



Walsall Council

Bloxwich  
Town  
Centre

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Local History

Bloxwich Market Place

Bloxwich Market

# TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN

## Bloxwich

TIP PART 1 | JANUARY 2021







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## Foreword

### Chair of the Town Board – Manjit Jhooty



“As chair of the Town Deal Board, founder and Managing Director of a Walsall business, where I was born. I am pleased to present this Town Investment Plan for Walsall.

The Town Deal and supporting Advisory Boards have brought together individuals and organisations with the expertise to deliver an Investment Plan that builds on our strengths and can address our weaknesses, ensuring the Town is resilient and thriving for the future.

Walsall is a proud town, with a rich history sitting at the heart of the country. Diversity is at its core through our people, places, communities and long-standing businesses; however, it faces several challenges, including skills deficits, poor health and living environment deprivation, all of which have increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To address these challenges and to build upon our strengths, we have developed a range of interventions that will ensure that Walsall continues to be a place where people want to work, live, play and learn. Our interventions include new skills infrastructure responsive to new technologies creating jobs for the future, arts and leisure venues that attract footfall to the town and key regeneration interventions that deliver opportunities accessible by all residents.”

### Chair of the Advisory Board – Rupert Fairfax



“As an owner of a Bloxwich business, I am pleased to support this submission. Local people and businesses have collectively worked hard to develop a programme of connected projects that together are capable of making a real, sustainable and measurable difference to local people and their Town. Stakeholders from across the town have used local connections and knowledge to develop this ambitious plan and their vision for the Towns future. It has been an intense, strenuous and successful process; we look forward and are excited to see the difference these projects will make to the town, its people and its future”

## Support Statements

**Councillor Andrew, Deputy Leader of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and Regeneration Portfolio Holder**



“For too long, Bloxwich has missed out in the competition for recognition and funding to improve economically for the future. The area has great potential, with attractive green space and many heritage assets, and its communities are strong and anxious for investment to achieve their vision and ambitions for the place and its people. The projects proposed together provide the ingredients to truly make a real and sustainable difference; creating opportunity in the form of new housing, access to jobs and a quality living and leisure environment. All of which will bring prosperity and sustainability to the town of Bloxwich.”

**Councillor Nawaz, Leader of the Labour Group**



“Bloxwich is a key residential commuter town that is home to a diverse and talented workforce that’s full of potential. By reclaiming derelict sites for housing and employment use, this will attract people and employers to take up residency in and around this town. This complemented by tailored support and training linked to construction and environmental improvements, will support local people into employment. Improved options for walking, cycling and traveling, that will open up both the Town and its local employers for people who really want to live, work and shop locally in an environmentally sustainable way are welcomed.”

**Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands**



“Walsall and Bloxwich are towns of impressive entrepreneurial heritage, once two of a number of industrial powerhouses that made the West Midlands ‘the Workshop of the World’. Despite some setbacks in the last few decades, there is still a wealth of untapped potential in these towns, and I am confident that the plans outlined here will put Walsall and Bloxwich back on an upward trajectory. We have worked closely with Walsall Council to ensure that these plans are aligned to those of the wider region, and we have confidence in the council’s ability to deliver against these commitments. I strongly support these bids and know that with the right support, these towns will help us deliver the Government’s Levelling Up agenda.”



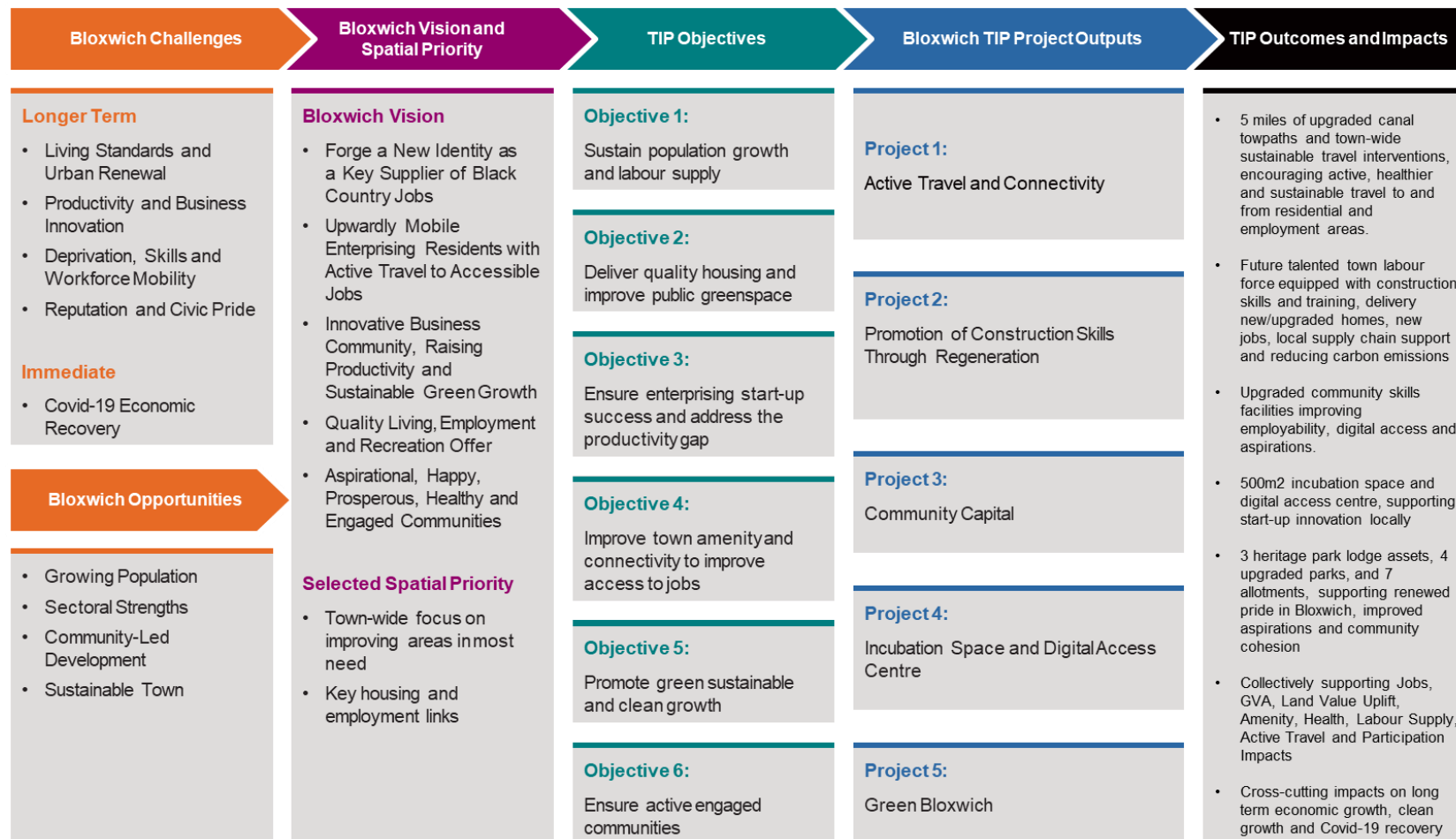
# 1

# Executive Summary



# 1 Executive Summary

Bloxwich will build on its reputation as a thriving Black Country market town at the heart of the country, with exceptional transport links and strong community values. Amid an eclectic but integrated mix of Walsall and West Midlands centres, we will forge a new identity for our town, developing a true sense of place that builds on our 'village feel' advantage and our strong built heritage, leafy park and canal assets. Our Town Investment Plan (TIP) proposal is for transformative projects that will bring long term economic growth and boost Covid-19 recovery of the town. The Town Board for Bloxwich total funding are requesting a capital ask of £25m for the five prioritised projects as summarised in the logic models below.







# 2

## Context Analysis

## 2 Context Analysis

### 2.1 Bloxwich - The Market Town Forging a New Identity

The market town of Bloxwich is located at the north-western end of the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall, on the Staffordshire and West Midlands border. The town sits directly to the north of the borough's main urban centre of Walsall, amid a dense polycentric mix of urban centres.

Bloxwich traces its origins back to Anglo-Saxon times and like much of the Black Country, the village grew rapidly during the Industrial Revolution. By harnessing the success of coal mining, iron smelting, forging, high quality local manufacturing produced; bridle bits, stirrups, keys, cabinet locks, plane irons, buckle tongues, chains and most famously awl blades. This fame continues through the production of high quality leather goods, notably its world-renowned saddles.

Between the 1920's and 1970's Bloxwich grew rapidly through a series of successive large-scale housing programmes, largely for council housing and today much of the town's fabric is late 20<sup>th</sup> Century development.

Like most urban centres across the predominantly urban borough of Walsall and the Black Country, successive expansion has meant that Bloxwich has almost merged with the surrounding town of Walsall and the large villages of New Invention, Shelfield, Pool Green, Pelsall Wood and Bentley, among others.

