

# An Economic Development Strategy for Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick Districts to 2028



## *Working Together to Scale up South Warwickshire*



Working *Together*



DECEMBER 2023

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# Foreword

This document presents a five-year strategy for the South Warwickshire economy. Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils, inspired by the range of common ground opportunities and challenges they face, have worked together, in consultation with a range of stakeholders, to draw up a common vision with ambitious plans and actions to deliver this South Warwickshire Economic Strategy by 2028.

The strategy is built around three themes: People, Productivity and Place, reflecting the three main pillars of our local economies. The strategy also identifies several core opportunity sectors to be jointly and actively promoted and supported by the two Councils.

There are three parts to this strategy:

1. South Warwickshire at a Glance – it presents key facts and figures about the South Warwickshire economy, and challenges and opportunities for the future.
2. An Economic Strategy for South Warwickshire – sets out a Vision for economic growth across South Warwickshire, our mission and focus.
3. Delivering the Economic Strategy – presents objectives to be achieved and actions to be delivered over the next five years up until 2028.

An Action Plan in Appendix 1 sets out how we will work in conjunction with a wide range of key stakeholders to deliver on these economic priorities. and will be able to be viewed at:

[www.stratford.gov.uk/swes](http://www.stratford.gov.uk/swes) and [www.warwickdc.gov.uk/swes](http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/swes)



**Cllr Ella Billiald**

*“Warwick District has many strengths which include natural assets with its stunning environment and tourism sector, as well as excellent creative, digital and green industries. Our strategy for business growth and the creation of new jobs must make use of these strengths,*

*to ensure our communities and industries thrive. The Council is undertaking numerous major initiatives across the district and by working with partners, stakeholders and business this economic strategy aims to make Warwick District a great place to live, work and visit.”*



**Cllr George Cowcher**

*“Sustaining a vibrant economy is vital to the health and prosperity of all who live in Stratford District. This strategy promotes economic growth within a sustainable context and the need to ensure that it is served with the necessary infrastructure”*

# Introduction

The 488sq miles of attractive South Warwickshire countryside is home to highly-skilled, entrepreneurial, innovative and creative people and businesses and provides the ideal incubator for new ideas to flourish and grow. However, the pandemic hit South Warwickshire hard, with Stratford-on-Avon District being the fourth worst economically affected area in the UK due to its significant tourism and hospitality sector. Despite the challenging economic times, this strategy not only seeks to reboot the South Warwickshire economy, but also to grow it, widening existing opportunities, making it more sustainable and less vulnerable and capitalising on our ambitions for a low-carbon economy.

**Our vision for South Warwickshire is that by 2028, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils will have contributed to the creation of a larger, stronger, greener and more inclusive economy.**

Our mission is to foster the growth of the South Warwickshire economy sustainably and equitably. Working together, we will ensure economic participation and prosperity for everyone in South Warwickshire. We will also lead the way and take smarter steps towards a greener future to meet our ambitions for a 55% reduction in South Warwickshire's carbon emissions by 2030.

Underlying the three themes of **People, Productivity and Place** are the core opportunity sectors of:

- Automotive and low carbon (including Automotive and Rail R&D, EV Batteries, Hydrogen)
- Low carbon 'green' technologies (including the Circular Economy)
- Bioscience, Medtech and Agri-tech
- Digital Creative
- Visitor Economy – to include hospitality, retail, leisure, cultural heritage and the arts

The Local Plan provides a long-term framework to guide physical and infrastructure developments in South Warwickshire up to 2050, reflecting, but also enabling, the vision and aspirations of both Districts as set out in [South Warwickshire Local Plan](#).

The economic development strategy intends to embed a low carbon sustainable approach to future growth and infrastructure in response to climate change, aiming to support the development of wholly sustainable communities, which requires having the right type of transport and digital infrastructure in place as a pre-requisite. The strategy will foster further development and growth of innovative knowledge based businesses in key opportunity areas and the right type of local economic growth according to the business presence in the more rural locations.

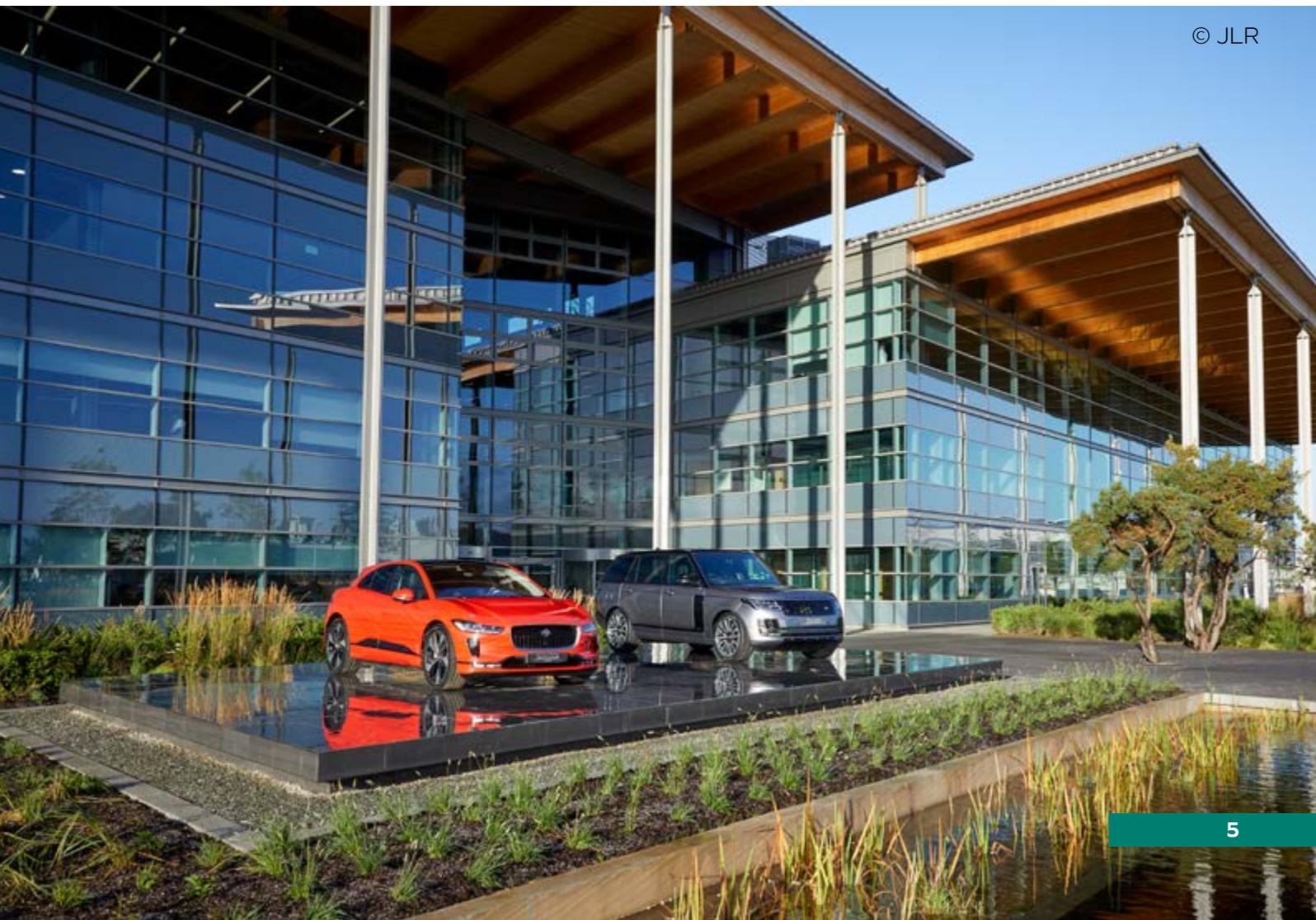
## Purpose of the Strategy

**The main objective of this strategy is to co-ordinate economic growth activities across South Warwickshire and highlight South Warwickshire’s significance and contribution to the wider regional and national growth plans. The strategy will ensure cross referencing and alignment with other County and sub-regional strategies to ensure joined up working and use of resources in the development of future action plans.**

Having this strategy in place provides a framework for joint activities drawing on common ground issues (opportunities as well as challenges) and taking advantage of the creation of critical mass and scale whilst minimising duplication and waste of resources and unnecessary competition. We should also recognise that both Stratford District and Warwick District Councils will undertake individual economic development activities. This is to be expected. This strategy enables those individual activities to share the common goals, aims and objectives of the wider geographic area in line with those set out in the strategy.

This strategy also provides impetus and direction for bidding for grants and monies when opportunities arise without restricting the ambitions and operational priorities of each authority. The strategy shows commitment and direction and will put the Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils in a stronger position to continue to attract public and private sector investment across South Warwickshire.

The following three parts explore the strategy in more detail.



