the movement and flow of people and traffic, reducing congestion and carbon emissions in Salisbury.

Rail: we have developed a Rail Strategy prioritising those new stations with the greatest potential for unlocking economic growth which has led to the submission of the business case for the Devizes Parkway station to Restoring our Historic Railways, and feasibility work on reopening Corsham station. We are active partners in England's Economic Heartland and the

Western Gateway sub-national transport bodies' work on respective rail strategies including a new direct pilot route between Swindon and Oxford.

Passenger transport: we have invested in Swindon's new bus station, active travel hub, Salisbury station forecourt interchange and improvements at Chippenham station.

What we want to deliver



Rail: improvements to Swindon's railway station and environs as the welcome point to the town, better connecting the development opportunities to the north of the station with the centre. We want to secure investment needed for improvements to the northern entrance to Salisbury Station, a new station at Devizes Parkway and further develop plans for a station at Corsham.

Employment land: we want to consider bringing forward additional employment sites along the M4 and A350. At Junction 16, this would include increasing the presence of green technology manufacturing, and testing use cases for additional investment at Junction 17 and along the A350. In addition, we want to protect key employment land allocations from alternative development in the area, including airfields such as Kemble, Boscombe, and Colerne and extend employment land allocations to respond to future requirements to ensure the area's economic growth potential is realised.

Energy planning: produce and deliver Local Area Energy Plans for Swindon and for Wiltshire presenting the delivery pathway for further decarbonisation within the area; including increasing the capacity for renewable and low carbon energy production which can connect to the national distribution network.

What we need from government

Ensure the investment required to re-enforce the national grid takes place promptly to enable key investments to proceed across our area.

Ensure we have the water, waste and sewerage infrastructure and energy resilience to enable inclusive and connected growth to take place.

A single pot allocation from DfT, MHCLG and Homes England to enable us to bring forward strategic sites such as Knowledge Central in Swindon, maximise the electrification of the mainline west of Chippenham to unlock housing on brownfield land and overcome the viability gap for private sector investors.

Establish a closer collaborative relationship with agencies, such as National Highways and the Environment Agency, on the development and delivery of our economic growth aspirations to smooth the delivery of investment priorities from concept and design, through to completion.

Government to fund the business cases for growth priorities for Swindon, which includes Junction 16 of the M4, as well as for development at Junction 17 of the M4 in Wiltshire, and consideration of further investment to support economic growth. These would enable the Swindon-M4 growth zone to become the growth focus for southern England.

We are keen to establish a close relationship with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation regarding the best use of military land assets to support economic growth, recognising the unique local research and development assets and relationships in the area. In particular, we want to protect the airfields for employment land opportunities.

Place-shaping

Making places work

Deliver vibrant communities through the regeneration and renewal of town centres and commercial areas, creating new employment opportunities and attracting younger people to live and work in our area.

Our priorities

Town centre investment: regenerate sites which are vacant or no longer fit for purpose and attract investment which creates new good quality employment opportunities.

Renew: the use of our heritage assets for economic, cultural and leisure purposes.

Revitalise high streets: enhance the attractiveness of our places by developing a broader retail and night-time offer alongside enabling greater town centre living and inclusion which is supported by active travel plans.

New homes: we want to encourage greater town centre living as part of our sustainable approach to place-shaping priorities. We will also work with government to consider the constraints Wiltshire faces in responding to the additional new homes requirement in future local plans.

Affordable homes: to enable lower paid workers and young people to live near to work.

Green construction: embrace new green construction techniques and reduce the carbon footprint of delivering our capital investment priorities and developing new skills.

Resilience: improve the flood defences in our major towns to ensure the resilience of our town centres and provide improvements in green, healthy spaces and enhanced amenities for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Premises: encourage the provision of good quality business and office accommodation and premises in our town centres and rural workspaces.

Our achievements

High streets: we secured Future High Street Fund investment in Swindon, Trowbridge and Salisbury which has unlocked private sector investment, regenerated town centres and improved access.

