



# West Berkshire - *“Open for Business”*

## A Local Economic Development Strategy for West Berkshire 2013-2018



WestBerkshire  
C O U N C I L





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## **West Berkshire- “Open for Business”**

### *A Local Economic Development Strategy for West Berkshire 2013-2018*

#### **Foreword**

The recent recession has placed both a national and international focus on the need to stimulate economic growth. Whilst our local economy has shown itself to be relatively resilient through the recent economic difficulties it has not been immune from trends such as rising youth unemployment and a reduction in new business start ups.

West Berkshire is an integral part of one of the most prosperous sub regions in Europe, the so called Thames Valley business wedge spanning from South Buckinghamshire, South Oxfordshire, through all of Berkshire, North Hampshire, and Surrey. Along with Greater London and other parts of the South East, this region is recognised as “the economic engine” which leads and pulls along the rest of the UK economy. Returning to rates of growth previously achieved in the period 1995 to 2005 will be the ultimate challenge in the coming years, especially given an increasingly competitive environment in what continues to become an increasingly global economy.

This Economic Development Strategy seeks to set out how we will respond to this new challenge but also how existing strategies and plans will work together to promote both growth and economic wellbeing across the District over the coming five years. The Strategy has not been prepared in isolation. It takes account of the Government’s own “Plan for Growth”<sup>1</sup> and also the outline growth strategy of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVBLEP), ‘Making the Boat go Faster’.<sup>2</sup> It also recognises that future business growth and enhanced prosperity are driven by a wide range of factors including the quality of the local environment and social inclusion.

This Strategy also needs to be considered alongside the recently approved Local Development Plan for West Berkshire which covers the period up to 2026. This Plan is itself based on delivering significant growth, with an expectation of 10,500 homes being built during the Plan period, a large proportion of these being constructed in and around Newbury. Our Economic Development Strategy seeks to support this approach.

Our Strategy is underpinned by our economic Vision for West Berkshire. This in turn is supported by five specific economic objectives. These to some degree reflect broader issues evident across Berkshire Thames Valley and the wider South East such as skills, inward investment and retention, as well as more locally focused issues such as promotion and regeneration. A delivery plan sets out how we intend to address the specific priorities that underpin each of the objectives. We are particularly focussed on “delivery via partnerships” because as a Local Authority we cannot generate economic growth on our own.

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<sup>1</sup> Business, Innovation and Skills March 2011 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-growth--5>

<sup>2</sup> TVBLEP 2012 [http://issuu.com/tvblep/docs/tvb\\_lep\\_outline\\_growth\\_strategy?e=7180515/1270603](http://issuu.com/tvblep/docs/tvb_lep_outline_growth_strategy?e=7180515/1270603)

Where appropriate we will work with the TVBLEP and other sub regional partners to ensure that our economic objectives are met. We share many of the same aspirations, and recognise that little if anything will be delivered by working alone, particularly in an environment where resources are increasingly scarce. As this Strategy is being finalised we are actively working with the TVBLEP to identify the key strategic infrastructure requirements across Berkshire. We are also engaged with our Unitary Authority partners in Berkshire, Newbury College and the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce in supporting the City Deal initiative which we hope will play a major role in tackling the skills related issues which are highlighted in this Strategy.

At a District level we intend to place an increasing emphasis on promoting West Berkshire as a place to both visit and do business. We will do this with a range of local partners including the recently established Newbury Business Improvement District (BID). Regeneration remains another major theme notably in Newbury where we will continue to work with existing and hopefully new development partners in realising the objectives of Newbury Vision 2026<sup>3</sup>. At the most local level, community planning will continue to be supported through parish councils and community planning groups as a means of achieving economic prosperity throughout all of the communities in West Berkshire.

Our Strategy will remain a living document. It will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect significant changes to the economic, environmental and regulatory frameworks within which the Strategy operates.

Our aim, as always, will be to assist and help generate economic growth in West Berkshire.



Councillor Alan Law  
Portfolio Holder for Economic Development



Nick Carter  
Chief Executive

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=27055>

## **West Berkshire-“Open for Business”**

### **Our Economic Vision**

*“West Berkshire Council will work proactively and openly with partners and stakeholders to maintain strong and resilient economic prosperity. We will provide an environment that creates opportunities for business growth that make a real difference to all people's lives, with businesses that start, stay and develop in the area.”*

#### **1. Executive Summary**

Central Government's clear aspiration is that it is businesses that will drive the economy forward and this Strategy aims to ensure that the Council is well placed to take advantage of any emerging opportunities for growth and to work with its partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors to shape the future economic prosperity of the area. This Strategy will act as a catalyst for improved collaborative working to ensure we are working towards our economic goals to improve outcomes for residents and those who also work and visit the area.

The national and local economy is part of an ever-increasing competitive and global economy and as such it was necessary to develop a local economic strategy to:

- take account of immediate economic challenges
- encourage economic stability and growth over the next five years
- help the Council and its partners in prioritizing limited resources in doing the above.

Some of the challenges that we face locally include:

- Ensuring that local skills meet local employment need
- Supporting businesses to stay and grow in the local area and promoting West Berkshire to companies and organisations that may wish to re-locate or start their enterprise here
- Being able to provide the right mix of employment land to meet the needs of businesses
- Making sure there is adequate housing provision for all who want to live and work here
- Making informed decisions by having access to and providing robust economic intelligence
- Regenerating key development sites in West Berkshire in a way that benefits the local community and economy.

### **Our Economic Objectives**

The Economic Vision will be achieved by delivering on our economic objectives which are outlined below:

1. Work with partners to ensure that **local skills** meet the needs of today's business and work environments.
2. **Promote** West Berkshire as a good location for business, leisure, learning and life.
3. Enable effective **infrastructure** that supports economic growth.
4. Encourage inward **investment and business retention** across all sectors
5. Actively support sustainable **rejuvenation and regeneration** projects in key locations.

## ***Our Underlying Principles of Delivery***

Each economic objective will be achieved in line with the following principles:

1. **Working in partnership** with those supporting the local economy to ensure a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to economic growth and retention, providing leadership and co-ordination where appropriate by:
  - a) Building and maintaining relationships with those in the **business** and **education** sectors to mutually support the local economy, with a strong channel for **two-way communication**.
  - b) Working closely with Regional Economic Organisations such as **Thames Valley Berkshire Local Economic Partnership (TVBLEP)** and through TVBLEP with relevant Government Economic Departments such as **UKTI** <sup>4</sup> and **BIS** <sup>5</sup>.
2. Understanding, monitoring and communicating trends and performance in the operation of the local economy by building a **Business Information Centre**.

### ***1.1 Skills and Employment***

Skills and employment includes the following priority themes:

- Ensuring that local skills meet local employment need.
- Promoting and improving access to apprenticeships and other learning opportunities.
- Encouraging business mentoring schemes.
- Facilitating work placements.
- Working with partners to ensure education and training providers deliver the Information and Guidance (IAG) agenda.
- Supporting young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) towards employment.
- Enabling local people opportunities to access employment, education and training opportunities to help improve the skills levels of the West Berkshire workforce.

The Council's priorities that support delivery of this objective include:

1. *Building on the work of the TVBLEP in collecting data on business needs and promoting apprenticeship opportunities to businesses and young people based on skills gaps*
2. *Encouraging local opportunities for business mentoring to help support SMEs*
3. *Communicating any identified work experience/placement opportunities to relevant partner.*

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<sup>4</sup> UK Trade and Investment

<sup>5</sup> Department for Business Innovation and Skills



## **1.2 Promotion of West Berkshire**

The promotion of West Berkshire includes the following themes:

- Encouraging and communicating a business friendly environment.
- Work with partners to develop tourism.
- Enhancing the retail offer of our town centres such as Newbury, Hungerford, Thatcham, Calcot and larger villages.

The Council's priorities that support delivery of this objective include:

1. *Provide ongoing support via the Council's Planning and Community programmes to towns and rural villages to encourage local promotion and increased economic development activity.*
2. *Support and encourage public sector procurement to local SMEs.*
3. *Ensure leisure and tourism agenda is embedded into all relevant Council programmes and economic development activity.*
4. *Increase West Berkshire's profile.*
5. *Increase networking with business communities.*
6. *Raise the profile of town centres as retail destinations.*

## **1.3 Infrastructure**

Economic Infrastructure includes the following elements:

- Housing
- Transport Network
- Superfast Broadband
- Flood Protection
- Providing the right mix of sites and premises
- Utilities
- Schools and training and education providers

The Council's priorities that support delivery of this objective include:

1. *Electrification of the railway line west of Reading to Newbury by 2016<sup>6</sup>.*
2. *A339, Newbury: Improvements to this key transport corridor to support growth and unlocking commercial redevelopment*
3. *A4 Calcot: Improved access and journey time to the M4 (J12)*
4. *Improving the Digital Infrastructure to transform West Berkshire's competitive position for new business enterprise and enhance the quality of life for people who live and work here through the provision of Superfast Broadband.*
5. *Housing provision through sites identified in the Local Development Plan.*

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<sup>6</sup> There will be a push for the electrification to continue further West post-2016, benefiting both Kintbury and Hungerford.

## **1.4 Investment and Retention**

Investment and Retention includes the following themes:

- Providing or signposting businesses to good quality Business Support.
- Local Economic Intelligence.
- Incubation provision for start-ups and growth units for business development.
- Removing barriers to enterprise.

The Council's priorities that support delivery of this objective include:

1. *Providing high quality, responsive support and information for businesses considering start-up, relocation, expansion or development.*
2. *Supporting bids, where appropriate, for sustainable investment into the district from international, national, regional, sub-regional and local organisations to grow the local economy.*
3. *Developing new web pages for business and economic development.*
4. *Liaison with rural businesses.*

## **1.5 Rejuvenation and Regeneration**

Rejuvenation and regeneration projects must meet the following key criteria:

- Enhanced quality of living.
- Improved employment opportunities.
- Schemes must be fit for identified current and modern use.
- Schemes must provide substantial visual enhancement to an existing area – public realm and landscaping.
- Any negative impact of a scheme must be mitigated for with consideration for the lives of existing residents and / or businesses.

The following key sites will support delivery of this objective:

1. *London Road Industrial Estate, Newbury*
2. *The Wharf, Newbury*
3. *Market Street/Station Gateway, Newbury*
4. *Sterling Cables site with new through road*
5. *Institute of Animal Health, Compton (will be redeveloped into a residential led mixed use development)*
6. *Arlington Business Park, Theale (opportunities will be taken to facilitate the redevelopment of stock as it becomes outdated).*
7. *Greenham Business Park (development land opportunities)*
8. *Other Rural Schemes*

## **2. Introduction**

### *2.1 Purpose*

The purpose of this Economic Development Strategy is to provide an overarching vision and framework for supporting and retaining a resilient local economy and to plan economic development work in West Berkshire for the medium term (2013-2018) and beyond.

It has been informed by a number of key issues affecting economic growth that have been identified through consultation with key partners and stakeholders, together with themes that were previously identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy<sup>7</sup>, the Local Economic Assessment 2011<sup>8</sup> and the recent work of Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVBLEP).

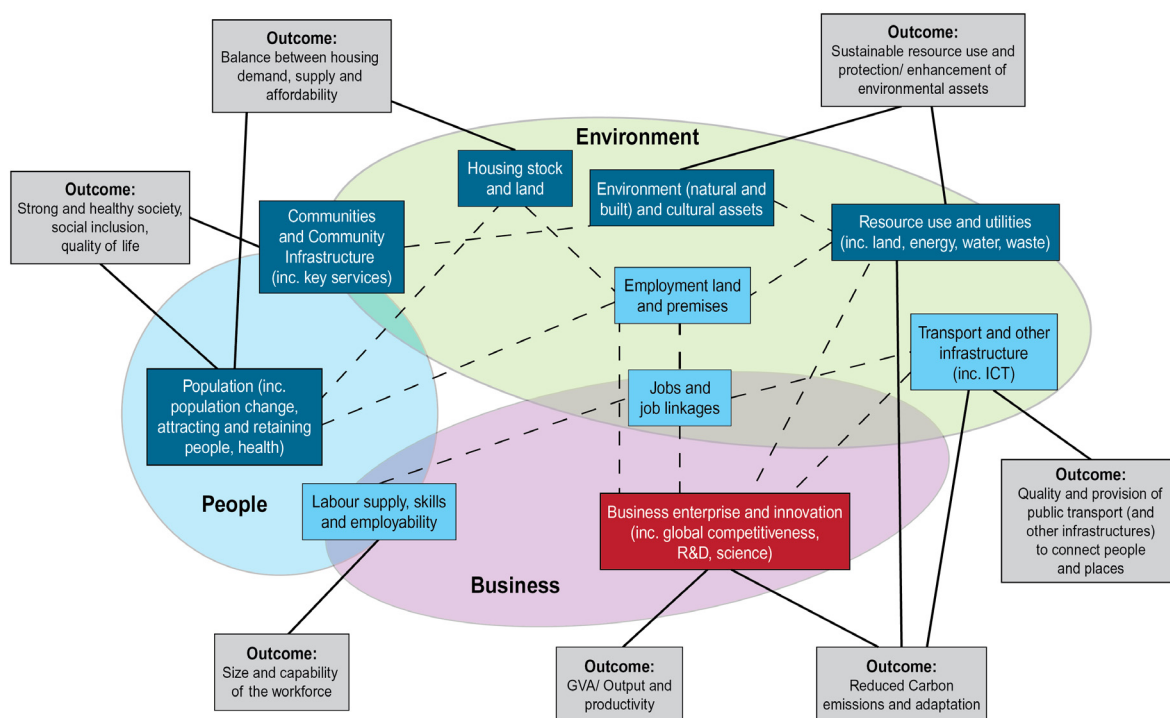
West Berkshire forms part of the TVBLEP. Led by a Board of 20 members and an Executive of 9 appointed Directors, (working on a voluntary basis) the TVBLEP has a strategic, sub-regional role in economic development, inward investment and economic growth in the Thames Valley.