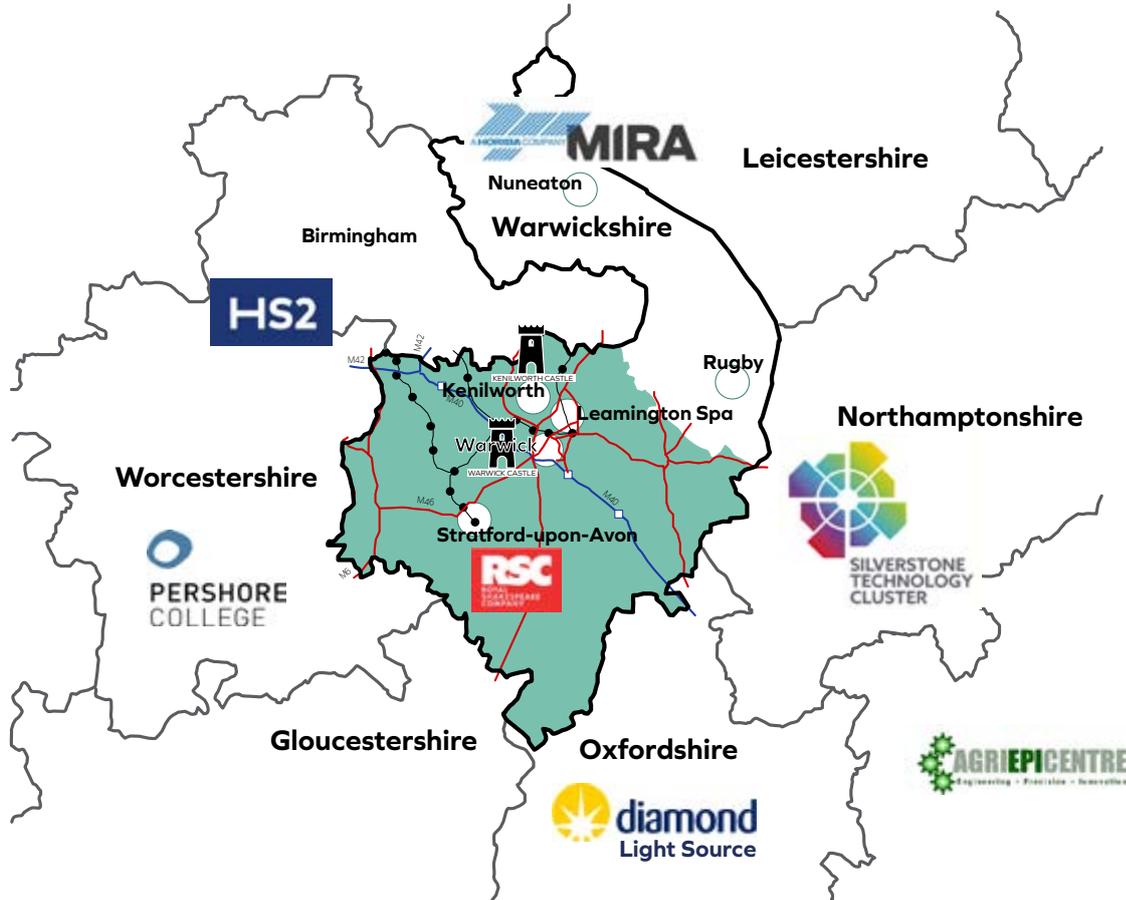
# 1. South Warwickshire at a glance

## At the heart of the Midlands Engine

South Warwickshire benefits from direct access to both Birmingham and London via the M40 and the Chiltern Main Line (with UK Central and HS2 to the north to open from 2029) as well as international travel via Birmingham International Airport via the M42. To the south, South Warwickshire borders Oxfordshire and its connections to the Oxford-Cambridge Arc as well. Businesses within South Warwickshire are geographically well-placed to capitalise on a range of economic opportunities from not only the wider West Midlands, but the East Midlands and Southeast and Southwest of England. In addition to the M40 and M42, South Warwickshire is traversed by the A46, the Trans-Midlands [Trade Corridor](#), a key strategic route of national and regional importance.

Given its strategic position at the heart of the West Midlands, the economic development strategy will champion further integration of the transport network including the development of future mobility, bicycle and transport hubs as well as fostering active travel especially in rural locations to enhance the connectivity between its urban centres sub-regionally, ensuring the area benefits economically from HS2.

Improvement to connectivity generally across the area including investment in road, rail and cycle routes across both urban and rural locations, as well as ensuring the area benefits economically from HS2, accelerating active travel roll out as part of the green infrastructure.



**South Warwickshire = 488 square miles**

- 30% within the West Midlands Green Belt
- 8% within the Cotswold National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)

**Travel times by road**

- Leamington to outer London (80 mins)
- Stratford to outer London (90 mins)
- Leamington to Birmingham (40 mins)
- Stratford to Birmingham (45 mins)
- Leamington to Oxford (40 mins)

**Travel times by rail**

- Leamington to London (80 mins)
- Leamington to Birmingham (25 mins)
- Stratford to Birmingham (50 mins)
- Solihull to London ( 38 mins proposed by HS2)

**Birmingham**

UK's second largest city, major transport hub, home to several universities and the leading Foreign Direct Investment location in the Midlands

**Nuneaton** – Motor Industry Research Association, founded in 1946, today HORIBA MIRA is a thriving automotive technology hub

**Coventry** – engine of the UK automotive industry

**Leicester and Leicestershire** – world-leading centres of new technology and innovation in space and earth observation and sports science

**Rugby** – birthplace of Rugby Union Football and strong heritage

**Silverstone** – F1 UK Grand Prix and High Performance Technologies

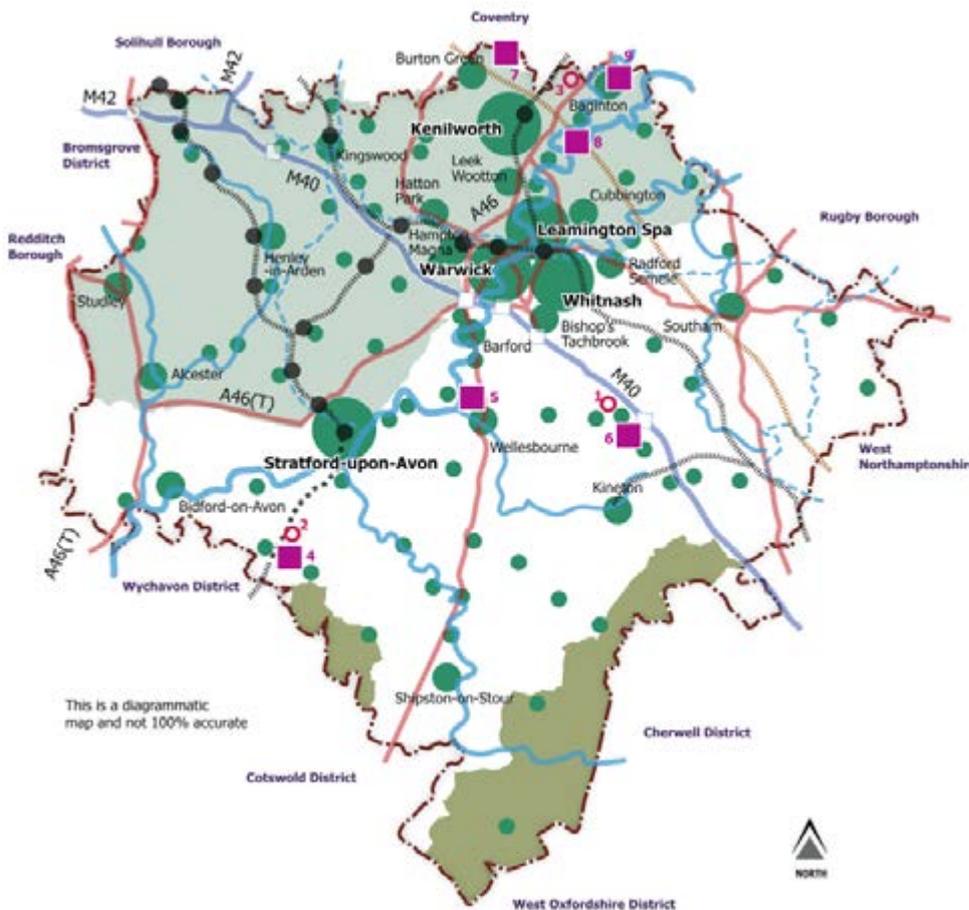
**Banbury** – motorsport and logistics hub

**Cheltenham** – GCHQ and cyber security hub

**Vale of Evesham** – booming food and agritech industry

**Redditch** – Aerospace industry

## With access to a unique range of assets



### ‘Silicon Spa’

The home of the UK’s Video Games Industry, the ‘Silicon Spa’ cluster (which extends from the heart of Royal Leamington Spa and stretches out to the surrounding areas of Southam and Warwick) employs over 2,000 highly skilled people, equating to over 10% of the UK total in games development.

### Automotive and Future Mobility

The Coventry & Warwickshire sub-region is proud of its reputation as a world-class centre for advanced manufacturing and engineering. Aston Martin Lagonda, Jaguar Land Rover and Lotus Engineering all have a major presence in South Warwickshire particularly at Gaydon (where Aston Martin has its global headquarters). In Stratford-upon-Avon District, manufacturing (of which the automotive sector forms a significant part) is the largest sector accounting for over 40% of GVA.

### UK Battery Industrialisation Centre (UKBIC)

Part of a Government programme to fast-track the development of cost-effective, high-performance, durable, safe, low-weight and recyclable batteries, the UKBIC provides the missing link between prototype battery technology and successful mass production. UKBIC has been delivered through a consortium of Coventry City Council, CWLEP and Warwick Manufacturing Group/University of Warwick (WMG).

The Energy Innovation Centre as part of WMG at the University of Warwick’s Science Park is undertaking ground breaking research and development into battery technology.

### Agriculture

70% of Warwickshire is agricultural land and home to a diverse range of farming, food and drink businesses. Agriculture is of particular importance to South Warwickshire in terms of contribution to the local economy, local communities, protection of the local environment and a large employer to local people.

### Food and Drink

South Warwickshire has developed an excellent reputation for ‘foodie’ businesses. Many farms have diversified and invested in infrastructure to make it possible for these businesses to start up and grow. Small and micro businesses in this sector are pioneering, created through passion and a desire to do business differently based with ‘green credentials’ central to their ethos. Examples of these companies are: Purity

Brewing, Warwickshire Gin, Henley Chocolates, Napton Cidery and Shakespeare Distillery.

### **Cotswolds National Landscape**

Designated in 1966 and previously known as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), it is the third largest protected landscape in England.

### **Shakespeare's Birthplace**

The birthplace in 1564 and childhood home of William Shakespeare is a mecca for all lovers of literature. The restored 16th-century half-timbered house situated in the heart of Stratford-upon-Avon is a popular attraction for UK and overseas visitors.

### **Magnificent Castles**

Warwick and Kenilworth Castles attract significant visitor spend (£72 million pre-pandemic total visitor spend between 2017 and 2019).

### **Historic Country Houses and Gardens**

South Warwickshire is home to numerous significant country estates (including Charlecote Park, Coughton Court, Compton Verney, Ragley Hall, and Alscot Estate) which hold exhibitions that attract domestic and international tourists.

### **Arts & cultural organisations, events and venues**

South Warwickshire boasts a wide range of organisations and venues which not only are important to make South Warwickshire a great place to live, work and visit, but also contribute directly to the economy of the area. These

range from Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum, the several theatres and venues including the Spa Centre and Loft Theatre in Leamington, and companies such as Motionhouse the world-class circus/dance performance company.