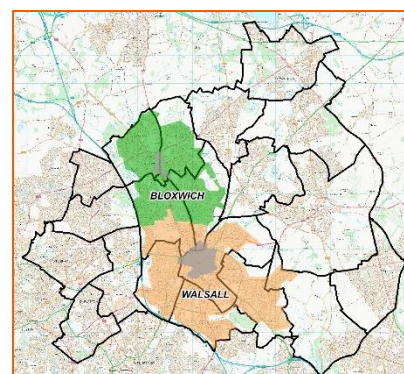
Despite this, each of the borough's urban centres retain their own sense of place and identity and Bloxwich Town Centre is characterised by its retained Victorian and Edwardian buildings, including some Grade II listings, and alongside the towns leafy parks and gardens, this gives the town centre a 'village' feel.

The A34 runs through the heart of Bloxwich, forming its high street and providing connectivity to the nearby town of Walsall and easy access to the M6 motorway, which skirts the town and provides excellent road connectivity to the Strategic Road Network (SRN). The town is also well-served by rail and bus links, particularly owing to its two rail stations, Bloxwich and Bloxwich North. Whilst some active travel is possible, including along the towns navigable canal, dedicated walking and cycling options in Bloxwich are at present limited and this impacts on accessibility to employment and learning options for residents without car access.

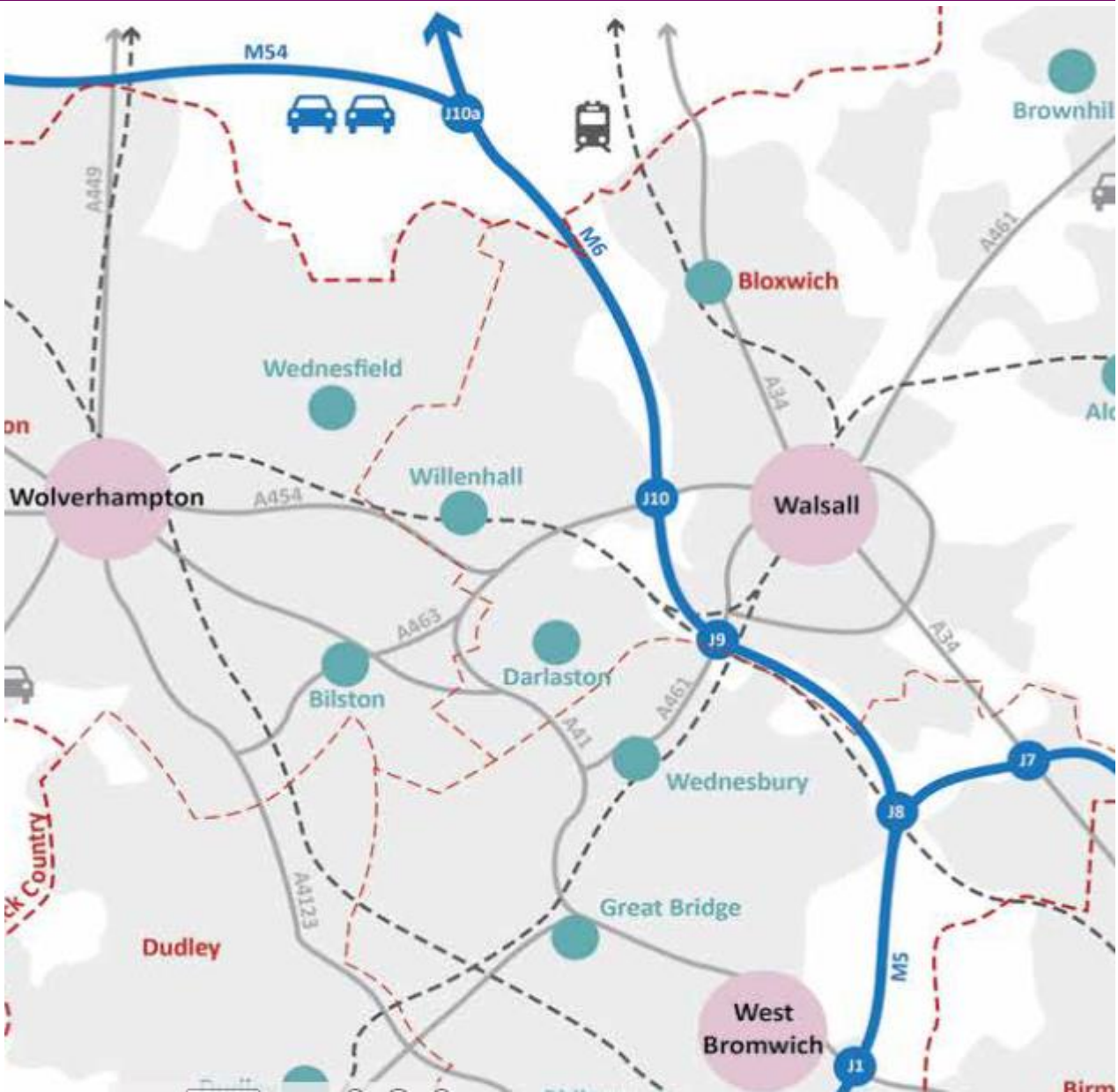
Nevertheless, good road and rail connectivity and proximity to surrounding centres means that Bloxwich today largely functions as a West Midlands 'commuter town' and to some extent a suburb of Walsall. The town provides a key source of labour to many surrounding dominant urban centres and 1 in 4 of Bloxwich's residents work in nearby Walsall alone.

This has meant that Bloxwich is a town that has largely been overlooked in economic development over the years, although as a local centre in its own right, there is opportunity for strengthening its role in the wider Black Country economy and in doing so, there is opportunity for forging a new identity for the town.

In particular, the role of Bloxwich as an important provider of jobs for the Black Country is a critical town function and the economic benefits of this continued role will extend widely, including supporting the success of nearby Walsall and its town deal ambitions.

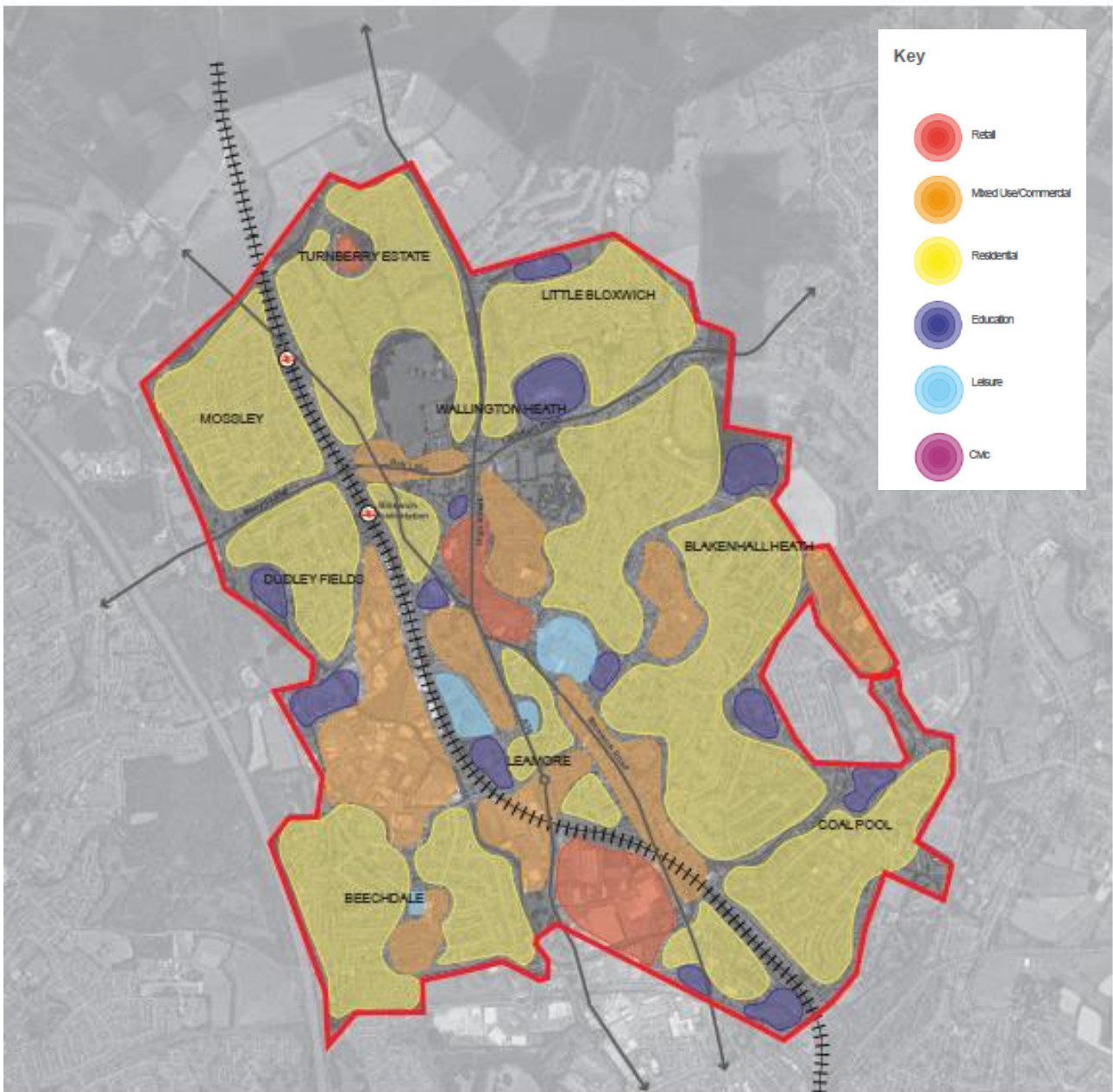


## Bloxwich Context





## Bloxwich Town Deal Boundary



## 2.2 Town Assets, Performance and Economic Drivers

Home to 50,300 residents and 1,250 businesses, Bloxwich has for generations served as an important Black Country local centre. Population growth since 2015 (+4.5%) has significantly outstripped growth nationally (+2.2%, England), largely due to growth in younger residents and today 1 in 4 residents are aged under 16 compared to 1 in 5 nationally. This provides a strong platform for bolstering the towns function as a key provider of a future Black Country workforce, but we need to ensure our town has an attractive offer to retain our emerging talent.