Town centre renewal: Towns Fund investment in Swindon has unlocked Kimmerfields, the town's flagship regeneration scheme, the Carriage Works and public realm works to facilitate connectivity to ensure the town centre is a more attractive investment opportunity.

Heritage Action Zone: this is a catalyst for Swindon's historic railway area becoming a cohesive heritage destination and innovation hub developing a clear sense of place within the town.

Master planning: we have refreshed and extended the Trowbridge masterplan, developed a masterplan for Chippenham and the Salisbury Central Area Framework as guides for future development, making these settlements more vibrant, attractive and sustainable places to live, work and visit.

The Wiltshire Towns Programme: this has funded town councils to drive footfall and fill vacant premises with new and expanding business activity in the heart of settlements.

Area identity: the Wiltshire Marque has been developed alongside a 'Heritage Trail and Events' app to increase awareness of locally produced goods, improve the visitor experience, drive new leisure and tourism trips, and increase footfall across the county.

Flood mitigation: Salisbury Riverpark has been completed to better manage and mitigate flooding in the heart of the city, protecting the integrity of activity further downstream as well as regenerating a central section of the city as an attractive amenity.

New homes: Phase 2 of Kimmerfields will deliver 400 high quality homes in the centre of Swindon based on the infrastructure we have delivered to enable it to come forward

Natural capital: we have baselined the value of our natural capital and are seeking ways to embed its consideration in decision making whilst supporting economic growth and enabling new investment to take place.

What we want to deliver

We have identified our list of priorities which we want to bring forward, or enable, with private sector investment. These will transform our settlements as attractive places to live and work, unlock further employment opportunities and deliver inclusive and sustainable economic growth, drive innovation and improve quality of life including enhancing opportunities to develop our creative, art and cultural amenities. Our priority schemes are at different levels of maturity and encompass both urban and rural locations. We want to access the capital investment to progress these aspirations as well as secure funding to develop our business cases through to delivery. They include proposals for:

Town centres: we want to continue investment in town centres;

Renewal: we want to deliver neighbourhood renewal schemes working with Homes England building in greater flexibility to help facilitate delivery;

Master planning: we want to continue our master planning development as well as access the capital funding required to enable their delivery.

New homes: to deliver new homes, including affordable homes, and explore the options for new settlements to cater for the future needs of our area. This includes supporting the development of our priority sectors and emerging clusters by aligning new and additional employment with the provision of new homes and sustainable travel options.

Sustainability and resilience: our priorities include investing in additional river park developments to manage the risk of flooding alongside creating attractive amenities for residents and visitors to enjoy. Our priorities will also seek to use green construction techniques and drive the development of green skills within our workforce.



What we need from government

We need to secure large-scale public sector investment for enabling works to attract private sector investment to bring forward our priorities, specifically we need a single pot allocation and local determination under our current partnership working and through future devolution plans. This includes securing both capital investment and project management funding to continue our master planning and development priorities; continue investment in town centres; and deliver neighbourhood renewal schemes,

Working with departments we want to:

- undertake flood mitigation forecasting and bring forward schemes with the Environment Agency;
- work with Homes England on an affordable housing plan and for land remediation to bring developments forward;
- work with Network Rail (Department of Transport) and UKRI (Department of Science, Innovation and Technology) to maximise investment opportunities across landholdings to deliver Knowledge Central in Swindon; and
- have a clear planning framework, supported by policies that enable economic growth to take place by supporting the delivery of new employment land; facilitating access to clean energy; meeting housing needs; and proportionately balancing nature and the environment to facilitate delivery.

Skills and employment

Address skills gaps and demands to support economic growth and increase aspiration.

Address the imbalance between skills demand and supply to improve the performance of our businesses and increase economic inclusion. This will be achieved through improving access to good employment opportunities for which residents and workers are appropriately skilled to perform; raising educational aspirations in areas where attainment is low; increasing participation in further and higher education; and delivering good quality careers advice.