### **West Midlands Investment Zone, West Midlands Gigafactory and Coventry & Warwickshire Gateway South**

In its Autumn Statement 2023, the Government has announced the go-ahead for the West Midlands Investment Zone which will bring more than £2 billion of new investment to the regional economy. One of the three areas chosen for the investment will be in Coventry and Warwickshire. The proposed state of the art Gigafactory will be based at Gateway South in Warwick District at the heart of the UK's automotive industry and will be able to supply UK manufacturers with batteries on their doorstep bringing investment, skills and jobs to the area and ensuring its place in the green revolution.

### **University of Warwick**

With more than 26,500 students across 32 departments the University is currently ranked sixth in the UK. Its main campus is to the south of Coventry with an additional campus at Wellesbourne. Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG) provides research and education in engineering, manufacturing and technology. Warwick Arts Centre is the largest venue of its kind outside of London.

### **Long Marston Rail Innovation Centre**

Operated by Porterbrook PLC, the centre is a leading cluster in sustainable digital rail technology working with Small and Medium Enterprises.

### **Wellesbourne Airfield**

Formerly RAF Wellesbourne Mountford, the airfield today operates as a general aviation airfield, home to private aircraft and a flying school training the next generation of UK commercial pilots. Its proximity to the University of Warwick's Campus at Wellesbourne provides the ideal opportunity to attract inward investment as a centre for aviation innovation.

### **Stoneleigh Park**

A science and innovation park, home to a cluster of over 60 businesses related to food production, equine and livestock husbandry, sustainability, renewable energy and the wider rural economy, Stoneleigh Park is a showcase for rural futures.

### **Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC)**

Established in 1961 and based in Stratford-upon-Avon, the RSC is a major British theatre company employing over 1,000 staff and producing circa 20 theatrical productions each year. As well as its three theatres in Stratford-upon-Avon the RSC also tours across the UK and internationally.

### **Bowls England**

Leamington is HQ of Bowls England and hosts the annual National Bowls championships throughout August attracting an estimated 11,500 spectators.

## Employment Land

Across South Warwickshire SDC and WDC acknowledge it is important that the right amount and type of employment land is provided during the life of their Local Plans. Local employment land means land to meet the needs of the district and support existing and growing sectors. National policy states that robust reviews are undertaken to assess the need in terms of both quality and quantity for existing and future supply. The joint South Warwickshire Plan is currently being developed and will take account of this need alongside other land uses.

Following a joint Employment Land Review undertaken by CW Local Enterprise Partnership and the 6 adjoining Local Authorities it was found that extra employment land was required.

WDC made extra employment land available at Thickthorn Heath in Kenilworth, Stratford Road in Warwick and land in the North East of the district, south of Coventry Airport. Some of these opportunities are now being brought forward for development.

## Proposed West Midlands Investment Zone (WMIZ)

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) region, and Warwick District (WDC) in particular, has the exciting prospect of the development of an Investment Zone (IZ) across the region and the Giga Park in Coventry and Warwick is proposed as one of the three areas in the region to receive tax benefits and one of two to benefit from Business Rates Retention. The Government initiative, as part of its wider levelling up agenda, intends creating investment zones specialising in one priority sector. The Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Sector has been agreed by the WMCA as the primary economic sector, particularly around EV and battery development, and its intersectionality with green industries, digital and health-tech.

The national programme offers each Investment Zone £80m over 5 years either to be taken entirely as funding or split between up to £45m tax incentives for investors (including Business Rates Relief) and £35m flexible spending. The zones will benefit from investment in infrastructure and other areas such as sector specific skills development and training.

The Giga Park is situated across the boundary of Coventry City Council with WDC. This site has been included as part of the Investment Zone because of the potential financial benefits that the inclusion of the proposed Gigafactory in the Zone, and its development, can bring to the whole of the West Midlands region. The West Midlands proposal, reflecting Government policy, is that BRR receipts and the £80m would first be allocated to meet the cost of infrastructure needed to enable development of the site. Retained business rates over and above this would be pooled across the WMCA and WDC area and applied to the benefit of the priority sector(s) and in WDC's case to local growth initiatives.

It must be emphasised that the development of the WMIZ is an ongoing process following the Government's announcement in its Autumn Statement 2023 for the 'go-ahead' of the WMIZ in advance of the programme start in April 2024. There is still a considerable amount of detailed work to be undertaken before the long-term economic and environmental benefits of the Giga Park's success will be seen.

Clearly, it is anticipated that the success of the Giga Park will generate significant and long-term economic growth for the district, including job creation, supply chain growth and new skills programmes, and reinvestment from BRR to help drive delivery. The proposals if fully realised overall would yield several billions £s of investment, significant business growth and the creation of thousands of jobs.

From an environmental perspective the proposed Giga Park also offers the significant opportunity to help decarbonise the economy locally, regionally and nationally and to help the wider transition of the economy to a net zero carbon one.

Working with sub-regional partners to attract inward investment for the project WDC recently granted planning permission for the development of the West Midlands Gigafactory. Adjacent to the pioneering Battery Industrialisation Centre (UKBIC) and on the back of JLR's recent announcement and commitment of £250m investment to the area to develop its own Future Energy Lab Mobility Research Lab it is ideally placed within the heart of the UK Automotive industry to act as a hub for the rapidly growing battery industry drawing on the R & D and talent pool already in the area. Further information can be obtained from: <https://ukgigafactory.com/>

## Wellesbourne Airfield Proposal

Whilst retaining and enhancing its aviation activities, SDC acknowledges the location and economic potential of Wellesbourne Airfield, particularly its proximity to the University of Warwick's Stratford-upon-Avon Campus. SDC supports the principle of employment uses on the site to capitalise on high-value manufacturing and engineering opportunities.

## Kenilworth Gateway

A46 Warwick Bypass  
CV8 2LP Approx 8 ha of  
Employment Land for sale

### The opportunity:

- 19.1 acres (circa 8 hectares) parcel of serviced employment land adjacent to the Warwick Bypass A46 to the south-eastern boundary of Kenilworth as part of the first phase of wider residential development of approx. 60 acres (24 hectares).
- Planning permission for Class E/B2 use
- Highly accessible and prominent location
- Excellent linkages to existing manufacturing, R&D and Digital Creative clusters

Kenilworth, a highly desirable market town in Warwick District, is undergoing significant urban development of housing, schools, leisure centres, community amenities and now offers a fantastic employment land development opportunity. Within easy reach of Coventry (7 miles), Leamington Spa (4 miles) and Warwick (5 miles) and with regular rail links to Coventry, Leamington Spa and onward to London (76 minutes) and Birmingham (21 minutes) the site is highly accessible being directly adjacent to the A46 Warwick Bypass. The site benefits from good connections to the wider motorway network within less than 6 miles of J15 of M40 and only 11 miles to J2 of M6.

The site is in an ideal location to maximise linkages with established and successful manufacturing R&D and Digital Creative clusters within the Coventry and Warwickshire sub-region and the wider region. Neighbouring Leamington 'Silicon' Spa is host to the largest video games cluster outside of the London area. The talent pools of world-renowned universities of Warwick and Coventry are on the doorstep and the proposed 'Giga factory' will be within easy reach placing the area in the vanguard of emerging technologies. **For further details:** [economic.development@warwickdc.gov.uk](mailto:economic.development@warwickdc.gov.uk)



## Long Marston Rail Innovation Centre

Derby and London based Porterbrook owns almost a quarter of the national passenger rail fleet and currently has around 4,000 vehicles on lease or on order. To date the business has invested £3bn in new passenger and freight vehicles and is actively looking to invest a further £1bn in rolling stock and wider rail infrastructure in the coming years. Engineering excellence is central to the company's role as a leading railway asset owner and manager. In collaboration with industry partners, the business project manages the delivery of regular upgrades to its rolling stock fleets, investing over £100m annually in its existing assets, working with over 100 UK-based companies and supporting around 7,000 jobs. It has an established reputation for delivering new technologies, such as battery, hybrid and hydrogen powered trains.

Since taking over the Long Marston Rail Innovation Centre in June 2021, Porterbrook has invested over £3m to modernise and enhance the facilities which include a 3.5km test track loop, high quality office and conference space, rolling stock storage and a training centre. A third of that spending

has been with local businesses in Warwickshire. The Long Marston Rail Innovation Centre is an increasingly important storage, training, research and development facility for the UK rail industry. The company's ground-breaking HydroFLEX, the world's first tri-mode battery, electric and hydrogen train, was built and extensively tested at the site before being presented at the



COP26 environment summit in Glasgow in November 2021. Porterbrook's long-term investment plans for Long Marston would allow many UK rail businesses to accelerate work in areas such as research and development and innovation in addition to supporting the local economy in Warwickshire. In 2023 it is committed to investing £2 million in a new Asset Management Facility (AMF), a fully enclosed train maintenance space incorporating heating, lighting, power and equipment. In 2022, the company announced a partnership with the charity Primary Engineer to deliver a new rail project to 10 schools in the Long Marston area, with the aim of encouraging more young people to consider careers in STEM related professions.

In terms of South Warwickshire's future economic development opportunities, it is important to maximise the cross-cutting synergies between sectors in terms of their future growth and support needed. Automotive, Rail, space, engineering and transport technologies including future mobility and alternative fuels are critical to the future of South Warwickshire and the West Midlands, so it is important to look at opportunities horizontally across sectors, ensuring that the training, skills and workforce development pathways are inclusive and support existing business needs as well as preparing for and promoting the strengths of South Warwickshire in the new and emerging economies of the future in low carbon and advanced manufacturing technologies.

## Transforming Leamington Programme

Transforming Leamington is an exciting new long-term initiative which aims to bring together all those involved in making Leamington Town Centre a vibrant and successful place now and into the future. This is intended to be achieved through developing existing and new relationships and articulating the shared ideas and approaches through a new Leamington Transformation Framework. This builds on foundations established in 2018 via the Vision for the Town Centre, and updates this for the current day. It takes on-board the changes that have happened since then, including recognition of the global climate emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the associated changes to our High Streets.