There are currently around 14,250 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs in the town and when compared against our 30,100 working-age residents, this is a particularly low jobs density of just 47 FTE jobs per 100 residents compared to 77 nationally.

This reflects high interdependencies between urban centres across the West Midlands, and the towns role as a key provider of jobs for larger urban centres, predominantly to nearby Walsall where 1 in 4 of our residents work.

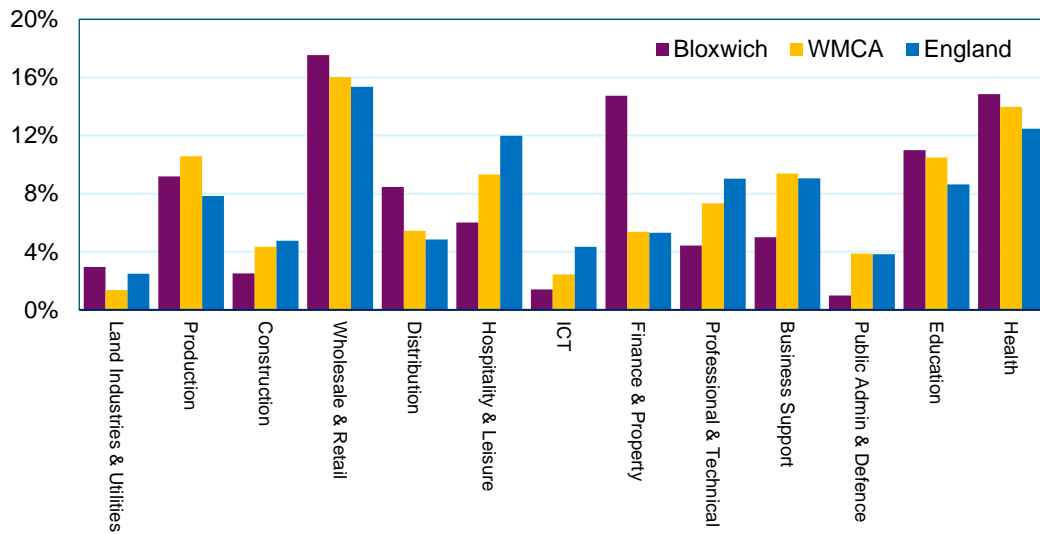
Although our role as a provider of labour supply means that we have high levels of out commuting daily, we have equally high levels of in commuters, reflecting a somewhat hidden economic role for our town.

Bloxwich - Commuter Inflows / Outflows				Bloxwich and Walsall Interdependencies	
Town Workforce Origins		Town Workforce Destinations		(blue = inflows / red = outflows)	
Town residents	26%	Bloxwich	26%		
Elsewhere in District	34%	Elsewhere in District	34%		
Elsewhere in WMCA	21%	Elsewhere in WMCA	21%		
Elsewhere in England	19%	Elsewhere in England	19%		

The town's job market has strengths in the finance sector, largely owing to the presence of our prize and internationally recognised business Homeserve. Together with notably higher than average levels of employment in the health, education, wholesale and retail sectors.

These strengths have served us well, but we are lacking critical mass in the professional, technical, IT and business support sectors, as well as deficits in the hospitality and leisure sectors. To support continued growth as a provider of Black Country jobs, we recognise a need to strengthen our leisure economy in particular.

## Bloxwich - FTE Jobs Comparisons



Although significant recent progress has helped towards ‘levelling up’ our town’s £594m economy, with recent above WMCA and England average growth in jobs, upskilling and employment in higher order occupations, we have begun this process from a very low base and we have some way to go.

Whilst upskilling efforts to date have been reasonably successful, we still have a low skilled resident population in typically low paid roles and whilst efforts both within the town and elsewhere (including the Walsall TIP area) will help to improve this position, businesses within our town have to an extent lacked dynamism. This has limited our towns potential to extend its contribution to the national economy and over the years, the existing per worker productivity gap has widened.

Raising town productivity requires a holistic approach, including a need to both provide the platform for new business innovations and encouraging fledgling businesses to establish and grow. From a supply perspective, we also need continued efforts to upskill our residents and improve labour mobility and access, particularly in communities experiencing acute employment deprivation, which for decades has remained a key town challenge.

## Walsall Borough Businesses



Over 80% of our towns neighbourhoods are among the 20% most deprived areas in England owing in part to a lack of job opportunities within the town. Consequently, we must ensure that job opportunities are readily accessible, particularly in these communities where car ownership is low and commuting options are limited.



Addressing deprivation in our town will of course require more than providing employment opportunities. The continued urban expansion during the latter half of the 20th century has helped our town to radically extend its labour supply role in Black Country economy, but today many residential areas of the town are in significant need of regeneration and renewal.

The effects of a poor living environment, alongside other factors, are stark and males living in the Blakenall ward for example have a life expectancy over 10 years lower than those living just a few miles away.

Across performance indicators, our town currently contributes around 13% towards the borough's economy and around 1% towards the WMCA economy.

The table below demonstrates the early effects of levelling up efforts in Bloxwich to date, with significant progress made towards closing performance gaps, but the town is doing so from a low base and has some way to go.






<b>Bloxwich – Key Indicators and Direction of Travel (2015-2018)</b>						
	<b>Bloxwich</b>	<b>WMCA</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>Direction of Travel (2015-2018)</b>		
				<b>Town Change</b>	<b>Vs WMCA</b>	<b>Vs England</b>
<b>Demography and Skills</b>						
Resident Population (total, 2018)	50,300	2.92m	55.98m			
Population Growth (2015-2018)	4.5%	2.9%	2.2%	↗	↗	↗
Working-age Residents (16-64)	59.9%	63.1%	62.6%			
Working-age Residents in Employment	67.8%	68.2%	75.4%	↗	↗	↗
Working-age residents in Unemployment	6.6%	6.5%	4.2%	↗	↗	↗
Residents in Higher Order Occupations	34.1%	40.6%	48.0%	↗	↗	↗
Residents qualified to NVQL2+ (16-64)	58.3%	66.3%	75.0%	↗	↗	↗
Residents qualified to NVQ4+ (16-64)	25.9%	30.5%	39.0%	↗	↗	↗
<b>Business and Economic Performance</b>						
Businesses (total, 2018)	1,250	103,520	2.70m	↗	↘	↘
Businesses per 10,000 Residents	249	355	482			
Total GVA (2018)	£594m	£69.7bn	£1.64tn			
GVA Growth (2015-2018)	+8.4%	+15.7%	+12.0%	↗	↘	↘
GVA per FTE (2018)	£41,700	£54,998	£61,220			
Jobs (total, 2018) *LSAOs	14,240	1.3m	26.84m			
Jobs per 100 Working-age Residents	47	71	77	↗	↗	↗
Jobs Growth 2015-2018	+7.1%	+2.8%	+3.5%			

## 2.3 Town Regeneration Achievements

Our town partners are committed to ongoing regeneration in partnership with developers, funders and the community. Major capital place-shaping investments delivered, underway or in development in recent years have focussed on housing delivery, with some commercial opportunities progressing.

In recent years a total of in excess of £210m of private and public investment has or is being invested in major regeneration schemes and when complete this will deliver over 1,510 new homes and almost 15,000 sqm of new GEA commercial space in the town.

Across projects, delivery via a range of models and special purpose vehicles, including public and private-led partnership arrangements, have been pivotal in shaping our town.