Economic development is all about improving the economy of our area, by attracting new businesses and retaining existing ones, encouraging inward investment, increasing employment opportunities, ensuring that local skills meet local employment needs, promoting leisure and tourism, and identifying areas for sustainable growth and development. Effective economic development will play a central role in enabling West Berkshire to rise to the financial challenges of the present day at the same time as equipping our community for future well being and prosperity. This Strategy provides a clear sense of purpose, direction and vision for the future economic well being of the area.

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<sup>7</sup> Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2026 “A Breath of Fresh Air”  
[www.westberks.gov.uk/breathoffreshair](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/breathoffreshair)

<sup>8</sup> [www.westberks.gov.uk/economicassessment](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/economicassessment)



**Figure 2.0 Link between Economic Development and the wider community.**

The above diagram illustrates that the local economy cannot be seen in isolation from other areas of the community. West Berkshire Council cannot itself deliver economic growth but can play a significant part through adopting the roles of commissioner, facilitator and deliverer of initiatives that encourage such growth.

The framework for the Economic Development Strategy consists of a vision for the economy of West Berkshire that will be achieved through the delivery of key priorities. Progress towards these objectives will be monitored and measured against key performance indicators and targets. The Economic Development Strategy will shape and prioritise the economic development work undertaken in West Berkshire, both by the Council and its delivery partners, by having a clear direction of travel for the medium term.

This strategy is owned and monitored by West Berkshire Council and delivered by a range of appropriate partners and stakeholders, including TVBLEP and the Skills and Enterprise Partnership. Both of these key partnerships seek to tackle the major skills, employment and economic issues that are important in the continued prosperity of West Berkshire.

## *2.2 Consultation*

Consultation on the draft EDS was undertaken using a West Berkshire Council Business web page from 24 June to 2 August 2013. We recognise the value of a full consultation process and drew on the expertise and insight of as wide a business audience as possible and collected views from the private, public and third sectors. Input from the business community will continue to be welcomed at any time as this is intended to be a dynamic document.

- Individual consultees were notified electronically about the start of the consultation, together with an offer of face to face discussion with Economic Development.
- The document has also been informed by a draft Economic Assessment undertaken by GVA consultants.
- There has been internal consultation with key officers in Planning, Transport and Education.
- The document was also discussed and presented at the Skills and Enterprise Partnership and the West Berkshire Chamber of Commerce Council.
- The draft document was also sent to an established Community Panel for input.

Comments that were received have been used to revise and strengthen the Strategy where appropriate although there were no major changes to the main areas of focus and our overall “direction of travel” for the local economy. One key theme that was identified was the need for more robust local economic data and intelligence. Work is being undertaken both by West Berkshire Council and TVBLEP to try and resolve this issue. However, since the Consultation period more up to date and additional information has been included in the Strategy.

## *2.3 Process for wider endorsement*

The Strategy has followed the democratic process for Policy adoption within West Berkshire Council and was fully endorsed by Councillor Alan Law, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development on 17 October 2013.

### **3. Background**

#### *3.1 Where are we now?*

West Berkshire shares in the overall affluence of the South East. In broad terms the South East economy can be categorised as being advanced, high value, high income, broadly based and service oriented. West Berkshire's local economy is characterised by a wide range of larger corporate and smaller businesses and employment activities that demonstrate the strength, diversity and attractiveness of West Berkshire to business across a wide range of sectors. The existing employment areas are focussed on the urban town centre areas, particularly Newbury, but across the whole area including the more rural locations across the District.

This Strategy recognises that there is a lot of excellent work already being undertaken to tackle the economic challenges that the area faces but that more can be done. Although West Berkshire is better placed than many areas to face the difficult economic climate, the district cannot be complacent in its attitude to supporting the local economy. For over a decade, West Berkshire has experienced near full employment, with few of the social problems sometimes associated with unemployment compared with other parts of the country. Throughout this time there have been more jobs available than there were people looking for work, a trend which is still continuing particularly in the Hospitality and Catering, Social Care; Logistics and Construction sectors. Despite this situation, there is growing concern about rising youth unemployment even though the trend in the number of Jobseekers' Allowance claimants continues on a downward trend from February 2013 to June 2013.<sup>9</sup> Significantly, amongst a section of working young people, there is concern about their levels of skills and training.

#### *3.2 Policy Framework*

At a much wider level the Economic Development Strategy sits in a policy hierarchy that flows down from the European Union and Central Government policies on employment, planning, business support, innovation, skills and learning and investment, through to sub-regional and local policies and strategies. It is recognised that Central Government will do what it is best placed to do (e.g. employment incentives, national infrastructure investments in airports and roads, tax, strategic inward investment).

It is also recognised that the TVBLEP has a key role within the sub-region. The TVBLEP has been established as part of a national government initiative to pull together key players representing education, employment and skills, SMEs and corporate enterprises, Local Authorities and the community sector to plan to deliver economic prosperity for the next 20–30 years. The TVBLEP published their outline growth strategy, "Making the Boat go Faster" in 2012. This will shortly be replaced by the Strategic Economic Plan for Berkshire.

At an individual local authority level our own Economic Development Strategy supports and reflects the key aims of "The Plan for Growth", the outline Growth Strategy and the Strategic Economic Plan for Berkshire, whilst addressing key local issues that will be important in driving economic growth. An example of this is our participation in the pan-Berkshire "City Deal" -a Government initiative that aims to streamline funding, give greater local accountability and control, encourage collaborative working across authority areas and enhance service provision around skills, training and business. At a local level our Economic Development Strategy also needs to link to local policies and strategies (see Foreword)

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<sup>9</sup> Nomis datasets

### 3.3 Economic Snapshot September 2013-“the big picture”

In 2008, whilst the U.K. as a whole entered into recession<sup>10</sup> and a severe economic downturn, South East England and West Berkshire in particular were much less affected. There has been a local slowdown within the local economy but the area is quite economically robust in comparison with other parts of the U.K. which may be due to the area having a high proportion of service-based employment and newer, 21<sup>st</sup> century industries.

In 2012, Experian produced an index ranking of high resilience LEP areas and the TVBLEP was ranked top for high resilience in both Business and People categories<sup>11</sup>. Higher resilience is associated with higher levels of enterprise and entrepreneurship; more significant presence of less vulnerable sectors; higher levels of educational attainment and labour market participation; lower unemployment; higher levels of life expectancy; and better living environments. West Berkshire's local economy is characterised by a wide range of larger corporate (AWE, Bayer, Vodafone, Stryker, Microfocus, Xtrac Engineering, Harrods Distribution Centre) and smaller occupiers and employment activities which demonstrate the strength, diversity and attractiveness of West Berkshire to business across a wide range of sectors.

Economic output in the South East of England has continued to grow; between 2009 and 2011 the South East's total GVA grew by £12,959m to £192,349m and GVA per head increased to £22,369. In 2011, this represented the largest increase in GVA per head (at 2.2%), which compares to growth in London of only 0.6%<sup>12</sup>. In the second quarter of 2013, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expanded at a quarter-on-quarter rate of 0.6% according to the Office for National Statistics' first estimate of growth in the quarter, building on growth of 0.3% in Q1 2013. This is the first time the UK has had two consecutive quarters of positive economic growth since Q3 2011.

The Centre for Economic and Business Research (CEBR) now expects the UK economy to grow by more than 1% for 2013 as a whole, and 2014 should see even stronger growth as housing market activity picks up and inflation falls, supporting consumer spending in real terms. However, while CEBR think that the UK economy should be able to perform even more strongly in 2014 than in 2013, there is still a significant risk of growth slowing beyond this period.

Nationally household spending is expected to slowly strengthen in the second half of 2013 and through 2014, as confidence lifts and credit conditions continue to improve. This will be increasingly supported by improving spending power as inflation gradually falls back and disposable income picks up, against the backdrop of a stable labour market. Business investment and exports are forecast to strengthen as the global economy picks up and the Eurozone returns to growth, confidence rises, and credit conditions continue to improve. Business investment is forecast to grow by 7.3% in 2014 from -2.8% in 2013. Export growth is expected to increase from 0.7% in 2013 to 4.9% in 2014.<sup>13</sup>

Across the UK, the unemployment rate for March-May 2013 was down 0.2% on the previous quarter. When looking more specifically at 16-24 year olds the unemployed rate fell to 20.9% down 0.2% from the previous quarter.

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<sup>10</sup> A recession is a period of time when the value of economic output of a nation or area declines. An official recession is when economic output declines for two or more quarters (a quarter is a three month period) in a row. The most recent official UK recession was when there were six consecutive quarters of declining value in economic output, from and including Q2 2008 to Q3 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Source: Experian, <http://publicsector.experian.co.uk/Products/Local%20Economic%20Resilience.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> South East Strategic Leaders (SESL) Economy and Skills Report 2013

<sup>13</sup> CBI

The Federation of Small Businesses' (FSB) latest research (Q2) shows confidence is at its highest level since Q1 2010, with the Small Business Index (SBI) standing at nearly +16 points, up sharply from the previous quarter's reading of +6.3. This is further strong and encouraging evidence that small firms are feeling upbeat about the next three months.

However, improving conditions to access finance to fund expansion, capital investment and growth remains a challenge. While it is encouraging that loans are now cheaper than a year ago, fewer small firms are approaching the banks and a significant proportion who do apply for bank finance are still turned down as lending criteria is tightened. Aggregate business lending is still falling as more companies pay back loans than gain access to new credit. Until lending begins to rise again, it is unlikely that there will be the surge in business investment that generally underpins a durable recovery. Business investment grew slightly in the second quarter but still substantially lags behind the rest of the economy.<sup>14</sup>

A summary of some key economic indicators across local comparator areas in the South East is shown below:

**Table 3.0 Summary of Economic Indicators for areas surrounding West Berkshire**

	<b>West Berkshire (Newbury)</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Swindon</b>
<b>Total jobs 2003</b>	91,000	111,000	118,000
<b>Total jobs 2011</b>	100,000	105,000	120,000
<b>% No of jobs change 2003-2011<sup>15</sup></b>	+1.1%	+1.0%	+1.0%
<b>Mean and median average gross annual salary (Feb. 2012)<sup>16</sup></b>	£35,700 £30,600	£37,700 £30,900	£33,300 £26,800
<b>Rail Journey time to London</b>	1 hour	30 mins.	1 hour
<b>Average House Price<sup>17</sup></b>	£226K	£193K	£128K
<b>Average House Price (detached)<sup>18</sup></b>	£377K	£372K	£212K
<b>Prime Office Rent <sup>19</sup>(Business Park)</b>	£18 p.s.ft	£26 p.s.ft	£19 p.s.ft
<b>Average Industrial Rent<sup>20</sup></b>	£8 p.s.ft	£8.25 p.s.ft	£6.75 p.s.ft

<sup>14</sup> Financial Times 4 September 2013

<sup>15</sup> Nomis Annual Business Enquiry

<sup>16</sup> ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2012

<sup>17</sup> Land Registry 2012

<sup>18</sup> Land Registry 2012

<sup>19</sup> Commercial Property Agent Reports 2011 and 2012

<sup>20</sup> Commercial Property Agent Reports 2011 and 2012



### 3.4.1 The West Berkshire Local Economy

#### Location

West Berkshire is well located and is bisected north to south by the A34 which connects the south coast with the Midlands. The Great Western Railway and the M4 motorway links South Wales and the West with London, with the M4 running directly through West Berkshire from the east to west. Both roads form part of the national arterial network and are maintained by the Highways Agency. These roads are also of European importance. The other main roads are the A339 connecting Newbury to Basingstoke and the A4 which runs east/west and is maintained by the Council and. The key urban centres in southern England (London, Reading, Southampton, Portsmouth, Bristol, Oxford and Swindon) are all within an hour's drive, as is Heathrow airport. The District is substantively rural, with nearly three quarters of West Berkshire lying within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is a nationally important and legally protected landscape, designated for the quality of its scenic beauty.

#### 3.4.2 A diverse mix of business.

Whilst there are some large businesses based in the area (AWE, Bayer, Vodafone, Stryker, Micro Focus International plc), the majority of businesses are SMEs and cover a diverse range of sectors. 73% of these employ between 0-4 people. The largest sectors are Professional, Science and Technical, Information and Communication, Construction and Business Administration and Support Services.<sup>21</sup>

Within the ICT sector West Berkshire appears to have some strengths in software publishing and 'other' telecommunications activities, although these strengths are weaker when compared to Berkshire and Oxfordshire. However, the recent relocation of Vodafone's international business functions to Paddington highlights the vulnerability of the ICT and telecommunications sectors.

**Table 3.1 Business Size in Berkshire<sup>22</sup>**

	<b>Micro Business (0-9)</b>	<b>SME (10-249)</b>	<b>Large (&gt;250)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Bracknell Forest</b>	3620	350	35	4005
<b>Reading</b>	4760	675	35	5470
<b>Slough</b>	3425	520	50	3995
<b>West Berkshire</b>	6920	845	40	7805
<b>Windsor and Maidenhead</b>	7130	715	35	7880
<b>Wokingham</b>	6325	575	35	6935

Between 2006 and 2010, there has been a net gain of 7.3% in new business start-ups, higher than the England growth of 3.3%. The following tables and figures in 3.0-3.3 demonstrate this healthy trend.