Leamington Spa is not alone in facing some of the greatest changes in the way people use town centres in their lifetime. The High Streets Task force draws together best practice and learning across all the nation's high streets and town centres. It is from this body of knowledge and experience that the concept of a Transformation Framework has been developed. A Framework is a forward-looking plan for the future which is flexible and able to quickly adapt and change as circumstances change in what can be very dynamic times for town centres.

The work is currently in development and has identified at least 22 individual projects, which will be co-ordinated at the strategic level via the Leamington Transformation Board.

As part of kick-starting this transformation, Leamington town centre has access to £10M of Government funding via the Future High Streets Fund.

This is allocated to five

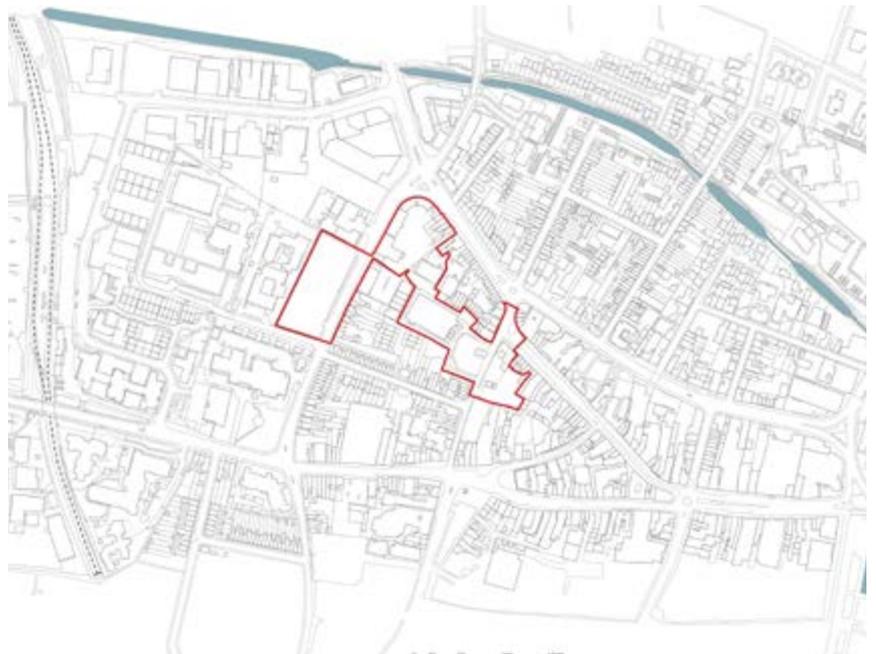
key transformational projects including the Town Hall, Spencer Yard, Former Stoneleigh Arms, Sorting Office. The Transformation Framework sets these projects in a wider context and provides the ability to articulate the vision for the town centre for all future funding bids. We will also be working closely with private sector partners to ensure empty units in the town centre are re-purposed to support the overall vibrancy and activity in the town centre as its profile of different uses changes from predominantly retail to more mixed-uses, including more residential and opportunities for town centre living.

It is crucial that our towns and villages remain welcoming and vibrant and have a distinct focus in the economic development strategy, in addition to our Opportunity areas, as South Warwickshire consists of a significant proportion of Warwickshire's rural economy. In terms of both the local plan and economic development strategy, we will support the development of rural village and town centres to enable them to establish their unique identities as has been undertaken in Leamington, to help strengthen them as destinations in their own right with unique economic and visitor attractions and unique business clustering. Support will be tailored according to the business and residents and community needs, enabling future enterprise and skills development as well as enhancing the town centre evening economy and hospitality, cultural and leisure sector.



## Stratford-upon-Avon Gateway site

Stratford-on-Avon District Council seeks to encourage the regeneration of land to the northwest of Stratford-upon-Avon town centre to form a new "Gateway" into the town, while extending the town centre offer into and through the site towards the emerging Canal Quarter, for which a separate masterplan has already been prepared. The Gateway site has already been identified by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust as a suitable location for a new visitor attraction celebrating the life and work of William Shakespeare. The proposed World Shakespeare Centre (WSC) will anchor a broader mix of town uses, and provide a complementary addition to Shakespeare's birthplace, the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and other cultural attractions around the town.



It will include high quality public spaces, places and facilities for everyone to enjoy, anchored by a world-class celebration of the world's greatest playwright William Shakespeare.



## University of Warwick

Warwick is one of the world's leading education and research institutions, ranked in the UK top 10 and in the world top 65, and proud to have been established in the West Midlands. The University's mission is to be a regional force for good: working together with communities, businesses, partners, and major industry to create impact that leads to innovation in action, boosts the local economy, attracts and retains talent, and provides local people with new opportunities to advance and excel. With 28,000 students and almost 7,000 staff, in 2019-20 the University generated £1.15 billion for the local economy.

The University's strategy connects its research to solving the major challenges of society. Since its foundation, Warwick Business School has become world-leading, and WMG (Warwick Manufacturing Group) is an exemplar of academic and industry researchers working together on global initiatives through partnerships such as the National Automotive Innovation Centre, as well as supporting skills for the future through the WMG Academy for Young Engineers and the WMG Degree Apprenticeship Centre.

The University has also made major investments in sport, arts and culture, providing training facilities for elite athletes and local communities, and recently completing a £45m refurbishment of Warwick Arts Centre. With a base in The Shard in London, an alliance with Monash University in Australia, and strategic partnerships across Africa, China, Europe, North America and beyond, by 2030, Warwick will be one of the world's exceptional universities.



## University of Warwick Wellesbourne Innovation Campus

The University of Warwick's campus on the outskirts of Stratford-upon-Avon is a unique collaborative environment shared by academic research teams and a range of knowledge-led businesses. The vision is for collaborative research to deliver on the global challenges of future mobility, crop science, digital technologies and health.

There are currently over 20 businesses at the campus, including the Lotus Advanced Technology Centre, Corteva Agrisciences, Rimac P3 Mobility, and the SMEs Lyra Electronics, Stoli Catalysts, Fluxsys and EBI Software, along with researchers from the University's School of Life Sciences and WMG (Warwick Manufacturing Group). The campus is also home to Defra's UK Vegetable Genebank, a repository of international significance, as well as the Natural Light Growing Centre, an industry-focused R&D facility of one of the UK Government's Agri-tech Innovation Centres. The University has a long-term vision for growth at the campus, with plans to welcome further investment and build a world-leading innovation hub in the region.



## A high value and high potential economy



**South Warwickshire is home to 16,000 businesses and a highly entrepreneurial location to start a successful business**

- There are **59 business per 1,000 population** in South Warwickshire, compared with 37 per 1,000 population in the West Midlands and 42 per 1,000 in England
- **Business survival rates for new businesses are relatively high**, a 4-year rate of 51% compared to 43% in England



**South Warwickshire is making an economic contribution of £10.2 billion of gross value added (GVA) to the regional and national economies, with the GVA in South Warwickshire growing faster than the average in England over the past 10 years, drawing on strong productivity trends**

GVA per hour worked and GVA per job filled are both above the England and West Midlands average



**South Warwickshire is home to 283,177 people, with a growing population and the working age population relatively highly qualified**

- There has been a population increase of 6.7% between 2017 and 2021, compared to 1.6% nationally and 1.5% in the West Midlands
- The **working age population aged 16-64 comprises 61%** of the South Warwickshire population

## 1. South Warwickshire at a glance



**Manufacturing**  
Businesses: 760  
Employment: 19,000  
GVA: £1,952 million



**Wholesale and retail trade:**  
Businesses: 1,955  
Employment: 23,000  
GVA: £1,015 million



**Professional, scientific and technical services**  
Businesses: 3,295  
Employment: 16,000  
GVA: £576 million



**Human health and social work**  
Businesses: 535  
Employment: 19,000  
GVA: £409 million



**Administration and support activities**  
Businesses: 1,415  
Employment: 11,000  
GVA: £505 million



**Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing**  
Businesses: 950  
Employment: 3,700  
**Utilities (electricity, gas, water supply and waste)**  
Businesses: 80  
Employment: 4,310  
GVA (Utilities & Agriculture): £1,503 million



**Real Estate**  
Businesses: 745  
Employment: 2,750  
GVA: £1,294 million



**Construction**  
Businesses: 1,715  
Employment: 6,000  
GVA: £460 million

**Sources:** Business Register and Employment Survey - Nomis, ONS, Demography 2021 - Released 2022, Nomis; UK Business Counts - Nomis, ONS, Demography 2022 - Released 2022, Nomis; Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by ITL1

It is also estimated that South Warwickshire will deliver approximately **£13.4 billion to the regional and national economy by 2028**. The two Councils are working together to contribute to the wider West Midlands ambitions to become the fastest growing region outside of London (as set out in the WMCA Strategic Plan for Growth).

This could deliver an **additional £300 million to the local economies by 2028**. This will bring the total contribution to the regional and national economies to £13.7 billion by 2028 (and £14.1 billion by 2030).

Source: Warwick Economics & Development (1.4% drop in GVA forecasted by the Office of Budget Responsibility in November 2022 has been incorporated – leading to a GVA in 2028 and 2030 that is slightly lower than would otherwise be the case).

- The working age population is projected to **grow in South Warwickshire at more than twice the rate of England by 2030**, with 8% growth in this age group compared to 3% nationally
- Approximately **49% of the working age population is qualified to NVQ4 or above**, compared to 43.2% nationally and 38.9% regionally (West Midlands)

### **79.5% of the working age population of South Warwickshire is economically active with 3.6% unemployed and 16.5% inactive**

- This compares with 79% of the working age population of England being economically active with 21% inactive (including unemployed).



- 31.4% of occupations in South Warwickshire are described as professional compared to 26.1% nationally
- There is also a concentration of associate professional positions (19% compared to 15% nationally)

## Some challenges

South Warwickshire is a high value and high potential economy and has many strengths, but it also faces some important challenges that will need to be overcome by the two Councils working closely together. For example, the competitiveness of the area has fluctuated in recent years since before the Covid-19 pandemic. SDC ranked 43rd in 2018, dropped to 51st place in 2019 but has since risen to 33rd place in 2023. Whereas WDC has stayed relatively stable but with a slight decline having ranked 22nd in 2018, 27th in 2019 and dropped to 29th in 2023. While both Districts have very strong bases in manufacturing, our economies are also highly dependent on retail, hospitality and tourism. These are sectors that tend to offer low-paid jobs with limited career progression opportunities.

