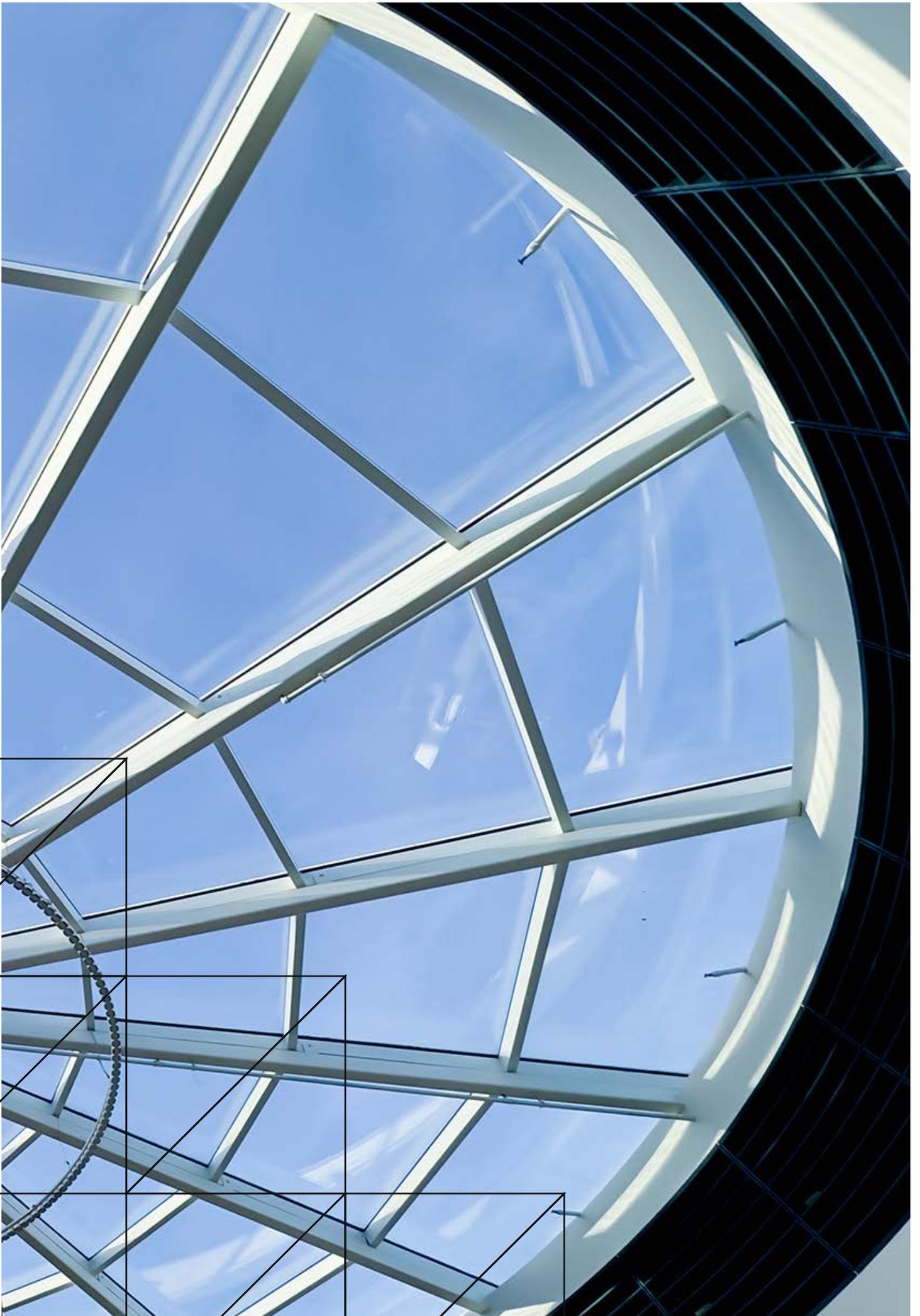


ECONOMIC GROWTH PLAN



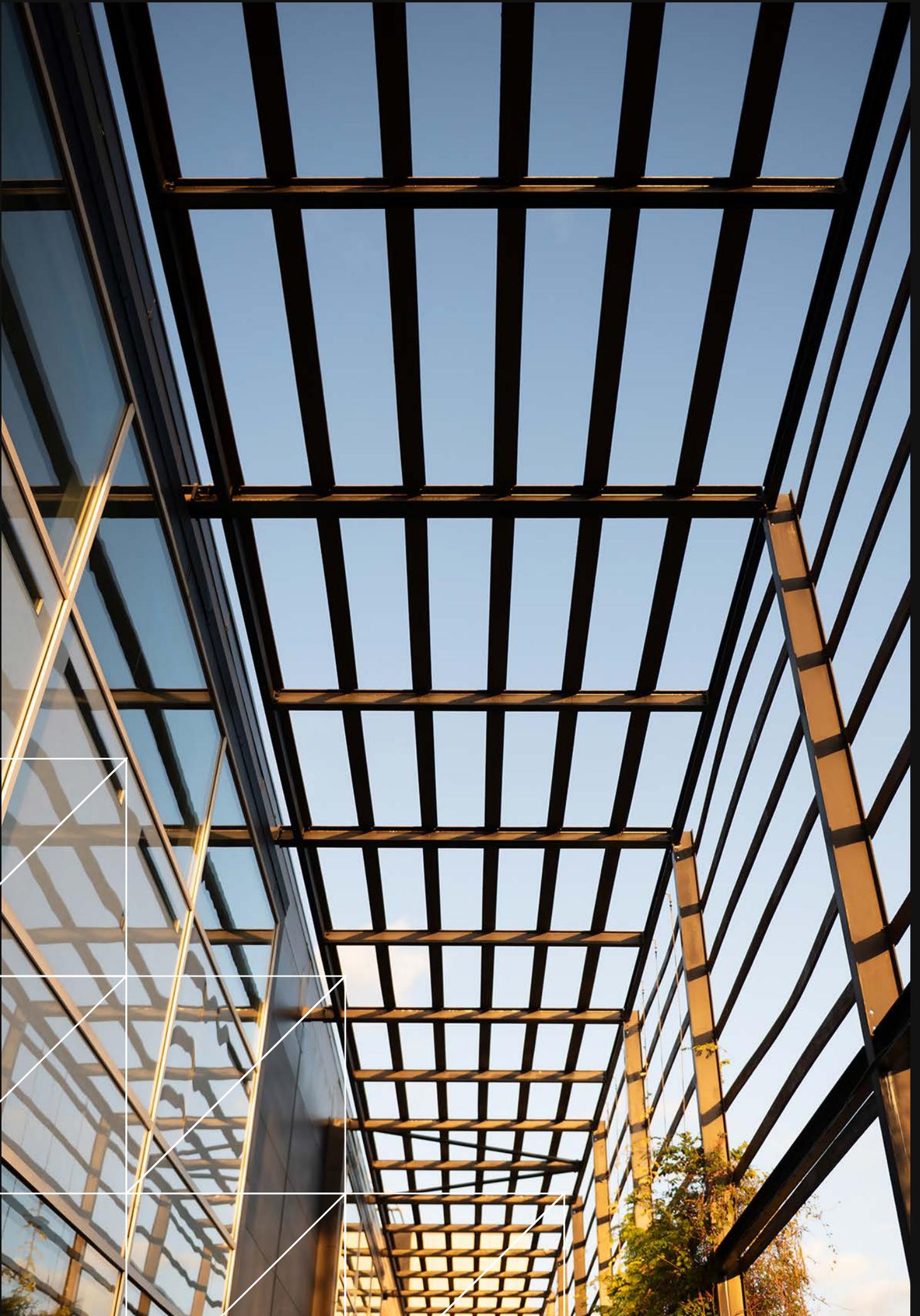
2026-2031





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FOREWORD



It is with immense pride and confidence that I present this Economic Plan for Swindon, a blueprint for our borough's future over the next five years. Swindon is a place of great heritage and even greater ambition. For centuries, our community has demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for reinvention, from the market town of the Domesday Book to the global hub of the Great Western Railway, the switch to automotive manufacture when the Railway works shut and, more recently, a beacon for finance, advanced manufacturing, and technology. This history of adaptability, driven by the ingenuity and hard work of our residents, is the foundation upon which we will build our next chapter.

This plan is not just an economic document; it is the practical manifestation of our long-term vision to Build a Fairer, Better, and Greener Swindon. Economic prosperity is not an end in itself, but the essential engine that will enable us to invest in our communities, create a vibrant and inclusive town, and lead the way in sustainable growth. By fostering a dynamic and high performing economy, we can address historical disparities in skills, enhance our quality of life, and ensure that the wealth we create is shared across all communities.

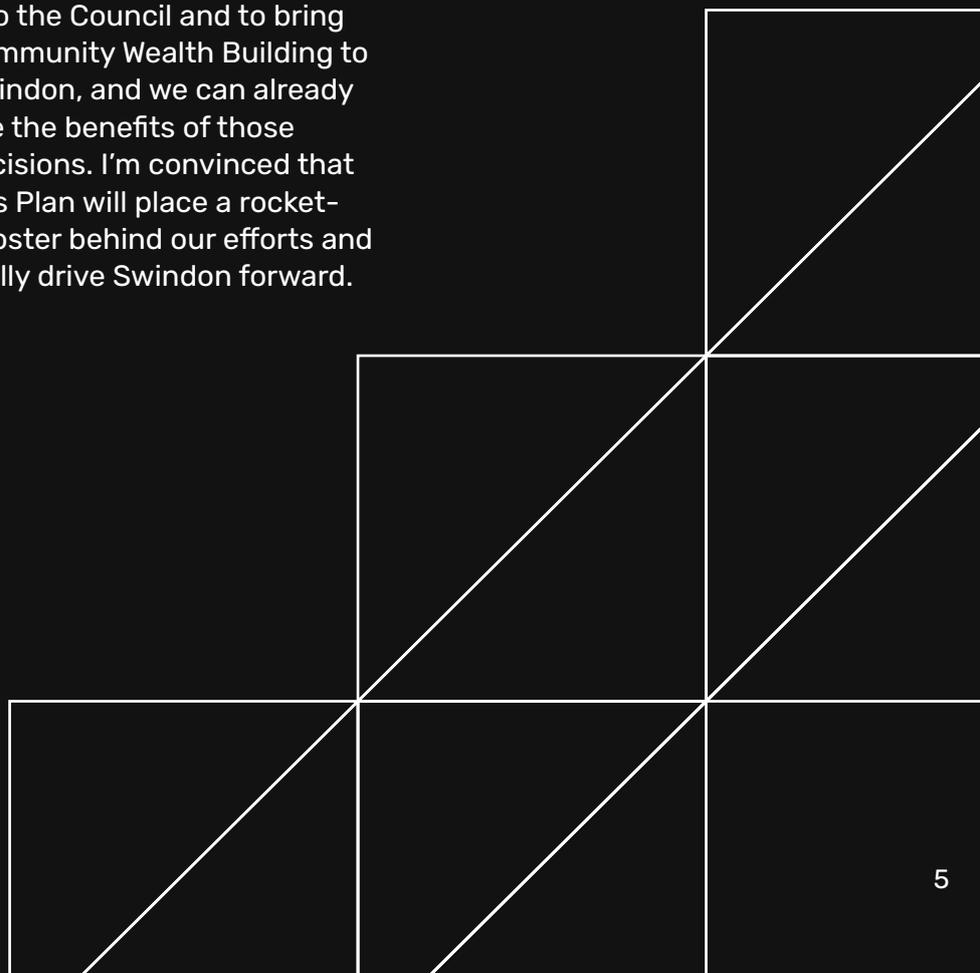
Swindon stands at a unique and opportune moment.