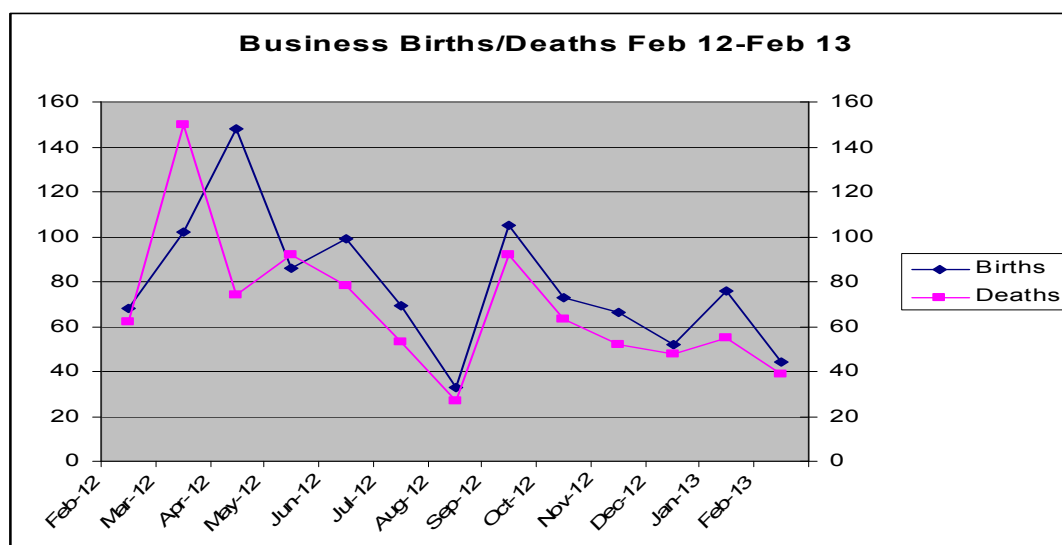
<sup>21</sup> ONS Neighbourhood Statistics March 2011

<sup>22</sup> ONS UK Business Activity 2012

**Table 3.2 Business Start ups and closures<sup>23</sup>**

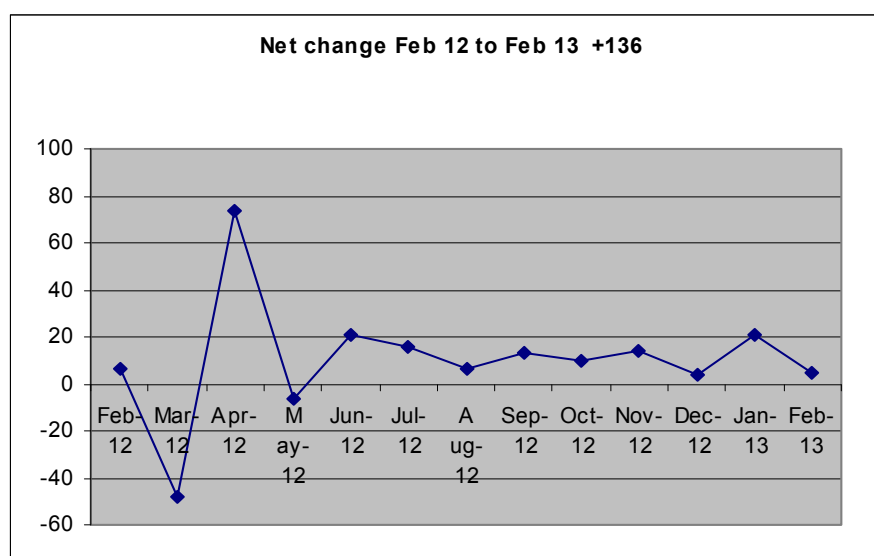
<b>Births of Enterprises</b>							
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% change between births and deaths</b>
West Berkshire	790	980	885	850	800	4305	+ 7.3%
TVBLEP area	4125	4745	4660	4160	4475	22,165	+8.5%
England	225,120	246,700	236,345	209,035	207,520	1,124,720	+ 3.3%
<b>Deaths of Enterprises</b>							
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Total</b>	
West Berkshire	705	765	755	895	870	3990	
TVBLEP area	3630	3640	3610	4655	4745	20,280	
England	182,800	199,300	196,695	246,630	261,880	1,087,305	

This comparative data ceased to be provided in 2010 so we are unable to provide more recent figures on this basis. However, local data shows that we have net gain business start-ups than business closures.

**Figure 3.0 Graph to show business starts and closures in West Berkshire<sup>24</sup>**

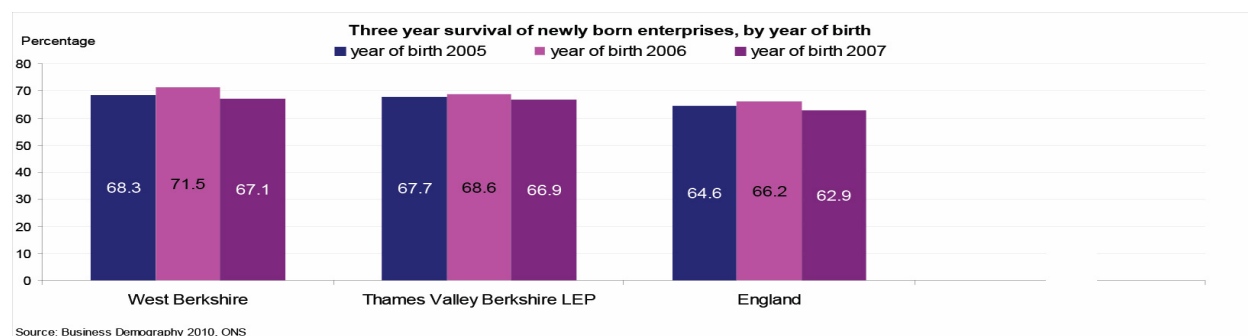
<sup>23</sup> ONS Business Demography 2006-2010

<sup>24</sup> Data from Non Domestic Rate Registration and Deregistration in West Berkshire



**Figure 3.1 Graph to show net change in Non Domestic Business Rate Registration and Deregistration<sup>25</sup>**

New enterprises in West Berkshire also show a trend to survive longer than in the TVBLEP area as a whole and also compared with England.



**Table 3.3 Age of Businesses across Berkshire<sup>26</sup>**

	<2 years	2-3 years	4-9 years	>10 years	Total no of businesses
<b>Bracknell Forest</b>	725	560	1235	1485	4005
<b>Reading</b>	1225	835	1480	1935	5475
<b>Slough</b>	1030	600	1065	1300	3995
<b>West Berkshire</b>	1290	965	2155	3395	7805
<b>Windsor and Maidenhead</b>	1400	1070	2225	3185	7880
<b>Wokingham</b>	1255	935	2060	2685	6935

<sup>25</sup> As above

<sup>26</sup> ONS UK Business Activity 2012

### **3.4.3 A strong local skills base**

West Berkshire is a high performing economy with higher than average levels of educational attainment and skills. As shown below in Table 3.4, 35.9% of the working age population holds a qualification at NVQ Level 5 and above (degree level attainment) which is higher than the figure for Great Britain as a whole.

At NVQ Level 2 (GCSE level) and above, West Berkshire also has a higher percentage of 16-64 year olds with this type of qualification than both the South East and Great Britain. However, it should not be overlooked that 22% of the working age population in West Berkshire has not attained at least a Level 2 (GCSE level) qualification.

Whilst West Berkshire has relatively low numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), there is a growing number of young people, aged between 17-24, leaving full-time education and accessing part-time work, usually in the retail sector, without any accredited training and hence poor longer term career prospects. This is known as “Jobs without Training” (JWT). To keep this in perspective, we currently estimate these young people to be a small selection of around 600 people. The challenge is to engage with both these young people and their employers at a local level.

A key objective of our Skills improvement program will be to directly enhance the prospects of this group of young people and to encourage employers to “grow their own” talent, thereby reducing staff churn and recruitment costs.

We plan to do this via our local participation in the new Berkshire-wide City Deal initiative. Under this umbrella, we will set up West Berkshire Futures in co-operation with Newbury College and other local support organisations. West Berkshire Futures will be a Hub for advice, guidance, support and skills training for work. This Hub will also provide business support for SMEs and micro-businesses in the area.

As well as a youth focus on Jobs without Training, West Berkshire Council also has a strong commitment to supporting adult learners to improve their employment prospects through its “Community Learning and Skills Plan 2013-2014”, again in conjunction with Newbury College and other local support organisations.

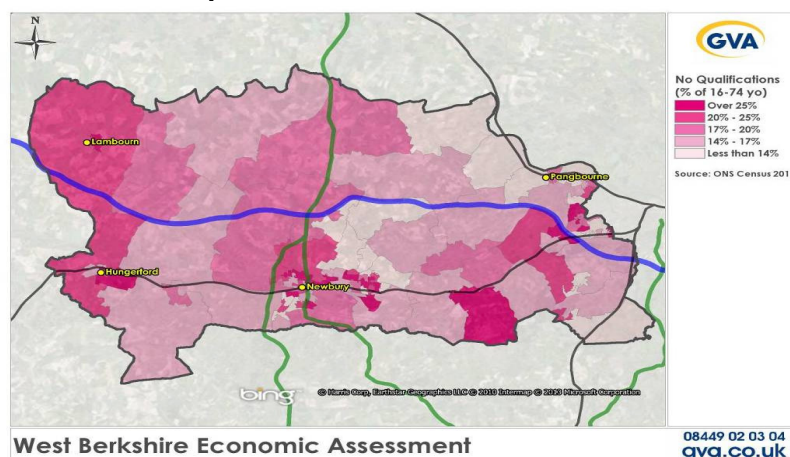
**Table 3.4 Qualifications (Jan. 2012-Dec. 2012) in West Berkshire compared with South East and Great Britain<sup>27</sup>**

	West Berkshire (numbers)	West Berkshire (%)	South East (%)	Great Britain (%)
NVQ4 and above <sup>28</sup>	35,800	35.9	36.8	34.4
NVQ3 and above	58,900	59.3	58.2	55.1
NVQ2 and above	77,200	77.6	75.4	71.8
NVQ1 and above	89,300	89.8	87.7	84.0
Other qualifications	4,400	4.4	5.4	6.3
No qualifications	5,800	5.8	6.9	9.7

Numbers and % are for those aged 16-64 in an area.

However, there is still a need to further improve these levels. There are still elements (5.8%) of the population with no qualifications as illustrated below:

**Figure 3.2 Proportion of the Population with no Qualifications in West Berkshire<sup>29</sup>**



<sup>27</sup> Source: ONS annual population survey

<sup>28</sup> NVQ Level 1: GCSEs, O-Levels or equivalent at grades D-G; Business Training and Education Council (BTEC) first or general certificate; General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) foundation level

NVQ Level 2: Five or more GCSEs, O-Levels or equivalent at grades A\*-C; BTEC first or general diploma; GNVQ intermediate level; City and Guilds Craft;

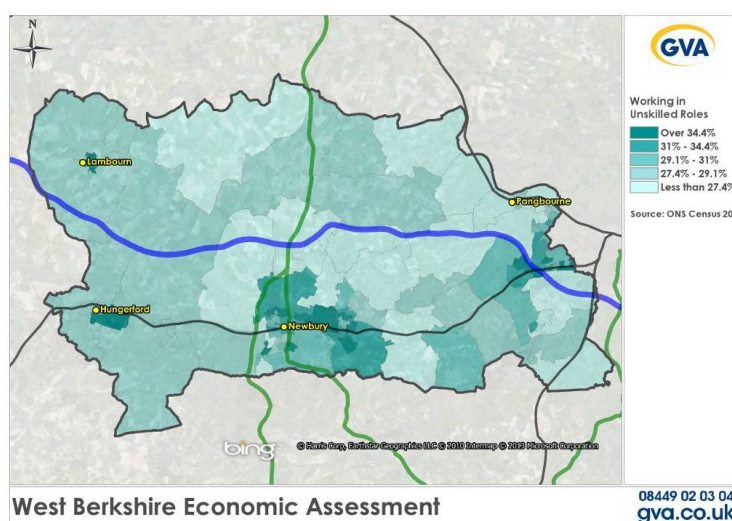
NVQ Level 3: Two or more A-Levels or equivalent;; BTEC National; Ordinary National Diploma (OND); Ordinary National Certificate (ONC); City and Guilds Advanced Craft.

NVQ Level 4: First or other degree;; Higher National Diploma (HND); Higher National Certificate (HNC); and higher education diploma; nursing; teaching (including further education, secondary, primary and others)

NVQ Level 5: Higher degree; Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.); and NVQ Level 5

<sup>29</sup> GVA Draft Economic Assessment of West Berkshire May 2013

**Figure 3.3 Share of workers in unskilled occupations in West Berkshire<sup>30</sup>**



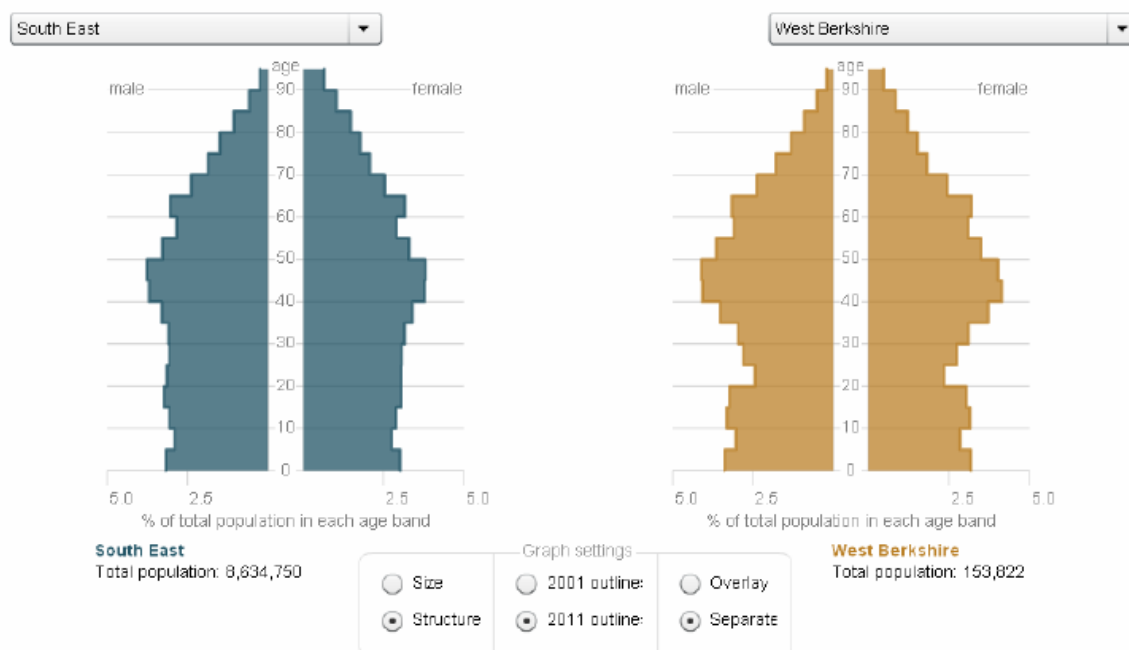
### 3.4.4 A changing demographic

West Berkshire now has an unbalanced demographic profile compared with the national average due to the ongoing loss of people aged 25-39 between the 2001 and 2011 Census count (see figure 3.4). Nationally 20-34 year olds make up 20% of the population, with 29% in Reading, compared to only 16% in West Berkshire. This is particularly interesting as Reading and West Berkshire have similar numbers of 0-19 year olds with 38,270 in Reading and 38,629 in West Berkshire.