Some parts of South Warwickshire also lack access to superfast broadband and good mobile phone coverage. This prevents some rural businesses operating on a level playing field. In parts of South Warwickshire, we also lack sufficient power/energy capacity to meet future demand for development. Furthermore, whilst South Warwickshire is centrally located in the country there are areas that lack direct links to the main rail network. Many communities have limited access to public transport. This has an impact on employment and social, health and wellbeing of residents where some suffer from social isolation and rural poverty. Housing costs have risen beyond average affordability in the area. House purchase and private rents are prohibitive for young, single, or lower paid people. With a shortage of social housing there are acute pressures in the housing market for local people who often have to move out of the area to cheaper areas.



## Significant opportunities

**A carbon neutral economy:** In 2019, Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon District Councils both declared a climate emergency. Both have committed to reduce district wide emissions by 55% by 2030. A joint 'Climate Change Action Programme', agreed by both Councils in November 2021, sets out ambitions and how we'll achieve them.

This requires the rapid decarbonisation of emission sources which fall outside of the jurisdiction of local authorities. A 2021 report produced on our behalf showed that emissions arising from energy use in non-domestic buildings and industrial processes represented 22.9% of the total carbon footprint of the Stratford and Warwick District areas.

We are already experiencing climate change on a global scale. A recent report produced by Sustainability West Midlands highlighted that 65% of UK SMEs have been financially impacted by their lack of response to weather information. As the impacts of climate change continue to be felt, it is likely that this figure will increase.

Economic development will play a vital role in driving the UK's transition to net zero. It is predicted that by 2050, there could be up to 1.18 million jobs in low-carbon and renewable energy sectors and this offers great opportunities to the area given our access to research and talent. Through the Economic Strategy, we will encourage low-carbon sectors to the Stratford and Warwick Districts to ensure that the area is well positioned to benefit from this. The Economic Strategy will enable a shift to a low carbon economy within the area in the following ways, expanded upon further in the delivery plan:

1. Businesses will be supported to reduce their carbon footprint.
2. Economic development within Stratford and Warwick Districts will maximise the economic opportunity presented by the transition to net-zero and the need to adapt to a changing climate.
3. Business resilience will be increased through the provision of climate change adaptation measures.

This strategy will support the development and alignment with the Warwickshire County Council's strategic economic plan for Warwickshire and the Sustainable Futures and Transport strategies for Warwickshire and the West Midlands. There is a need for greater connectivity on the rail network to enhance the connectivity of Stratford to the main rail spine between Oxford and Leamington for instance and the Honeybourne Stratford rail line. South Warwickshire will aim to support the development of a more reliable and resilient road, rail and active travel and public transport infrastructure, including rapid EV transition.

**Powering the South Warwickshire Economy:** A bigger South Warwickshire economy will require more locally generated energy. This strategy therefore supports proposals for renewable energy generation, low carbon heat and power, retrofitting of existing buildings, hydrogen hubs and emerging low-carbon energy technologies. The Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy and Warwick Local Plan set out the Councils' respective planning policies for supporting applications for such schemes.

At the local community level, there are also economic opportunities arising from the development of the circular economy in response to climate change and an opportunity to further enhance biodiversity as well as developing new economic opportunities linked to the natural capital, enhanced natural landscapes within the area including local energy solutions including renewable energy.

**Levelling Up:** The Levelling Up White Paper recognised the role Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) is playing as an anchor institution for local SMEs driving skills improvement and supporting local communities. Warwickshire is referenced as a recipient of funding through Project Gigabit to bring gigabit-capable broadband to 85% of the UK by 2025, and Leamington Spa as a recipient of Future High Streets Fund. There is also recognition of the benefits that the legacy of the 2022 Commonwealth Games will bring to the whole West Midlands region.

**Rural Economy:** South Warwickshire is a predominately rural area and this strategy seeks to support economic activities right across South Warwickshire. The rural economy encompasses all businesses operating in rural locations; not just those engaged in agricultural or land-based activities such as farming, food production or tourism. Whilst needing to be mindful of constraints such as landscape setting and traffic on rural roads, this strategy seeks to capitalise on the potential to provide for local employment opportunities to ensure thriving rural communities.

**Prosperous High Streets:** High streets and town centres are under increasing pressures and undergoing structural changes. These changes provide an opportunity to reinvigorate our town centres to ensure that they remain vibrant and resilient. This may mean a shift away from 'traditional' retailing and this strategy supports the provision of a mix of commercial uses and a more experienced based culture. This may also mean extending the window of activity on our town centres by promoting the evening economy. Importantly, we need to get local residents back onto our high streets and the approach above, coupled with improvements to the public realm will be critical in achieving this.

**Employment Enabling Sites:** Research has shown that one of the barriers to economic growth across South Warwickshire has been the affordability of employment land, particularly local businesses looking to expand being priced out by competing land values or higher value sectors. The councils are exploring how they can use their planning policies to promote and encourage the provision of affordable employment space across South Warwickshire and this strategy supports the principle of such provision.

**Sustainable Transport:** South Warwickshire is car dominated. Despite this, there is a network of railway lines connecting the main towns with Birmingham, Solihull, Coventry and London. This strategy seeks to promote uses of sustainable transport modes as part of the shift to net zero and the councils will work with partners, including the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership to improve services and fully capitalise on the South Warwickshire rail network.

**West Midlands regional strategies and initiatives:** Major opportunities are also created for South Warwickshire through the two Councils working together in the regional context, including to continue supporting the Midlands Engine and contribute to the work of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) including the WMCA Plan for Growth (in particular health-tech and med-tech, digital creative opportunities for production and games development and aerospace including manufacturing and alternative fuels sectors) and the West Midlands Innovation Accelerator; the WMCA's Green Prospectus (in particular future mobility, smart energy systems, energy storage and resource management and low carbon economy). Together we will also explore opportunities arising from the Midlands Connect targeted investments to alleviate key congestion hotspots along the A46 corridor, including at Evesham and Stratford-upon-Avon.



### **Coventry and Warwickshire Immersive and Creative Industries Launchpad**

Innovate UK has opened a pioneering funding programme focused on the Coventry and Warwickshire's immersive and creative technology cluster, to further accelerate innovation and growth in the region's creative technologies.

Under the Launchpad programme, businesses and researchers can bid for Innovate UK grants ranging from £25k to £1 million for business-led projects that build on the region's strengths.

The competition will support outstanding innovation projects led by businesses which are active, or growing their activities, in the creative and immersive technology industries cluster in Coventry and Warwickshire.

The Immersive and Creative Launchpad is promoted by Invest Coventry and Warwickshire, a partnership between Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council.

Round one of the competition for funding opens on 23 October and closes on 6 December 2023 but further rounds will be available in the future.

Find out more about the competition and how to apply: <https://iuk.ktn-uk.org/programme/launchpads/>

### **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)**

Under the Government's Levelling Up agenda every part of the UK received an allocation of both core UKSPF funding and the numeracy programme, Multiply. The three overarching objectives for the funding are community and place; supporting local businesses and people and skills. The funding runs through to March 2025 and the allocation for South Warwickshire was:

Warwick District Council - £3,484,412

Stratford District Council - £3,596,031

Warwickshire County Council - Multiply - £2,543,360 (County wide allocation)

By working in partnership with WCC and other boroughs and districts existing county wide support programmes have been reviewed and maintained and where possible additional programmes have been commissioned to meet local need.

SDC has benefitted from an additional allocation of £1,015,179 from the Rural England Prosperity Fund as a large part of the district faces rural challenges and can demonstrate that it meets the criteria of associated lower productivity rates; poor connectivity and poorer access to key services.



© Heart of England Community Energy

**The following SWOT analysis sets out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and how they impact on people, productivity and place.**

## People

- Diverse and rich skills of the local workforce ranging from manufacturing, software and technology to agriculture 
- Strong educational outcomes and qualifications among the population

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- High proportion of low paying employment in the retail, hospitality and tourism sectors
- High cost of living (e.g. access to affordable housing and travel costs) impacting on ease of recruitment for certain sectors and health and well-being of residents who often have to move out of area for availability and affordability of housing. This especially impacts young, single and low paid people 
- Poor connectivity through public transport and limited access to superfast broadband and reliable mobile phone coverage leading to rural social isolation and poverty

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- A highly skilled workforce offers a bedrock from which to build high skill industries such as low carbon sector and artificial intelligence
- A joint strategy offers an opportunity to work with local and regional partners to match local skills supply to the demands generated by investments in new technologies 
- Work with the University of Warwick and local employers to increase graduate and apprenticeship opportunities and retention
- Access to UK Shared Prosperity Fund ( UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) to support employment and skills training across the area

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- Dependence on service sector jobs and response to the pandemic led to a large portion of the workforce being furloughed and seeing other work leading to hiring shortages for these sectors 
- Fewer young people in the labour market, a key demographic for tourism and service sector jobs, exacerbating issues of worker shortages in these sectors

## Productivity

- Particularly high GVA growth compared to nationally
- A strong business survival rate and strong entrepreneurial culture and attractive environment to do business 
- Well-qualified population and emerging new technology and innovation clusters

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- Imbalance in sectoral spread of GVA - making the economy vulnerable to economic shocks and crises
- Despite high employment, a large portion of jobs are low-paying sectors such as retail, social care, and food and drink service
- Insufficient energy/ power capacity to meet future development demands in certain areas 
- Limited access to superfast broadband and reliable mobile coverage in certain areas
- Both Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council have slipped down the Local Authority Competitiveness Index from 2018 to 2021 from 48th to 43rd and 26th to 22nd respectively.

