

A woman with curly hair is shown from the chest up, looking towards the camera. She is wearing a blue sweater. The background is a solid green color with a large, stylized green apple shape behind her.

Building a connected, creative, dynamic economy for all Worcestershire's Plan for Growth 2020 – 2040

Executive Summary Version



Worcestershire
Local Enterprise Partnership



Foreword.

Worcestershire has seen exciting economic developments over the past few years.

Investment in our transport infrastructure has helped unlock employment opportunities. We are at the forefront of 5G technology that will underpin Industry 4.0. And we are now home to over 31,000 businesses – 40% more than in 2010.

At the same time, we have a bedrock of valuable advantages. We have well-established industrial centres. We have historic and resilient market towns. We have some of the UK's most beautiful countryside. We are strategically located in the centre of the country, with good links to the major centres.

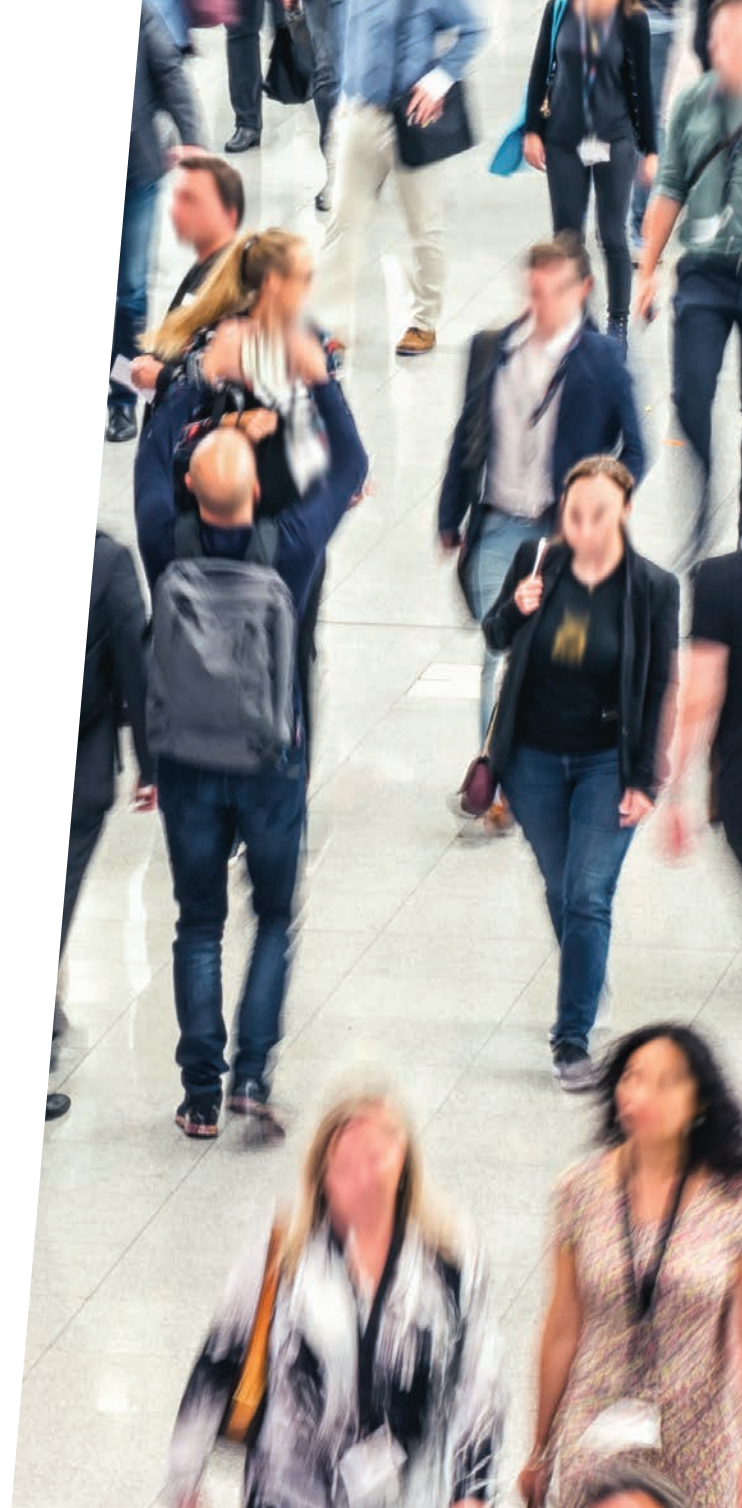
Together, they contribute to what makes our county such an appealing place to live.