Bloxwich Development – Complete or In Delivery (c.2014+)				
Project	Status	Delivery	Outcome / Impact	
Goscote Lane Corridor – Phases 1&2 (Waterskeep) (£45m Phase 1, £56m Phase 2)	Phase 1 Complete Phase 2 In Delivery (Summer 2020 start)	LGF secured to assist with WHG and Keepmoat delivery	Phase 1: 412 new homes on 10.4ha of land Phase 2: 407 new homes on 10.8ha of land	
Goscote Lane Corridor – Former Goscote Works (£27.4m)	In Planning	Site remediation complete via LGF Homes England scheme with developer partner Taylor Wimpey	263 new homes on 8.7ha of land	
Former Caparo (£44m)	Imminent Delivery	Site owned by Athem Lovell LLP (whg and Lovell). Land Fund grant secured from WMCA	252 new homes on 6.6ha	
Former Reedswood Golf Club (£31m)	Project Development	Council-owned site with ongoing due diligence work underway	180 new homes on 4.8ha land	
Reedswood Business Park (£8m)	Part-Completed	Unit 1 complete and occupied (1,395 sqm) Outline permission for remaining land, marketed for design and build.	14,865 sqm GEA of commercial industrial space on 3ha of land	



# Bloxwich Town Achievements

## BLOXWICH ACHIEVEMENTS

The adjacent figure shows some of the town achievements that have been or are due to be delivered in Bloxwich:

1. Gosooto Lane Corridor – Phases 1&2 (Waterskeep)
  - Phase 1: 412 new homes on 10.4ha of land
  - 407 new homes on 10.8ha of land
2. Gosooto Lane Corridor – Former Gosooto Works
  - 263 new homes on 8.7ha of land
3. Former Caparo
  - 252 new homes on 6.6ha
4. Former Reedswood Golf Club
  - 180 new homes on 4.8ha land
5. Reedswood Business Park
  - 14,865 sqm GEA of commercial industrial space on 3ha of land

### Key

-  Commercial achievements
-  Residential achievements
-  Canal
-  Railway
-  Road network
-  Site boundary

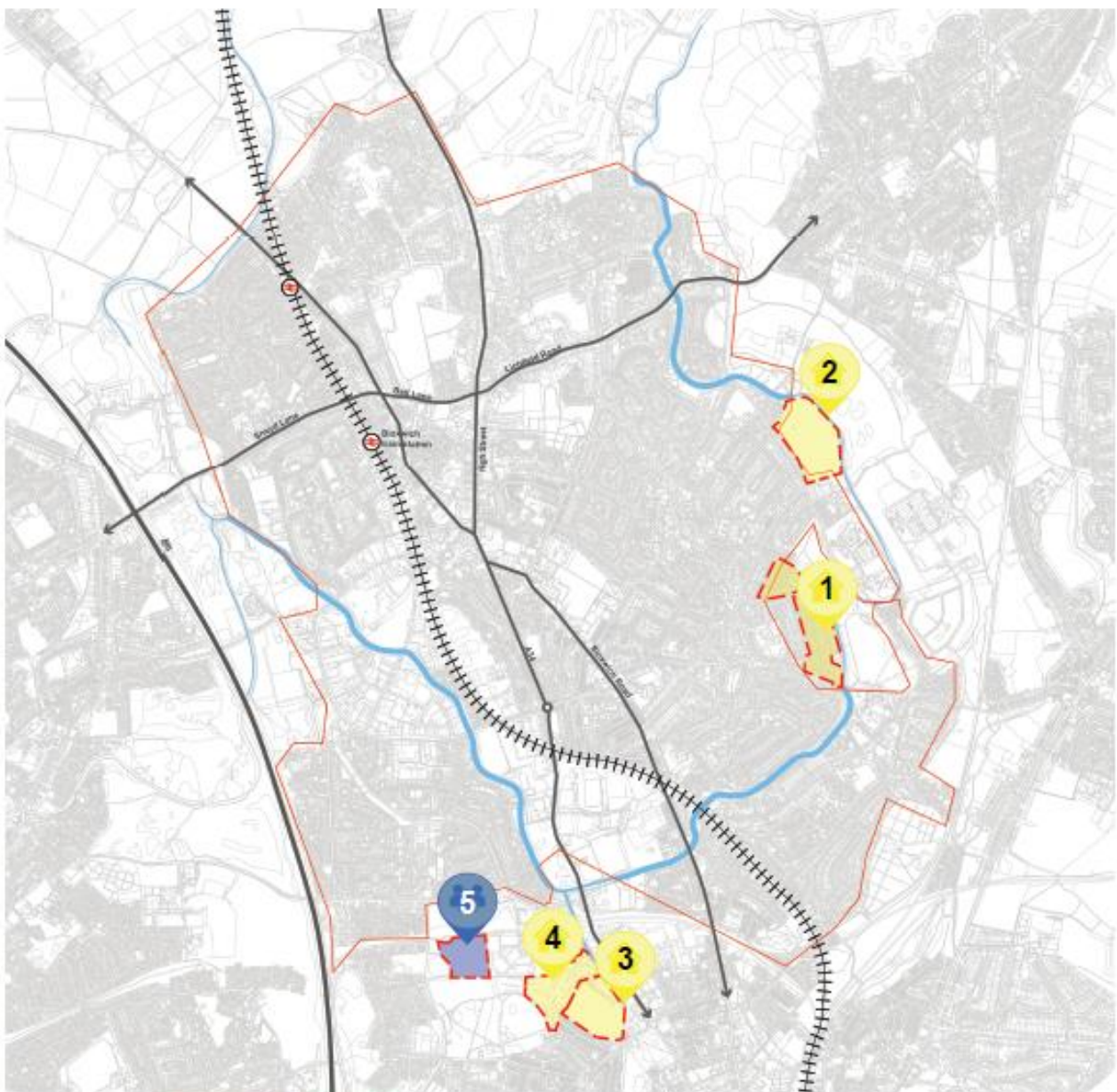


FIGURE 1.4: BLOXWICH ACHIEVEMENTS



## 2.4 Long Standing Town Challenges

Despite good recent progress in closing our resident-based performance gaps, persistent economic and socio-economic challenges remain and through an early review of the core challenges, tested through engagement and proven through the evidence available, we have identified four longstanding town challenges we are seeking to address.



### Challenge 1: Living Standards and Urban Area Renewal

Bloxwich experienced rapid large-scale residential-led expansion over the years but today many areas of the town are very tired looking and in need of significant regeneration.

The effect on our communities arising from sub-standard housing stock is perhaps best highlighted by Indices of Deprivation evidence, where in 2019 almost 70% of our communities were among England's 40% most deprived on the ID's Living Environment measure, with only 8% of communities ranking highly on the Living Environment sub-domain.

Poor standard town accommodation is not only a key driver for town-wide deprivation, but it also serves to diminish civic pride and reinforce low aspirations. Over time, the quality of stock in Bloxwich has worsened and areas of the town have fallen into further disrepair, particularly the Beechdale, Blakenall Heath, Mossley and Dudley Fields areas.

Raising living standards to improve the quality of life of our residents is therefore a key town challenge and ambition. The impact of poor living environment on health outcomes is clear, but improved environs has a significant role in also raising aspirations, boosting civic pride and ensuring the town continues to be a key provider of Black Country jobs.

Maintaining and improving the quality of existing housing stocks is also the responsibility of residents and landlords, but in practice low rental returns and very low wage rates in parts of the town make community-led built environment improvements challenging. For reference, in 2019 average resident earnings in Walsall borough were £4,300 lower than the national average.

As such, we must in the first instance prioritise regeneration in those areas where housing renewal and other urban regeneration is most needed.

## Challenge 2: Productivity and Business Innovation

The legacy of reasonably low-value activities in Bloxwich has meant that at current levels, average workplace-based 'GVA per FTE job' is almost £20,000 lower than the England average.

GVA growth in the town has also been very slow since 2015 (+1% between the years) meaning that the town's productivity gap has significantly widened by around £3,975 per FTE job since 2015.

In recent years, business churn rates have been low and growth has been significantly lagged national business growth (+2% since 2015 vs +6% in England). Business start-up rates within our town have been low and across the borough start-up rates have fallen in recent years, which is a similar trend observed nationally. Whilst there have been few business 'deaths' (pre-Covid), we are a town that is characterised as having a with a reasonably 'static' and rooted business community.

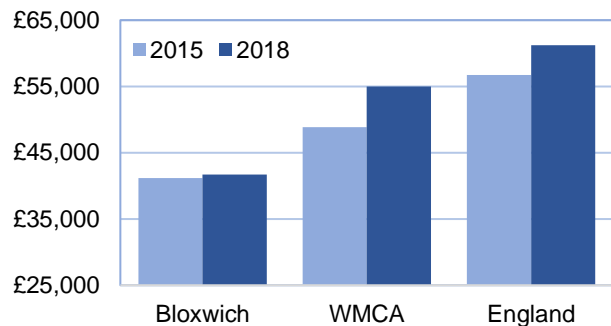
Reversing the per worker productivity gap is critical to levelling up the town, but framed within the context of low levels of innovation, low business start-up and churn rates locally, and comparably fewer businesses than would be expected for a town of its size, we must improve our offer to attract new higher value activities to the town.

To provide a competitive offer, the town needs to offer access to a talented labour pool and deliver excellent business and innovation support. Business innovation rarely happens organically and as well as improving our offer to attract new businesses and foster emerging businesses within Bloxwich, we need to ensure product, service, process and business model innovation among our existing 1,250 strong business community.

Across the area, Walsall Council, the Black Country Growth Hub, The Black Country Chamber of Commerce, the Federation for Small Business all offer tailored support to businesses and we have strong working relationships with innovative organisations, such as the University of Wolverhampton, Warwick Manufacturing Group and the Manufacturing Technology Centre to support a local innovation eco-system.

Despite this Bloxwich lacks dedicated provision for local innovation and start-up support and we are seeking to in part redress this through our TIP. Similarly, by ensuring active links and joint initiatives with the Walsall TD investments, Bloxwich residents will have improved accessibility to the wider Walsall innovation and start-up offer, and vice versa.