Our priorities

Support the upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce to meet the needs of employers.

Strengthen our engagement with employers to better understand their future skills needs.

Encourage employers to commit to invest in the training and development of staff and inclusive recruitment practices.

Raise aspirations and increase social mobility to improve educational outcomes.

Support our residents to access sustained employment focussing on young people aged 16-25 and those with health issues, disabilities and other wider barriers.

What we want to deliver

Improve young people's progression into sustained employment post-16 education.

Improve the pathways for technical and vocational training, including short courses, to meet sector needs.

Encourage employers to invest in training and development to upskill and reskill their workforce.

Increase the opportunities for the economically inactive to enter work through encouraging employers to engage in employment programmes and help meet skills demands.

Engage employers in programmes which support economic growth through improving employee health and well-being working with public health, local hospitals and Integrated Care Boards.

Provide good quality careers advice for people of all ages.

Support higher level skills progression through increasing local provision and raise its profile amongst employers.

Work with providers and employers to maximise the levy to deliver greater uptake and achievement of skills and training opportunities.

Work with employers to identify those sectors where apprenticeships are the best pathway to address high demand sector needs.

Maintain local evidence base and business skills engagement to help inform national as well as local skills delivery programmes.

Explore additional skills development pathways for roles in critical high demand occupations including the education and health care settings, professional scientific and technical and manufacturing industries.

Explore pathways to enable migrants in our area, where English is not their first language, to secure roles which they are qualified to perform.

Strengthen our higher education offer and build on our existing relationships with universities outside of our area.



What we need from government

Establish a direct link into Skills England to help inform and deliver government policy and programmes taking into account both local and national priorities.

Commitment to integrate the health and work agenda through joined up commissioning between Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Health, and Department for Education.

Commitment to multi-year funding to ensure longevity of delivery to maximise outcomes.

Clearly outline employers' role in implementing the government's skills reforms and delivery framework taking into consideration different business sizes and capacities.

Ensure there is clear and strong messaging between the National Careers Service, Job Centres and other sources of careers provision to ensure local provision is effective.

Business

Support the start-up, survival and growth of businesses with the potential to grow and deliver good quality products and services.

Enable businesses to reach their potential and achieve productive and greener growth through the delivery of good quality business information, advice, guidance, and routes to investment.

Our priorities

Build and co-ordinate the network of business support provision to simplify routes to access advice and cross-referral opportunities to meet the needs of business and deliver positive outcomes.

Broaden access to investment finance including venture capital and patient capital through wider partnership working with national and private sources of finance.

Encourage businesses to invest in leadership and management training to build resilience and respond to new opportunities as well as tech adoption skills to transform their operations and maximise their productivity, growth and digital transformation, for example, generative AI, cloud-based tech, automation, and e-commerce applications.

Recognise and respond to the specific needs of rural businesses and their opportunities to thrive enabled by digital connectivity and accessible business support services.

Raise the profile of the area as an advantageous and attractive location to new and overseas investors aligned to our place-shaping and infrastructure investments working with the Department for Business and Trade and regional opportunities.

Encourage business to adopt greener business practices and processes.

Foster innovation and increase productivity through working with our university and research organisations to commercialise and adopt new technology, ideas and business operations including Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and engagement in specialist sector development initiatives.

Enable the sustainable growth of the visitor economy to offset the slow economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Streamline the way in which businesses engage with council services to facilitate their growth ambitions.

Explore ways in which commissioning and procurement spend of the public sector in the area can be opened up to a greater proportion of local business and share best practice through our business networks.

What we want to deliver

Maintain the delivery of the Growth Hub as well as extend its reach to engage with businesses in communities which are harder to support, for example, land-based and rural businesses, and minority communities.

Extend the use of our Growth Hub resources to co-ordinate and raise awareness of business schemes including broadband vouchers, low carbon energy programmes and retrofit schemes.

Bring forward new avenues to finance working with the British Business Bank and establish new venture capital and angel investor networks.