These are all important factors that we will build on as we move forward with purpose. To help us, Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) has developed a strategic framework that underpins a vision that looks out to 2040. It's a vision that creates a connected, creative and dynamic economy that works for all.

A connected county.

Whatever happens in the wake of Covid-19, we already know that the future is digital. Investment in fibre to the premises rollout and support for a gigabit-capable infrastructure rollout will revolutionise the productivity potential of all our businesses, in particular our thousands of rural ones. Together with our strategic location, it will also make us an increasingly attractive option for professionals embracing remote and hybrid working.

Alongside our digital focus, intelligent investment in our physical infrastructure will support businesses that move goods and ease road congestion. Our focus on rail as part of this investment points the way to a more sustainable future – and supports our decarbonisation agenda.



A creative county.

We face a once-in-generations opportunity to transform our skills base.

This means starting at the very earliest age.

It means showing our young people that Worcestershire is an exciting county that offers huge potential for a lifelong career.

It means support for the generation entering the workforce at the most difficult time in living memory.

It means equipping workers in sectors that will irreversibly change in light of the pandemic with the skills they need to find rewarding careers elsewhere.

It means ensuring we have the skills we need in sectors with high growth potential such as manufacturing, health and care, agri-tech, business and professional services, construction, and IT and digital.

It means supporting all our workers, of all ages across the labour market, with the right skills and flexible working opportunities to allow them to have fulfilling jobs that help them work in the way they want for as long as they want.



A dynamic county.

Innovation drives competitive advantage, which is why we are unashamedly focusing on science and technology and driving investment in research and development.

We seek to support businesses as they break new ground with entrepreneurial ideas and innovative ways of working that change models and methods of delivery in order to meet the challenges we face as a county and a country. Our aim is to create a reputation for new technology and digital capability that allows our businesses to trade with the world.

Within this, sustainable energy is a key focus. We have ambitious targets to:

- Halve carbon emissions on 2005 levels by 2030
- Double the size of the low carbon sector between 2016 and 2030
- Triple energy production from renewable generation by 2030

We know that the expertise and innovation of our business base will be instrumental in meeting these targets – and those of the UK as a whole. Companies such as Worcester Bosch, FAUN-Zoeller and Air Products are already exploring the options with hydrogen technology that will lead the way to a net-zero carbon future.



Executive Summary.

Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) has outlined an ambitious and exciting 2040 vision for the county that will create a connected, creative and dynamic economy for all.



Worcestershire Parkway.

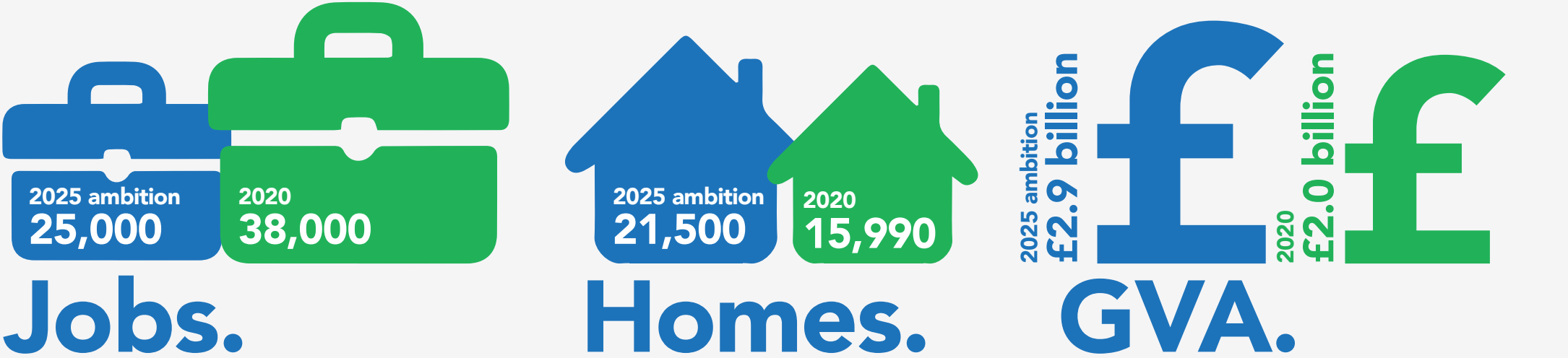
The vision builds on the fantastic progress we have made on the key performance indicators we set to measure the success of our 2014 Strategic Economic Plan to grow the Worcestershire economy.