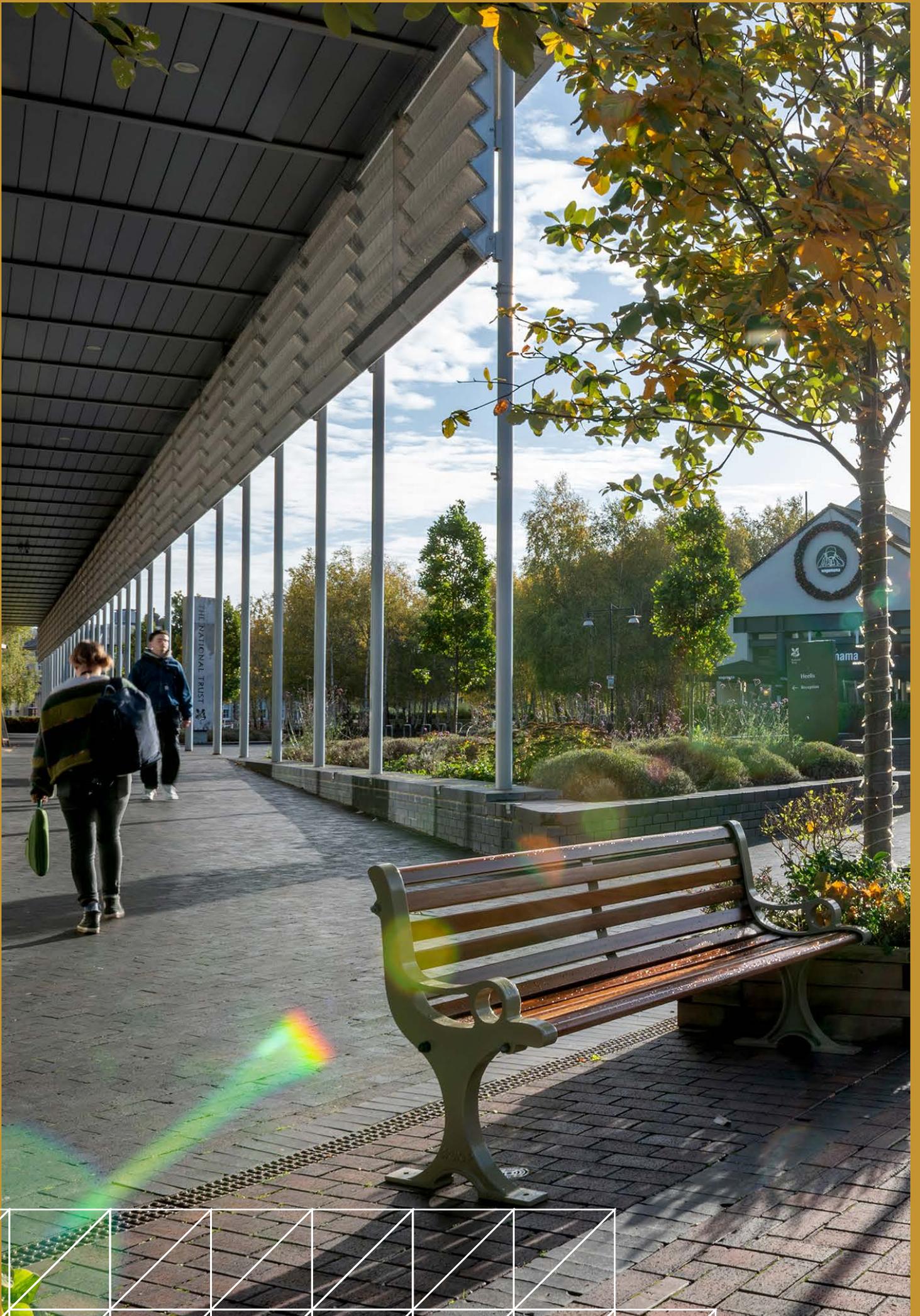
Our strategic location at the nexus of the M4 corridor, connecting us to London, Bristol, and Cardiff, positions us as a central player in the Southern England economy. We are a key partner in the national dialogue on devolution and local growth, and our economic strengths align perfectly with the UK Government's modern Industrial and Defence Strategies. We have a clear mandate and a compelling narrative to make a powerful case for investment and support at the highest levels of government and from the private sector.

I'm really proud of the work we have already done to bring an Inward Investment team back into the Council and to bring Community Wealth Building to Swindon, and we can already see the benefits of those decisions. I'm convinced that this Plan will place a rocket-booster behind our efforts and really drive Swindon forward.

This document outlines a bold and confident plan to leverage our existing assets, address our challenges head-on, and seize the opportunities that lie before us. It is a call for a renewed and energetic partnership—driven by the Economic Growth Forum—between the Council, our businesses, our educational institutions, and, most importantly, our residents. I am convinced that by working together, we can transform Swindon into the powerhouse city of Southern England, securing a prosperous and equitable future for generations to come.

**Leader of Swindon Borough Council
Councillor Jim Robbins**





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Swindon: National Leader, Global Competitor, Local Heart

Swindon Borough Council's Economic Plan 2026-2031 is a visionary and actionable plan designed to elevate Swindon to the status of a powerhouse city in Southern England. Leveraging its strategic location on the M4 corridor, a history of industrial reinvention, and a highly productive workforce, this plan outlines a comprehensive framework for sustainable, inclusive, and accelerated economic growth over the next five years.

The core vision is to build upon Swindon's exceptional economic performance, transforming it into a national leader in innovation, productivity, and sustainable development. The plan is structured around seven core themes:

1. Business and Investment Ecosystem
2. Branding, Place and Creativity
3. Investment in Regeneration and Place
4. Infrastructure and Connectivity
5. Green Economy
6. Employment and Skills
7. Community Wealth Building

Each theme has a defined objective and set of actions designed to deliver a cohesive and ambitious plan.

The plan's foundation is built on Swindon's proven economic strengths. The Borough boasts a Gross Value Added (GVA) of over £12.7 billion and a GVA per hour worked of £62, ranking it third in the UK for productivity. This high-performance economy is supported by a rapidly growing population, which increased by 10.4% between 2013 and 2023. The plan will harness this momentum to address key challenges, such as historical skills gaps and the need for town centre regeneration, by aligning local priorities with major national and regional initiatives.



WHAT THE ECONOMIC GROWTH PLAN MUST DO FOR SWINDON

Swindon has positioned itself as a primary hub for economic growth by focusing on three high-value sectors: Defence, Component Manufacturing, and Financial and Professional Services.

These sectors are strategically prioritised because they leverage the town's industrial heritage, its 'golden hour' proximity to London and Heathrow, and a highly-skilled local workforce.



WHY DEFENCE?

Swindon is a national leader in Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), aligning with the UK's 2025 Defence Industrial Strategy to prioritise sovereign autonomous manufacturing.

- **Investment & Jobs:** Major players like TEKEVER, STARK, and Flyby Technology are establishing the UK's largest drone hub here, securing 800+ high-skilled jobs.
- **Specialisation:** The region's Defence Location Quotient (LQ) is 2.0, double the national average.
- **Strategic Goal:** Establish a 'Swindon and Wiltshire Defence Growth Deal' to integrate local SMEs into the national supply chain and secure R&D funding.

WHY COMPONENT MANUFACTURING?

Manufacturing is Swindon's primary economic driver, contributing £2.9 billion (14%) to total GVA and employing 33,500 people regionally.

- **Heritage to Innovation:** Leveraging a legacy from Spitfires to automotive, the focus is shifting toward dual-use components for Clean Energy and Defence.
- **Strategic Site:** The redevelopment of Panattoni Park (former Honda site) serves as the catalyst for this manufacturing reinvention.
- **Productivity:** Local firms remain critical to global supply chains in aerospace, pharmaceuticals, and energy.

Be ambitious for Swindon with a compelling vision, leveraging our strategic opportunities

Attract private and public investment at scale

Boost productivity, support quality jobs and skills, and help business grow

Encourage Inclusive growth that allows residents to meet their full potential

Support regeneration of the Heart of Swindon and renewal of neighbourhoods

Drive the transition to Net Zero with long economic benefits for Swindon

Enhance Swindon's brand and raise its profile

Harness Devolution's benefits, following the Mayoral Strategic Authority submission to Government

WHY FINANCIAL & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES?

A regional powerhouse, this sector generates £1 billion in GVA and is anchored by the headquarters of Nationwide and Zurich UK.

- **Outperforming Trends:** Despite national contractions, Swindon's financial business base grew by 10%, outstripping the UK average.
- **Future Growth:** Professional and technical services comprise 17% of local businesses, with professional employment forecast to rise 43% by 2030.
- **Strategic Shift:** Transitioning from a traditional back-office hub into a high-value centre for Fintech and sustainable finance.

While defence, component manufacturing, and financial and professional services are consciously prioritised as core economic pillars, Swindon's long-term resilience is underpinned by a broader ecosystem of emerging and foundational sectors.

SECTORS & THE PLAN'S OBJECTIVES

Green Innovation and the Circular Economy:

The Borough is actively pivoting towards a low-carbon future by leveraging its strengths in sustainable technologies, green hydrogen, and renewable energy to drive environmental and economic renewal.

Cultural and Evening Economy:

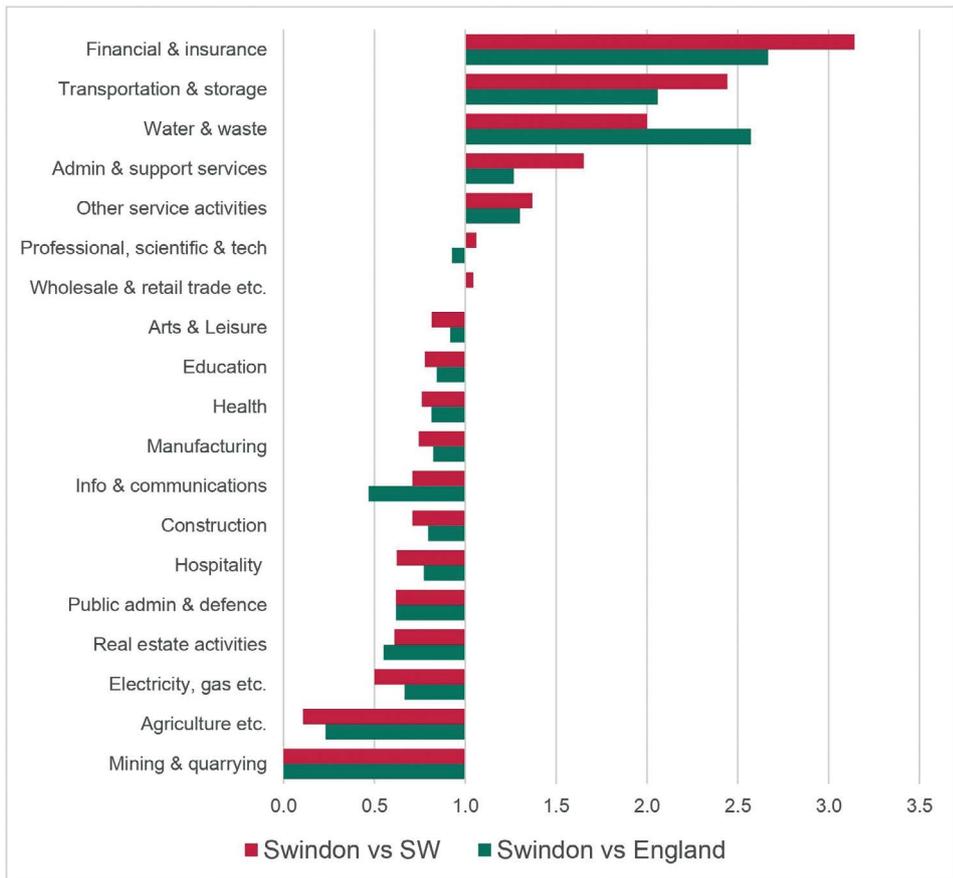
Strategic investments in town centre regeneration and heritage assets are designed to enhance Swindon's vibrancy, positioning culture as a key driver for tourism and a high quality of life for residents.

SME and Knowledge-Based Clusters:

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent the vast majority of the business base, with growing specialisms in life sciences, ICT, and digital innovation forming a critical part of the town's diverse entrepreneurial landscape.



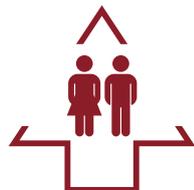
Location Quotient of Employment in Swindon vs the SW and England



Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2022

Snapshot of Swindon’s Economy - Total Population: 243,875

Population Increase: 40.35 (1991- 2024)



Working age population: 65% (155,927)



Total Jobs in Priority sectors: 23,900 (ONS, 2023)



Total Jobs: 99,600 (ONS, 2023)