It is likely that local young people leave to study or find work and others do not move here to take their place. This is leading to a rapidly increasing average age in the West Berkshire population which will lead to an older workforce in the future. There may also be a need for more “in-commuting” to redress any skills imbalance that could potentially result from this demographic profile.

<sup>30</sup> GVA Draft West Berkshire Economic Assessment May 2013

## 2011 Census: population estimates for England and Wales

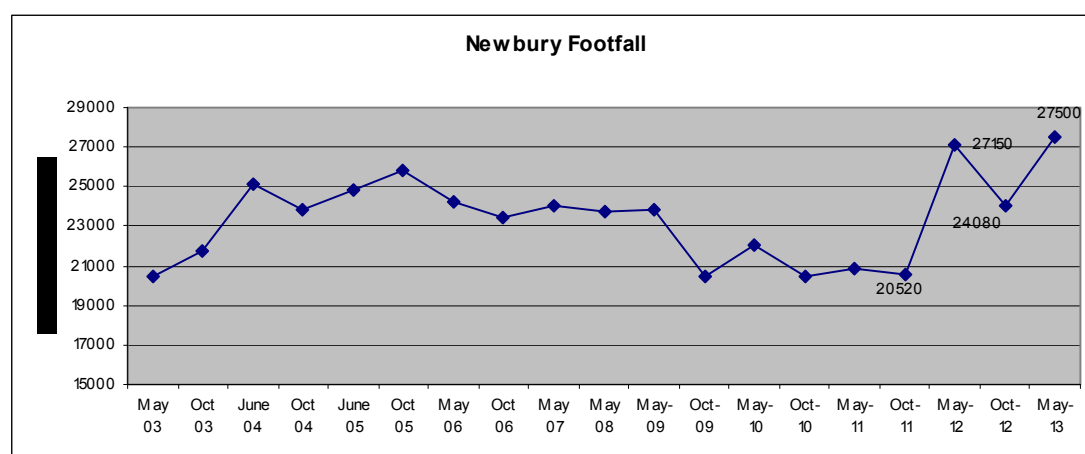


**Figure 3.4** Diagram to show age profile of West Berkshire compared with South East England

### 3.4.5 A quality retail destination.

With the redevelopment of Newbury Town Centre and the opening of the Parkway Shopping Centre in October 2011, footfall figures overall are increasing. Parkway Newbury offers 475,000 sq ft of shops, restaurants and accommodation. Together with a wide range of independent retailers, Newbury will continue to offer an individual and comprehensive shopping experience. Newbury is moving up the retail rankings and is now on the 70th rankings.<sup>31</sup>

**Table 3.5 Newbury Town Centre Footfall**<sup>32</sup>



There are pressures in other town centres such as Hungerford and Thatcham whose footfall has been performing more in line with the recent national downward trend. (Improvement has started to be seen nationally in August 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Experian Retail Rankings

<sup>32</sup> PMRS Ltd data

Table 3.6 Hungerford Town Centre Footfall<sup>33</sup>

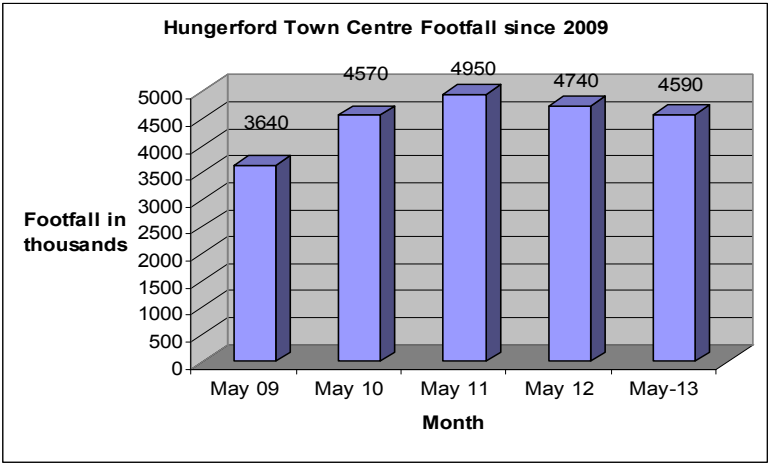
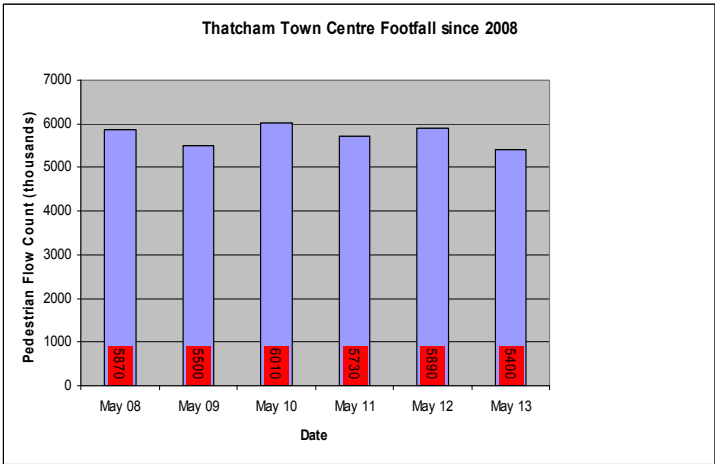


Table 3.7 Thatcham Town Centre Footfall<sup>34</sup>



<sup>33</sup> PMRS Ltd data

<sup>34</sup> PMRS Ltd data



### **3.5 Key Challenges and Opportunities for West Berkshire's economy.**

Operating within an open global and national economy, West Berkshire's prosperity will ultimately depend on how the world and national economies are performing. Local efforts can only do so much to mitigate against a global or national turndown, but within this general constraint, we need to identify local issues and local opportunities which we can help to address.

It is an economic fact that newer, technology-led businesses are more competitive, faster growing and more resilient than older, more traditional ones. Fortunately, West Berkshire and its surrounding districts are blessed with a good mix of industries including these newer 21<sup>st</sup> century businesses as well more traditional ones and, in the case of West Berkshire, a large rural area hosting many small and medium sized enterprises. This broad base and mix in itself gives us a degree of resilience.

Our long term challenge is to ensure the environment that nourishes them all continues to flourish.

#### **3.5.1 Education and skills**

Successful businesses, of all types, require a highly qualified and skilled source of labour. So, further improving our general levels of educational attainment, which are already higher than the national average, will be a key objective.

Appropriate skills training, particularly for the young first time employee has been identified as a key concern. This will be addressed via special targeted training programmes and improved apprenticeships schemes.

#### **3.5.2 Infrastructure**

The general infrastructure plays a vital role in attracting and retaining successful businesses. Highway maintenance and strategic links to ports, airports and major metropolitan areas remains a high priority of the Council and its capital investment plans.

Increasing coverage of Fast Broadband is also of vital importance and as such is a key investment priority for 2014/15, especially in the extensive rural areas. Support for the planned electrification of the railway network to Oxford, Newbury and beyond by 2016 is another key objective. Rail electrification will provide the area with faster and more reliable links to Reading, a key interchange station, and London Paddington will be under an hour's journey time. The location of the stations in Newbury, The Racecourse, Theale and Hungerford are well linked to existing business locations.

#### **3.5.3 Housing**

Along with many other parts of South East England, West Berkshire suffers from a relative shortage of housing and, in particular, affordable homes because housing prices, particularly for first time buyers, are relatively high. It is therefore important to ensure delivery of the District's target of 10,500 new homes by 2026 as set out in the recently adopted new Local Plan and also the requirement contained within that Plan for 35% overall of these homes to be affordable housing.

### **3.5.4 Employment land**

The recently adopted Local Plan researched both the quality and quantity of land and sites for commercial purposes. It was concluded that commercial rents are relatively competitive and there is a good supply of commercial space available in West Berkshire up to 2026.

### **3.5.5 General Environment**

The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty covers some 75% of West Berkshire. With its villages and landscape along with the attractions of the River Thames and the Kennet and Avon canal, the district is a desirable place to live and to visit. Added to this are the attractions of the new shopping and leisure facilities of Newbury town centre, the traditional antique centre of Hungerford as well as leading sporting activities such as Horse racing and breeding and the numerous National Heritage sites such as the battlefield, Shaw House and Greenham common.

The challenge here is both to protect, enhance and to promote these assets.

There are opportunities for growth in tourism and retail, particularly linked to Parkway and the “Visit Newbury and surrounding areas” initiative. Other areas have been highlighted for rejuvenation and regeneration such as The London Road Industrial Estate, Market Street and the Wharf areas of Newbury and the rural Institute of Animal Health in the village of Compton.

Future support for other rural employment sites will similarly be crucial in ensuring they continue to provide suitable locations for businesses. They play a vital role in supporting rural service centres, delivering sustainable locations that link where people live to where they work. More proactive support may be required to ensure broadband; highways and public transport etc. all meet the specific needs of rural businesses.

### **3.5.6 Largest Potential Challenge**

The biggest challenge we, or any other local authority, is ever likely to face is the potential of one of our large employers relocating all or part of its business out of the area, for whatever reason. This could come about for numerous reasons, some of which we could do little to prevent. However, to have a chance at prevention or at least to significantly mitigate against the impact, there is a need to be aware of any such possibility as soon as possible. Here good intelligence and in particular good relationships and communications with our larger employers are essential. Putting in place structures and processes to ensure good two way communications between the Council and business will be a key focus of the Council’s Economic Development Department.

### **3.5.7 Summary**

In general we need to continue to reinforce what is attractive about West Berkshire today. Identify and address key issues such as individual skills deficiencies, promote West Berkshire as a place that is “open for business” and develop stronger links with the business community to listen to and understand their needs and concerns and react appropriately. Key to all of that will be to build an Economic Information centre and a quality Business Support structure and pro-business culture. More detail of West Berkshire’s challenges and opportunities can be found in the SWOT<sup>35</sup> analysis at Appendix 2.

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<sup>35</sup> Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

## 4. Our Economic Strategy

### 4.1 Our Economic Vision

*“West Berkshire Council will work proactively and openly with partners and stakeholders to maintain strong and resilient economic prosperity. We will provide an environment that creates opportunities for business growth that make a real difference to all people's lives, with businesses that start, stay and develop in the area.”*

In order to have a resilient and sustainable economy, West Berkshire will need a variety of different sectors within the area, together with a combination of larger businesses and SMEs. The local economy will help to create benefits for the environment, culture and social well-being. West Berkshire must develop in a way that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. A resilient and dynamic economy requires a reduction in regulation and other “barriers to entry”, support for existing businesses and the facilitation of new areas for growth.

### 4.2 Our Economic Objectives

The Economic Vision will be achieved by delivering on our economic objectives which are outlined below:

1. Work with partners to ensure that **local skills** meet the needs of today's business and work environments.
2. **Promote** West Berkshire as a good location for business, leisure, learning and life.
3. Enable effective **infrastructure** that supports economic growth.
4. Encourage inward **investment and business retention** across all sectors
5. Actively support sustainable **rejuvenation and regeneration** projects in key locations.

### 4.3 Our Core Activities

All economic development activities will be undertaken with consideration of the following guiding questions:

Does the activity:

- create wealth, employment or opportunity in a way that is consistent with our economic vision and underlying principles of delivery?
- build on existing economic strengths or diversify our economy?
- support entrepreneurship, innovation or creative business activity that meets a local need?

### *Our Underlying Principles of Delivery*

Each Economic Objective will be achieved in line with the following principles:

1. Working in partnership with those supporting the local economy to ensure a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to economic growth and retention, providing leadership and co-ordination where appropriate by:
  - a) Building and maintaining relationships with those in the business and education sectors to mutually support the local economy, with a strong channel for two-way communication.
  - b) Working closely with Regional Economic Organisations such as TVBLEP and through TVBLEP with relevant Government Economic Departments such as UKTI<sup>36</sup> and BIS<sup>37</sup>.
2. Understanding, monitoring and communicating trends and performance in the operation of the local economy to build a Business Information Centre and to deliver economic development work in an informed, robust and timely manner.

These principles will be supported by:

- ensuring that we avoid duplication and achieve the best use of available resources;
- build upon the success of previous and ongoing work by adding new dimensions and activities in an economy that is faced with the challenges of a national recession
- view Economic Development as a cross-cutting theme, impacting on all that happens in West Berkshire.

West Berkshire Council cannot deliver economic growth on its own but can play a significant part through adopting the roles of commissioner, facilitator and deliverer of initiatives that encourage growth.

The Economic Development Strategy will be achieved through an annual Delivery Plan that identifies individual work programmes and projects. The following diagram illustrates the high level delivery strategy for economic development:

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<sup>36</sup> UK Trade and Investment

<sup>37</sup> Department for Business Innovation and Skills

#### **4.2.1 Skills and Employment**

Skills and employment includes the following themes:

- Ensuring that local skills meet local employment need.
- Promoting and improving access to apprenticeships and other learning opportunities.
- Encouraging business mentoring schemes.
- Facilitating work placements.
- Working with partners to ensure education and training providers deliver the Information and Guidance (IAG) agenda.
- Supporting young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) towards employment.
- Enabling local people opportunities to access employment, education and training opportunities to help improve the skills levels of the West Berkshire workforce.