We said that by 2025 we wanted to create 25,000 jobs, build an additional 21,500 homes and add £2.9 billion a year to our Gross Value Added (GVA) figure¹.

To date, we have seen 38,000 jobs created, 15,990 homes built (which equates to 74% of the target in 65% of the time) and added £2 billion to our annual GVA.

These achievements have been supported in no small part by the powerful track record established by WLEP and our partners. Together, we have successfully delivered a range of projects and interventions that have brought significant sums of public and private sector investment into the county.

Key performance indicators.



For example, major road upgrades to ease congestion and enable local economic growth are unlocking housing and employment land.

Worcestershire Parkway, the first new rail station in the county for over a century, is creating opportunities for a greater range and frequency of rail services to and from other parts of the country.

Our Gamechanger employment sites programme has brought forward four strategic sites across the county and is attracting significant investment and employers, which is creating local jobs.

The new Duckworth Centre of Engineering at the Heart of Worcestershire College, is delivering automotive, engineering, plumbing and heating qualifications that address local skills needs.

We are home to one of the UK’s first six 5G testbeds. As part of the project, we delivered the first live factory 5G trials in the UK, showcasing the possibilities of Industry 4.0 and are now looking to share the learnings with other local businesses to help improve productivity.

It is right to celebrate these – and other – successes.

However, the world has moved on since 2014. Factors such as Brexit, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Government’s Levelling Up agenda were creating a very different economic landscape, even before the biggest public health crisis in generations in Covid-19 led to a deep economic shock.

The events of 2020 and 2021 mean this is a timely opportunity to take stock and refresh our economic vision and strategy for the county. We need to continue to hold ourselves to account against our 2025 targets, but now is the time to plot our trajectory to 2030 and 2040.

We face a myriad of economic challenges in our quest, but it is possible to marshall them around three key themes. We need to keep these themes at the forefront of our thinking as we move forward.

Economic recovery post-Covid-19.

The world’s economy has experienced a massive shock and Worcestershire’s is no different. Covid-19 has changed the way we work forever. We need to consider how the economy will change and adapt. This includes the impact on our high streets with the shift to online retail and the increasing demand for robust, resilient digital technology to serve trends that were accelerating even before the pandemic. To build back better, we need to focus on supporting jobs and housing delivery as well as consider the role our city and town centres have to play in our future.

The levelling up agenda.

Recognising the importance of the Government’s Levelling Up agenda, we need to support our businesses to improve their productivity, which will in turn lead to greater economic prosperity. We also need to tackle the health inequality and social mobility challenges in our communities by championing inclusion and diversity in the way we work.

Climate change.

We need to move towards a greener future and champion environmental sustainability. This means decarbonising our energy and transport systems. It also means tackling the challenges we face around water availability and flooding. In doing so, we will be taking steps to adapt our economy so we can contribute to the Government’s target of net-zero carbon by 2050.



Duckworth Centre of Engineering

Our four headline objectives.

We have developed a refreshed plan for growth for the county that will become a guiding framework for the next 20 years.

It is based on extensive work we have done in collaboration with partner organisations and stakeholders across the county. We have compiled a robust evidence base, analysed Worcestershire's economic performance, considered the key economic challenges we face and undertaken intelligent consideration of future trends.

There are four headline objectives. Each of them contributes to supporting economic growth, improving productivity and ensuring greater social inclusion.

1. Improving Worcestershire's strategic connectivity and infrastructure.

We will champion investment in our physical, digital and energy infrastructure. We will build on the significant and successful investments to date and further develop our high-class physical and digital infrastructure.

In this way we can attract and support entrepreneurs and businesses in the county and create the necessary conditions to enable them to be successful.

As a historic net importer of energy, we will seek to redress the balance, embracing a green recovery in the county, growing the low carbon sector and increasing renewable energy generation through innovation and investment. Projects such as these will support our Energy Strategy, which aims to make Worcestershire the greenest county in the UK.