Degree level qualifications: 66,740 47.3% increase



New Homes Proposed: 26,000

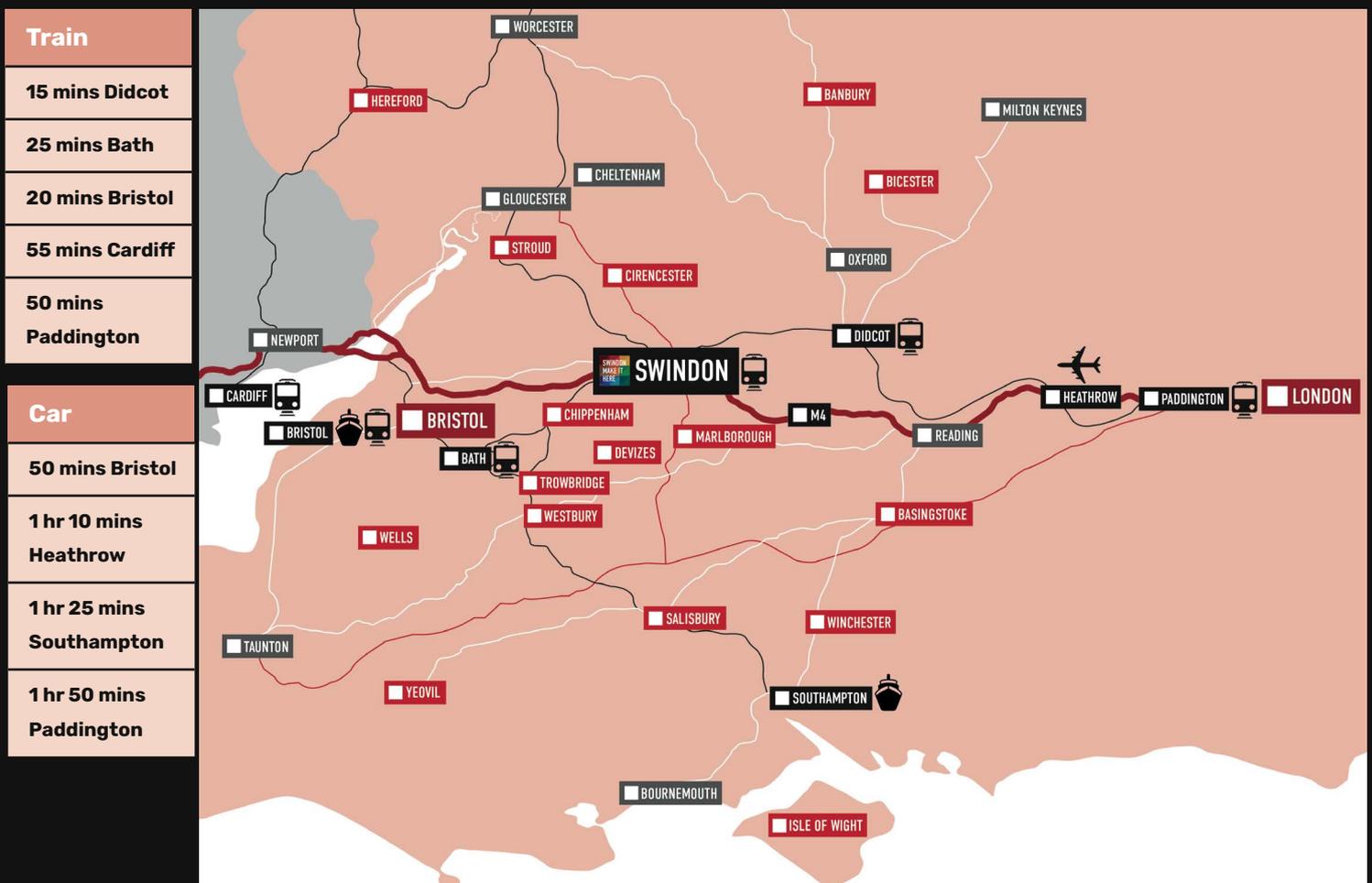


SWINDON OVERVIEW

Sector Dominance: Swindon shows a distinct specialisation in Finance and Utilities, boasting concentrations double the national and regional averages. This dominance is primarily driven by 'monetary intermediation' activities, solidifying the town's role as a major financial hub in the South West.

Specialised Infrastructure: The high LQ in Water, Waste, and Logistics highlights Swindon's strategic importance as a regional infrastructure and distribution centre. These sectors outperform the wider spatial scale, contrasting with a lower reliance on primary industries like Agriculture.

Comparative Positioning: While excelling in high-value services, Swindon has significantly lower employment levels in Real Estate and Public Administration than the England average. This creates a focused economic profile that relies heavily on its unique strengths in finance and transport.



1. THE SWINDON ADVANTAGE



1.1 VISION FOR 2026-2031

Productivity Powerhouse

The vision for Swindon's economy by 2031 is to become the most innovative, productive, and fastest-growing town in England. This ambition is rooted in the recognition of Swindon's inherent strengths and its extraordinary capacity for adaptation. Throughout its history, Swindon has been a place defined by its ability to reinvent itself, from its origins as a small market town, to a bustling railway hub, and subsequently, a post-industrial centre for a diverse range of knowledge-based and manufacturing sectors. The plan considers this history of strategic reinvention as a foundational asset. This deep-seated cultural adaptability makes Swindon an ideal location for modern, future-focused businesses that require a resilient and flexible environment to thrive in an unpredictable global landscape.

This vision for a powerhouse place aligns directly with the Swindon Plan's three core missions: to Build a Fairer, Better and Greener Swindon. The economic plan serves as the engine for achieving these broader societal goals. A fairer Swindon is one where prosperity is widely shared, disparities in education and life chances are reduced, and economic opportunities are accessible to all. A better Swindon is a town with a regenerated, vibrant heart, high-quality housing, and excellent infrastructure. A greener Swindon is a leader in sustainable development and the low-carbon economy, embracing new technologies to combat climate change while creating high-value jobs. This integrated approach ensures that economic growth is not pursued in isolation but is inextricably linked to social and environmental progress, making for a truly holistic and sustainable plan.

Our new draft Local Plan includes policy levers to deliver An Economically Thriving Swindon (Chpt. 7) including allocating sites for an additional 640,000sqm of industrial floorspace making Swindon and affordable place to do business. The plan emphasises the growth of opportunities for investors, identifies key sectors and highlights interventions to rejuvenate the town centre as a priority. Key policies also stress working with developers, businesses and the education sector around new skills, training and employment opportunities for the local workforce.

Furthermore, this vision is deliberately positioned to capitalise on Swindon's crucial role in the national economic conversation. As a high-growth, high-productivity hub, the plan frames the Borough as a vital partner in the UK Government's efforts to drive regional prosperity. This strategic alignment aims to attract both public and private investment, solidifying Swindon's position as a national asset with the potential to contribute significantly to the wider UK economy.





1.2 FOUNDATIONS FOR GROWTH

Swindon's economic narrative is one of demonstrable success and untapped potential. The Borough's economy is robust, with a total Gross Value Added (GVA) of £12.7 billion, placing it 26th nationally, punching well above its population rank of 43rd. What truly distinguishes Swindon, however, is its exceptional productivity.

At £48.7 GVA per hour worked in 2022, Swindon ranks third nationally and outperforms many of its regional competitors, including Oxford and Reading. This indicates that local businesses (and our workforce) trade internationally, are highly efficient and capable of generating real value, a prime characteristic for attracting high-value-added sectors.

Demographically, Swindon is a rapidly expanding borough. The population has grown by 10.4% over the last decade (2013-2023), more than the national average. The working-age population is 65%, higher than the South West's average of 61%, providing a robust labour pool for businesses. However, historical challenges, such as a recent period when population growth outpaced employment growth, led to an increase in out-commuting. This plan is designed to correct that imbalance by creating high-quality, local jobs that align with the growing resident population.

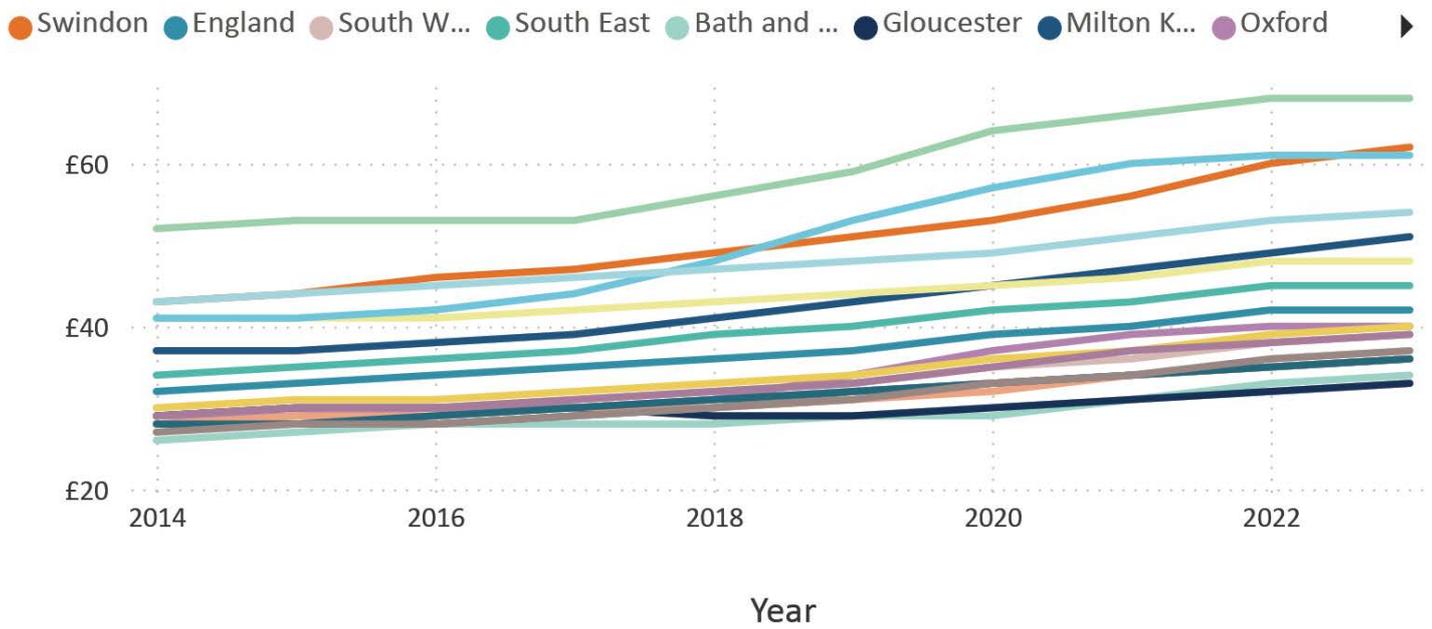
The existing economic base is diverse and resilient, with a strong presence of large employers like **Nationwide**, **Zurich**, **RWE**, and the **National Trust**. The Borough's economy is more dependent on larger businesses than many of its neighbours, providing a stable foundation for growth, but a need to work closely with our large employers to manage economic shocks. The plan will build on these strengths, focusing on a new generation of priority sectors that complement and expand the existing industrial mix.

To provide a transparent and objective assessment of Swindon's position, a SWOT analysis is presented below. This analysis, derived from a comprehensive review of existing strategies and economic data, highlights the borough's key advantages and the challenges it must navigate to achieve its 2036 vision.

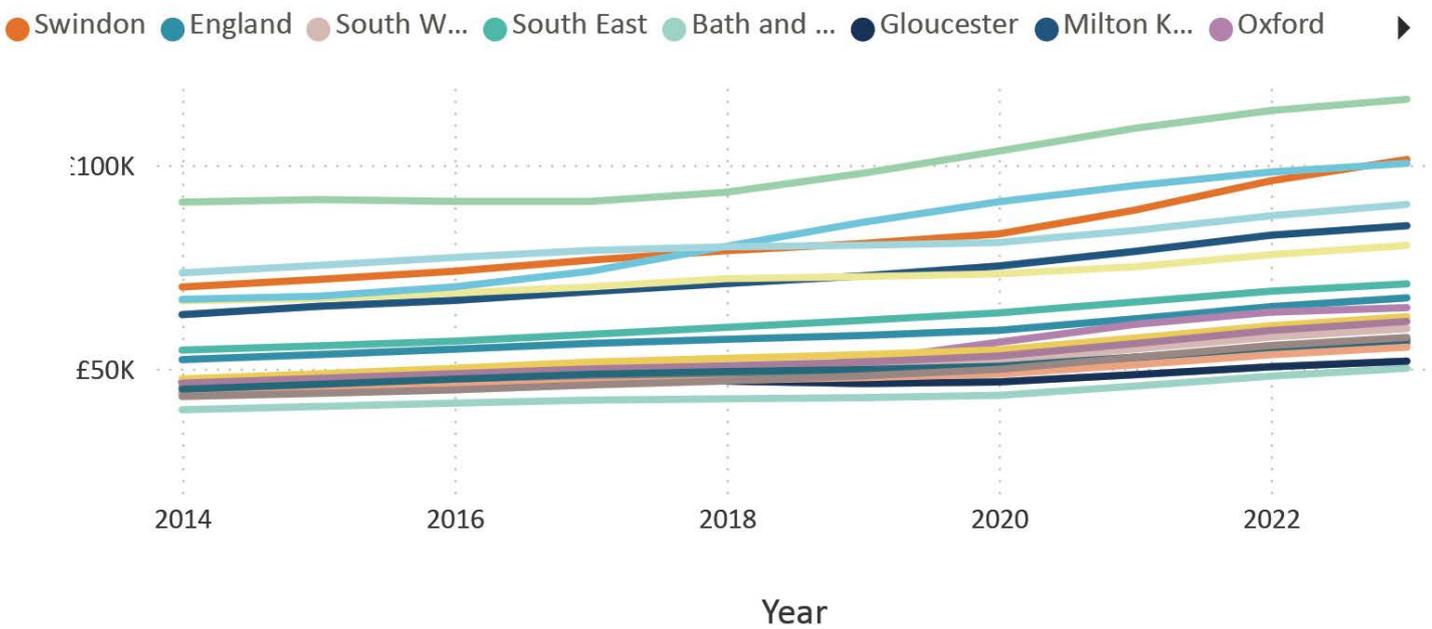




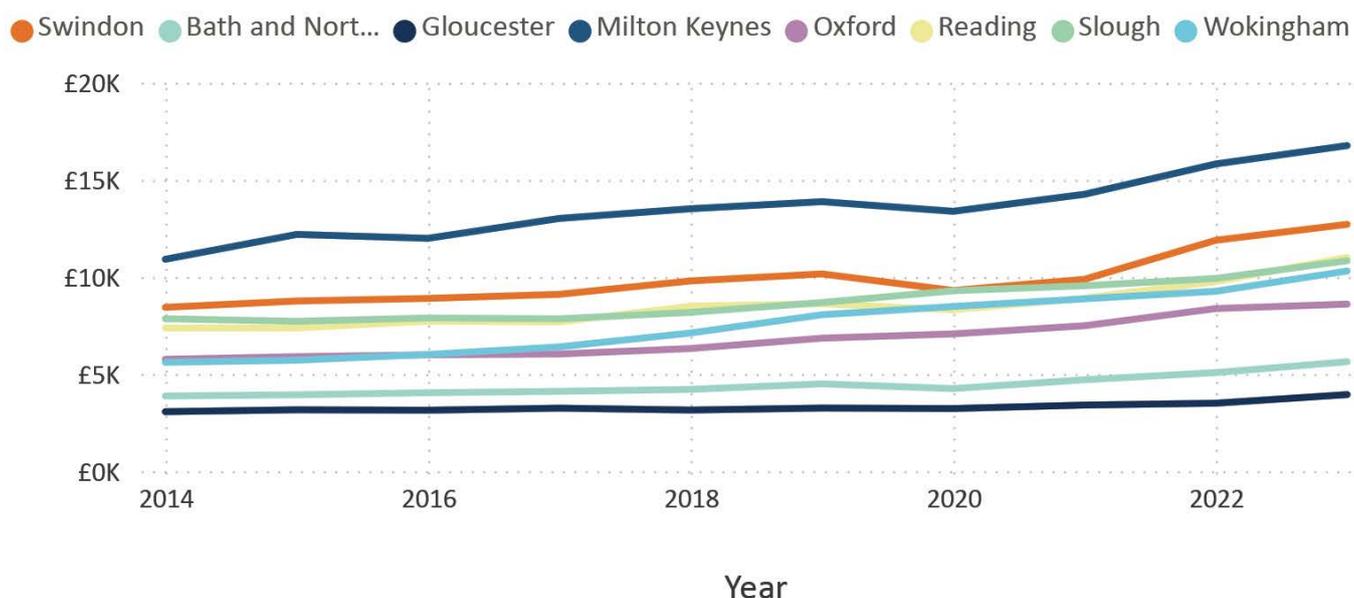
Gross Value Added (GVA) per Hour Worked



Gross Value Added (GVA) per Filled Job



Gross Value Added (GVA - £ Millions)