“Skills deliver real economic benefits to individuals; to the communities they live in and to the country as a whole. In these challenging economic times, learning becomes more important than ever before, playing a vital part in building a sustainable economy, nourishing social mobility and feeding social justice.”<sup>38</sup>

The Skills Agenda will include working with businesses, training providers and other partners to ensure that residents, including young people, are “work-ready” and have the skills required by local employers.

The Berkshire City Deal, in which West Berkshire is involved, is aiming to tackle the skills agenda in the medium and longer term. The shared ambition in this collaborative initiative is:

- A guarantee of high quality and timely advice and support so that every young person has the opportunity to undertake training, improve their skills, undertake an apprenticeship or get a job;
- Underpinned by an integrated single support structure for local young people that is accessible, linked to real business needs, reduces duplication and is results orientated offering improved value for money.

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<sup>38</sup> Kim Thorneycroft, Chief Executive of Skills Funding Agency, Adult Learners’ Week May 2013)

#### *4.2.1. a Ensuring that local skills meet local employment need*

In the current economic climate, employers need colleges and providers to be proactive, working with them to identify the ways they can maximise their competitiveness and sustainability. Listening to what employers need and matching training provision to reflect that requirement ensures that the education framework is delivering the workforce employers want. Matching training to local skills gaps makes sense not just from an employer's perspective but also from an individual's, helping to move those who are out of work, or in vulnerable areas of employment, into more sustainable jobs.

Newbury College and other training providers are able to understand and respond to what local people and businesses need. Newbury College plays a vital role in the Skills and Enterprise Partnership, strengthening links and collaborative working with the business community and other key partners such as West Berkshire Training Consortium. Further work is being undertaken with the business community to identify skills gaps and develop ways to address this. Skills are a key element of the Berkshire City Deal and West Berkshire Futures (see p. 21-22) and work will be ongoing to deliver the best possible employment outcomes for young people and others within the working age population of West Berkshire.

We aim to:

- *Maintain a robust evidence base to understand both the existing and future needs of the market place.*
- *Encourage local opportunities for business mentoring to help support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)*
- *Facilitate work placements.*
- *Work with partners to ensure education and training providers deliver the Information and Guidance (IAG) agenda.*

#### *4.2.1. b. Promoting and improving access to Apprenticeships and other learning opportunities*

Apprenticeships are a key route to building the national and local skills base and are, of course crucial to national productivity, the success of local economies, businesses and individual success in the employment market.

Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes designed around the needs of employers, which lead to national recognised qualifications. Business representatives from the relevant industry sector work with the Sector Skills Councils to develop the course content. Depending on the sector and job role an Apprenticeship can take anything between one and four years to complete. It is a package of on-the-job training and qualifications.

#### *4.2.1. c. Encouraging local business mentoring schemes*

There are many definitions of business mentoring, but a straightforward one is “an experienced person acting as a sounding board and critical friend to help someone develop their abilities or run a business”<sup>39</sup>.

Central Government is committed to the development and expansion of the business mentoring network for SMEs in the UK, given evidence of business mentoring’s ability to raise competition, stimulate innovation and support economic growth.<sup>40</sup> BIS has created a network of volunteer mentors made up from the small business community and can be accessed through [www.mentorsme.co.uk](http://www.mentorsme.co.uk), the national mentoring portal owned and operated by the British Bankers’ Association (BBA).

Business mentoring allows a business to optimise growth and enables it to be more innovative, entrepreneurial and to realise the potential of its workforce. A business mentor can help develop a stronger and more sustainable business. Mentors are volunteers who give their time freely. As successful business people, they understand the challenges facing business owners or organisational leaders.

The mentor's role is to support, develop, stimulate and challenge. An experienced mentor can help to:

- develop key business skills
- improve problem-solving abilities
- build confidence
- develop leadership skills
- widen network of business contacts.

West Berkshire Council will promote local business mentoring wherever possible and encourage volunteer mentors to come forward to create a database of suitable contacts for local businesses to access.

#### *4.2.1. d. Facilitating work placements*

Work experience placements that work have positive outcomes for the employer, the young person and society. Work experience is an opportunity to introduce young people to the reality of working life within a willing organisation, to help them to secure and sustain employment. The aim is to provide learning and insight into working life by exposing the young person to a variety of tasks and experiences for a limited period of time.

West Berkshire Council will work with education and training providers and facilitate work placements with local businesses.

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<sup>39</sup> Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative Ltd (SFEDI) 2011

<sup>40</sup> “Estimating the Provision of Business Mentoring”, BIS Sept. 2012

*4.2.1. e Working with partners to ensure education and training providers deliver the Information and Guidance (IAG) agenda*

Since September 2012 schools have had a duty to secure access to independent and impartial careers guidance for their pupils. Schools are free to make arrangements for careers guidance for young people that fit the needs and circumstances of their students, and are able to engage, as appropriate, in partnership with external, expert providers.

There is now no expectation that local authorities will provide a universal careers service. However, local authorities have a statutory responsibility under section 68 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to encourage, enable and assist the participation of young people in education or training. In West Berkshire this responsibility is delivered in a number of ways by the Council, including through the provision of targeted IAG provision via the Connexions Service provided by Adviza and links with its Integrated Youth Support Service and developments such as the Turnaround Families Programme.

The need for high quality IAG provision for all young people remains vital in the context of a changing jobs market and continuing economic recession. Local and national employers also need young people with the right skills, knowledge and aptitude to meet their needs.

In spite of the current economic difficulties, the global economy is expected to double in size by 2030, creating up to a billion new jobs in high-skilled industries. Young people therefore need a good, well-rounded education, relevant and rigorous qualifications and broader employability skills to prosper in this changing market.

The right IAG provided at the right time can help to inspire and inform young people about their future lives and raise their aspirations about what they can achieve. It can help young people to identify the right pathways to achieving their goals, including via apprenticeships or higher education and opens their eyes to professions and careers that they otherwise might never have thought of. The raising of the participation age to 18 by 2015 and other options for where young people will be able to undertake their statutory education from the age of 14 suggests IAG provision needs to be tailored to young people's changing education pathway choices.



#### **4.2.2. Promotion of West Berkshire**

The promotion of West Berkshire includes the following themes:

- Encouraging and communicating a business friendly environment.
- Work with partners to develop tourism.
- Enhancing the retail offer of our town centres such as Newbury, Hungerford, Thatcham, Calcot and larger villages.

##### **4.2.2. a Tourism**

Tourism is essential to England's economy. It generates £97billion<sup>41</sup> each year, employs in excess of two million people and supports thousands of businesses, both directly and indirectly. It also has an interdependent relationship with a range of sectors including farming, transport, retailing, sport, museums and the arts. West Berkshire recognises the importance of tourism to the local economy and the potential additional spend that can come brought into arts venues, visitor attractions and local businesses such as restaurants, cafes and bars. Front-line businesses such as hotels and restaurants buy supplies and services to run their businesses, so suppliers also experience the indirect effect of visitor spending.

We value tourism because it can help to:

- encourage inward investment
- support improving local infrastructure
- support expansion plans from the area's tourism operators

The development of local tourism will be achieved through collaborative working with key delivery partners such as Newbury BID ("Visit Newbury and surrounding areas"), hoteliers, leisure providers, arts and culture venues and visitor attractions to establish a distinct offer for the area.

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<sup>41</sup> Visit England

#### 4.2.2. b Retail Destination

A strong retail offer is essential to building a successful, competitive and sustainable local economy. The National Planning Policy Framework clearly promotes town centres as the heart of communities and as locations for the focus of retail, leisure and commercial activity. It states that local authorities should have positive plans for town centres which set out vision over the long term, and that they should clearly define a hierarchy of centres. Policy should sustain and encourage open markets and the 'individuality' of centres and site allocation should favour "in town" locations before "edge of" and "out of town" retail is considered.

With the opening of Parkway Shopping Centre in Newbury in October 2011, combined with a strong mix of retailers in the independent sector, West Berkshire has a positive story to tell on the high street. Newbury was the 15th most affluent shopping catchment area in the UK<sup>42</sup> and has a varied retail offer including John Lewis Home, Hotel Chocolat, Waitrose and an independent family run department store, Camp Hopson. Parkway's website describes the transformation of Newbury as "from prosperous market town to sophisticated shopping destination." Other key centres such as Thatcham, Pangbourne and Hungerford also have some unique and eclectic independent offers and the area experiences a relatively low premises vacancy rate on its High Streets.

We aim to:

- *Provide ongoing support to towns and rural villages to encourage increased economic prosperity.*
- *Raise the profile of town centres as retail destinations.*

#### 4.2.2. c. Creating a business friendly environment

We are determined to create a business-friendly environment that strives to retain companies within the area and that encourages diversity and growth. We are communicating with our businesses; identifying their needs; eliminating barriers to success; and supporting them to develop and grow wherever possible. We also want to encourage SMEs to participate in public sector procurement and make it easier for them to do business with West Berkshire Council.

We aim to:

- *Work with other agencies to support starter and small businesses and social enterprises.*
- *Ensure the majority of businesses in West Berkshire are aware of our economic priorities and support that can be provided.*
- *Increase West Berkshire's profile and image by promoting it as a prime location and investment opportunity.*
- *Strengthen the work of the Skills and Enterprise Partnership in order to raise its profile within the district.*
- *Increase networks within the business community to facilitate work and increase knowledge for "signposting" enquiries.*
- *Be responsive to economic change by reducing challenges and risks and maximising opportunities by working with private, public and third sector partners.*
- *Review and develop new business and economic development web pages, including links to and from key partners and relevant organisations.*

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<sup>42</sup> Property Market Information Service (PROMIS) 2010

#### **4.2.3. Infrastructure**

Economic Infrastructure includes the following elements:

- Housing
- Transport
- Superfast Broadband
- Flood Protection
- Providing the right mix of sites and premises
- Utilities
- Schools and training and education providers

The quality of our economic infrastructure is of strategic importance to business growth. The reliability of transport networks, the security and cost of energy, the resilience of water and waste services and the speed of broadband connections are all critical factors for business. “Infrastructure networks form the backbone of a modern economy and are a major determinant for growth and productivity.”<sup>43</sup> Improved road and rail links, reliable service supplies, efficient public transport and protection from flooding can help to encourage new businesses to establish themselves in West Berkshire.

Co-operation is needed between West Berkshire Council, TVBLEP and the private sector to produce an infrastructure strategy (Local Infrastructure Plan) that will deliver economic growth in the district and pan-Berkshire. The strategy will identify clear priorities and based on robust evidence to help to secure investment.

Our core activities around infrastructure will include:

- Working with other appropriate agencies to promote and market new investment sites, and ensure there is available commercial land and buildings to attract and secure inward investment.
- Working through the planning process to provide a supply of appropriate employment sites and workspace that meets the development and expansion needs of local firms and of those relocating.
- Working with our private sector partners to secure infrastructure funding and being prepared to invest in infrastructure projects that will create jobs and yield long-term economic prosperity.

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<sup>43</sup> HM Treasury, National Infrastructure Plan 2011, November 2011

#### 4.2.3. a Transport

The local highway network is, and will remain, a valuable transport asset that supports the local economy and allows people to access the service and facilities that they need. The economy is highlighted as one of the key issues within the Local Transport Plan.<sup>44</sup> For example, “transport will have a key role in supporting and enhancing the economic vitality of the District. There will be greater connectivity to town centres and employment centres, thereby allowing all modes more efficient and safer access. Improvements will be made to the streetscene and public realm in urban centres to reduce the impact of road traffic, thus making them more attractive for people to visit.”

A definitive list of local proposed transport infrastructure initiatives is included in the Delivery Plan at Appendix 1.

#### 4.2.3. b Superfast Broadband

Improving the speed and coverage of broadband across the county can give a real boost to local economies. The “Superfast Berkshire” project has combined the resources of the 6 unitary councils and TVBLEP to improve access to broadband services in predominantly rural areas of Berkshire by 2015 under a UK government initiative. The project aims to build on the current expansion plans of the private sector by providing infrastructure investment in areas that are not commercially viable. The overall objective is to provide superfast broadband (24 Mbit/sec) to 90% of business and residential premises across the county and standard (2Mbit/sec or more) to the remaining 10%. This will be funded through a Government grant, matched local authority funding and a contribution from suppliers.

Improving the broadband connectivity within Berkshire is expected to deliver benefits for the development of businesses and communities across the county. These benefits include:

- encouraging the start up and growth of SMEs across Berkshire and encouraging businesses to choose Berkshire as their base.
- providing broadband access to all parts of the county reducing pockets of digital isolation and the need for businesses to relocate away from more rural areas.
- development and growth of a wide range of professional services SMEs and local branches of larger organisations to support the larger multi-national organisations in Berkshire through reliable and fast internet coverage.
- supporting the continual growth of flexible working practices, including home working, in both public and private organisations that provide commercial benefits and attract high calibre candidates in a competitive employment market.

More information can be found at <http://www.superfastberkshire.org.uk>

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<sup>44</sup> [www.westberks.gov.uk/ltp](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/ltp)

#### *4.2.3.c Housing provision*

Achieving a broad balance between the location and growth of homes and jobs is an important aim at the local level. It gives residents the opportunity to work locally, retains local skills within the workforce and reduces the need for commuting to jobs in other places.

The Local Plan for the District supports economic growth by objectively assessing the needs for market and affordable housing in the District. The West Berkshire Core Strategy, which forms part of the Local Plan for the District, sets a framework for the delivery of 10,500 new homes in the District between 2006 and 2026 and includes 2 strategic sites – at Newbury Racecourse and Sandford Park. The policies of the Core Strategy aim to secure the provision of the right mix of house sizes, types and tenures to meet identified needs which will in turn support the needs of the local economy (see the Delivery Plan at Appendix1)

#### *4.2.3. d Utilities*

Utilities include electricity, gas, water, telephony, sewage and locally generated renewable power-all of which are essential to a healthy economy. At this time, and for the foreseeable future, the capacity within the area has been assessed through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)<sup>45</sup> as sufficient to meet the needs of the population and the projected growth in the District to 2026.

The IDP is a supporting document for the Core Strategy and part of the Local Development Framework. The IDP covers the plan period from 2010-2026 although the content is monitored annually and reviewed periodically. The document includes details of the infrastructure identified by the Council and other service providers to support the delivery of the Core Strategy. It explains the approach the Council has taken to identify this infrastructure, how it will be delivered and an assessment of the potential risks associated with doing so.