Key physical infrastructure projects →
Key digital infrastructure projects →
Key energy infrastructure projects →





Key physical infrastructure projects.

- North Cotswold rail line transformation
- A46 Evesham bypass junction improvement
- A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme



Key digital infrastructure projects.

- Gigabit-capable infrastructure roll out
- Rural connectivity
- Mobile signal improvement / investment programme
- W5G testbed development
- 5G deployment



Key energy infrastructure projects.

- North Worcestershire EV charging infrastructure
- Bromsgrove District Heat Network
- Hydrogen Centre of Excellence

2. Stimulating investment in research and development and innovation to create a dynamic Worcestershire business environment.

We want to see Worcestershire transition into a powerhouse of research and development (R&D) and innovation. We know our businesses punch above their weight in terms of their investment into R&D activities.

We have already launched the county's first dedicated technology accelerator, BetaDen, which is now providing targeted support and mentoring to Worcestershire entrepreneurs and businesses alike, helping them to develop their products and services into commercial-ready propositions.

However, we also know that there is more financial support and resource available regionally and nationally that

Worcestershire could better tap into.

We will work in partnership with local businesses and Higher Education institutions both inside and outside our economic environs to unleash our potential.

We will build on our successes to date, embracing schemes that drive high value jobs, boost our county's wealth generation and create the conditions for entrepreneurs to survive and thrive.



Key R&D and innovation projects

- **Malvern Science and Technology Park**
- **BetaDen expansion**
- **University of Worcester Health and Care Innovation Centre**
- **Digital Manufacturing and Innovation Centre**

3. Supporting a creative future-fit Worcestershire workforce.

We will focus on equipping our young people with the skills, advice and opportunities they need to succeed in their future careers. We will actively engage with local educational establishments, employers and partners to raise awareness of Worcestershire as a fantastic place to live and work in order to attract and retain the next generation of talent our economy needs.

We will champion re-skilling and up-skilling opportunities across the labour market and provide relevant information, advice and guidance to ensure they know what skills are in demand. Support our residents to remain part of the workforce for as long as they want.

Recognising the importance of digital for careers both now and into the future, we will focus on programmes that equip our workers with the skills they need, which in turn will supply local employers with the skills they are calling out for.



Key creative and future-fit workforce projects

- National Telecomms and Digital Skills Centre
- Public Sector Skills Centre of Excellence
- Midlife MOT Programme (Review / Reskill)
- Employer Skills Hub
- Digital Skills Programme

4. Revitalising our city and town centres.

Our towns and city have proved themselves resilient in the face of seismic shifts. Now is the time to build on that resilience.

We will support the city and town investment plans that seek to transform these places to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the local communities they serve.

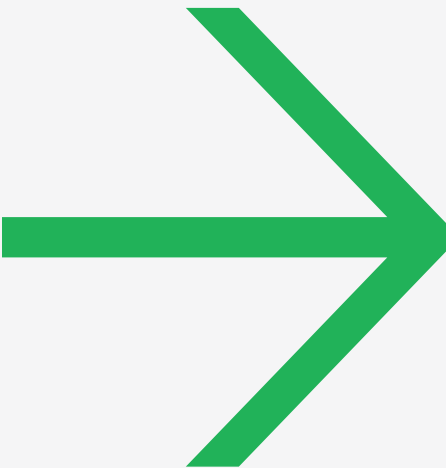
We will help to deliver the future commercial and office spaces our businesses need to create the multi-functional high streets that will ensure they are able to thrive in the future.



Key city and town centre revitalisation projects

- Worcester Shrub Hill Quarter and rail station redevelopment
- Redditch Transport Interchange and Rail Quarter
- Development of former Market Hall site in Bromsgrove
- Redevelopment of former Crown House site in Kidderminster
- Malvern Theatres extension
- Flood resilience programme including Tenbury Wells, Bewdley and Powick

Our Plan for Growth in Summary.