Strengths	Weaknesses
High economic productivity (£48.7 GVA/hour, third in UK)	Historical skills gaps and low higher education participation rates
Strategic location on the M4 corridor and Great Western Main Line	Town centre environment needs significant regeneration and investment
Strong and growing population with an above average working-age demographic	Recent GVA per hour performance has shown signs of "levelling out" compared to fastest-growing peers
Demonstrable track-record of engineering, innovation and adaptability	Pockets of worklessness and deprivation in specific wards and rural areas
Key partner in the national 'Case for Cities' coalition for devolution	Difficulty in attracting and retaining young talent
Opportunities	Threats
Alignment with UK Industrial Strategy to secure funding and support for priority sectors	National grid capacity constraints and slow connection times
Securing a Defence Growth Deal to leverage national defence spending	Competition from established regional neighbours and international cities
Development of key investment sites: Panattoni Park, Kimmerfields, Brunel Quarter and Knowledge Central	Economic uncertainty and global volatility impacting investment decisions
Fostering a hydrogen and low-carbon economy, building on existing strengths	Viability issues impacting housing and employment site delivery
Devolution of funds and powers through a regional Mayoral Strategic Authority to secure major investment and growth	A national shortage of high-level skills, particularly in STEM fields



1.3 STRATEGIC CONTEXT: THE TIME IS NOW

This plan is not a stand-alone document but an integral part of wider national and regional policy. The Council's approach is to demonstrate how Swindon is a proactive, reliable partner of government, delivering national ambitions. We have deliberately aligned local priorities with the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy (MIS), the Defence Industrial Strategy, and the Financial Services Growth and Competitiveness Strategy.

The MIS identifies high-potential sectors like Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy, and Defence and highlights the need to support their development in city regions and clusters. Swindon's plan directly responds to this by focusing on Component Manufacturing and Defence as priority sectors, providing a clear pathway for national investment to land and flourish in the Borough. Similarly, the national Defence Industrial Strategy calls for "Defence Growth Deals" in key regions. Swindon will make a persuasive case for a similar deal for Swindon and partner regions, demonstrating shared commitment to security and growth.

Swindon's role in the 'Case for Cities' coalition, comprising cities like Oxford, Reading, and Cambridge, argues that many English cities are "underpowered, underbunded, and underfunded" by outdated governance structures. The Swindon Economic Plan uses this argument to advocate for a more autonomous, city-led governance model. The document argues that a "right-sized" local authority, with boundaries that reflect the functional urban area where people live, work, and move, is essential for delivering coherent, long-term plans for housing, infrastructure, and economic growth. This positions the Council's ambitions not as a parochial local request, but as part of a devolved Thames Valley MSA enabling effective regional growth and planning.

Businesses do not think in terms of local authority boundaries. With that knowledge, we recognise the importance of collaborative engagement with all of our neighbours. The plan builds upon our former work with Wiltshire Council articulated in the Economic strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire 2025-2031. It acknowledges the vision of driving inclusive and sustainable growth across the region while maintaining a clear and distinct focus on Swindon's unique economic strengths and investment priorities, such as the development of the Swindon M4 growth zone and the strategic sites within the Borough, including those in the Heart of Swindon Vision 2025 and Local Plan 2043.





1.4 BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Listening, Collaborating, and Co-Creating

A robust Economic Growth Plan is not developed in isolation. This plan is co-authored by the businesses that drive our local economy. Through our 'Let's Talk Business' events, we have listened carefully to the challenges and aspirations of our business community. This feedback has been instrumental in shaping this plan, grounding it in the reality of doing business in Swindon.

Fostering Business and Innovation - Businesses highlighted the need for a diverse and resilient business ecosystem that supports enterprises at every stage of their journey. We heard the call for better support for start-ups and SMEs, specifically regarding affordable workspace, professional advice, and access to funding. In response, we will explore expanding incubation spaces and innovation hubs to nurture local talent and commercialise innovation. We also noted the request for a "soft-landing" package to welcome and support new investors, providing a focal point for business advice. This plan commits to fostering a pro-growth environment that champions local businesses while attracting strategic investment in high-growth sectors.

Skills and Workforce Development - We heard recruitment remains a primary challenge, not just regarding qualifications, but regarding employability skills. We were told the current system often feels like a 'two-tier' model that prioritises university pathways over technical routes, leaving young people unprepared for work. In response, this plan places a renewed emphasis on technical pathways and apprenticeships, building on Swindon's strength in engineering and technology. Regarding higher education (HE), we noted mixed views on a traditional university; instead, you asked for a technical and business focused HE model, that meets employer needs. To ensure ongoing alignment, we are committed to strong business voices on Swindon's strategic Skills Board.

Revitalising the Heart of Swindon - Businesses were decisive in their feedback: avoid distractions such as chasing city status and focus on delivering the 'Heart of Swindon' Vision. We are listening. Our priority is revitalising the town centre, with a specific focus on the night-time economy, public realm, and entertainment hubs to improve footfall and vibrancy. The need to control the narrative of our town was also highlighted. We will work with our firms to sell Swindon's strengths, ensuring the town is marketed effectively. Attracting business, government and private investment is critical to give developers confidence in long-term development and place-making.

Infrastructure and Decarbonisation - We acknowledge the scepticism expressed regarding 'Net Zero' when it lacks tangible benefits. Businesses asked for incentives and clear guidance rather than just mandates, alongside critical improvements to infrastructure such as EV charging and grid capacity. This plan commits to a pragmatic approach, treating Net Zero as an economic opportunity for cost savings and stability, rather than a political box-ticking exercise. Furthermore, we are prioritising the 'hard' infrastructure power, water, and transport connectivity as this was identified as essential for long-term growth.

Inclusive Growth and Procurement - To ensure growth benefits the wider community, local firms asked for better access to council contracts for SMEs. We are committed to removing barrier to entry and opening these opportunities up to local businesses. We will also work to connect investors with our communities to ensure that the benefits of growth, jobs, supply chain opportunities, and wealth building, are shared across the borough.

This plan is a shared agenda owned by a range of stakeholders. By continuing to listen and collaborate, we will build a Swindon that is productive, resilient, diverse, and prosperous for all.



2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR GROWTH

This plan is underpinned by seven core themes. Each is designed to address a critical aspect of Swindon's economic ecosystem, from nurturing businesses to enhancing residents' quality of life. This holistic approach ensures that the pursuit of economic growth is balanced with social equity and environmental responsibility, delivering a sustainable and resilient future for Swindon.



2.1 BUSINESS & INVESTMENT ECOSYSTEM

With partners, we will cultivate a dynamic and entrepreneurial business environment that supports firms at every stage of their lifecycle, from innovative start-ups to established multinational headquarters. The goal is to drive GVA increases, which significantly outpace the national average and solidify Swindon's status as a high-growth hub.

To achieve this, several actions are needed. The Business Growth Hub will be augmented further to provide targeted advice, particularly to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), on adopting new technologies, improving sustainability, and navigating the complex landscape of private and public finance. This initiative will work in close partnership with local bodies and business forums to ensure its services are directly responsive to the needs of the local economy.

A significant portion of this theme is dedicated to attracting new inward investment. The Council will proactively market strategic sites such as **Kimmerfields**, **Knowledge Central** and **Panattoni Park** as prime locations for high-value businesses, particularly in the priority sectors of component manufacturing, defence, and financial services. The marketing efforts will highlight Swindon's exceptional productivity (£48.7 GVA per hour), cost-competitive environment (low land and commercial rates), and unparalleled transport connectivity.

To foster a culture of entrepreneurship, we will further develop the **Workshed** and wider **Carriage Works**, a unique heritage and innovation asset near the railway station. Offering flexible workspace and collaborative facilities for the thriving digital and creative sectors, this will be a focal point for our enterprise ecosystems, align with national initiatives to support innovation and R&D, attract greater VC and angel investment to position Swindon as a location to scale innovative businesses that invest here.





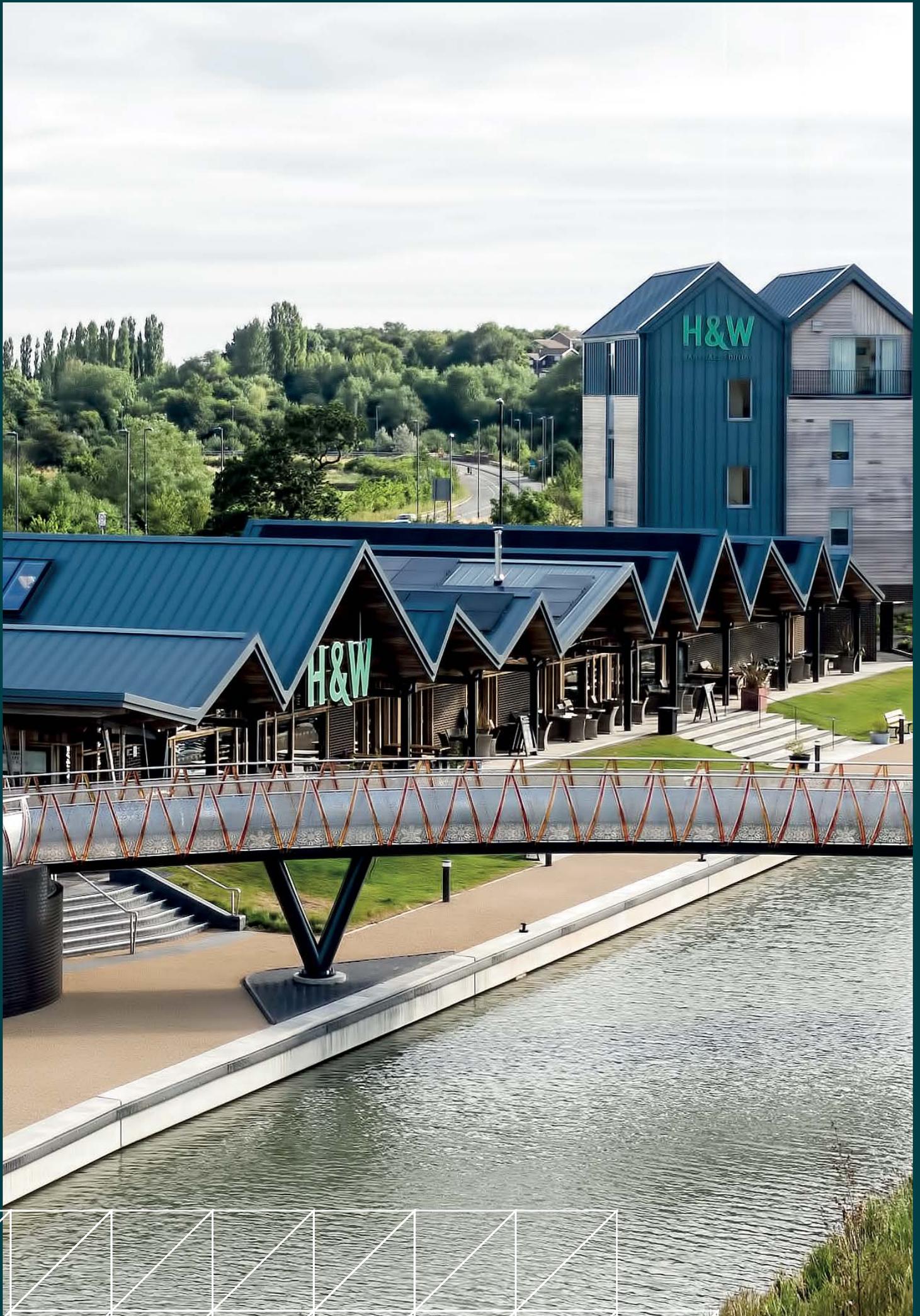
2.2 BRANDING, PLACE & CREATIVITY

Swindon's is a dynamic, forward-thinking place where workers, businesses and investors are all invited to be successful. This is exemplified by the 'Swindon Make it Here brand'. Ensuring our investor audiences understand is central to attracting investment and driving sustainable economic growth. A strong, cohesive brand communicates confidence, ambition, and opportunity to investors, businesses, and talent. By showcasing Swindon's strategic location, skilled workforce, and thriving innovation ecosystem, we position the town as a competitive destination for high-value sectors we have identified.