GVA per FTE Job Comparisons

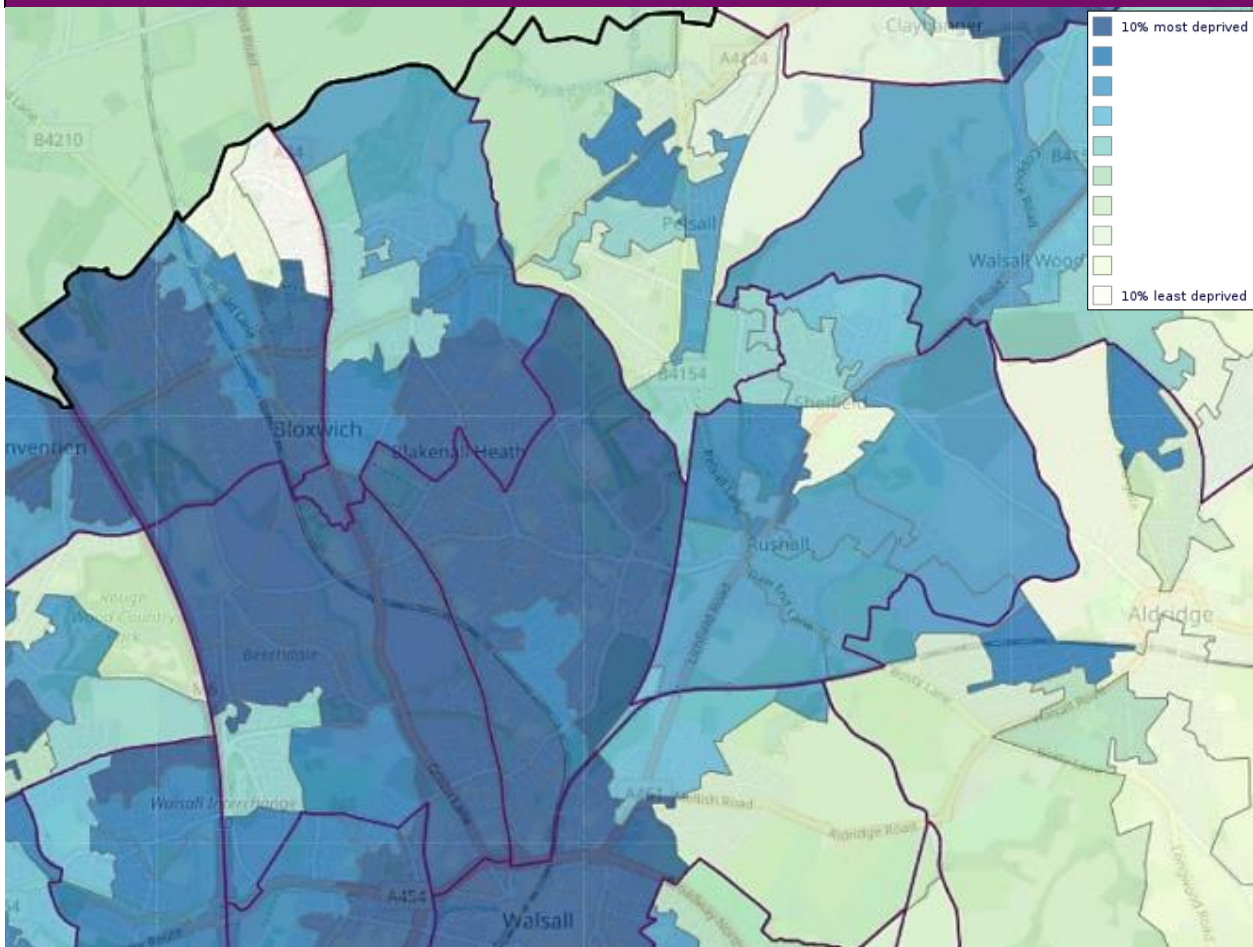


### Challenge 3: Deprivation, Skills and Social Mobility

Almost 80% of Bloxwich's neighbourhoods are among England's most deprived 20% of areas, and our town has very acute levels of income, employment, education / skills and health deprivation.

Acute deprivation is prevalent in communities across our town and whilst a holistic approach is required to tackling deprivation challenges, including an improved urban environment with more accessible improved greenspace, the core challenge is that many residents in low paid, low skilled jobs and we have high numbers of residents in unemployment or not engaging in the labour force.

#### Bloxwich - Deprivation Results (2019)



We have a significant challenge to raise aspirations and improve social mobility locally and to some extent, the success of nearby Walsall also has a key role in this. What is clear however is that low levels of skills and car ownership in many of our most deprived communities makes access to employment opportunities challenging. For illustration, at the time of the last census 38% of our households had no access to a car/van, compared to 26% nationally and this position is likely to have not significantly changed. We must therefore improve access to employment opportunities in our town and beyond, including via active travel modes.

As important is ensuring that residents have ready access to local employment opportunities which are now typically promoted on online platforms. Whilst broadband coverage in the town is reasonably good, many communities in Bloxwich simply cannot afford home broadband or are unskilled in digital technologies.

Upskilling and improving access to employment are therefore both critical to improving social mobility locally and ensuring that businesses have ready access to skilled labour force, but long-standing town and borough-wide challenges remain.



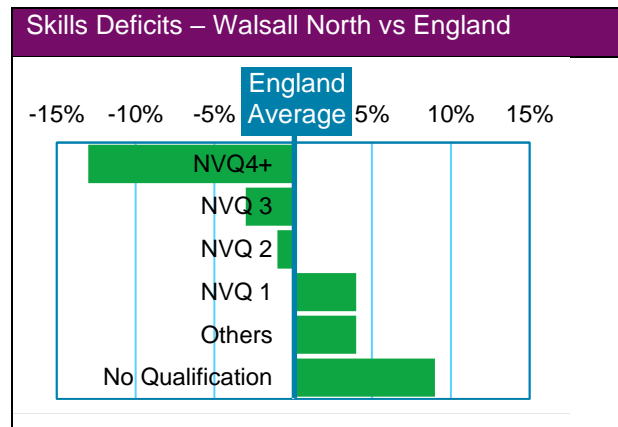
We have however made good progress in upskilling in recent years and have narrowed gaps in skills and attainment on wider averages, largely through the efforts of our skills providers, including Bloxwich Academy, Walsall Academy, Castle Business and Enterprise College and the nearby Willenhall E-ACT Academy.

Nevertheless, we still have an almost 17 percentage point deficit on national averages higher levels skills (NVQ 2-4+) and 1 in 6 of residents have no formal qualifications.

Clearly achieving a demonstrable shift in our town's skills base takes time and we need to promote the potential benefits to individuals in our communities that could be gained from maximising their skills and talents by raising aspirations locally and providing clear pathways to employment for individuals.

Covid-19 has ultimately weakened our labour market and we must ensure our residents are well placed to help with and benefit from economic recovery. Clearly a multi-agency holistic approach is required to removing access to employment barriers, addressing poverty and improving outcomes among hard to reach communities. Town partners at all levels continue to progress various initiatives to improve the lives of our residents.

*When surveyed on what was holding their community back, local respondents were most likely to cite a lack of jobs, education and training in the area.*



#### Challenge 4: Boosting Reputation, Instilling Civic Pride and Economic Resilience

The polycentric nature of the borough and wider Black Country area has meant that we are a town that has for many years been largely overlooked.

We want to be known as a centre that offers excellent living, leisure and employment opportunities, but we have a longstanding place-shaping challenge to put Bloxwich on the map.

We need to forge a new identify for the town, instil renewed civic pride, build community cohesion and promote the town as a destination of choice widely. To this end, we will place our community at the very heart of town development and improve our towns offer to raise its profile regionally.

Everyone benefits from well-designed buildings, spaces and places. A quality built environment instils civic pride, improves our quality of life and brings enormous societal value, as well as contributing to economic success.

Whilst our town centre offers a reasonably unique 'village' feel, the legacy of inter and post-war expansion has today left an abundance of somewhat bland estate-style housing across the town, with parts of the town also being marked by aged detractor residential and commercial premises and areas of tired realm. Our offer for employment and leisure is also somewhat lacking.

We want Bloxwich to be known as more than a Black Country commuter town and in light of this we will continue to progress a series of place-shaping initiatives designed to re-position the towns identity widely, including through urban renewal and the improved 'look and feel' of the town. This will not only raise living standards and build upon our offer for recreation, but it will also bring renewed civic pride and confidence in Bloxwich.

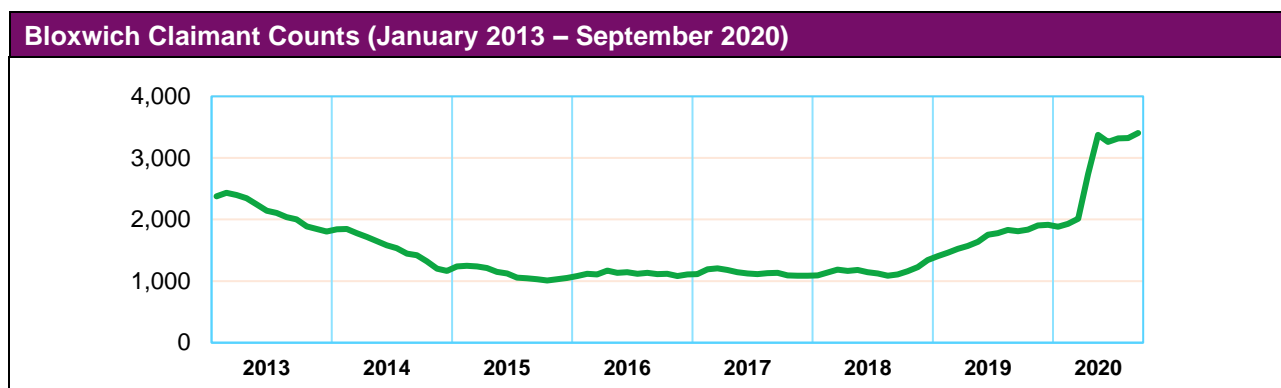
*When surveyed on what would make the biggest difference to their community, Bloxwich residents were particularly likely to cite a more diverse and welcoming town centre, improved green spaces, and outdoor activities.*

## 2.5 The Immediate COVID-19 Challenge

As of September 2020, The WMCA area saw the highest proportion of eligible residents furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and 14,700 of Walsall North Parliamentary Areas residents had been furloughed.