Continue to support inward investment activities working with the Department for Business and Trade.

Maintain our business engagement networks to ensure we are listening to, and responding to, changing business conditions.

Continue to develop skills through close working relationships with skills delivery programmes and education providers including supporting the delivery of Skills Bootcamps and Career Hub priorities, and with Public Health on promoting healthy workplaces and wellbeing practices to our business community.

Working across services, share our knowledge on the demand for appropriate employment land, commercial and office space provision and help inform the forward pipeline of investment needs.

Build on the research we undertook with the University of West of England to identify the issues which rural businesses face in a post-pandemic living and working environment.



What we need from government

We need multi-year funding settlements for the delivery of nationally funded programmes to be delivered locally. This includes:

- a 3-to-5-year UKSPF funding settlement from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to tackle issues which restrict the growth of 'every-day' businesses and enhance the functioning of communities and rural areas;
- a 3-to-5-year funding commitment for Growth Hub provision by the Department for Business and Trade; and
- a 3-to-5-year funding allocation to support the continued working relationship with the Department for Business and Trade for inward investment activity, to refresh the

promotional materials and website content to help to attract new and overseas investors to locate in our area.

Final draft for approval

Priority growth sectors and emerging clusters

Harnessing research and innovation to underpin growth

Enable the expansion of our priority sectors and specialist clusters by creating the right conditions for growth and investment.

Our priority sectors

Advanced engineering: we have strategic sites which could extend our existing expertise in advanced engineering and high value manufacturing activities. These include the 350-acre Panattoni Park in Swindon and the future potential of land at Junctions 16 and 17 of the M4, and sites along the A350 growth zone.

Creative industries: our creative industry assets are wide ranging and include plans for the centre of Swindon to become a creative hub comprising film, dance, theatre and art alongside content creation and design. Plans are in place for a new soundstage studio on Science Museum Group's campus in Wroughton. In addition, we have a strong base of design, architecture and advertising and marketing professionals operating in the area

Digital technologies: we are keen to grow our digital technologies sector from the nascent Tech Trowbridge cluster which focusses on gaming and esports, through to the development and application of digital technologies for wider industry use such as defence technologies and drones, data centres and cyber resilience applications.

Financial and professional services: Swindon is a key location for financial services sector representing 7% of total employment, which is 4.5 times greater than the average for England and over double that of London (3.2%), it is home to big names including Nationwide and Zurich. We want to retain and grow this specialism.

Green industries: We are home to innovators in sustainable technologies and aim to extend activity in green construction and low carbon and renewable energy generation developing the skills for the future to meet our net zero ambitions. Swindon is home to the Innovation Centre for Applied Sustainable Technologies (iCAST), a joint collaboration between the universities of Bath and Oxford to drive forward innovation and commercial application of groundbreaking research in sustainable chemicals and chemical engineering. Its research gateway for businesses based in the UK and overseas is based at the Carriage Works in Swindon.

Our emerging clusters

Life sciences: Porton in Wiltshire is a government designated Life Sciences Opportunity Zone with international strengths in vaccinology. It is home to research and innovation activity undertaken by the UK Health and Security Agency alongside a growing cluster of life sciences businesses at the Porton Science Campus. In addition, there is complimentary activity in the pharmaceuticals sector in Swindon and Chippenham.

Defence cluster: Wiltshire has a strong military history based on its Army and Royal Air Force presence. We are part of the defence supply chain through our precision and advanced engineering expertise and we are working with partners in western England to map our defence cluster which includes advanced manufacturers, cyber defence and the burgeoning space industry 'Space West', alongside Ministry of Defence (MOD) assets in Corsham. As part of this work, we want to create collaborative pathways for small and medium sized enterprises as a route into the defence supply chain and links through to the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA).

Defence estates: we are keen to establish a close relationship with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation regarding the best use of military land assets to support economic growth, recognising the unique local research and development assets and relationships present in the area. In particular, we want to protect the airfields for employment land opportunities.