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<sup>45</sup> The IDP can be found at <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=19636>

#### *4.2.3. e Schools and Education and Training Provision*

##### Schools Capital Programme

Capital infrastructure investment in schools is delivered through the Education Capital Programme, which is contained within the Council's Capital Strategy.

School capital investment ensures sufficient quality infrastructure is in place to meet the demands of an ageing estate, the changing needs of education, demographic pressures and the impact from new housing.

Significant capital investment is currently being made to meet the impact from demographic growth across the primary age range. A total of 345 additional primary places are currently being delivered in Newbury through the expansion of John Rankin Infant (90 places) and Junior (120 places) schools, The Winchcombe school (105 places) and Falkland primary school (30 places). A further 220 additional primary places are currently being delivered in Thatcham, through the expansion of Spurcroft (210 places) and Francis Baily (10 places) Primary schools. Plans are also being drawn up to provide for further primary places in Newbury and Hungerford to meet anticipated continuing demographic growth in those areas.

An Infrastructure Development Plan has been drawn up that identifies the infrastructure requirements to meet the impact from the new housing to be delivered between now and 2026, as set out in the West Berkshire Core Strategy.

#### **4.2 4. Investment and Retention**

Investment and Retention includes the following themes:

- Providing or signposting businesses to good quality Business Support.
- Local Economic Intelligence.
- Incubation provision for start-ups and growth units for business development.
- Removing barriers to enterprise.

An integrated and diverse economy is the key to delivering our future economic performance and relative strength. Successful, and sustainable, economies are built on a wide range of sectors providing a range of jobs suitable for a diverse population with a range of skills.

##### **4.2.4 a Business Support**

Businesses need a range of good quality business support that they can call on to help their businesses survive and grow. With the removal of Business Link's face-to-face support, local authorities have a role to play in plugging the gap that has been left. The generation and survival of new businesses is key to our local economy, especially in our changing economic climate.

We will improve our business profile by presenting West Berkshire as being encouraging to the local economy. We have an "open for business" attitude to business, making it easier for businesses to interact with us and get what they need by nurturing good relationships with existing large employers through regular contact and a 'care programme' for strategically important and being seen to look after the needs of existing smaller businesses and campaigning to unlock issues that hold back growth such as infrastructure constraints.

##### **4.2.4. b Economic Intelligence**

We will be working towards developing local economic intelligence on the economic characteristics and future economic potential of the area, particularly working closely with TVBLEP to obtain the data that we need to support our local businesses, local education providers, young people and their families to make sure they are best informed about future job opportunities.

#### *4.2.4. c Incubation provision for start-ups and growth units for business development*

Businesses must be our champions to help instil a culture of enterprise with the public sector and other stakeholders working closely and positively with them to ensure that young businesses have the right workspaces, support, mentors and networks to survive and grow. Our focus must be on growing and attracting new talent, by creating a pipeline of new entrepreneurs and business leaders and by being a business friendly district where entrepreneurs want to live, work and invest.

Business incubation provide growth SMEs and start-ups with the ideal location to develop and grow their businesses, offering everything from virtual support, “rent-a-desk” through to state of the art laboratories and everything in between. Business incubation provides a nurturing, instructive and supportive environment for entrepreneurs during the critical stages of starting up and growing a new business. Currently, there are approximately business 300 incubators in the UK, directly supporting in excess of 12,000 dynamic, creative and innovative businesses<sup>46</sup>. They support all sectors, including ICT, science, technology and creative industries. There is already some provision locally at Greenham Business Park, together with flexible office accommodation provision from private sector organisations such as Festival House in Newbury and Regus.

Funding new appropriate accommodation for start ups and growing businesses will prove difficult. However, it may be possible to develop small affordable business units as part of larger development schemes, possibly in conjunction with partners either as social enterprises, or through joint venture arrangements.

#### *4.2.4. d Removing barriers to enterprise*

As set out in central Government’s “Guide to Decentralisation and the Localism Bill”<sup>47</sup>, it is lifting the burden of bureaucracy and empowering local areas to do things their way. The Government believes power should be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level.

Supporting business growth through removing barriers to enterprise is a key theme of government policy, as expressed in the local growth white paper<sup>48</sup>, under the heading of promoting efficient and dynamic markets and increasing confidence to invest. Government’s approach to this has included a set of reforms to the planning system to introduce a national presumption in favour of sustainable development which applies to decisions on all planning applications. In principle, The Localism Act 2011 gives greater control and power for local authorities and communities over the way in which their area develops, making it easier for local areas to drive the development they want.

Additionally the Government is relaxing the current planning regulations meaning that it will be possible to convert office space to residential use without needing planning permission. It will be necessary to monitor this to see if it leads to a shortfall in office floorspace which needs to be rectified. Business Rate Retention<sup>49</sup>, from April 2013, could allow us to receive direct financial benefits from increases in their business rates yield. Income will be deringfenced so it could be reinvested into the local economy.

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<sup>46</sup> UKBI, Birmingham

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/localism-act-2011-overview>

<sup>48</sup> Local growth: realising every place’s potential, BIS, 28 October 2010

<sup>49</sup> Local Government Resource Review



#### **4.2.5. Rejuvenation and Regeneration**

The achievement of this aim will include, for example, providing direct support to regeneration and economic development projects by acting as a facilitator and communicator for the business community and its relevant membership organisations. Key areas identified are Newbury, Thatcham, Hungerford, Compton<sup>50</sup> and office sites such as Arlington Business Park where opportunities will be taken to facilitate the redevelopment of stock as it becomes available.

Town centres are an important resource for an area; they can offer a vibrant centre servicing a range of needs, including economic, tourism and leisure, community uses. They are natural transport hubs, providing opportunities to offer sustainable transport options for those using the centres. They are also places which offer a multiplicity of uses for any given trip, as opposed to single purpose trips, thereby reducing travel. There is a need to find the unique quality of a town centre and what places or history produces pride of place for the residents.

A Regeneration scheme is designed to reinvigorate a depressed or under utilised urban area.

Rejuvenation and regeneration projects must meet the following key criteria:

- Enhanced quality of living.
- Improved employment opportunities.
- Schemes must be fit for identified current and modern use.
- Schemes must provide substantial visual enhancement to an existing area – public realm and landscaping.
- Any negative impact of a scheme must be mitigated for with consideration for the lives of existing residents and / or businesses.
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The following key sites will support delivery of this objective:

##### **4.2.5a London Road Industrial Estate, Newbury**

This is an important site, located at a key location in Newbury. Any redevelopment would be expected to make a positive contribution to the visual appearance of the Town Centre and be of a high quality design. The site will be redeveloped to provide a mixed use development. This redevelopment will be delivered as a joint venture between West Berkshire Council and a private sector provider.

##### **4.2.5b The Wharf, Newbury**

Despite the continued economic difficulties, it is hoped that within the next five years the redevelopment of the Wharf as a large high value public amenity space will have been delivered. The redevelopment will align with the refurbishment of the Museum and the creation of a new transport interchange. It is seen as creating a key visitor hub for the town.

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<sup>50</sup> This site will be redeveloped into a residential led mixed use development

#### *4.2.5c Market Street/Station Gateway, Newbury*

Newbury Railway station also acts as a key entry point into the Town and improvements are needed to improve accessibility between the station and the Town Centre. These will form part of the wider Market Street redevelopment. A Conditional Development Agreement has been signed with Grainger Plc to deliver the Market Street redevelopment.

#### *4.2.5d Sterling Cables site with new through road*

A scheme is being progressed to bring forward a comprehensive redevelopment of this site which includes the new Kings Road Link Road. Work is progressing with the developer to submit a planning application for the site. The delivery of the Kings Road Link Road has been ranked highly by the Berkshire Local Transport Board as a priority for funding.

#### *4.2.5e Pirbright Institute of Animal Health (IAH),, Compton*

The 15 hectare IAH site is situated in Compton Village. IAH is relocating to Surrey and this will have a significant impact on the village of Compton. It is therefore important to plan the redevelopment of the brownfield site, which is located within the AONB. A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been produced in conjunction with the local community. This will form the framework for a residential-led, mixed use scheme

#### *4.2.5f Arlington Business Park, Theale (opportunities will be taken to facilitate the redevelopment of stock as it becomes outdated).*

Owned by Goodman UK, Arlington Business Park is located at Junction 12 of the M4, with direct routes to Reading, London and Bristol and only a short drive from Heathrow Airport. There is also a railway station at Theale that links to London Paddington.

The site is currently made up of a wide range of modern office buildings but in the future, more general business use, such as warehousing and logistics, may be explored by Goodman UK given the site's excellent location. Other employment generating uses may also be considered.

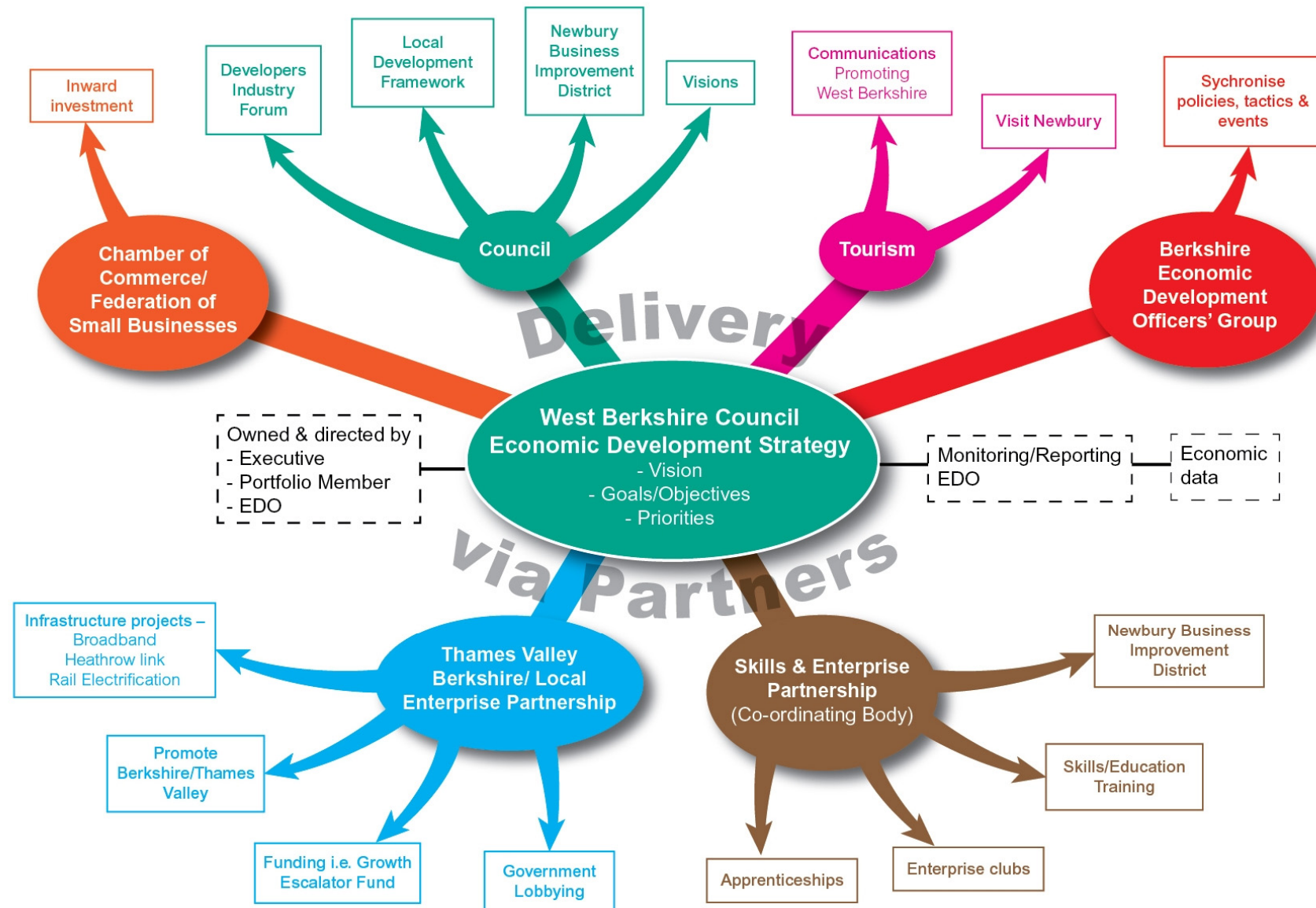
#### *4.2.5g Greenham Business Park (development land opportunities)*

Owned and managed by Greenham Common Trust, Greenham Business Park offers a wide range of commercial property solutions suitable for start ups and SMEs to larger scale manufacturing and distribution. Greenham Business Park allows for a variety of property types and sizes. The site has planning permission for B1, B2 and B8 and the Trust's objective is to provide accommodation that would be suitable for a wide range of businesses, allowing them to grow and expand on site.

The Park currently has vacant land available for "design and build" opportunities with several occupied sites which have long-term development potential.

#### *4.2.5h Other Rural Schemes*

These will be considered on a case-by-case basis.



## 5. Delivery Framework and Direction of Travel

### 5.1 Performance Monitoring and Measuring

#### *Economic Development Delivery Plan Indicators*

Success in delivering our strategic priorities will be monitored quarterly against 11 key indicators:

Key Economic Monitoring Indicator	Output with date	Variance in Performance since last measure	RAG Rating <sup>51</sup>	Reason for RAG Rating	Remedial Action
NVQ4 and above	35.9% Jan-Dec 2012				
NVQ2 and above	77.6% Jan-Dec 2012				
No qualifications	5.8% Jan-Dec 2012				
Number of Jobseekers Allowance Claimants aged 18-64 (DWP via Nomis)					
NEETs <sup>52</sup>					
% of people (16-24) from cohort starting/completing Apprenticeships					

<sup>51</sup> RAG rating applies the "traffic light" system of performance and risk to each of the monitoring indicators, taking into account the relative performance of West Berkshire against comparator areas. Red is of concern, Amber should be monitored and Green is on target.