Furloughed Jobs, August 2020		
	Total	% of Eligible
Walsall North	14,700	36%
WMCA	866,700	34%
England	8,067,700	32%

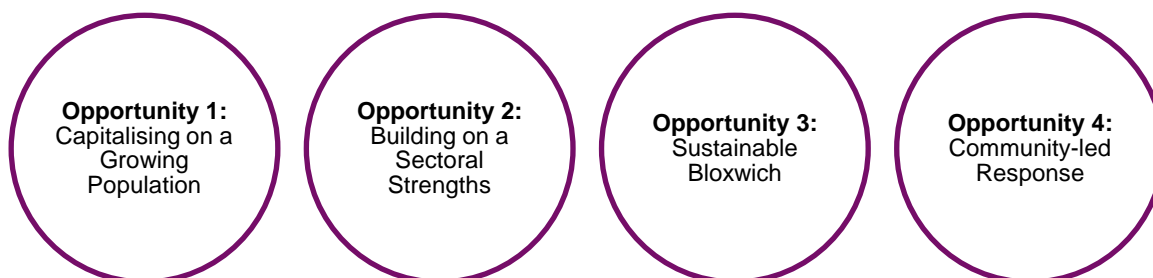
Whilst furlough and self-employment support has offered protection against redundancies, as the two schemes taper off and as we enter Lockdown 2.0, there is a pressing unemployment concern and we are already seeing worryingly sharp increases in town claimants (as a proxy for unemployment). During September 2020, a record 3,500 town residents received welfare support, almost doubling in the space of a year.



We need to get the economy moving again, but lockdown measures have ultimately resulted in a dramatic fall in footfall across the town. Many businesses have temporarily closed and as we move into the next phase of lockdown measures the fear is that some may never recover. For a town that is already very short of job opportunities, the immediate challenge is to identify actions to meaningfully rejuvenate Bloxwich in ways which give businesses, residents, workers, students and visitors the confidence to spend time there safely, whilst also observing continued social distancing needs. Covid-19 has also impacted on town property markets, although the magnitude of impacts is presently less clear.

## 2.6 Town Opportunities

Whilst longer term and immediate town challenges are well understood, we see a number of opportunities to capitalise on our growing population and build on our existing sectoral strengths sustainably, as outlined below. We also see our Town Deal as a once in a generation opportunity to engage and empower our communities in the transformation of our town.



### Opportunity 1: Capitalising on a Growing Population

We are a town witnessing above average population growth, largely due to growth in younger residents and today 1 in 4 of our residents are aged under 16 compared to 1 in 5 nationally.

This provides a strong platform for raising a future workforce that can support businesses not only in our town but also across the Black Country and West Midlands, but we must ensure our town has an attractive offer to retain our emerging talent.

Alongside ensuring a varied and quality housing offer in the town, we need to extend our offer for recreation and leisure. To fully capitalise on our growing next generation, we also see significant opportunity for supporting the growth of new innovative business in our town, an innovation offer that is currently lacking.

In capitalising on a growing population, there is also renewed opportunity for town vibrancy, footfall and spending, which will also support retail and hospitality success, particularly in our town centre, and in having a strong future workforce offer, we will improve investor appeal, not only in Bloxwich, but also in Walsall and beyond. This will in turn help to catalyse future Black Country investment.

Full integration and improved accessibility to the wider Walsall offer, including its sought TIP investments in improved skills infrastructure, innovative technologies and an extended arts and recreation offer, will also complement Bloxwich's ambition and opportunity to retain younger residents.



## Opportunity 2: Building on Sectoral Strengths

Although our role as a Black Country labour supplier has meant that we have a smaller business community than would typically be expected for a town of our size, we nevertheless have a 1,250 strong business community that provide 14,240 FTE jobs in the town.

We have existing sectoral strengths in finance, health, education and wholesale and retail and in recent years we have seen above national average promising growth in financial, insurance and business service activities, alongside significant growth in education and health services, collectively supporting 1,400 new town FTE jobs since 2015.

We are a town committed to backing winners and we must continue to support activities that ensure the town retains a well-balanced economy, not least to ensure available career opportunities for our residents.

This will include the provision on new employment space within the town, but we have limited land opportunities for new commercial development. We do however have opportunities for repurposing various redundant premises at our town core to deliver new commercial (and residential) development.

Identified town centre development sites include:

- BX6I: The Market Centre: Retail opportunity



- BX6II: South East of High Street: Large storeelopment opportunity
- BX6III: Queens Parade / Wolverhampton Road: Retail, office, service and residential opportunities
- BX6IV: Elmore Green Road / Station Street: Business, leisure, community or residential opportunities
- BX6V: Park Road (North): Residential, business or leisure opportunities
- BX6VI: Park Road (South): Retail, office, service and residential opportunities
- BX6VII: High Street/Reeves Street/Somerfield Road/Stokes Street: Residential, business, leisure or community opportunities

These opportunities are already being supported through local planning and looking forward where needed we will identify mechanisms to accelerate the delivery of business and employment growth in our town.

### Growing Town Sectors (FTE Jobs, 2015+)

Health (+525 FTEs)	Finance and Insurance (+500 FTEs)	Business Admin (+250 FTEs)
		Education (+120 FTEs)

### Opportunity 3: Sustainable Bloxwich

Our town has a leading role in Black Country labour supply and this role will continue well into the future. What is clear however is that we must ensure that our town grows more sustainably and at the time of the last Census (2011), 84% of our residents commuted by motor vehicles on the road network. There are various opportunities for encouraging more active travel not only within Bloxwich but also to and from the town of Walsall, for which we have a highly interconnected labour market.

Moreover, there are inherent opportunities for creating a more sustainable town not only through active travel connectivity improvements between residential and commercial areas (current and emerging) locally, but also through increased options for more flexible remote and home-working, with options accelerated this year through Covid-19 lockdown measures.

The renovation and repurposing of existing redundant business premises within the town alongside the delivery of brownfield regeneration also offers opportunity for carbon zero employment capacity growth in the town and through the delivery of modern more energy efficient housing, we also see opportunity for achieving a more sustainable housing product in Bloxwich.

Ultimately, we aspire to create a greener town, building on our 'village' feel and other town assets to create a real sense of place and community, with improved environmental outcomes.

### Opportunity 4: Community-led Response

The Town Deal represents a once in a generation opportunity for engaging Bloxwich's residents in community-led development activities.

Our residents and businesses are rightly keen to support our towns success, and this is best reflected in the already active business and community organisations in our town, which include the Bloxwich Business Partnership CIC, Bloxwich Community Partnership, Manor Farm Community Association, and various borough-wide business, voluntary sector and charitable organisations such as One Walsall. First Base Walsall and the Black Country Chamber of Commerce.

Community groups already support local enterprise, skills training and regeneration initiatives in Bloxwich and the opportunity to utilise TIP investment in empowering our communities to engage in active town change sits at the heart of our vision. This will extend a longstanding tradition of embedded local action.

The Community Capital Programme provides the resources required to create trusted local venues, through which up to date and (Covid-19) safe skills training and employment support will be delivered. The next stage of this process, will through the business plan, allow us to set out how local communities will take up these exciting opportunities.

# 3

## The Bloxwich Strategy





## 3 The Bloxwich Strategy

### 3.1 Town Vision and Intended Outcomes

Bloxwich will build on its reputation as a thriving Black Country market town at the heart of the country, with exceptional transport links and strong community values.

Amid an eclectic but integrated mix of Walsall and West Midlands centres, we will **forge a new identity** for our town, developing a **true sense of place** that builds on our 'village feel' advantage and our strong built heritage, leafy park and canal assets.

We will capitalise on the competitive advantage of exceptional connectivity to further our role as a **key supplier of Black Country jobs** by radically **refreshing our living offer**. Bloxwich will be the destination of choice for **upwardly mobile** and **increasingly enterprising residents**.

Supported by a growing population and a **home-grown business community**, our town will not only offer easy access to jobs elsewhere, but we will extend our offer as a location to do business, thereby **raising our towns productivity** and **supporting sustainable growth**.

**Active travel to accessible job opportunities** will be commonplace and our increasingly **innovative business community** will efficiently contribute to our ambition for a **more sustainable greener town**.

By 2030, our town will be known for its **quality housing, employment and recreation offer** and for its **aspirational, happy, prosperous and healthy residents**.

