

Buckinghamshire

LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL HEART OF BRITAIN

Buckinghamshire LEP response to the Buckinghamshire Strategic Vision 2050

February 2021

Thank you for providing Buckinghamshire LEP with the opportunity to comment on the Buckinghamshire Draft Strategic Vision for 2050 ahead of the document being shared at the forthcoming Growth Board discussion.

We are pleased to see that the vision draws heavily on the economic priorities set out within the Local Industrial Strategy for Buckinghamshire published jointly by BLEP and Government in 2019 and to a lesser degree the Economic Recovery Plan published by BLEP in 2020.

It is important that the vision focusses on the important economic assets based around the Creative Industries, the Space Sector, High Performance Technologies and Healthcare Technologies that are integral to the Local Industrial Strategy but also recognises the important drivers of all future growth and prosperity including ease of access to the latest enabling digital technologies and increased choice in relation to skills provision, accessible and affordable housing, transport and mobility options.

We believe there are four important themes that we would like to see further emphasised throughout the strategic vision:-

Connected Communities – A vision for place should always place its most important asset, its people, at its heart. In a rapidly changing world our connections to each other within our own business, educational, health and social environments are perhaps more important than ever before. Being located close to, but distinct from a global city is a major strength for Buckinghamshire, this should be celebrated and expanded on in this vision. For an extended period where we will see many new people moving into Buckinghamshire we should ensure that those arriving are welcomed and integrated into our strong community environment. When you arrive in Buckinghamshire, as a new business or as a new family you are not anonymous, but a welcome and valuable addition to our community.

Innovation – for a vision covering such a long period of time it is impossible to predict exactly what changes in technology or society will occur. What we can say it that we will look to support, encourage and champion innovation wherever possible. For a county steeped in its entrepreneurial spirit and as an area of firsts we would like to see the vision highlight how it will help provide the conditions in Buckinghamshire to support and encourage innovation and as a testbed for ideas.

Flexibility, Affordability & Choice – Three themes in one; the vision says a lot about how our town centres will be developed as they move on from their diminishing reliance on retail. Town centres and high streets must be able to evolve swiftly to meet the demands of the time, they must not be overly constrained by planning restrictions and greater choice should be encouraged in relation to town centre living and business environments. As an area we should be looking to encourage more

and different types of housing ownership models and construction methods, particularly in town centres to appeal to different generations and to increase affordability for our whole community. By providing greater choice we will help to increase the attractiveness and distinctiveness of the area for our existing communities and in particular our younger generations that are so important to retain by choice. The themes of flexibility and choice should be extended to the economic section, many of our most significant economic assets are located outside of town locations and we must improve the choices on how these can be accessed by the Buckinghamshire communities. By improving choice in these connections and in supporting additional strategic and accessible employment hubs across Buckinghamshire we will provide better access to high quality local employment opportunities for all of our communities and we will help reduce the traditionally high levels of out-commuting by Buckinghamshire residents.

Net Zero Ambitions – Given the increasing importance of this aspect of modern living the Net Zero credentials of Buckinghamshire should be further emphasised. The integrity of these credentials will be increasingly important in attracting and retaining investors, skills and talent. As an area with important natural assets, including potentially the next National Park our ambitions related to protecting our natural resources and embracing green technologies should be at the forefront of the vision.

The final point that we would like to make in commenting on the draft is in relation to the delivery timeline. Much of the narrative relates to the current challenges for Buckinghamshire and to the current local plan timeframe. We wondered if the delivery timeframe should therefore reflect this thinking more closely and cover the 3 time periods 2020/25; 2025/30; 2030/40.