<sup>52</sup> Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training.

Key Economic Monitoring Indicator	Output with date	Variance in Performance since last measure	RAG Rating <sup>53</sup>	Reason for RAG Rating	Remedial Action
GVA Berkshire <sup>54</sup>	£28,697 million 2011				
Business Registrations (Births) and Deregistration (Deaths)					
Empty Business Premises (Annual)					
Footfall (Newbury 6 months, Thatcham & Hungerford annually)					
No. of unique visitors to "Visit Newbury" website					
Leisure vs. business trade from accommodation providers.					

<sup>53</sup> RAG rating applies the "traffic light" system of performance and risk to each of the monitoring indicators, taking into account the relative performance of West Berkshire against comparator areas. Red is of concern, Amber should be monitored and Green is on target.

<sup>54</sup> ONS December 2012, Gross Value Added (GVA) is the value of output less the value of intermediate consumption (OECD)

## Appendix 1 Delivery Plan for West Berkshire

### Delivery Plan for West Berkshire's Economic Development 2013-2018

1. *Work with partners to ensure that **local skills** meet the needs of today's business and work environments.*

	Initiative	How	By When	Outcome/Output	Lead Partner
1.1	Facilitating work placements	a) Feedback any identified work experience/placement opportunities to relevant partner.	Ongoing activity	Increase in work experience/placement opportunities	EBP WBTC
1.2	Promoting and improving access to Apprenticeships and support programmes e.g. traineeships	a) Promote the Apprenticeship Scheme with employers, particularly SME sector	Ongoing activity	Increase in Apprenticeship "starts"	SEP WBTC
		b) Utilise local data and knowledge to identify skills gaps and use this intelligence to promote relevant Apprenticeships.	Ongoing activity	Increase in Apprenticeship "starts"	SEP
		c) Promote work opportunities within the district by running annual events for businesses seeking staff and those looking for work	June 2014	No. of vacancies filled by annual Jobs Fair  Reduction in JSA claimants	SEP

*1. Work with partners to ensure that **local skills** meet the needs of today's business and work environments.*

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner(s)</b>
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Ensuring that local skills meet local employment need</b>	a) Undertake GAP analysis to identify key growth areas using existing research and analysis.	<b>December 2013</b>	Report produced and presented to SEP.	SEP
		b) Undertake local survey to identify skills needs of local employers, particularly SMEs	<b>January 2014</b>	Training and qualification provision tailored to local need	SEP/Chamber of Commerce/ FSB
		c) Use the City Deal framework (West Berkshire Futures Hub) to address skills and employment issues of young people (17-24).	<b>April 2014</b>	Reduction in Jobs Without Training (JWT) figures Reduction in JSA claimants aged 18-24 Establishment of "West Berkshire Futures" Hub	WBC  SEP
		d) Increase and widely promote knowledge and skills in local businesses, including SMEs, and for local people through training and support opportunities.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Reduction in JSA claimants	SEP
		e) Improve the understanding of links and outcomes between business needs and education outcomes to improve mutual understanding and future employment 'fit'	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Increased attainment and qualifications	SEP
		f) Development of Skills and Employment Plans to support key infrastructure developments.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Framework established through local Planning Policy to provide local employment and training	WBC (Planning and Economic Development) SEP

1. *Work with partners to ensure that **local skills** meet the needs of today's business and work environments.*

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>1.4</b>	<b>Working with partners to ensure education and training providers deliver the Information and Guidance (IAG) agenda</b>	a) Engage with education and training providers and parents as well as young people to promote the value of skills and training opportunities in West Berkshire and the opportunities for future careers.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Reduction in NEET.  Increase in work placements	Education and training providers EBP SEP Newbury College RPP (until March 2014)
<b>1.5</b>	<b>Work with neighbouring authorities and with TVBLEP to prepare and maintain a robust evidence base to understand both existing needs and likely changes in the market.<sup>55</sup></b>	a) Collect and publish statistical data on the local economy to support inward investment on the Council's website.	<b>December 2013 and ongoing updates</b>	Visits to website increased	Other LAs TVBLEP
		b) Build a database on the top 50 private and public sector employers in West Berkshire and establish contact with them.	<b>September 2014</b>	Database with key information produced.	Business Community TVBLEP
<b>1.6</b>	<b>Encouraging business mentoring schemes</b>	a) Encourage local opportunities for business mentoring to help support SMEs	<b>March 2015</b>	No. of businesses supported	Chamber SEP FSB

<sup>55</sup> From the National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 p.39



**2. Promote West Berkshire as a good location for business, leisure, learning and life.**

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Provide ongoing support to towns and rural villages to encourage increased economic prosperity.<sup>56</sup></b>	a) Support and contribute to the update and implementation of the refreshed Newbury Vision 2026	<b>March 2014</b>	Refreshed Vision approved by Steering Group.  Increase in footfall and improved economic indicators	Liz Alexander, Planning Bill Bagnell Vision Steering Group Bill Bagnell, Chris Jones, Leisure Focus Groups
		b) Provide support for other Visions and Parish Planning (Thatcham, Hungerford and the Eastern area (Thames and Kennet)) on Economic Development themes	<b>Ongoing</b>	Increase in footfall y.o.y.	Mireille Willan (Thatcham)  EAVTG  LSP
		c) Support rural regeneration through specific targeted initiatives with, or through, key partners.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Increase in annual no. of planning commitments and completions	LSP Parish Councils Jo Naylor Planning
		e) Liaise with rural business representatives on a regular basis to prevent isolated working and identify any specific needs.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Increased economic intelligence	WBC
		f) Support rural/farm diversification where suitable	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	"Birth/death" rates of businesses improved.	WBC
		g) Support Equestrian/Horse racing sector where required	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Niche sector developed	The Racecourse, Newbury

<sup>56</sup> West Berkshire Sustainable Community Strategy objective

**2. Promote West Berkshire as a good location for business, leisure, learning and life.**

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Work with other agencies to support starter and small businesses and social enterprises.</b>	a) Develop Enterprise Clubs to provide a business support structure to cater for the needs of SMEs in a simplified way	<b>December 2013</b>	No. of businesses supported	WBC JCP BCC Sovereign Housing The Real Business Club
		b) Work to set up a mentor cohort to work with local start ups/SMEs	<b>July 2014</b>	No. of businesses supported	WBC Chamber of Commerce SEP
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Ensure the majority of businesses in West Berkshire are aware of our economic priorities and support that can be provided.</b>	a) Develop excellent relationships with local businesses, particularly targeting high growth, innovative companies.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	2 way flow of information and knowledge created	WBC
		b) Attend relevant business networking events	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	2 way flow of information and knowledge created	WBC
		c) Develop and undertake an Annual Business Survey with business community	<b>June 2014</b>	Better understanding of business needs gained	WBC
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Ensure leisure and tourism agenda is embedded into Economic Development activity</b>	a) Encourage all tourist businesses and attractions to promote business opportunities.	<b>March 2014</b>	Visitor numbers increased. Increased visitor spend. Increased bookings at venues.	Hidden Britain resources Corn Exchange Leisure and Culture The Watermill Newbury BID
		b) Work with partners to produce visitor statistics to enable monitoring of numbers.	<b>September 2013</b>	Visitor nos. increased. Increased visitor spend. Increased bookings at venues.	TIC Newbury BID

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Ensure leisure and tourism agenda is embedded into Economic Development activity</b>	c) Development and promotion of the “Visit Newbury and surrounding areas” website	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Increased number of “hits” to website	Newbury BID
		d) Develop West Berkshire into a short-break visitor destination	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Visitor numbers increased. Increased visitor spend. Increased bookings at venues.	Newbury BID
		e) Deliver a high quality destination with a diverse and strong offer of consumer and leisure activities	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Visitor numbers increased. Increased visitor spend. Increased bookings at venues.	Newbury BID
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Increase West Berkshire’s profile and image by promoting it as a prime location and investment opportunity.</b>	a) With partner support, undertake research to understand why businesses relocate across the UK.	<b>June 2013</b>	Plan produced	Chamber, FSB, TVBLEP, Thames Valley Inward Investment
		b) Produce a flexible portfolio of inward investment material.	<b>October 2013</b>	Improved business “birth rate”	Thames Valley Inward Investment
		c) Produce regular newsletter for the business community highlighting successes and key economic information	<b>March 2014</b>	Business community better informed	WBC

**2. Promote West Berkshire as a good location for business, leisure, learning and life.**

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>2.6</b>	<b>Strengthen the work of the Skills and Enterprise Partnership in order to raise its profile within the district.</b>	a) Pro-actively promote the work of the Partnership and opportunities available to the business community	<b>Ongoing work</b>	Increased business engagement No. of people obtaining an Apprenticeship in a West Berkshire business	SEP Chamber FSB NAS
		b) Support any events that providers are hosting and promote where possible	<b>As necessary</b>	Increased attendance	Education and Training Providers Chambers FSB
<b>2.7</b>	<b>Increase networks within business community to facilitate work and increase knowledge for “signposting” enquiries</b>	a) Attend and support networking events where appropriate	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Contact base increased  Opportunity to sell benefits of doing business in West Berkshire increased.	WBC

**2. Promote West Berkshire as a good location for business, leisure, learning and life.**

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>2.8</b>	<b>Be responsive to economic change by reducing challenges and risks and maximising opportunities by working with private, public and third sector partners.</b>	a) Support the retention and development of local business and enterprise by working with key partners.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Births/Deaths figures	TVBLEP BEDOG VitalSix
		b) Develop an understanding of the local economy and communicate the threats and opportunities as appropriate.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>		WBC
		c) Support businesses to secure any relevant grant funding	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Increase in funding received	TVBLEP
		d) Deliver casework support to businesses, maintaining records on a database with regular follow up with the business.	<b>Ongoing activity- updated monthly</b>	Employer Satisfaction Survey	WBC
		e) Explore the possibility of a Smartcard for West Berkshire that will benefit local businesses and residents	<b>June 2014</b>	Take up of cards Increase in local footfall	Transport Leisure and Culture Newbury BID, ATCM

**2. Promote West Berkshire as a good location for business, leisure, learning and life.**

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>2.9</b>	<b>Review and develop new Business and Economic Development web pages, including links to and from key partners and relevant organisations</b>	a) Web pages for economic development improved and refreshed. Develop “dashboard” for analysis of enquiries.	<b>September 2013</b>	Enquiries measured and monitored.	Web team
<b>2.10</b>	<b>Create a business-friendly environment</b>	a) Increase awareness of procurement opportunities for small businesses to engage with public sector procurers.	<b>September 2013</b>	Meet the Buyer and Procurement Workshops become established annual events with more SMEs gaining new contracts	TVBLEP Procurement
		b) Strengthen the work of the Skills and Enterprise Partnership in order to raise its profile within the district.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	More business engagement achieved	SEP
<b>2.11</b>	<b>Raise the profile of town centres as retail destinations</b>	a) Improve the evening economy aiming for Purple Flag status.	<b>July 2014</b>	Improved leisure and evening economy offer  Purple Flag achieved	Newbury BID
		b) Promote “Shop Local” schemes	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Retention of independent retailers	Newbury BID

**3. Enable effective infrastructure that supports economic growth.**

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner(s)</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Support and encourage the provision of appropriate, decent and sufficient housing.<sup>57</sup></b>	a) Work closely with the business community to understand their changing needs and identify and address barriers to investment, including a lack of housing, infrastructure or viability. <sup>58</sup>	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Issues identified by businesses and communicated back.	Business Community Highways Transport Housing Planning Thames Valley Inward Investment
		b) Provide input to all statutory plans (e.g. Core Strategy, Highways Maintenance Programme)	<b>As required</b>	Targets and objectives included in relevant plans	Transport/Highways ICT Planning Housing
		c) Sandleford Development of 2000 new homes (CS3)	<b>March 2015</b>	Homes built and occupied	WBC
		d) Newbury Racecourse Development of up to 1500 homes	<b>March 2015</b>	Homes built and occupied	The Racecourse, Newbury
		e) Achieve District-wide requirement for 35% affordable housing to be provided as part of new residential development. Actual levels of provision to be negotiated on a site by site basis.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Affordable Housing target achieved	WBC

<sup>57</sup> West Berkshire Sustainable Community Strategy objective

<sup>58</sup> From the National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 p.39

**3. Enable effective infrastructure that supports economic growth.**

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner(s)</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Develop West Berkshire as an area of digital innovation and creativity</b>	a) Provide support to the proposed Digital Weekend	<b>By October 2013</b>	Established as an annual event  Visitor figures increase  Business relationships strengthened  Positive PR generated	IT  Generate (UK) Ltd
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Support and encourage the provision of appropriate, and sufficient transport<sup>59</sup> infrastructure</b>	a) Kings Road Link: Supporting successful industry – enabling Newbury's growth		The scheme links a key employment area (circa 4,770 people), via the A339, to the Strategic Road Network, thereby helping to sustain and enhance the local economy. It is a long-identified improvement and has a protected alignment in the District Local Plan and is included in the Core Strategy Infrastructure Delivery Plan.	West Berkshire Council (Highways & Transport and Planning & Countryside Services)

<sup>59</sup> The transport schemes listed in this table are at different stages of design and funding. They range from being fully designed with funding secured to having an outline design with funding being sought. Where funding is still to be secured, the Council is actively pursuing a range of opportunities.



**3. Enable effective infrastructure that supports economic growth.**

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Support and encourage the provision of appropriate, and sufficient transport<sup>60</sup> infrastructure</b>	b) A339, Newbury: Improvements to this key transport corridor to support growth and unlocking commercial redevelopment		There are a series of schemes planned and proposed for this important transport corridor. Each of the junctions has improvements planned in conjunction with new development and there is a scheme proposed which increases capacity on a key link whilst providing a new junction to enable the regeneration of a significant industrial area for a mixed use development.	West Berkshire Council (Highways & Transport and Planning & Countryside Services)

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<sup>60</sup> The transport schemes listed in this table are at different stages of design and funding. They range from being fully designed with funding secured to having an outline design with funding being sought. Where funding is still to be secured, the Council is actively pursuing a range of opportunities.