WLEP vision



Worcestershire

A connected creative dynamic economy for all

WLEP strategic objectives



- Improving Worcestershire's strategic connectivity and infrastructure
- Supporting a creative future-fit Worcestershire workforce
- Stimulating investment in our R&D and innovation to create a dynamic Worcestershire business environment
- Revitalising our city and town centres

Headline target figures



- Increase jobs by 11,500 by 2030
- Increase GVA by £1.3 billion a year by 2030
- Increase jobs by 18,500 by 2040
- Increase GVA by £2.5 billion a year by 2040

Our plan for growth



Places (communities)

- Have a more mixed and affordable housing stock across the county to meet the demands of the local economy and attract key sector workers and a younger skilled workforce
- Enable continued revitalisation and transformation of the city and town centres across the county to include provision of more residential, enterprise and commercial space
- Capitalise on the five distinct geographical areas in their sector strengths, tailoring investments and interventions accordingly, such as cyber in Malvern and South West or advanced manufacturing in North Worcestershire

Ideas (innovations)

- Increase investment in R&D in line with national target of 2.4%
- Improve links between businesses and Higher Education institutions
- Increase the number of R&D assets across the county to enable greater collaboration with Higher Education institutions beyond Worcestershire's borders
- Increase commercialisation success rate of business R&D investments to bring more products and services to market

People (skills)

- Reduce levels of claimants and improve individual health and wellbeing whilst impacting positively on economic activity
- Aim for all educational establishments to continually meet all eight careers education benchmarks annually with a particular focus on the Worcestershire economy
- Create an education and training provision ecosystem that meets local needs and future trends of Worcestershire's economy by ensuring FE and HE are responsive
- Increase the number of graduates and skilled young people in Worcestershire spending more of their economic life in Worcestershire
- Improve economic activity rates in our older workforce by creating a culture of flexible work environments and upskilling and reskilling opportunities
- Narrow the gap between average workplace earnings in Worcestershire and national average workplace earnings

Infrastructure

- Improve rail journey times and service frequency within the county to better support intra- and inter-county movement
- Deliver the four key strategic road corridor improvements to Worcestershire by 2030 to enable economic growth and ease congestion
- Increase digital connectivity of the county in line with Government's national ambition of delivering 85% gigabit capability by 2025
- Halve the carbon emissions of the county, double the size of the low carbon economy and triple renewable energy generation in the county by 2030

Business environment (support)

- Increase the stock of high quality and sustainable business premises in the county to support inward investment and growth of indigenous businesses
- Increase the number of scale-up and growth businesses in the county
- Increase the GVA of the county as a result of firm level productivity improvements

Key cornerstone sectors

- Business and professional services
- Construction
- Health and care

Key growth sectors

- Advanced manufacturing
- Cyber, IT and digital
- Horti/agricultural technology

Achievements to Celebrate.

Homes.
15,990



Jobs.
38,000



GVA.
£2.0billion



Skills



Business environment



Infrastructure



Innovation



Place



Apprenticeships



Careers support



Inward investment



Housing/Employment



Key sectors



Transport/road



Transport/rail



Digital



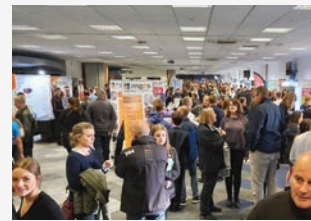
R&D/Entrepreneurship



Flood alleviation



Collaboration/Co-working



Worcestershire Apprenticeships

A not-for-profit network of training providers, FE colleges and voluntary/third sector organisations that delivers apprenticeships, traineeships and study programmes for adults and young people. First event held Autumn 2014.



Annual Skills Show

A showcase for careers pathways and employment opportunities to all young people across the county — first event held Spring 2015

It now reaches over 6,000 young people and over 120 employers per year.



The Gamechanger programme

Gamechanger Strategic Employment Land sites programme established and attracting investment since 2016. First four sites included Redditch Gateway, Kidderminster Enterprise Park, Worcester Six Business Park and Malvern Hills Science and Technology Park.



Hoobrook Link Road in Kidderminster

Opened Autumn 2016 and supported delivery of local employment and residential development in Kidderminster.



Agritech Research Centre

Opened at Pershore College (WCG) in Autumn 2017 along with the META project at Evesham College (WCG).



Mobile call success rates

by district increased from between 92.8% and 98.0% in 2017 to between 94.4% and 99.4% in 2019.



BetaDen

the county's first technology accelerator successfully launched with 8 Cohort 1.0 companies in Autumn 2018.



Flood alleviation

Worcester New Road flood alleviation scheme completed Summer 2018.

Upton Marina flood alleviation scheme completed Summer 2019.