Our place offer extends beyond infrastructure and connectivity; it reflects quality of life, cultural vibrancy, and inclusivity. Swindon's rich heritage, green spaces, and diverse communities create an environment where businesses and people can thrive. Investing in cultural assets, arts, events, and creative industries, will enhance the town's appeal, foster a sense of pride and belonging while attracting visitors and talent.

Culture and branding will work hand in hand to differentiate Swindon in a competitive landscape. By amplifying success stories, promoting our innovation clusters, and celebrating local creativity, we strengthen perceptions of Swindon as a modern, connected, and welcoming place. This approach supports inward investment by reducing perceived risk, building investor confidence, and encouraging long-term partnerships. Ultimately, a compelling brand and vibrant cultural offer will stimulate economic activity, attract skilled professionals, and create a resilient, inclusive economy for the future.





2.3 INVESTMENT IN REGENERATION & PLACE

The plan recognises that a thriving economy requires an attractive and well-functioning physical environment. The objective of the Place & Regeneration theme is to deliver a holistic transformation of the Borough, focusing on the renewal of the town centre and the delivery of high-quality housing. This work will be guided by the Council's mission to **Build a Better Swindon**.

The central pillar of this theme is the implementation of the ambitious Heart of Swindon Vision document. This vision outlines a plan to regenerate key sites within the town centre, such as **Kimmerfields**, the **Brunel Quarter**, and the **Carriage Works**, to create a mixed-use urban core with up to 8,000 new homes, new commercial spaces, and enhanced cultural and leisure offerings.

This is a strategic intervention to correct a long-standing weakness and create a vibrant, liveable centre that attracts businesses, residents, and visitors. The development of **Knowledge Central** at the station gateway is central to this long-term priority, which will progress over the next decade. This transformative project will bring high value, knowledge employment and students into the heart of the town, supporting the broader economic ecosystem and town centre vibrancy.

The plan also addresses the urgent need for housing. It will accelerate the delivery of new homes on major development sites, including the **New Eastern Villages** and **Great Stall Employment Land**. The plan is committed to ensuring a mix of affordable and market-rate housing options to accommodate a growing population and attract a diverse workforce, including young professionals and key workers.

Finally, we will protect and creatively reuse Swindon's rich architectural heritage, ensuring that the regeneration process honours the town's past while confidently building its future. More detail will be in the Culture & Heritage Strategy developed in 2026.





2.4 INFRASTRUCTURE & CONNECTIVITY

Investment in strategic connectivity

Consolidating our superior infrastructure will remain the bedrock of Swindon's economic success. The Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) highlights that the Borough must over time transition from its car-dominated present towards a sustainable, net-zero transport system. This plan adopts the LTP4's 'Avoid-Shift-Improve' framework, aiming to evolve physical and digital networks to maintain competitive advantages, while supporting the Infrastructure Delivery Plan's (IDP) growth targets to 2043.

The plan advocates for continued investment in strategic connectivity, specifically enhancing rail and road links to London, Bristol, and Oxford. As outlined in the LTP4, we will prioritise the A420 corridor to open new economic catchments and deliver the Southern Connector Road to unlock the New Eastern Villages. To address congestion and journey time reliability, the Council will move beyond simple capacity increases. Instead, aligned with the Bus Service Improvement Plan, we will focus on high-quality bus priority corridors and active travel infrastructure to shift local journeys away from private cars.

In the digital realm, the IDP confirms that while 98% of premises now have access to superfast broadband, an 8% gap remains in rural communities. Closing this divide is essential for inclusive growth, ensuring that location is not a barrier to productivity. Furthermore, we must ensure new developments are future-proofed with full fibre connectivity to support agile working models.

Crucially, this plan will take a proactive stance on energy resilience. The IDP identifies that key electricity Bulk Supply Points, including Swindon and Toothill, are currently "constrained". With the Future Homes Standard driving the electrification of heat and transport, demand on the grid will only increase. We will actively engage with Distribution Network Operators to secure essential grid reinforcements, ensuring Swindon remains an energy-resilient location capable of supporting high-growth, technology-intensive industries.





2.5 GREEN ECONOMY

Sustainable practices and energy

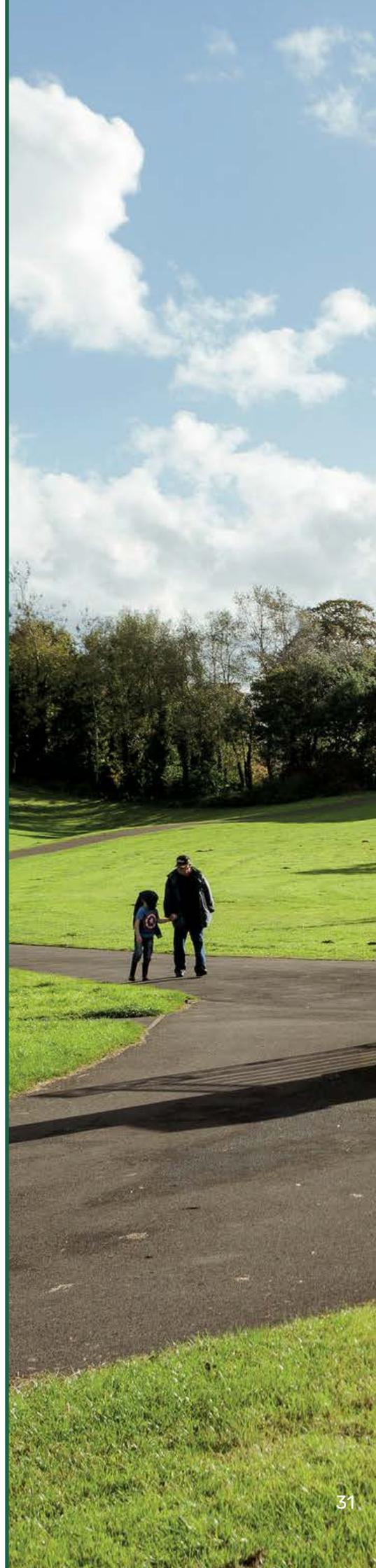
The transition to a low-carbon economy is not only a moral imperative but also one of the most significant economic opportunities of this century. This objective will position Swindon as a national leader in sustainable practices and energy, foster the creation of high-value green jobs, and actively pursue a robust decarbonisation strategy. This aligns with the Council's commitment to **Build a Greener Swindon**.

Swindon already has a growing reputation for low-carbon innovation, bolstered by the presence of major industry players and research bodies. The town is home to the business-led Swindon Hydrogen Hub and serves as a strategic base for RWE, which is driving large-scale renewable energy projects, and NERC (part of UKRI), which oversees vital environmental research from its Swindon headquarters.

Local innovators like Sinewave are also central to this ecosystem, providing the critical high-voltage infrastructure needed to connect green technologies to the grid. Swindon remains one of the few places outside London with two hydrogen refuelling stations, and the plan will build upon this strength by supporting the development of innovative hydrogen technologies. By exploring new opportunities in dual-use technologies, such as battery storage and advanced materials, the town is well-positioned to serve both the clean energy and other sectors.

To guide the Borough's decarbonisation efforts, the Council has developed a **Decarbonisation Framework**, as recommended by the joint Swindon and Wiltshire strategy. This provides a pathway for increasing renewable energy capacity and addressing grid constraints, thereby making Swindon a more attractive location for green technology manufacturing and data centres.

The plan will also focus on developing a skilled workforce for the green economy, ensuring that residents are equipped to fill high-quality jobs in areas like advanced manufacturing and clean energy, which are explicitly supported by the national Industrial plan.





2.6 EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS

Promote continuous learning

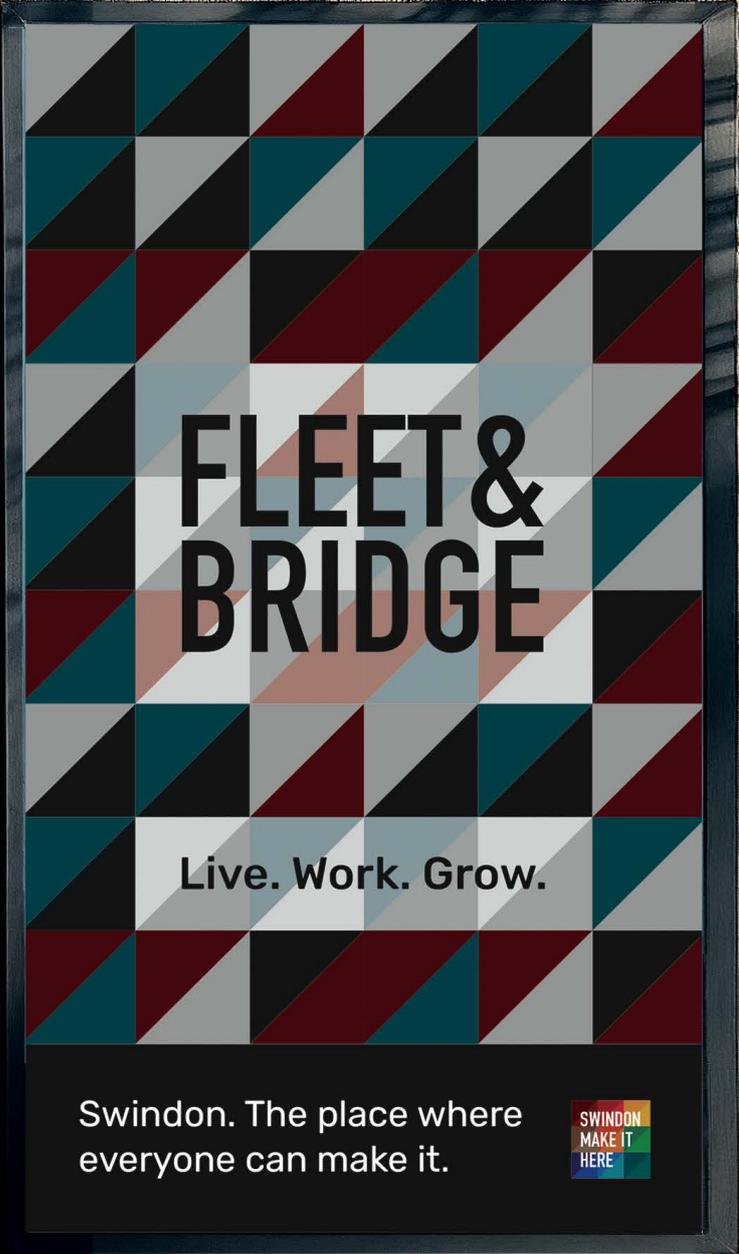
A high-performing economy is built on the strength and adaptability of its workforce. The primary objective of the Employment & Skills theme is to address historical skills gaps, promote continuous learning, and ensure a robust talent pipeline that is precisely aligned with the needs of local employers. Aligned with our Swindon Skills Strategy and Local Skills Improvement Plan, the Economic Plan's shared goal is to raise aspirations and increase participation in higher-level education and technical training, correcting the Borough's historically low rates of university participation and attainment of Level 4 qualifications.

A critical action is to formalise collaboration between the Council, local education providers (such as New College, Oxford Brookes University, and the University Technical College), and employers to create a dynamic Local Skills Improvement Plan. This plan will identify and respond to the specific skill requirements of the priority sectors, ensuring that young people and adults are trained for the high-value jobs of the future. The plan will also launch an upskilling and reskilling campaign targeting adults, particularly those without formal qualifications, to build their confidence and support their progression into further education or employment.

This is a direct measure to address the challenges of worklessness and low-skilled employment that the Borough has faced. The plan will explore the concept of a 'Defence Skills Passport' to facilitate career transitions, a concept outlined in the national Defence Industrial Strategy.

To attract and retain young talent, the plan recognises that a good job is not the only factor. The regeneration of the town centre, the development of cultural venues, and the enhancement of leisure offerings are crucial components of a wider talent attraction strategy. By creating a vibrant and desirable place to live, the borough can compete with neighbouring cities like Oxford and Bristol in retaining its most promising residents.





FLEET & BRIDGE

Live. Work. Grow.

Swindon. The place where
everyone can make it.



2.7 COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

Build a Fairer Swindon

Economic growth is only truly successful if it benefits all members of society. The objective of this theme is to ensure that Swindon's economic success is inclusive, tackling inequality, and promoting community wealth building. This is the cornerstone of the Council's mission to **Build a Fairer Swindon**.