Cyber network: we are continuing to build the network of cyber defence businesses and professionals working across industries through the Swindon and Wiltshire Cyber Cluster as part of the UK's Cyber Cluster Collaboration, building on the presence of MOD Corsham.

What we want to deliver

We will encourage closer collaboration with, and between, businesses and universities and research organisations to create more spin-offs, enable the commercialisation of research, and attract inward investment and new innovation-active firms into the area. This is expected to lead to the creation of high value jobs, helping to increase productivity, and secure greater investment in research and development.

We will work with the private sector to deliver future phases of the Porton Science Park to attract additional investors to the area which are working on national health security research programmes. This will include links through to Salisbury Health Education and Technology project (HEAT).

The Salisbury HEAT project aims to create a sustainable, integrated and environmentally sensitive, net zero carbon development around Salisbury District Hospital. In doing so it will bring together new education, training and research activities with new hospital facilities, deliver research and development activity, and open-up new supply chain and employment opportunities in the city and more widely.

We will work with the Science Museum Group to enable it to continue to deliver its master plan for its Wroughton site as a low carbon technology research and innovation campus.

We will work with the Institute for Sustainability on the consolidation of iCAST's presence in Swindon and surrounding region, expand the number of universities and industrial partners in its cluster and make iCAST the go to place for companies working in sustainable chemical technologies. Public and private investment will be required to build a 5,000m² state-of-the-art facility employing 50 technical staff that will allow it to support companies with promising sustainable technologies to scale up both regionally and nationally.

Creation of a new knowledge cluster in the heart of Swindon, 'Knowledge Central', anchored by the Carriage Works and presence of UKRI, which will attract new innovation-led businesses and research organisations into the centre of the town.

Explore regional working opportunities to deliver wider business support and innovation programmes such as the Made Smarter Programme and Place-Based Innovation Impact Accelerators (PBIAA).

Work with the providers we identified under the infrastructure objective to overcome the barriers to sustainable economic growth and bring forward our priorities.



What we need from government?

We want to work with UKRI to maximise the benefits we have of the research councils being based in Swindon, and the role it can play as part of the development of the Knowledge Central. Through our engagement activities we will disseminate and encourage our business community to engage in innovation calls, programmes and research initiatives to help build the local research and innovation ecosystem.

We seek capital investment for business case development and the enabling works needed to secure the private investment required to deliver these priorities.

Governance, monitoring and evaluation

Governance

To ensure intended outcomes are reached, Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council will work together to deliver their sustainable economic growth priorities through the joint governance arrangements established for the Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit which covers many of the functions of the former Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership. These will continue whilst devolution discussions with government mature and future delivery pathways are agreed and established.

Successful implementation will require close collaboration between local and national government, local businesses, public services, universities, regional partnerships, and other local organisations. Collaborations to deliver improvements reaching beyond the boundaries of Swindon and Wiltshire, will require new joint governance arrangements to be agreed to oversee delivery.

Monitoring

We will develop an implementation plan to frame the delivery of this strategy covering the next 10 years, setting out clear milestones, actions, intended outputs and outcomes, timescales, roles, and responsibilities. We will also develop and maintain a risk register. We will monitor progress against key milestones and produce an end-of-year report to ensure that we are progressing work to achieve our strategic objectives.

The Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy 2025-36 will be used to guide the allocation of future funding streams including applications to, or allocations of, future local growth funds, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other investment and resources which may become available in the future. The list of priorities and actions outlined in this strategy is not exhaustive and there may be other activities of strategic importance that are currently in progress, in planning stages, or which may arise in the future.

Evaluation

We will develop an evaluation process to assess progress against the objectives outlined in this strategy. This will involve setting a set of key performance indicators (KPIs), which will be monitored and reported to government according to its funding requirements as well as through usual local authority performance and monitoring arrangements.

We will undertake a three-year review of this economic strategy which will include the production of an updated local economic assessment for the area.