The Kiln

A collaborative and co-working space in Worcester, opened Summer 2019.



Worcestershire Careers Hub

The Careers Hub, which works with every school in the county and has helped ensure Worcestershire is one of the most improved areas for careers advice over the last two years.

The Hub received the 'Highly Commended' award for Careers Hub of the Year at the Careers Excellence Awards — Winter 2019.



5G Testbed

Successful award of DCMS funding to establish one of UK's first six 5G test-beds, leading to UK's first live 5G factory trials taking place in Worcestershire — Spring 2019.



Duckworth Centre of Engineering

At Heart of Worcestershire College established to offer automotive, engineering, plumbing and heating qualifications.

Phase 1 opened Autumn 2019. Phase 2 opened Autumn 2020.



Kidderminster Rail Station Upgrades

Refurbishments and commuter facilities upgraded at one of the county's busiest rail stations — completed Summer 2020.



Worcestershire Parkway

First brand-new rail station in the county for over a century — opened Spring 2020.



Worcester Southern Link Road

Upgrading to dual carriageway — completed Summer 2021.



Superfast broadband coverage

Broadband coverage increased from 68.6% in July 2013 to 96.8% in March 2021.

Conclusion.

This is an ambitious plan that will require us to continue to work closely with partners and stakeholders within the county and beyond. This commitment also recognises that businesses do not operate to the same administrative and geographic boundaries that provide structure to public sector organisations and funded initiatives.

Successful implementation has enormous rewards.

It has the potential to deliver an additional 11,500 jobs and increase GVA by £1.3 billion per year by 2030. Looking out to 2040, this increases to 18,500 jobs and improved GVA of £2.5 billion per year.

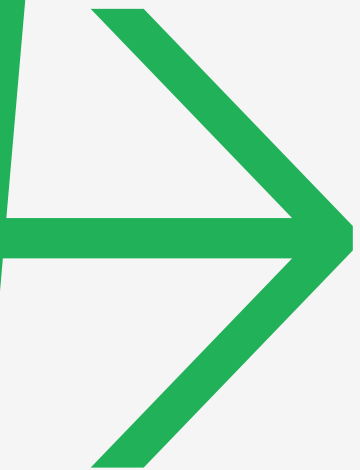
It will position Worcestershire as the most digitally connected and skilled county in the country, building on our 5G status and digital rollout strategy.

It will give us the fastest-growing innovation ecosystem outside London and the South East thanks to investment in our 'security by design' strengths.

It will mean we are the county renowned for testing and implementing low carbon technology in the rural/urban setting.

It will make us the best county in the UK for young people to access careers advice, guidance and work-based opportunities all within a fantastic environment to live and work.

In other words, it will transition Worcestershire from its current status as a hidden gem to being the most connected county in the country and making a powerful contribution to the future success and productivity of UK PLC. It will create a connected, creative and dynamic economy for all.



By 2030/2040

By 2030



11,500

more jobs



£1.3 billion

added to our GVA per year

By 2040



18,500

more jobs



£2.5 billion

added to our GVA per year

Key cornerstone sectors



Business and professional services



Construction



Health and care

Key growth sectors



Advanced manufacturing



Cyber, IT and digital



Horti/agricultural technology

To create a connected, creative and dynamic economy for all that boosts productivity and earning power in the county and contributes to UK PLC, we have developed a Plan for Growth with a focus on five foundations of productivity. Together, they support the vision for a transformed economy:



Places:
ensuring
prosperous
communities
across the county



Ideas:
developing a
dynamic and
innovative economy



People:
good jobs and
greater earning
power for all



Infrastructure:
investment in
upgrading the
county's physical,
digital and energy
infrastructure



**Business
Environment:**
creating the
conditions that make
Worcestershire the
best place to start
and grow a business

These foundations provided us with a framework to develop an evidence base and give a greater level of understanding of Worcestershire's economy. More information on this evidence base is available in the Appendices.

It also gave us the insight required to develop a series of interventions designed to mobilise the five foundations of productivity in Worcestershire and contribute towards the national ambition.

We want to hear from you.

This is an ambitious plan that will require us to continue to work closely with partners and stakeholders within the county and beyond. It's why we want to hear your thoughts.

If you would like to comment on our Plan for Growth or play a role in its delivery, please contact Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership

✉ Email
enquiries@wlep.co.uk

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