The plan will adopt a proactive approach to community wealth building, leveraging Swindon's significant purchasing power to support local businesses and keep more of the 'Swindon pound' circulating within the local economy. This will be achieved by reviewing procurement policies to encourage and support local suppliers, particularly SMEs, in bidding for council contracts. The Council will develop a new Community Wealth Building Working group to create a Business Directory for Swindon and promote fair and appropriate wages, strengthening the local economy from the ground up. The Council's role as a place shaper, convener and deliverer is critical in this effort, bringing together public, private, and voluntary sector partners to deliver on this shared mission.

The plan will directly address the pockets of worklessness, and deprivation identified in the research. This will involve targeted economic development projects and skills training programmes in the most affected areas to reduce disparities in employment and income. By ensuring access to training and high-quality jobs for all residents, including those without formal qualifications, the plan links economic development directly to the pursuit of social justice.



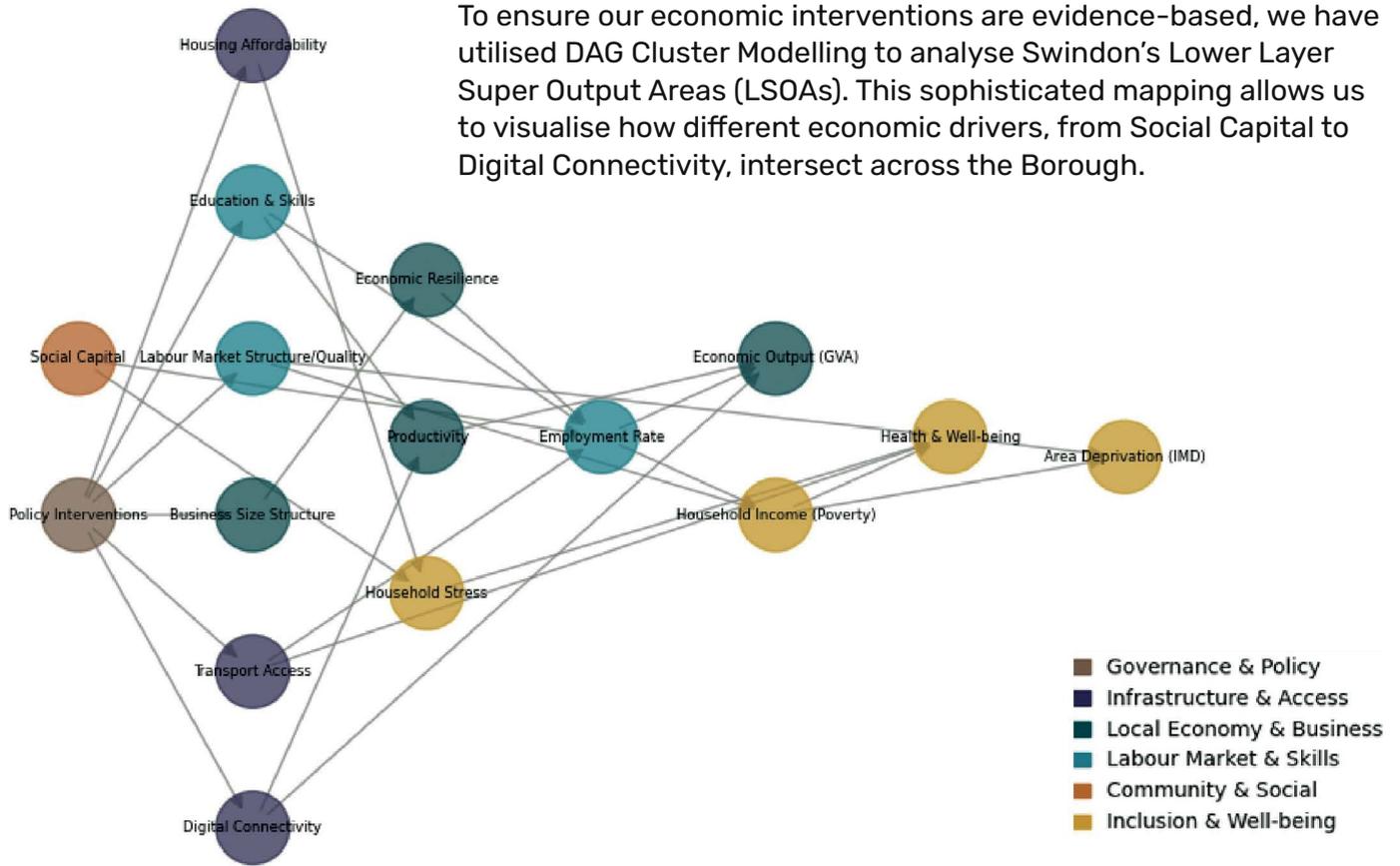
3. PRIORITY SECTORS: TARGETS FOR OUR FUTURE

Swindon's economic growth over the next five years will be significantly powered by three high-growth, high-value sectors that align with the Borough's unique strengths and wider national priorities. By concentrating resources and interventions on these areas, the plan aims to secure significant private and public investment, create high-quality jobs, and solidify Swindon's reputation as a key economic player in Southern England. The following sections detail the vision, strategic alignment, and targets for each sector.



Source: DAG Cluster Modelling

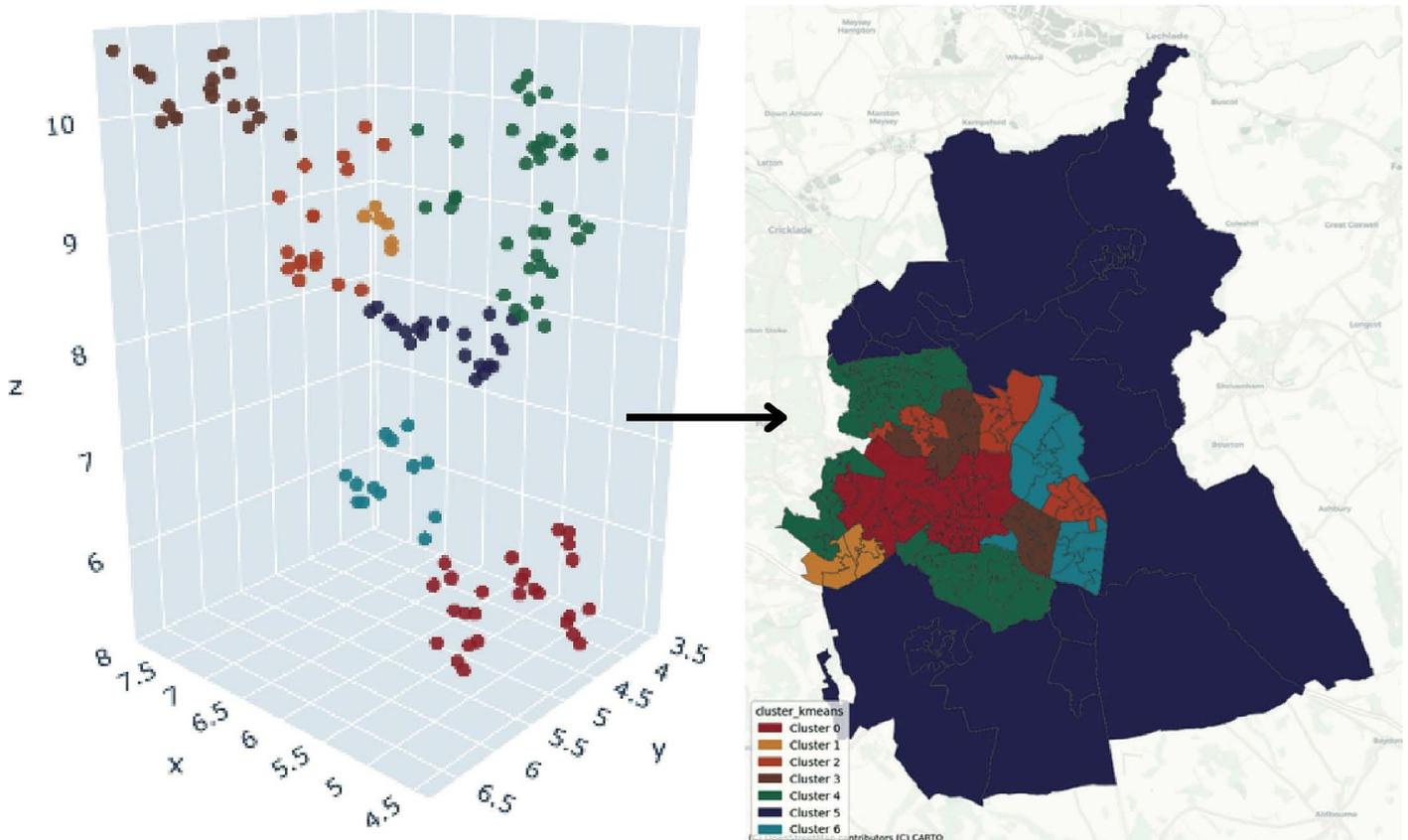
To ensure our economic interventions are evidence-based, we have utilised DAG Cluster Modelling to analyse Swindon’s Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). This sophisticated mapping allows us to visualise how different economic drivers, from Social Capital to Digital Connectivity, intersect across the Borough.



Swindon LSOA Clusters K-means & UMAP

The resulting map (right) illustrates the distinct economic “zones” within the borough. This spatial intelligence allows us to:

Pinpoint Priority Sectors, Target Interventions, Optimize Investment



Current State: A cornerstone of Swindon’s economy, this £1bn sector employs nearly 20,000 people. The Borough has HQs for Nationwide, Zurich, and RWE a testament to its skilled workforce. Rapid connectivity to London via Great Western Railway is a significant advantage.

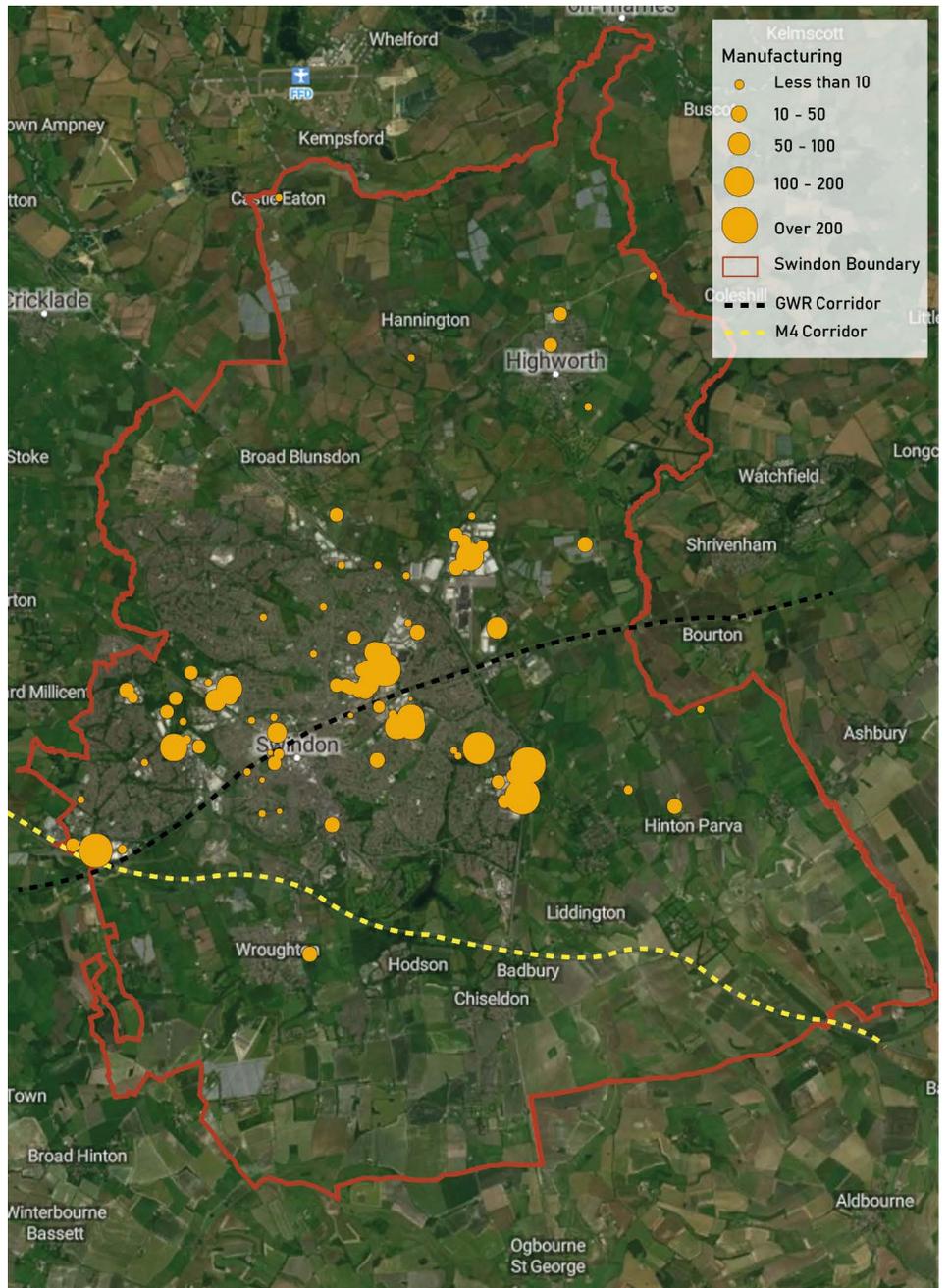
Vision 2031: To evolve from a traditional back-office hub into a dynamic centre for Fintech and sustainable finance. We will position Swindon as a place where next-generation tech companies scale, leveraging deep local talent. This investment underpins the Heart of Swindon Vision.