**3. Enable effective infrastructure that supports economic growth.**

	Initiative	How	By When	Outcome/Output	Lead Partner
3.3	<b>Support and encourage the provision of appropriate, and sufficient transport<sup>61</sup> infrastructure</b>	c) A4 Calcot: Improved access and journey time to the M4 (J12)		The scheme involves improvements to a notorious traffic congestion issue in Calcot. This part of the A4 serves as the main access route to/from the M4 junction 12 to the residential areas of Calcot and Tilehurst. The proposed scheme involves widening the road to provide an additional westbound traffic lane over a distance of 650m.	West Berkshire Council (Highways & Transport and Planning & Countryside Services)

<sup>61</sup> The transport schemes listed in this table are at different stages of design and funding. They range from being fully designed with funding secured to having an outline design with funding being sought. Where funding is still to be secured, the Council is actively pursuing a range of opportunities.

3. *Enable effective infrastructure that supports economic growth.*

	Initiative	How	By When	Outcome/Output	Lead Partner
3.3	<b>Support and encourage the provision of appropriate, and sufficient transport<sup>62</sup> infrastructure</b>	d). M4 Junction 12 capacity improvements.		This scheme has been designed to support the development of a new 39,322 sq m IKEA store (providing 400 jobs) at Calcot Retail Park which is adjacent to J12 of the M4. It increases the capacity and efficiency of the junction which also benefits major employment areas in Theale such as Arlington Business Park which has over 152,000 sq m of office space with approximately 4870 employees. The scheme will also be supported by the replacing of the roundabout on the A4 at the access to the retail park with a signalised junction to help manage traffic flow	This is a developer led scheme so the lead partner is IKEA but there is close liaison with West Berkshire Council and the Highways Agency

<sup>62</sup> The transport schemes listed in this table are at different stages of design and funding. They range from being fully designed with funding secured to having an outline design with funding being sought. Where funding is still to be secured, the Council is actively pursuing a range of opportunities.

3. *Enable effective infrastructure that supports economic growth.*

	Initiative	How	By When	Outcome/Output	Lead Partner
3.3	<b>Support and encourage the provision of appropriate, and sufficient transport<sup>63</sup> infrastructure</b>	e) Theale Park & Rail		This scheme looks to make improvements at Theale Rail Station and promote it as a Park and Rail site for access to Reading town centre and London travelling to the east and Newbury and other destinations to the west. The improvements include a new ticket office with additional facilities and lifts improving the accessibility of the station.	First Great Western is the lead partner with close liaison with Network Rail and West Berkshire Council (also a key funding partner).
		f) Electrification of the railway line between Reading and Newbury	<b>2016</b>	Line Electrified and service improved	Network Rail
3.4	<b>Provision of Superfast Broadband</b>	a) Improve the Digital Infrastructure to transform West Berkshire's competitive position for new business enterprise and enhance the quality of life for all.		Provide superfast broadband to 90% of premises with the remaining 10% to have access to at least 2Mbps connections.	WBC/TVBLEP

<sup>63</sup> The transport schemes listed in this table are at different stages of design and funding. They range from being fully designed with funding secured to having an outline design with funding being sought. Where funding is still to be secured, the Council is actively pursuing a range of opportunities.

**3. Enable effective infrastructure that supports economic growth.**

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Provision of Superfast Broadband</b>	b) Provide an on-line awareness and demand stimulation plan for Berkshire to demonstrate the benefits of superfast broadband.	<b>April 2015</b>	Uptake of service	WBC/TVBLEP
		c) Support the rise in uptake of on-line access across Berkshire.	<b>Ongoing</b>	Uptake of service	WBC/TVBLEP
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Ensuring effective flood protection is in place</b>				Environment Agency
<b>3.6</b>	<b>Providing the right mix of employment sites and business premises</b>	a) Ensure that all key employment sites are “fit for purpose” to meet the economic needs of West Berkshire	<b>Ongoing</b>	Reduced vacancy rate	WBC
<b>3.7</b>	<b>Making sure that local utilities meet local need.</b>	a) .Various upgrades to existing off site 11KV infrastructure across West Berkshire and specifically at Sandleford and The Racecourse developments		Upgrades complete	Southern Electric Power Distribution
		b) Various upgrades to gas infrastructure across West Berkshire		Upgrades complete	Scotia Gas Network

3. *Enable effective infrastructure that supports economic growth.*

	Initiative	How	By When	Outcome/Output	Lead Partner
3.7	<b>Making sure that local utilities meet local need.</b>	c) Some upgrades to existing waste water infrastructure across West Berkshire including upgrade to the main terminal pumping station in Newbury and upgrade to wastewater infrastructure at Sandleford.		Upgrades complete	Thames Water
		d) Provision of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems		Systems in place	Developers
		e) Renewable energy projects, including wind, biomass, hydro and CHP including onsite CHP district heating system at Newbury Racecourse.		Systems in place	Various public and private sector bodies, with support from Thames Valley Energy

4. *Encourage inward investment and business retention across all sectors*

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>4.1</b>	Provide guidance where appropriate to pre-start, new and existing businesses and ensure that services and information for business are accessible within the local authority.	a) Support on an individual basis when required	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	"Birth/death" rates of businesses monitored with the aim of increasing and retaining businesses. (Quarterly report)	WBC (NNDR team) Newbury BID
		b) Development of an Enterprise Club to support pre-start and new start businesses (subject to available funding)	<b>October 2013</b>	Number of pre-starts and start-ups supported	WBC with Berks. CC and Sovereign
		c) Review and develop new Business and Economic Development web pages, including links to and from key partners and relevant organisations	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	All pages updated	WBC
		d) Be responsive to economic change by reducing challenges and risks and maximising opportunities by working with private, public and third sector partners.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>		WBC
		e) Identify and work with private sector provider to bring an Enterprise Centre to West Berkshire e.g. Basepoint	<b>March 2014</b>	Centre opened	WBC

4. *Encourage inward investment and business retention across all sectors*

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>4.2</b>	Provide high quality, responsive support and information for businesses considering relocation, expansion or development.	a) Provide high quality, responsive support and information for businesses considering relocation, expansion or development.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Number of sites and premises enquiries made in West Berkshire from initial baseline figure. Reduction in retail/commercial property vacancy rates.	Thames Valley Inward Investment  UKTI
		b) Maintain a comprehensive and up to date business sites database, highlighting vacant premises, providing site searches on a reactive basis.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Increased economic intelligence	Chamber, Business Community, Commercial Agents WBC (NNDR team)
		c) Maintain a dialogue with commercial agents and prospective developers on development opportunities.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Increased economic intelligence	Commercial Agents
		d) Develop a "Welcome" pack for potential and new businesses.	<b>September 2013</b>	Pack designed and distributed.	Parkway Newbury BID Commercial Agents and Developers.
		e) Encourage innovation and improve productivity to improve the overall competitiveness of West Berkshire	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	GVA improved	WBC



4. *Encourage inward investment and business retention across all sectors*

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>4.3</b>	Support bids, where appropriate, for sustainable investment into the district from international, national, regional, sub-regional and local organisations to grow the local economy.	a) Set up relevant funding alerts	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Increase in external funding received.	TVBLEP  Thames Valley Inward Investment
		b) Promote and encourage take-up, where appropriate, of growth and escalator funding from TVBLEP.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Increase in funding received.	WBC
<b>4.4</b>	Provide and use Local Market Intelligence (LMI) effectively	a) Work with neighbouring authorities and with TVBLEP to prepare and maintain a robust evidence base to understand both existing needs and likely changes in the market.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	LMI system in place	TVBLEP  BEDOG
		b) Build a database on the top 50 private and public sector employers in West Berkshire and establish contact with them.	<b>February 2014</b>		WBC

4. *Encourage inward investment and business retention across all sectors*

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>4.5</b>	Removing barriers to enterprise	a) Liaise with rural business representatives on a regular basis to prevent isolated working and identify any differing needs from urban businesses.	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Rural needs addressed	Countryside Alliance  Berks. Community Council
		b) Establish a Business Expansion Forum with reps. from private sector (SME and large companies), Newbury BID and training and education providers	<b>May 2014</b>	Understanding of local need and skills solution developed	Private sector Newbury BID Newbury College WBTC WBEBP

5. Actively **support sustainable rejuvenation and regeneration** projects in key locations.

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Outcome/Output</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
<b>5.1</b>	Provide direct support to regeneration and economic development projects	a) Be aware of key developments and projects and identify opportunities for support	<b>Ongoing activity</b>	Projects supported and delivered	Planning, West Berkshire Partnership, Vision groups, Parish and Town Councils
		b) Work with selected partners to deliver the regeneration of West Berkshire e.g. London Road Industrial Estate, Market Street/Station Gateway, The Wharf, Compton IAH (residential-led mixed use), Arlington Business Park (facilitate the re-development of outdated stock).	<b>September 2013 and ongoing</b>	Projects supported and delivered	BID Parkway Planning Vision Steering Group Goodmans Greenham Common Trust Granger Strutt and Parker
		c) Support businesses on Sterling Cables Industrial Estate to re-locate successfully within West Berkshire	<b>September 2014</b>	All businesses and jobs retained	Commercial Agents

## **Appendix 2 SWOT Analysis**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<p>Location/Accessibility relative to strategic transport networks.</p> <p>Above average survival rate for start-ups</p> <p>Diverse and relatively resilient local economy</p> <p>High levels of employment</p> <p>Attractive surroundings and natural environment valued by businesses</p> <p>Not overly dependent on one sector.</p> <p>Strong local partnerships and history of partnership working between the 6 Berkshire councils and other organisations.</p> <p>Key urban centres in southern England (London, Reading, Southampton, Basingstoke, Winchester, Oxford and Swindon) are all within an hour's drive, as is Heathrow.</p> <p>Relatively low levels of reported crime, compared to surrounding areas.</p> <p>Relative absence of dependence on the public sector for employment indicates that as the government cuts continue, the area should be less affected than other areas.</p> <p>Modern retail offer</p> <p>Diversity and quality of leisure and cultural facilities.</p>	<p>Relative affluence of the area masks pockets of deprivation in both urban and rural areas</p> <p>Much of the office accommodation does not meet 21st century requirements</p> <p>Relatively high price of housing</p> <p>Degree of complacency around local economy.</p> <p>Lack of aspiration for the tourism agenda.</p> <p>Relatively few large firms</p> <p>Inward investment tends to be more limited than other for other parts of the Thames Valley, given the distance from London and Heathrow.</p> <p>Natural environment is a constraint to development.</p> <p>Rural nature of the District gives limited access to some locations.</p> <p>Lack of current local economic intelligence.</p> <p>Aging population can put additional pressure on public services.</p>

Opportunities	Threats
<p>Through building stronger partnerships between business and LA and other partners, there is potential to improve business' prospects through more coordinated support.</p> <p>Build on high levels of self employment and business start ups</p> <p>Establishment of TVBLEP provides an opportunity to articulate and promote the collective strength of the sub-region.</p> <p>Ensure the training offer can meet the changing needs by encouraging greater involvement from local businesses in developing future skills and training offers.</p> <p>Promote and focus on the business benefits of partnership working with the education sector.</p> <p>More collaborative working to promote Apprenticeships as a positive career choice to prospective trainees and the wider public.</p> <p>Roll out and take up of Superfast broadband, together with significant scope for the improvement of broadband coverage in rural areas.</p> <p>Supporting the further development of the area's tourism offer using natural assets and events.</p> <p>New markets and services created by the needs of an ageing population.</p> <p>Planned electrification work, due by 2016, is set to provide the District with faster and more reliable rail links.</p> <p>Opportunity to address the significant numbers of people who do not have qualifications or skills suitable for the modern workplace.</p> <p>Build on the technology sector opportunity for inward investment and encourage affiliated and similar organisations.</p> <p>Encourage development of green technology and infrastructure.</p> <p>Strengthen delivery capability of the Skills and Enterprise Partnership</p>	<p>Planning constraints and infrastructure unable to adequately support further growth and expansion</p> <p>Ongoing uncertainty over wider economic conditions, including financial restructuring and access to funding</p> <p>Potential relocation of larger companies away from area.</p> <p>Risk aversion to business start-ups and development due to economic climate.</p> <p>Public expenditure redirections.</p> <p>Failure to balance jobs and housing need, thereby exacerbating both in and out-commuting.</p> <p>Impact of credit crunch and national/ global recession on the development and house building sectors.</p> <p>Lack of speculative high quality office development.</p> <p>Lack of sufficient innovative activity</p> <p>Impact of ageing population and declining numbers of young working-age adults.</p> <p>Growth plans of Reading may draw further private sector interest away from West Berkshire.</p> <p>Lack of employment and training prospects for young people</p> <p>Reduced work placements through schools</p>

### **Appendix 3 List of key partners and stakeholders**

Adviza

Berkshire Economic Development Officers Group (BEDOG)

Bracknell Forest Council

Community Council for Berkshire

Construction Skills Board

The Corn Exchange

Education Business Partnership

Environment Agency

Federation of Small Businesses

Greenham Common Trust

Hungerford Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Jobcentre Plus

Kennet and Avon Canal Trust

National Apprenticeship Service

Newbury BID

Newbury College

Newbury Hoteliers' Association

Newbury Vision Steering Group

Parkway

Parish/Town Councils

The Racecourse, Newbury

Raising Participation Partnership (until March 2014)

Reading CIC

Reading Council

Royal Windsor and Maidenhead Council

Skills and Enterprise Partnership

Skills Funding Agency

Slough Council

Social Enterprise Berkshire

Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce

VitalSix

The Watermill

West Berkshire Chamber of Commerce

West Berkshire Partnership

West Berkshire Schools

West Berkshire Training Consortium

Wokingham Council



For all business related enquiries contact:

**Janet Duffield**

**Economic Development  
Strategic Support**

West Berkshire Council  
Market Street  
NEWBURY  
RG14 5LD

T: 01635 519475

[jduffield@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:jduffield@westberks.gov.uk)

WBC/SS/JD/0913