Our community will be at the heart of renewed town identity and **increasingly engaged, upwardly aspirational and active communities** will proudly call Bloxwich home.

### 3.2 Spatial Strategy

The full Spatial Strategy for Bloxwich can be found in **Appendix A**. This is summarised below.

The Spatial Strategy envisions four interconnected priorities for a safe, accessible and prosperous Bloxwich:

- **Growing:** Regeneration through development, revitalising the high street and making the most of built assets
- **Community:** Community development, skills, partnerships, and community services
- **Connecting:** Better accessibility for active travel, road, rail, and bus services.
- **Place-making:** Public realm, high quality design, urban greening, and local distinctiveness.

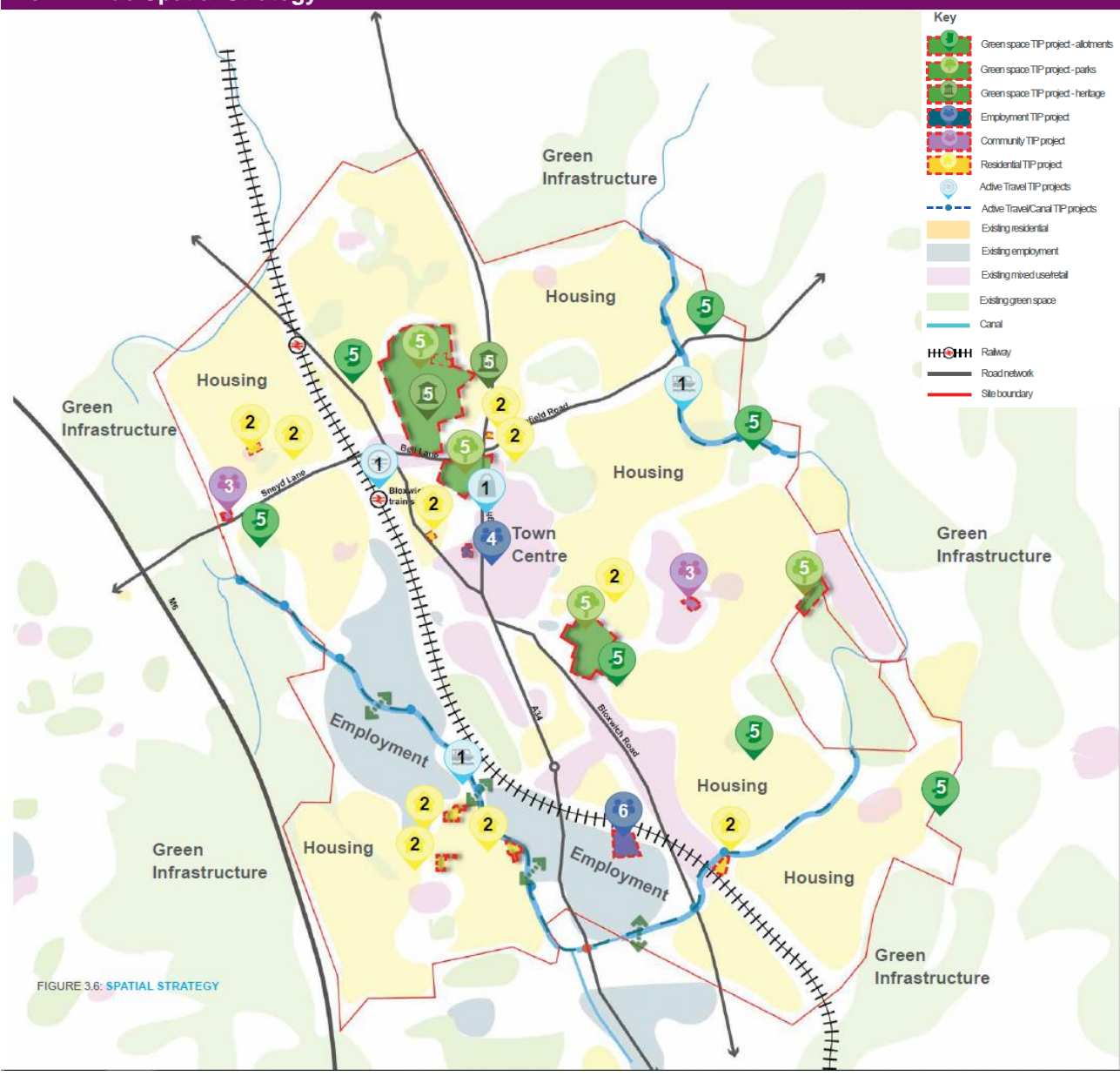
**Growing Bloxwich** builds on the vision of the Black Country Core Strategy (part of the Local Development Plan for Bloxwich and the rest of Walsall), which places Bloxwich within an employment based regeneration corridor. Bloxwich and the rest of these corridors will help to grow the local economy and sustainable communities with good local services and accessibility.

**Community** seeks to build on the desire to upskill local communities, fully utilising the local network of community services and partnerships to help support local people. This reflects one of the key themes of the stakeholder engagement summarised in Section 5, where local residents and businesses wanted to see better skills and training for local people in order to help them better access the labour market.

**Connecting Bloxwich** seeks to build on Bloxwich's existing assets such as its canal and cycling networks to deliver a more comprehensive network of sustainable travel options for getting to key locations such as the high street and Bloxwich's two railway stations. This reflects both local planning policy and priorities that have emerged through stakeholder engagement.

**Place-making** recognises Bloxwich's existing green infrastructure and public realm assets and seeks to direct investment to improve these spaces to make them safer, more accessible and more welcoming for the entire community. Stakeholder engagement found that improving green spaces, investing in local heritage, and refurbishing disused buildings were all key priorities for the local community.

# Town Wide Spatial Strategy



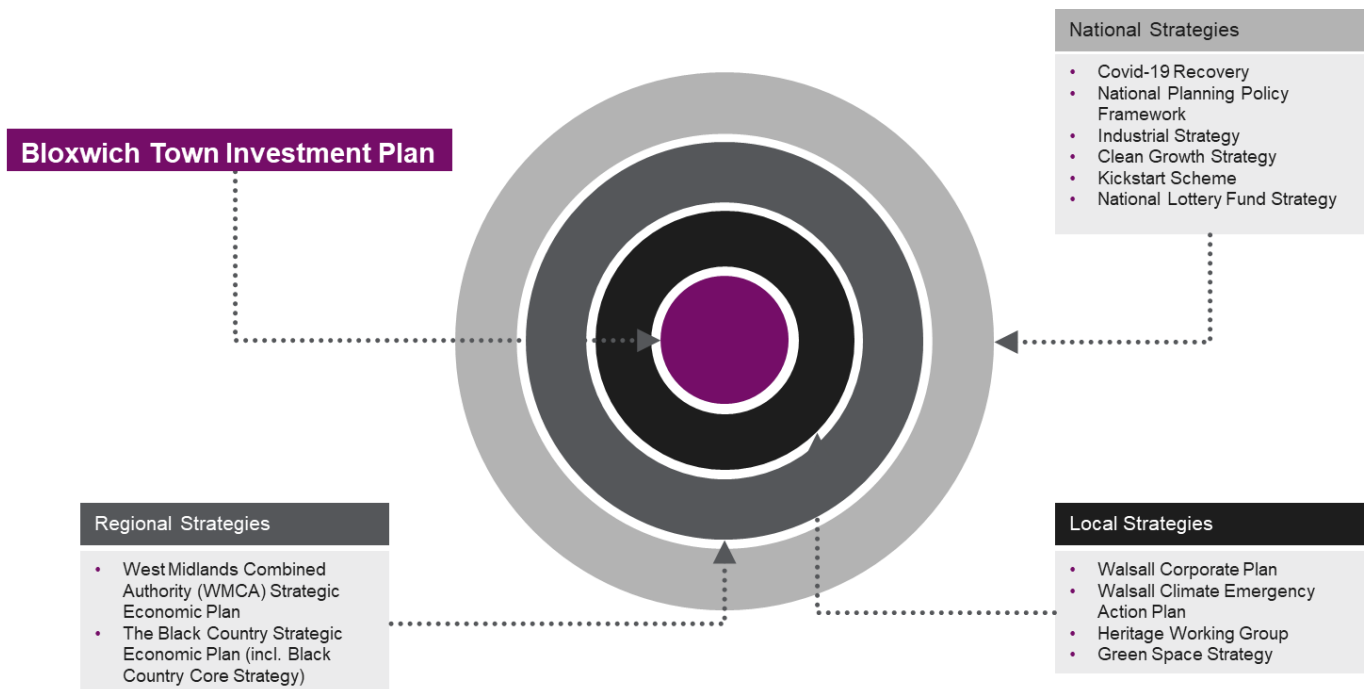
### 3.3 TIP Objectives

Our TIP objectives will further contribute to the success of our vision for Bloxwich:

- **Objective 1:** Sustain population growth to ensure our town continues to supply the workforce for the future, locally, for the Black Country and West Midlands, including contributing to the success of Walsall town and its TIP and Future High Street Fund investments.
- **Objective 2:** Deliver additional new and upgraded quality housing and public greenspace to radically refresh and extend the towns offer for living and recreation
- **Objective 3:** Ensure Bloxwich is the ideal platform for entrepreneurial and enterprising start-up business success and growth, to help address the productivity gap
- **Objective 4:** Improve town amenity, connectivity and navigability to encourage active travel, with targeted interventions to encourage new options for accessing employment among hard to reach communities, thus ensuring inclusive growth
- **Objective 5:** Promote green, sustainable and clean growth, ensuring that TIP projects embed localism and are within environmental limits
- **Objective 6:** Ensure active communities are engaged and placed at the very heart of Bloxwich's success, instilling improved well-being, civic pride and aspirational, happy, prosperous and healthy residents

### 3.4 Alignment with Existing Strategies

The TIP projects will maximise their impacts and contribute to the local, regional and national policies and plans which will allow the town to build on its strategic vision and plans.