Strategic Alignment: This aligns with the national Financial Services Growth and Competitiveness Strategy, which prioritises Fintech and regional hubs. Swindon is designed to tap into this agenda, demonstrating readiness to become a hub and helping firms access capital levers like the British Business Bank.

Targets and Actions: Increase sector GVA and range of firms, driven by growth in high-value sub-sectors.

Objective	Key Actions			
GVA Growth: Increase Financial and Professional Services GVA above national averages	Establish a Financial Services Task & Finish Group to align local businesses with national policies and funding streams.	Market the Kimmerfields Central Business District as a prime location for high-quality, Grade A office space and a hub for Fintech innovation.	Collaborate with local education providers to develop bespoke training programmes and apprenticeships in Fintech, data analytics, and sustainable finance.	- Leverage Swindon’s Knowledge Central to attract firms in FinTech, LawTech, and PropTech, which are areas of national focus.
Talent Development: Increase the number of residents with sector specific qualifications	Work with universities like Oxford Brookes to expand their presence and course offerings in Swindon, creating a talent pipeline that meets the sector's needs.	Promote a Global Talent Task & Finish Group to attract and retain elite talent from overseas to work in Swindon financial services sector, as mentioned in the national strategy.		
Innovation: Establish a dedicated FinTech and Sustainable Finance network within the local business ecosystem	Partner with the British Business Bank and the Office for Investment to provide catalytic finance and support for Fintech start-ups and scale-ups.	Promote Swindon's low-carbon credentials and support for green technologies to attract investment in sustainable finance products and services.		

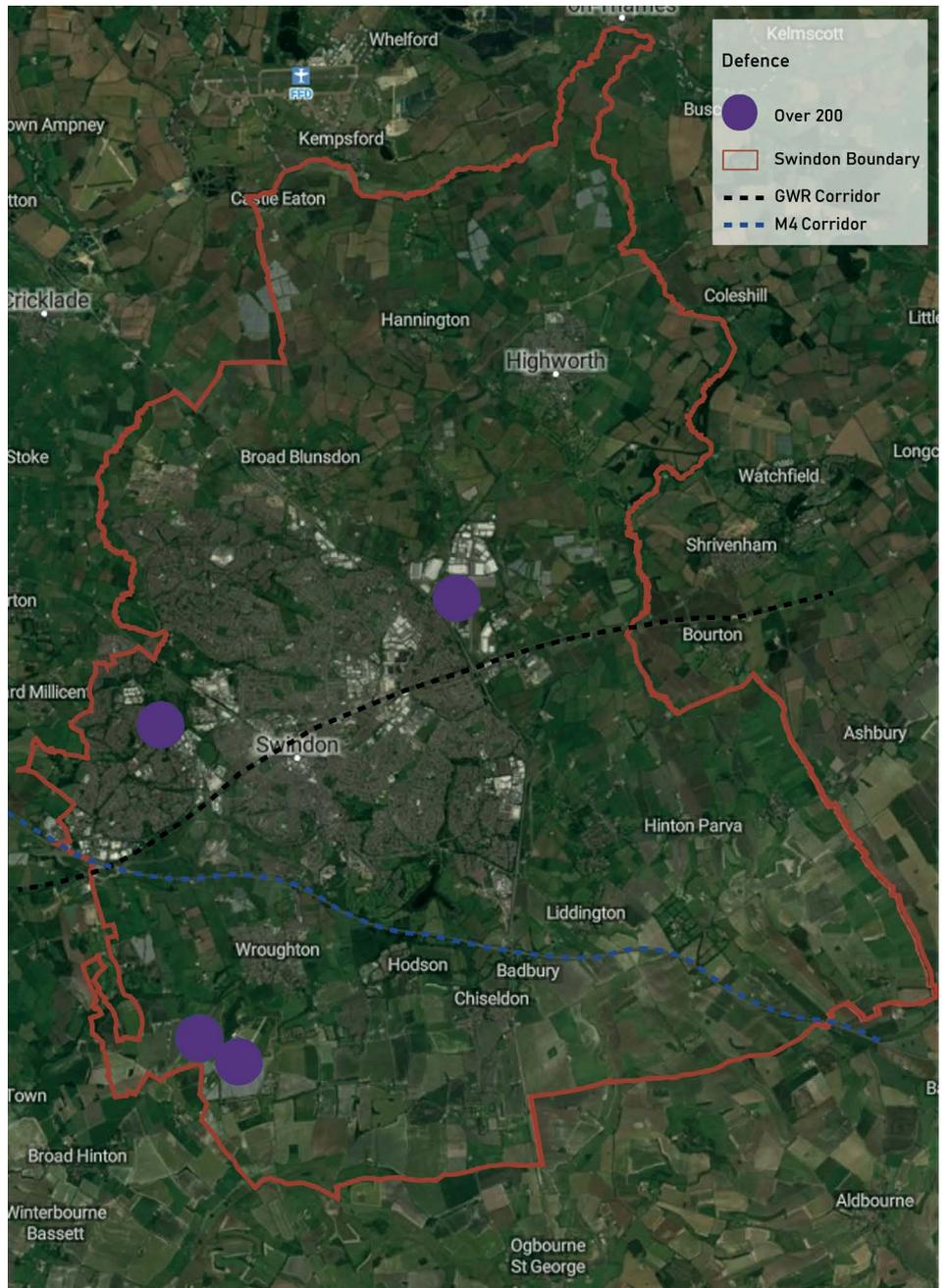
3.2 COMPONENT MANUFACTURING



- **Current State:** Swindon has a rich and storied history in manufacturing, from its origins as a railway works to its role as a major hub for automotive production, notably with Honda’s former presence. The closure of the Honda plant created a significant local economic shock but also presented a major regeneration opportunity at the 100-hectare **Panattoni Park site**.
- **Vision 2031:** To renew and reinvent Swindon’s manufacturing base by strategically focusing on advanced and sustainable component manufacturing. The vision is to transition from traditional automotive production to high-tech, dual-use components that serve the high-growth Clean Energy Industries and Defence sectors, creating a new, resilient, and future-proof industrial cluster.
- **Strategic Alignment:** The plan frames this as an act of economic reinvention that aligns perfectly with the UK’s Advanced Manufacturing and Clean Energy Industries and Defence Investment strategies. The national strategy prioritises investment in Batteries, Hydrogen, and other clean technologies, and Swindon’s plan is to position Panattoni Park as a hub for the components that enable these technologies. This is a forward-looking approach that leverages the site’s scale and connectivity, transforming a legacy asset into a future-focused powerhouse.
- **Targets and Actions:** The goal is to create 2,500 new, high-skilled jobs in the sector by 2031.

Objective	Key Actions		
Job Creation: Create 2,500 new jobs in Component Manufacturing by 2031, primarily at Panattoni Park	- Proactively market Panattoni Park site as a strategic location for advanced manufacturing and logistics, targeting firms in the national Advanced Manufacturing and Clean Energy Industries sectors.	Develop a new Skills and Reskilling Programme that provides training in advanced automation, robotics, and digital manufacturing, aligning with national skills initiatives.	Facilitate partnerships between component manufacturers and defence primes to integrate Swindon’s firms into the national defence supply chain, focusing on dual-use components.
Innovation: Attract at least 2 major R&D facilities or technology centres to Panattoni Park by 2031	Leverage the Local Innovation Partnerships Fund to bid for funding to develop an innovation and other opportunities’ after partnership fund ecosystem.	Support the growth of local firms in composites and advanced materials, which are highlighted as key foundational industries for the national Industrial Strategy.	
Sustainability: Position Swindon as a national hub for Clean Energy components, particularly in hydrogen and battery technology	Build on the success of the Swindon Hydrogen Hub to attract investment in the production of hydrogen-related components.	Address the issue of grid capacity and timely connections to make the area attractive to energy-intensive manufacturing and R&D.	

3.3 DEFENCE



- **Current State:** Swindon’s location in the M4 growth zone places it near significant defence assets. The Borough hosts strategic businesses and agencies like Historic England and UKRI, which work with the MOD. However, this cluster’s economic potential has not been fully harnessed or integrated into a coherent local industrial policy.
- **Vision 2031:** To become a vital contributor to the national defence supply chain, specialising in high-tech, dual-use components, R&D, and advanced manufacturing. We will formalise and scale this contribution, securing defence spending and creating a resilient sector that benefits local SMEs, fulfilling the Defence Industrial Strategy’s ambition for Swindon.
- **Strategic Alignment:** This directly responds to the UK’s Defence Industrial Strategy. The national strategy positions defence as an ‘engine for growth’ and commits to Defence Growth Deals in regions with strong clusters. It also supports SMEs and promotes dual-use technologies. This creates a nationally backed roadmap for Swindon to make a compelling case for funding.
- **Targets and Actions:** Increase defence-related SME spend significantly above the national average and establish a Defence supply chain hub.

Objective	Key Actions		
Supply Chain Integration: Increase defence-related SME spend by 50% by 2031.	Propose a formal Western Regional Defence and Security Cluster Growth Deal to the Ministry of Defence, highlighting the region's existing strengths and potential for future growth.	Establish through the Western Regional Defence and Security Cluster a local Defence Office for Small Business Growth to help Swindon's SMEs navigate the complex world of defence procurement, as suggested in the national strategy.	Use social value and offset policies in procurement to ensure that defence spending directly benefits Swindon's local businesses and supply chains.
R&D and Innovation: Attract investment into dual-use technologies.	Leverage Knowledge Central and other innovation hubs to foster research in dual-use technologies like AI, cyber, engineering, and advanced materials that serve both military and civilian needs.	Engage with national bodies like UK Defence Innovation and the National Security Strategic Investment Fund to secure R&D funding for local companies.	
Skills and Talent: Increase the number of residents with defence-related skills.	Work with education partners to create a Defence Universities Alliance and Defence Technical Excellence Colleges in the region to build a pipeline of skilled workers.	Promote a career in defence through initiatives like “Destination Defence,” which aims to shift negative perceptions and highlight the rewarding opportunities in the sector.	

4. INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The success of this plan is anchored by Swindon's unique industrial DNA and its status as a powerhouse for innovation. By capitalising on our 'anchor employers' industry titans and national institutions like Nationwide, Zurich, RWE, and the National Trust, we are not just building sites; we are fostering an ecosystem where global corporate leaders and cutting-edge research thrive side-by-side.

Central to this vision is our partnership with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Science Museum Group, both headquartered here. Their presence cements Swindon's position as a national hub for scientific discovery and heritage preservation. For a comprehensive breakdown of these opportunities, please refer to our Investment Prospectus, signposted throughout this document.

4.1 SWINDON'S STRATEGIC ASSETS

Key Investment & Regeneration Sites

Kimmerfields: The New CBD As the flagship regeneration project in the town centre, Kimmerfields is designed as a premier Central Business District. It will provide Grade A office space tailored for our **Financial and Professional Services** giants. By co-locating corporate leaders with educational institutions and high-quality residential units, we are creating a dense, walkable urban core that drives 'innovation through proximity.'

Knowledge Central: Knowledge Central is a 100-acre, 'once-in-a-generation' strategic asset positioned to drive Swindon's urban renaissance. Located adjacent to the mainline railway station, it provides immediate connectivity to London and the South West, acting as a gateway for regional growth. The site serves as a vital hub for higher education and research, anchored by the historic Carriage Works and the national headquarters of UK Research & Innovation (UKRI). By integrating modern incubation spaces, vibrant public realms, and up to 4,000 new homes, Knowledge Central transforms Swindon's rail heritage into a future-ready innovation district that attracts talent and sustains long-term economic renewal."

Panattoni Park: Re-industrialising for the Future by occupying the former Honda site. Panattoni Park is one of the largest industrial redevelopments in Europe. This site is the cornerstone of our ambitions for **Component Manufacturing** and the green economy. Given its scale and M4 connectivity, we are proactively marketing this asset to the **Clean Energy** and **Defence** supply chains to reinvent Swindon's manufacturing legacy.

Brunel Quarter & Creative Hubs: A vibrant town is essential for attracting and retaining the talent required by our anchor employers. The Brunel Quarter will transform our retail and leisure landscape, while integrated digital hubs will provide flexible workspaces for the **Digital and Creative** sectors. This ensures Swindon remains a "destination of choice" for the next generation of innovators.

New Eastern Villages & Great Stall: To support a growing workforce, these major developments provide the essential housing and infrastructure required to sustain our economic expansion. These are not merely housing estates but connected communities designed to link residents directly to our primary employment hubs, significantly reducing out-commuting and enhancing the local labour pool.



PLANNING FOR GROWTH: CASE STUDIES

A. PANATTONI PARK



Alignment with Local Plan Objectives

1. Better Swindon (Economic Strength): As a £918m redevelopment of a 360-acre prime site, the project fulfills Strategic Objective SO4 by reinforcing Swindon's role as a national logistics hub.

It provides 7.2 million sq. ft. of modern employment space, ensuring long-term economic resilience and high-quality infrastructure, including on-site transit links and a dedicated community hub.