## 1. South Warwickshire at a glance

- Localise energy supply, secure further investment in new technologies and promote a low carbon economy
  - Support growth in all key sectors and knowledge-based businesses in: advanced manufacturing and engineering; low carbon; tourism and service sector; creative industries and ICT and agriculture sector 
  - UKSPF and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) will provide on-going support to businesses
  - Coventry & Warwickshire has been highlighted as a potential Investment Zone with the proposed Giga-factory to be located at the Coventry Airport site, the heart of the UK automotive industry, for provision of UK Batteries for the UK EV industry
- 
- Continuous increase in housing affordability ratios will limit young and lower income workers moving in to the area 
  - Certain sectors in South Warwickshire could be disproportionately impacted by climate change such as agriculture and tourism

## Place

- Proximity to world class universities and industries with strong R&D
  - Areas of outstanding natural beauty and a world renowned cultural and historical heritage attracting global tourism and investment
  - Excellent schools, good transport links to London and Birmingham, attractive open spaces and cultural offerings make the area an attractive place to live and work 
  - Good transport links to London and Birmingham from Leamington and Warwick
  - South Warwickshire has received levelling up funds in terms of Future High Streets Fund in Leamington Spa and as part of the wider Project Gigabit bringing broadband to 85% of the UK by 2025
  - Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) recognised by Government as anchor institution for local SMEs in driving up skills improvement and supporting local communities
- 
- Restricted access to public transport in many parts, impacting employment, health and rural isolation 
  - Limited access to broadband and phone coverage for some rural areas
  - Continuing need for social and affordable housing affecting young and vulnerable people
- 
- National and local policy commitments and funding and well-targeted regeneration projects across different areas and sectors
  - Buy-in, engagement and the development of a new housing company offer opportunities for focusing on progressive low carbon policies for the area 
  - Coventry & Warwickshire recognised as one of the areas for proposed Investment Zone with the proposed site of the UK Gigafactory to be based at Coventry Airport. This will bring significant benefits to the existing eco-system being at the heart of the UK Automotive Industry
- 
- Staff shortages and supply chain breakdowns as a result of Brexit and Covid impacting on businesses' ability to operate effectively 
  - Employment land and space, while relatively abundant, may not be suitable for business needs

### Key

Strengths 

Weaknesses 

Opportunities 

Threats 

## 2. An Economic Strategy for South Warwickshire

### Our Vision

Our vision for South Warwickshire is that by 2028, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils will have contributed to creating a larger, stronger, greener and more inclusive economy.

### Our Mission

Both Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils have declared climate change emergencies and are committed as organisations to achieving net carbon neutrality by 2025. Aside from the positive environmental impacts of achieving carbon neutrality, mitigating and adapting to climate change will generate positive economic impacts and new opportunities for jobs and investment in new sectors, driving forward innovation in existing sectors and creating the cross-fertilisation of ideas. The Councils want to capture and capitalise on these opportunities and see South Warwickshire leading the way in decarbonising the local economy while promoting growth and social inclusion. Our mission, therefore is:

*To foster the growth of the South Warwickshire economy sustainably and equitably. Working together, we will seek to achieve economic participation and prosperity for everyone in South Warwickshire. We will also lead the way and take smarter steps towards a greener future to meet our ambitions for a 55% reduction in South Warwickshire's carbon emissions by 2030.*

### Our Focus

To deliver our strategy, we are focusing on three themes: **People, Productivity and Place**. Across these themes, we have identified several main objectives and priority actions that the two Councils want the strategy to accomplish.

The Action Plan in Appendix 1 is intended to evolve into a 5 year plan with more detailed activity for the medium term developed during Year 1 when other strategies under development have produced their strategies and action plans to enable us to align objective prioritisation, resources and fund and the roles of other Councils and bodies are clearer and what type of role and activity SDC and WDC will play. It recognised that the economy can be a very fast changing environment and the impact upon economic development can often be sudden as was demonstrated by the Covid 19 pandemic. There are of course more longer-term investment projects that take years to come to fruition often reliant on appropriate funding streams to effect the regeneration. This Action Plan therefore focuses on the next five years and in particular incorporates a more detailed first year of operation 2024- 2025 with the intention that the Action Plan will be reviewed annually to reflect the current economic circumstances facing both Councils locally, regionally and nationally. The Action Plan will be supported by more detailed service plans held by each Council which will be monitored with quarterly reporting.

The main objectives are:

#### People

**Objective 1** - To address the skills imbalance.

**Objective 2** - To increase the provision of low cost housing.

#### Productivity

**Objective 3** - To support existing sectors.

**Objective 4** - To de-carbonise the existing South Warwickshire economy.

**Objective 5** - To attract new sectors to South Warwickshire to diversify the local economy.



### Place

**Objective 6** - To improve infrastructure provision across South Warwickshire.

**Objective 7** - To increase the vitality of our high streets and town centres and promote the economic value of our artistic and cultural assets.

**Objective 8** - To ensure the adequate supply of employment land.

An additional cross-cutting objective has been added specific to Warwick District in confirmation of the West Midlands Investment Zone.

**Objective 9** - To work with West Midlands Combined Authority in the development and delivery of the West Midlands Investment Zone (WMIZ).

# 3. Delivering the Economic Strategy

## Main objectives and priority actions

### People

#### Objective 1 - To address the skills imbalance

- 1.1 Explore opportunities with local businesses for apprenticeship and other vocational programmes such as T levels in partnership with colleges and universities across South Warwickshire
- 1.2 Working with local businesses, sixth forms and colleges, establish a programme of promoting local job opportunities with school and college leavers including career fairs and job matching and with the education business partnership and careers hub and enterprise advisors
- 1.3 Explore opportunities with local colleges and universities to retrain adult learners to address staff and skill shortages in specific sectors
- 1.4 Access to training and development at all stages of the working life with a focus on the green economy and low carbon transition, digital, creative and electronics and technology skills
- 1.5 Develop a workforce with the skills needed to increase and enhance natural capital, biodiversity and sustainable development across the area
- 1.6 Skills for social mobility, inclusion and widening participation
- 1.7 Develop workforce development strategies for the future mobility technologies, green technologies and digital creative industry sectors

#### Objective 2 - To increase the provision of low cost housing

- 2.1 Encourage and support the provision of 100% affordable housing schemes across South Warwickshire in accordance with Local Plan policy
- 2.2 Explore with partners the potential for low cost key worker accommodation targeted at the service and hospitality sectors
- 2.3 Deliver additional housing that meets the needs of South Warwickshire through Registered Providers (RPs) and through Milverton Homes Local Housing Company in the case of Warwick District Council

### Productivity

#### Objective 3 - To support existing sectors

- 3.1 Promote business support programmes and networking across South Warwickshire targeted at start-up and fledgling businesses, in particular programmes that provide flexible and less prescriptive support
- 3.2 Support the diversification of the rural economy including through the provision of local hubs for rural and agricultural industries that foster collaboration and innovation
- 3.3 Establish one additional business centre across South Warwickshire by 2028
- 3.4 Support the provision of additional visitor accommodation in line with sustainable "green" tourism principles
- 3.5 Promote Warwickshire and Leamington Spa as the digital creative technology hub for the West Midlands and provide the necessary underpinning physical infrastructure. Launch Innovate UK Immersive and Creative Technologies launchpad funding programme
- 3.6 To utilise South Warwickshire's allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to improve support for local businesses

### 3. Delivering the Economic Strategy

- 3.7 Support businesses in South Warwickshire to adapt to climate change, minimising the impact on productivity and maximising economic opportunities
- 3.8 Develop an innovation support service as well as enhancing a coherent innovation ecosystem across Warwickshire
- 3.9 Develop a business engagement strategy for SDC and WDC linked to the Growth Hub. Arrange and host an SDC business fair

#### **Objective 4 – To de-carbonise the existing South Warwickshire economy**

- 4.1 Work with existing partners to establish a network of low carbon business champions to promote and support the de-carbonisation of existing businesses and to encourage a circular economy across South Warwickshire
- 4.2 Encourage and support the retrofitting of commercial premises with renewable energy generation
- 4.3 Work with Shakespeare’s England and the new Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) tourism businesses to de-carbonise the tourism sector including through more sustainable travel

#### **Objective 5 – To attract new sectors to South Warwickshire to diversify the local economy**

- 5.1 To work with University partners to maximise the benefit of “spin off” or “spin out” commercial opportunities arising from University research in low-carbon sectors
- 5.2 Support the provision of an electric vehicle “Gigafactory” and support low carbon future mobility and its associated value and supply chains within South Warwickshire
- 5.3 Develop the Wellesbourne Innovation Campus & sector supply chains. Develop the Kenilworth Gateway employment site
- 5.4 Encourage innovation graduate placements with businesses, including Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs)
- 5.5 Sector diversification, internationalisation and inward investment support. To work with regional partners to attract inward investment into development and delivery of the proposed EV Giga Factory at Gateway South, Coventry Airport

#### **Place**

#### **Objective 6 - To improve infrastructure provision across South Warwickshire**

- 6.1 To facilitate the delivery of superfast broadband speeds/full fibre and good mobile 5G signal across South Warwickshire
- 6.2 To work with National Highways and Warwickshire County Council to facilitate the upgrading and safety of the A46 to expressway standards\*
- 6.3 To facilitate the increase of renewable power generation and supply across South Warwickshire, in appropriate locations
- 6.4 Review options for de-carbonisation of refuse collection vehicles and future zero carbon fuel opportunities. SDC to continue to work with Porterbrook, Long Marston on hydrogen rail project
- 6.5 To improve the transport connectivity to the University of Warwick’s campus

\*Limited-access road or expressway.

A highway or arterial road for high-speed traffic which has many or most characteristics of a controlled-access highway, or no access to adjacent property, some degree of separation of opposing traffic flow, use of grade separated interchanging extent, prohibition of some modes of transport such as bicycles or horses and very few or no intersecting cross-streets.

## **Objective 7 – To increase the vitality of our high streets and town centres and promote the economic value of our artistic and cultural assets**

- 7.1 To facilitate the delivery of the World Shakespeare Centre in Stratford-upon-Avon; support & facilitate the delivery of key public realm/highway schemes to help improve the place and economic wellbeing of town centres e.g. Bridge Street / High Street (SuA), Parade (Leamington Spa), Bath Street
- 7.2 Working with Town Councils and BIDs, secure funding opportunities for public realm improvements to high streets, including the Stratford Gateway site and new development of the Debenhams and BHS stores in Stratford-upon-Avon
- 7.3 Working with WCC Warwickshire Towns Network, Town Councils and BIDs to monitor occupancy levels in town centres and work with landlords to encourage pop-up and meanwhile uses in empty shops
- 7.4 Work with Shakespeare’s England, Destination Coventry and Visitor Information Centres to compile and maintain a single list of events across South Warwickshire to assist in more effective collaboration and promotion
- 7.5 Deliver Leamington’s Future High Street Fund and wider transformation projects to strengthen the ‘Silicon Spa’ cluster as the national centre for digital creative industries. To work in partnership Transforming Leamington Board to progress projects to address town centre issues in Leamington Spa
- 7.6 To retain visitors to South Warwickshire by growing the night-time economy through supporting later opening of businesses and provision of diverse events including more evening events
- 7.7 To strengthen and protect existing high streets in all town centres/ villages by resisting the loss of retail and/or commercial space to residential and supporting the rural towns in delivery of their neighbourhood plans

## **Objective 8 – To ensure the adequate supply of employment land**

- 8.1 To facilitate the provision of additional affordable employment premises across South Warwickshire through the SWLP
- 8.2 To ensure adequate future supply of employment land in the right locations across South Warwickshire through the SWLP
- 8.3 To ensure the appropriate availability of physical infrastructure such as offices, enterprise and innovation centres and move on space in rural market towns in support of their neighbourhood plans

## **Objective 9 – To work with West Midlands Combined Authority in the development and delivery of the Proposed West Midlands Investment Zone (WMIZ)**

- 9.1 Development and delivery of the WMIZ and specifically Giga Park in Coventry and Warwick
- 9.2 Attract investors to the WMIZ Giga Park site
- 9.3 Allocation of WDC surplus retained business rates generated by the WMIZ
- 9.4 To ensure that the decisions of the Board do not import any undue risk to WDC in financing schemes that result from those decisions



## Core Opportunity Sectors

The strategy identifies several sectors for the two Councils to work together on in order to boost growth and productivity. These sectors are those where there are significant opportunities for investment, building on an existing foundation of established, successful business, particularly in the professional services, across the area while further improving and opening up (new) opportunities for the local workforce. Collectively, these sectors also contribute to the achievement of our net zero targets.

- **Automotive and low carbon transport** - to include advanced manufacturing engineering (AME), EV Batteries, Hydrogen and Rail - With strong links to both further and higher education institutions, South Warwickshire forms a world-leading cluster at the heart of advanced automotive technology and R & D into future mobility across all transport sectors. Specific market opportunities in this respect include: EV Batteries - taking a lead from the R&D foundation of the automotive industry, this fast-developing sector is creating a high value, advanced cluster in its own right, assisted by the UK Battery Innovation centre in Warwick District and the proposed Investment Zone and Gigafactory at Coventry and Warwickshire Gateway South and the world-leading research of University of Warwick and Coventry University. Hydrogen – non-fossil fuel hydrogen generation is an alternative clean fuel to battery technology. Work on hydrogen technology in the rail industry is being explored at Long Marston with the development of the Hydro-flex train.
- **Low Carbon Technology** - to include the 'Green Economy' and the 'Circular Economy' – in addition to low carbon transport the area is well placed to develop opportunities across the 'Green Economy'. Warwick District is the home to National Grid's HQ and the area offers opportunities for businesses in the development low-carbon forms of energy. The strategy will encourage businesses working in this sector and will encourage the development of a 'Circular Economy' to move both councils towards the achievement of their Net-Zero ambitions.
- **Bioscience , Agri-tech and Medtech** - Seeking to develop biological and technological solutions that sustain, restore, and improve the quality of life for humans, plants, and animals in our world, including innovations in agriculture to increase its yield, efficiency, and profitability. Bioscience has strong roots in South Warwickshire with continual research since 1949. With access to R&D, higher educational institutes and pool of technical expertise opportunities to attract and develop high-tech industries in the area.
- **Digital Creative** - Centred on Leamington Spa town centre this cluster extends to nearby towns such as Southam. The home of the UK video games industry, "Silicon Spa" employs 10% of the UK games development workforce and is the largest cluster outside of Greater London. The area offers great opportunity for development of Film and TV industry but also link up with other clusters involved in digital transformation, augmented and immersive technologies and digital manufacturing.
- **Visitor Economy** – to include hospitality, retail, leisure, cultural heritage and the arts – South Warwickshire boasts a host of global 'hero brands' in the likes of Shakespeare and the RSC, Warwick Castle and Kenilworth Castle and is well established as a tourist destination employing significant numbers of people and contributing to the local economy. A specific area of focus for the economic strategy will be to develop tourism in a sustainable way across the area and to look at new opportunities to build on the existing tourism offer of our local towns, villages and rural areas to ensure they remain vibrant and welcoming to both the resident and visitor alike..

### 3. Delivering the Economic Strategy

Within South Warwickshire, there is a core economic area comprising the five main towns (Kenilworth, Royal Leamington Spa, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick and Whitnash), the A46 Trans-Midlands Trade Corridor and the central section of the M40. It also includes the University of Warwick's two campuses, Coventry and Warwickshire's Gateway South Battery Innovation Centre and the proposed Gigafactory, Long Marston Garden Village and Rail Innovation Centre, Stoneleigh Park, the automotive hub at Gaydon and proposed development at Kenilworth Gateway off the A46 and the Innovation Centre at Wellesbourne Campus. Whilst this Economic Strategy seeks to maximise economic opportunities across the whole of South Warwickshire, this area, with its proximity to High Speed 2 and UK Central at Arden Cross in neighbouring Solihull Borough just to the north of South Warwickshire, is likely to provide the focus for attracting strategically significant inward investment to drive forward the South Warwickshire economy, while acknowledging national and local planning policies (e.g., Green Belt).

This strategy acknowledges the need for additional employment land (including affordable employment premises), and this will generally be directed towards this Core Investment Opportunities Area. The strategy will also ensure that these areas are well connected - **with a particular focus on supporting public transport and active travel**. It is recognised that a core area which includes the A46 expressway does support further car borne travel. It will be important that investment along this corridor focuses on tackling existing congestion and that new development opportunities maximise all opportunities for promoting public transport including rail-based access where possible. These will need to be addressed further in the South Warwickshire Local Plan. The identification of this area is not intended to set out a wider development growth strategy for South Warwickshire, nor is it intended to advocate development in the Green Belt. The place to consider this wider growth strategy in the round will be the South Warwickshire Local Plan. The role of this identified area is to prompt discussion about the likely focus for attracting significant inward investment within this strategy.

**Areas outside of the Core Investment Opportunities Area remain suitable for more local investment opportunities**, subject to national and local planning policies.

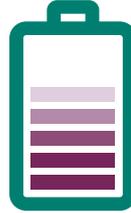


### Map highlighting advanced manufacturing and knowledge based sectors

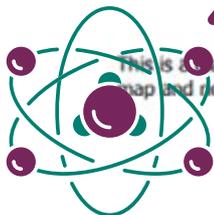
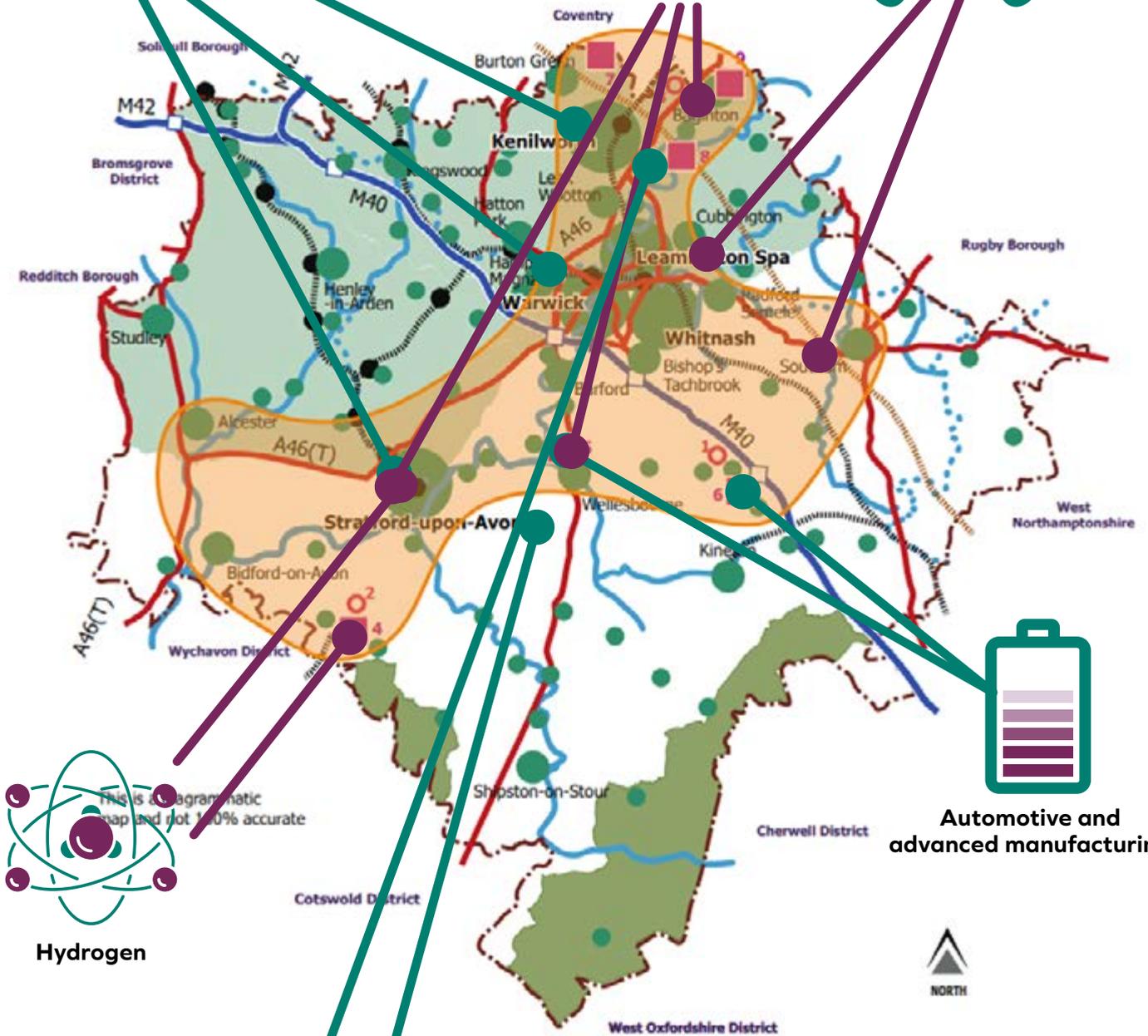
Visitor Economy



EV Batteries



Digital Creative



Hydrogen



Bioscience and Agri-tech

Automotive and advanced manufacturing

**Key** - Visitor Economy applies to whole of map

- Green Belt
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Core Opportunity Area (indicative)

This is a diagrammatic map and not 100% accurate

**SDC and WDC work in partnership with a range of other organisations and stakeholders across the local and wider area to deliver support and advice to businesses. This diagram indicates the range of topics and to which groups the district councils signpost.**



University of Warwick

Stratford-on-Avon-College

Warwickshire College Group

Warwickshire Property & Development Group

Warwickshire County Council

Warwickshire County Council

Warwick District Council

Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce

Federation of Small Business (FSB)



## Our Key Partners

In delivering this Economic Strategy, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils will be working closely with a number of key delivery partners.