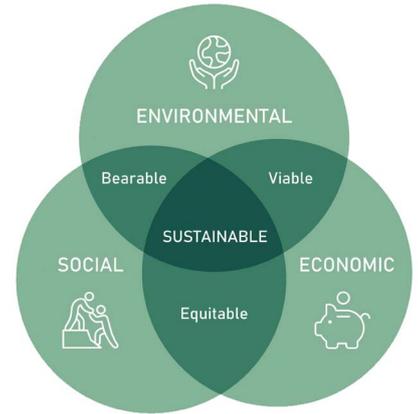
2. Fairer Swindon (Opportunity & Skills): The development promotes social inclusion by offering a diverse range of units, from SME spaces to 'Big Box' logistics, catering to various business scales.

In line with Policy FE7, it supports local workforce development through Employment and Skills Plans, providing new apprenticeships and diverse job opportunities for the local community.

3. Greener Swindon (Sustainability): The project is a benchmark for low-carbon development, targeting BREEAM 'Outstanding' and EPC A ratings. It aligns with Strategic Objective SO6 by incorporating Net Zero Carbon construction, solar PV arrays, and EV charging.

Furthermore, it commits to a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain through wildflower meadows and wildlife corridors, alongside active travel routes like 'trim trails' and cycle paths.

- Bus Service
- Restored Green Space
- Cycling
- New East-West Connection



BUILD A BETTER SWINDON

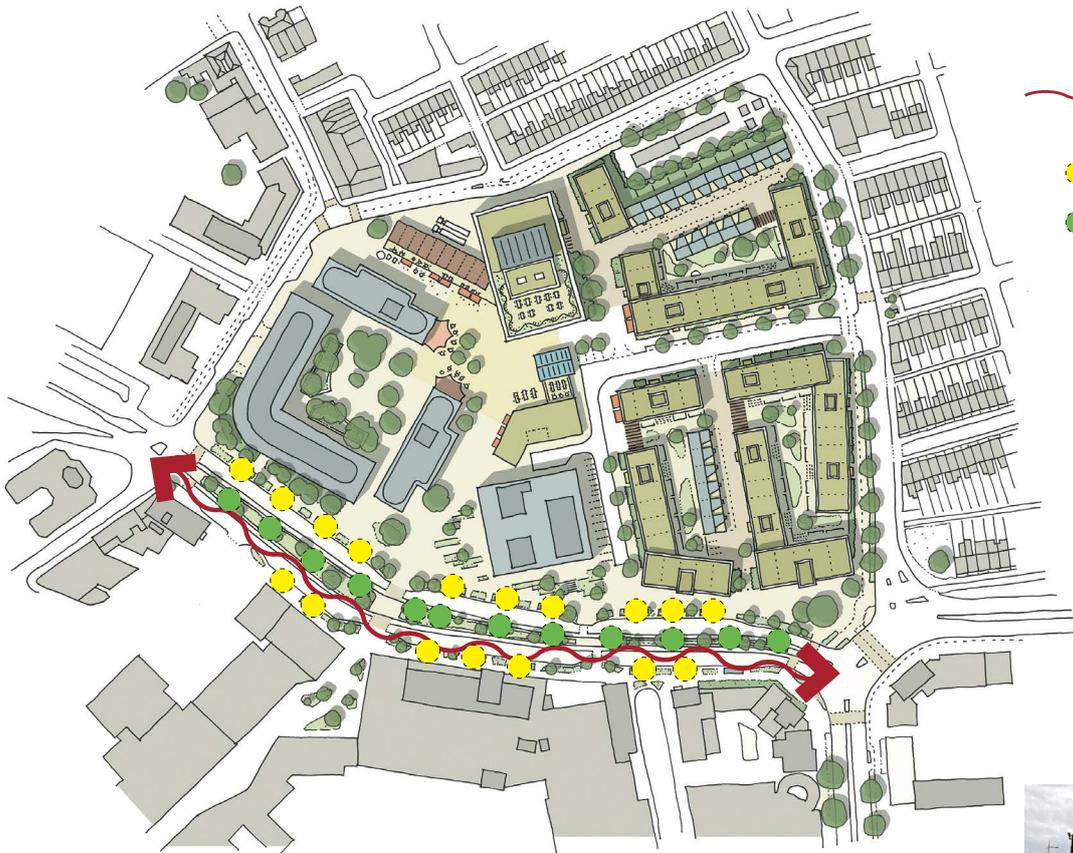


BUILD A FAIRER SWINDON



BUILD A GREENER SWINDON

B. KIMMERFIELDS



-  New Fleming Way Public Realm
-  Bus Interchange
-  Pedestrian/ Green Zones

Alignment with Local Plan Objectives

1. Better Swindon (Economic District & Interchange): Kimmerfields acts as the 'Heart of Swindon' by providing high-quality mixed-use office and residential space to attract regional businesses.

This is physically integrated with Fleming Way's transformation into a major public transport interchange, which replaces the old bus station to create a seamless, welcoming gateway for commuters and visitors.

2. Fairer Swindon (Inclusive Urban Living & Transport): The synergy between these projects **creates a more accessible town centre**. Kimmerfields introduces new urban housing options and jobs, while the Fleming Way **public realm removes pedestrian barriers** (such as the old underpass) to ensure a **safe, level-access environment that is inclusive** for all ages and abilities.

3. Greener Swindon (Sustainability): By centralising high-density development at a primary transit hub, these projects minimize car dependency.

Fleming Way **prioritises cyclists and buses, acting as a green spine** that links the railway station to the town's retail core, complemented by Kimmerfields' integration into the Borough's wider green infrastructure and heritage networks.



**BUILD A BETTER
SWINDON**



**BUILD A FAIRER
SWINDON**



**BUILD A GREENER
SWINDON**

5. GOVERNANCE & PARTNERSHIP MODEL

The Council's role in this new era will be to act as an 'enabler, a convenor, and a place shaper,' shifting from a traditional service provider to a strategic partner. This new model is designed to foster greater collaboration and leverage resources more effectively across the public, private, and voluntary sectors.

A new Swindon Economic Growth Forum will be established, bringing together key stakeholders from anchor organisations, the SME community, educational institutions, and government agencies. This forum will be responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the delivery plan, ensuring alignment with national funding opportunities, setting ambitious targets for the economy and providing a unified voice to central government.

The plan explicitly seeks to build and strengthen relationships with national government bodies. This includes partnerships with the Office for Investment, the Department for Business and Trade, and the Ministry of Defence to access specialised funding, expertise, and support.

The plan is predicated on the idea that Swindon's growth is a national project, and a dedicated, collaborative approach is the most effective way to secure the resources needed for its success.



5.1 DELIVERING ECONOMIC GROWTH PLAN

Role of the Economic Development Team

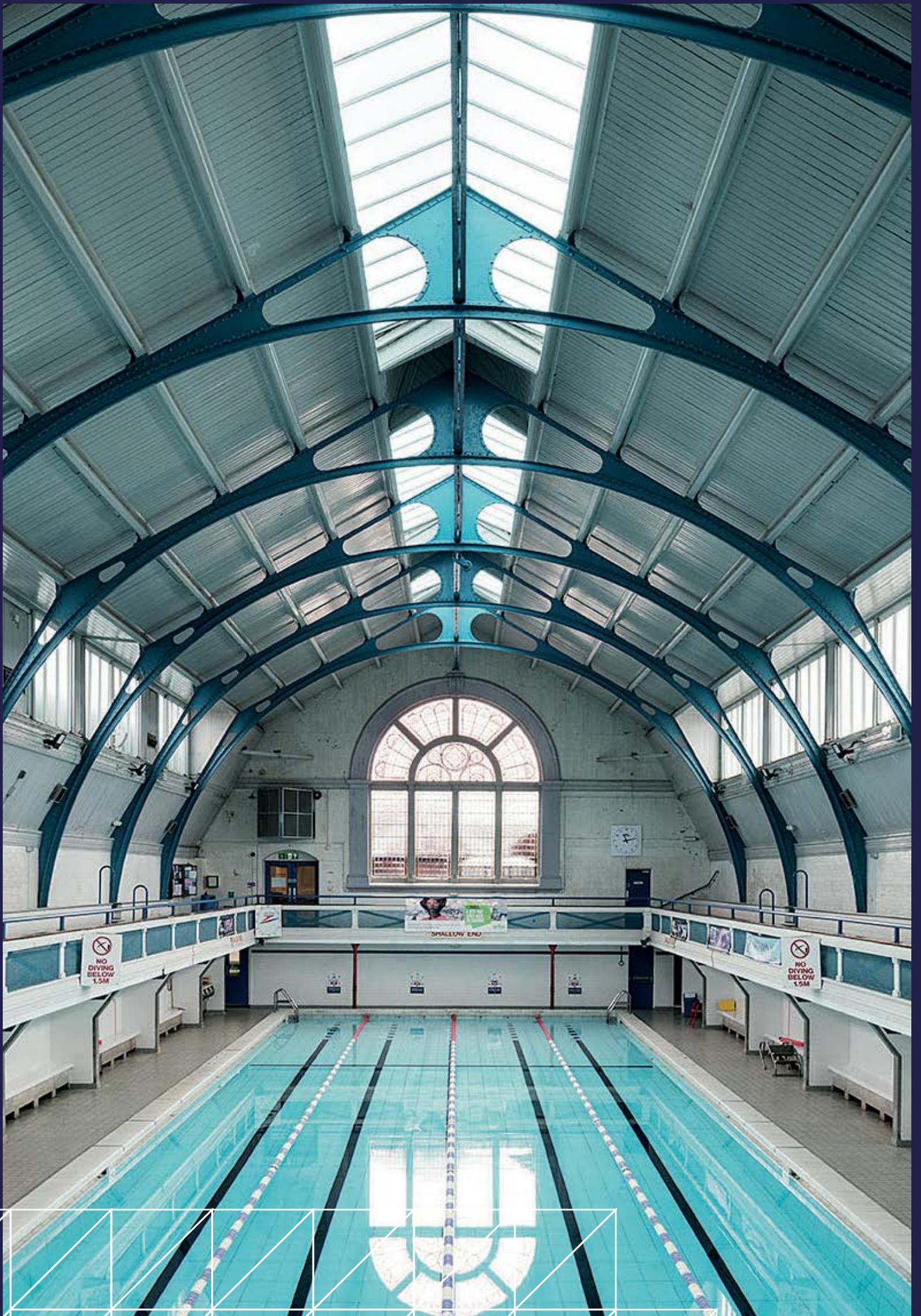
Swindon Borough Council's Economic Development Team will be the driving force behind the delivery of the Swindon Economic Growth Plan, ensuring that the town remains competitive, inclusive, and investment ready. The team will be led by the **Director of Inclusive Growth**, supported by the **Head of Inward Investment and Inclusive Economy**, and a set of specialist roles designed to deliver measurable economic and income impacts.

The Planning and Economic Development Officer (Key Account Management) will focus on deepening engagement with existing businesses, identifying expansion opportunities, reducing the risk of losing skilled workforce roles, and work to support key sites and investment opportunities. Success will be measured through the number of business expansions, jobs safeguarded and created, and GVA uplift. Income impacts include accelerated business rates growth and prevention of social costs to the council.

Finally, the Growth Hub Lead will develop a Growth Hub function aligned with the Swindon & Wiltshire Growth Hub, providing tailored support and access to finance for local businesses. This role will drive business support for SMEs, funding allocation, and job growth, while generating income through government funding, long-term business rates uplift, and interest in micro-finance.

Together, this team will deliver a coordinated approach to economic development, adhering to the principles of the Economic Growth Plan, ensuring Swindon attracts investment, supports business growth, and creates a resilient, inclusive economy for the future.





5.2 MEASURING SUCCESS

Economic metrics

To ensure accountability and transparency, a clear framework of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be used to monitor progress against the plan's objectives.

This framework will go beyond traditional economic metrics to include social and environmental indicators, reflecting the Council's holistic vision for a Fairer, Better, and Greener Swindon. The Council has committed to an annual review of progress, with regular public updates to ensure that the plan remains agile and responsive to changing economic circumstances.

Category	Key Performance Indicators	Data Sources
Economic Growth	GVA per capita growth rate. - Business start-up and survival rates. - Total number of jobs created. - Inward investment and private capital secured in key sites.	ONS, UK Business Counts, Council records, DBT/OFI records.
Skills & Employment	Percentage of residents with a Level 4 qualification (or higher). - Apprenticeship starts in priority sectors. - Number of adults participating in training and reskilling programmes.	Annual Population Survey, local education provider data.
Regeneration & Place	Investment secured for town centre projects (e.g., Kimmerfields). - New homes and affordable homes built on strategic sites. - Town centre footfall and public satisfaction survey results.	Council records, developer reports, resident surveys.
Inclusive Growth	Changes in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) scores in target wards. Reduction in worklessness and unemployment rates in target communities.	ONS, IMD data, Council procurement reports.
Green Economy	Number of jobs in the low-carbon and green sectors. - Renewable energy capacity installed in the borough. - Reduction in the borough's carbon footprint.	ONS, Local Area Energy Plan data, Council carbon reports.
Culture	GVA and number of new jobs from Creative Industries. Visitor Spend. Place perception surveys.	ONS, Resident Surveys. Tourism data.

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March 2026