### **West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)**

Created in 2016, the WMCA exists to grow the regional economy by investing in transport, skills, wellbeing and housing. Comprising 18 local authorities and 3 local enterprise partnerships, the WMCA is the power behind the [Midlands Engine](#).

### **West Midlands Growth Company**

The West Midlands Growth Company plays an important role in supporting with the delivery of the [West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy](#). Its primary purpose is to attract investment, jobs, visitors and business to the West Midlands region.

### **Coventry & Warwickshire Growth Hub**

A single gateway to navigating the best private and public sector business support available. Businesses can access tailored, commercially focused and joined-up advice that's free, impartial and delivered with one goal in mind: growing your bottom line.

### **Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP)**

The CWLEP has played a pivotal role in delivering on Coventry & Warwickshire's aspiration to become a high growth economy and global hub for knowledge-based industries, leading the way in Advanced Engineering & Digital sectors. The District Councils will need to work with colleagues to review how the work of the CWLEP following its closure is to be taken forward, including the priorities identified in the [CW Strategic Reset Framework](#) published March 2021. This document develops and implements a focused, partnership-led strategic framework to reset the sub-regional economy to make Coventry & Warwickshire a safe and highly attractive place to live, study, work, and invest.

### **Coventry & Warwickshire Champions**

The champions unite businesses, organisations and individuals across Coventry & Warwickshire in a powerful network to help develop and promote Coventry and Warwickshire and raise its profile.

### **Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce**

One of 53 accredited Chambers of Commerce in the UK which together make up a strong network of trusted champions of businesses, providing a local hub for businesses to access business support, training, networking and member benefits.

### **Federation of Small Business**

The Federation of Small Business (FSB) is one of the UK's leading business support organisations offering support, advice and benefits to self-employed, micro and smaller businesses up to SMEs. Locally there is a very active branch offering business support and networking.

### **Invest in Coventry and Warwickshire**

Leads on local inward investment activity, working closely with partners like Dept for International Trade, WMGC and CW Growth Hub to promote the area and to provide free and confidential services to businesses looking to relocate including commercial property searches and location advice, local intelligence, introductions to networks and organisations, information on funding and innovation support and employment and skills development support.

### **Coventry & Warwickshire Reinvestment Trust**

The Trust is a not-for-profit organisation committed to supporting individuals, start-ups and businesses in Coventry and Warwickshire and through its investment, creating a positive and beneficial impact upon the local community. Its mission is to help people and finance businesses by providing loans to financially disadvantaged people and aspiring entrepreneurs, businesses and social enterprises not able to secure finance from the high street banks.



### 3. Delivering the Economic Strategy

#### **Warwickshire County Council**

Warwickshire County Council's Economy and Skills Group develops activities and initiatives that add value for Warwickshire to help grow the economy to the benefit of residents. Key services include economic analysis and research, project and programme management, business support and development and engagement in the employment and skills agenda. The [Inward Investment Team](#) works closely with staff at Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils to secure new employers and jobs to South Warwickshire.

#### **Warwickshire Property & Development Group**

The Property & Development Group has been set up to deliver new affordable and market priced homes and a range of commercial, mixed use and renewable energy opportunities across the county. It is owned by Warwickshire County Council, which will re-invest profits back into the Council's priority activities.

#### **University of Warwick**

The University of Warwick is consistently highly placed in university rankings, achieving top 10 status in UK league tables and recognition as one of the top universities in the world. The University benefits from three multi-disciplinary faculties on two campuses: Arts; Social Science; and Science, Engineering and Medicine, including world renown departments such as, [Warwick Business School](#), [Warwick Medical School](#), and [Warwick Manufacturing Group](#).

#### **Warwickshire College Group**

WCG operates three colleges across South Warwickshire. [Moreton Morrell](#) with a focus on land-based courses, [Leamington](#), and [Warwick Trident](#) with a focus on engineering. They also run a number of apprenticeship programmes with local employers, including JLR.

#### **Stratford-on-Avon College**

The college provides a wide curriculum of vocational courses including re-skilling of the older population. As well as apprenticeships with local employers, courses include including performing arts and stage skills.

#### **SAE Institute**

Our newest education partner to join the area is the SAE Institute providing education and training to the digital creative industry set in the heart of Leamington Spa's 'Silicon Spa' Creative Quarter and opening its doors to its first cohort of students in September 2023.

#### **Shakespeare's England**

Established by Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils, Shakespeare's England is the official tourism body for the South Warwickshire region. Its aspiration is to attract more business and leisure visitors – who stay longer, explore further and spend more. Shakespeare's England prepares and implements a Destination Management Plan to deliver its objectives. This economic strategy is consistent with the DMP with a focus on de-carbonising the tourism industry. In the light of the de Bois Review of the role of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), the Government has recently announced its support for the formation of a new Coventry and Warwickshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) between Destination Coventry and Shakespeare's England. Both councils will work with partner in Shakespeare's England to consider the best means of support the visitor economy through our DMO and ultimately LVEP.

#### **BID Leamington**

Since 2008, BID Leamington has made excellent progress to increase the appeal of Leamington town centre and improve trading performance of its businesses. Popular Events include the [Leamington Food Festival](#), [Leamington Lantern Parade](#), as well as promoting the town through its websites [LoveLeamington](#) and [TasteLeamington](#).



### **Stratford-upon-Avon BID**

Since 2009, the Stratford-upon-Avon BID works to attract more people into Stratford town centre, make them stay longer, spend more and leave happy. Events include the [Festival of Motoring](#) and [Food Festival](#). They also promote [Independents' Day](#).

## South Warwickshire Business Support

Across South Warwickshire the councils lease space to support and grow small businesses. Find out more about your local business centre:

### Althorpe Enterprise Hub

Althorpe Enterprise Hub offers a range of furnished and serviced office space – from 2 to 18 people - all with flexible “easy-in, easy-out” licence arrangements. The Hub also benefits from a staffed reception providing office support services.

### Court Street Creative Arches

Spacious and distinctive, Court Street Creative Arches are renovated Victorian railway arches providing unique, inspirational workspaces for creative and digital businesses, appealing to creative individuals with a dynamic business idea or an existing company looking to expand or collaborate.

### Spencer Yard

Forming part of Leamington’s Creative Quarter, Spencer Yard is home to a variety of arts and creative organisations and provides a unique collaborative environment for all creative industries, in a range of office and studio space. The area is undergoing total regeneration and what was formerly the United Reform Church (aka The URC) has been transformed into a collaborative, creative working space known as ‘The Fold’ and opens its doors in October 2023. The Fold will be home to Cogent, a creative marketing company and other tenants in the Digital Creative sector. An exciting new addition to the development is an inspirational, industry led, national education provider the SAE Institute which will be fully operational from Sept 2023 to offer training and qualifications across the digital industry sector.

### 26HT

26HT is a refurbished four-store regency building located in the centre of Leamington Spa fitted out specifically for the digital gaming sector. It offers a supportive and collaborative studio environment for new and emerging gaming studios looking for their own space.

### Venture House Stratford

Venture House provides a unique environment for people starting up a business and for fledgling businesses. Following the COVID-19 Pandemic the exact shape of Venture House’s services are still being developed for re-opening but the fundamental aim of Venture House, to inspire a new generation of entrepreneurs and offer support to existing small enterprises remains.



## Implementation

Accompanying the final draft of this strategy will be two action plans that set out the specific tasks that each Council will seek to undertake to deliver of the vision, aims and objectives of this strategy. The strategy will be reviewed at least every 5 years, or sooner if there are significant structural changes to the local economy.

## Measuring success

The vision expresses the ultimate aim of this strategy; essentially to grow a more productive lower carbon local economy. In order to know whether this strategy has been achieved, it is important to establish a baseline dataset that can then be reviewed in 5 years. Providing a regional and national context will also establish the wider context for economic change over the period of the strategy.

Success of the strategy will be monitored and assessed using a number of different measures across three main areas:

- size of the economy
- diversity of the economy
- the carbon footprint of the economy

These measures are set out in more detail in the Action Plan in Appendix 1 and will be reported on by both councils.

## South Warwickshire Local Plan

Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils are working together to prepare a single local plan for South Warwickshire. Running to 2050, the SWLP will act as the delivery vehicle for this Strategy, setting planning policies to support economic growth and identifying locations to attract investment. This strategy therefore informs the SWLP as well as other planning main decisions taken in respect of the existing SDC Core Strategy and WDC Local Plan.

This strategy will also work with the corporate and other relevant strategies of both councils to achieve common objectives.

## Business Friendly Environment

The councils each have three main regulatory functions; planning, environmental health and licensing. Within these functions, the councils have enforcement powers to address any breaches of law. In November 2021, the Councils adopted '[Better Business for All](#)', a regulator and business charter to promote success in business whilst continuing to provide public protection.

**Whilst this strategy does not overrule the independent exercise of these functions, it sets a clear position that the councils will be supportive of the principle of proposals that generate low-carbon economic growth, and in taking decisions in respect of the above functions, the starting point is a presumption in favour of proposals that accord with this strategy.**

**If you require this document in an alternative format please contact us:**

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