### 3.4.1 National Strategies

**Covid-19 Recovery** aims to return to life as close to normal as possible, for as many people across the UK as possible, as fast and fairly as possible; in a way that avoids a new epidemic, minimises lives lost and maximises health, economic and social outcomes.

The projects will align with the government's planning policies as set out by the **National Planning Policy Framework** and with a high level policy support shown in **Appendix I**.

**UK's Industrial Strategy** is focussed on boosting productivity by backing businesses to create good jobs and increase the earning power of people throughout the UK with investment in skills, industries and infrastructure. The strategy includes Sector Deals which reflect partnerships between government and industry on sector-specific issues can create significant opportunities to boost productivity, employment, innovation and skills. The Sector Deals that are relevant are the Construction Sector Deal.

**Clean Growth Strategy:** UK's 2050 net zero target — one of the most ambitious in the world — was recommended by the Committee on Climate Change, the UK's. The Clean Growth Strategy aims to achieve clean growth, while ensuring an affordable energy supply for businesses and consumers, is at the heart of the UK's Industrial Strategy. The Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking and DfT (2020) Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy complement this strategy.

**Kickstart Scheme** provides funding to create new job placements for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment. This includes further funding for learning and young people on the scheme to be 'job ready'.

**National Lottery Fund Strategy 2018 – 2021** vision is and role is to be inspiring, leading and resourcing the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future.

### 3.4.2 Regional Strategies

**WMCA's Strategy** consists of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and is aligned to the Industrial Strategy. The SEP sets out our vision for improving the quality of life for everyone in the West Midlands. The plan shows devolved powers and resources will be used to deliver a stronger West Midlands with a focus on skills, innovation, transport and inward investment. The strategy eight key priority areas: Transport, Public Service Reform, Productivity and Skills, Housing and Regeneration, Economy, and Thrive at Work.

**The Black Country Strategic Economic Plan** focusses on growing its global supply chain with the world class skills it demands, to maximise the benefits of the location, to exploit our industrial and geological heritage and to provide high quality housing to meet the needs of a balanced growing population. Part of the Plan includes the Black Country Growth Deal which aims to drive business growth, give people new skills, test new innovations, invest in transport infrastructure and regenerate key sites for housing and employment in the Black Country. The focus is on maximising the economic impact of growth opportunities from the automotive, aerospace and construction sectors, capitalising on the Black Country's key strengths in advanced manufacturing.

#### **Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS)**

The Black Country Core Strategy is a planning and regeneration plan for the whole of the Black Country, signed up to by the four Black Country Councils (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton).

The Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) sets out the vision, objectives and strategy for future development in the Black Country up to 2026 and beyond. It forms the basis of Walsall's Local Development Framework and will guide future development decisions throughout the Black Country. Although the Core Strategy does not generally mention specific sites, it covers issues including:

- the protection and improvement of the natural and built environment
- where jobs should be located
- the location and size of new shopping, leisure and cultural facilities
- the location and type of future housing developments
- how people can move around the Black Country

- how to address the needs of the Black Country's diverse communities.

### 3.4.3 Local Strategies

**Walsall Corporate Plan** vision states: "Inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised." Our focus priorities are Economic Growth, People, Internal Focus, Children and Communities.

#### **Walsall Climate Emergency Action Plan**

Walsall Council declared a climate change emergency on 16th September 2019 and committed to becoming a net zero carbon authority by 2050. The Council's Transport in Walsall Strategy 2017-22 supports the promotion of Low Emission Zones and Ultra Low Emission Vehicles in accordance with the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan. The Council is taking a lead role in the development of the Black Country's ULEV Strategy and Action Plan, which sets out a series of recommendations for Black Country Councils in order to prepare for the anticipated 2035 Government ban on the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles.

The key targets are to develop public transport initiatives which enable a rapid shift towards active and sustainable travel modes.

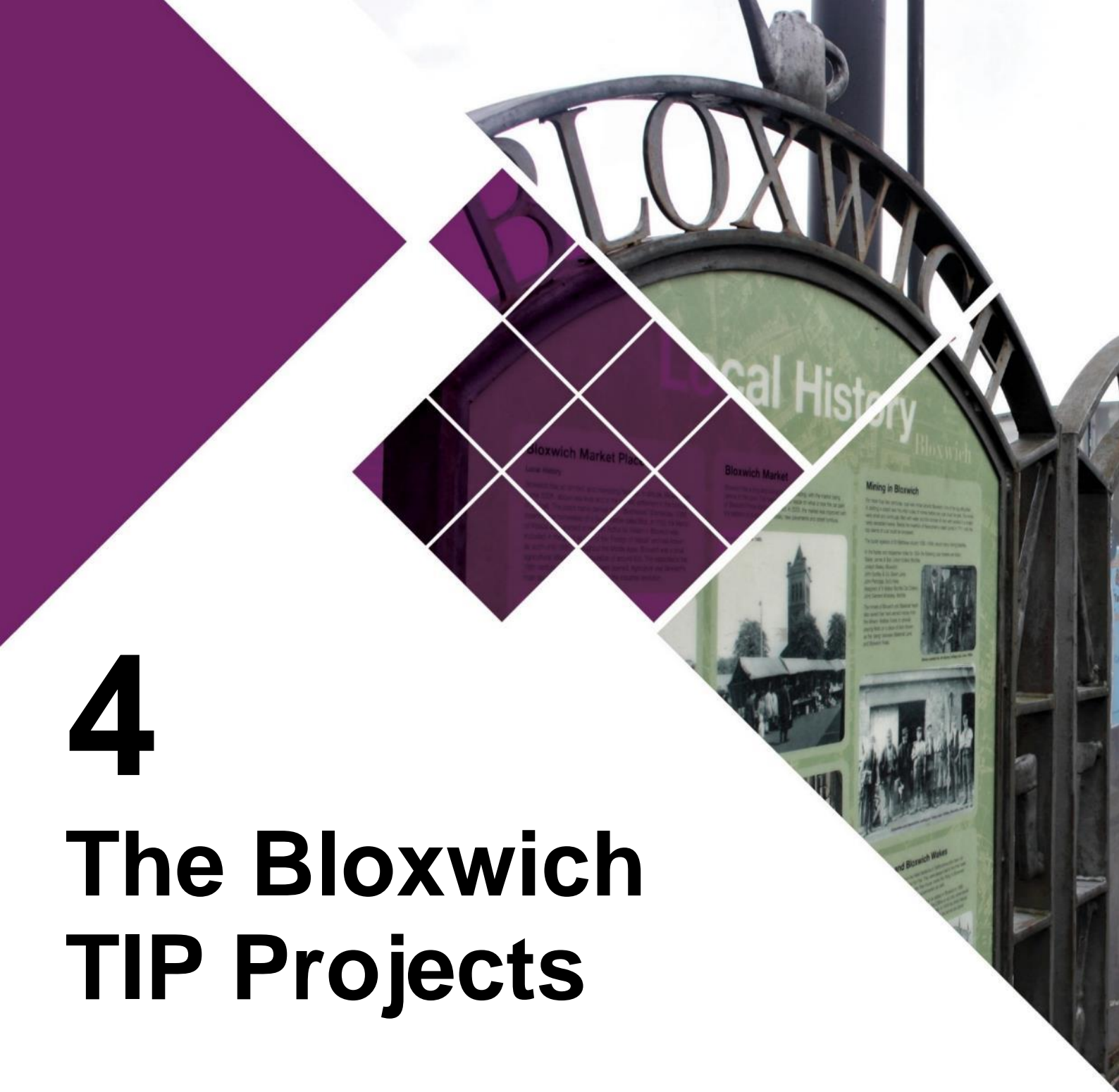
**The Walsall Council Heritage Working Group** exists to support the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Capacity Programme, which aims to rebuild capacity and resilience within the Council and community, creating a vibrant heritage sector with opportunities to tackle inequalities in health & wellbeing, and improve environmental and economic indicators.

#### **Walsall Green Space Strategy**

The longer term aims of this strategy are to manage, maintain and develop green spaces objectives are:

- To develop an economically viable Parks & Green Space Service
- To provide opportunities for people and communities to actively participate in green spaces
- To develop and strengthen existing partnerships to bring added value to green spaces
- To conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity across green spaces
- To realise the potential that green spaces can play in addressing health inequalities
- To ensure green spaces play their part in the economic growth of the borough
- To provide safe, accessible, clean and well-maintained green spaces and facilities.

The strategy addresses some of Public Health England's 2020 review: 'Improving access to greenspace.'



# 4

# The Bloxwich TIP Projects

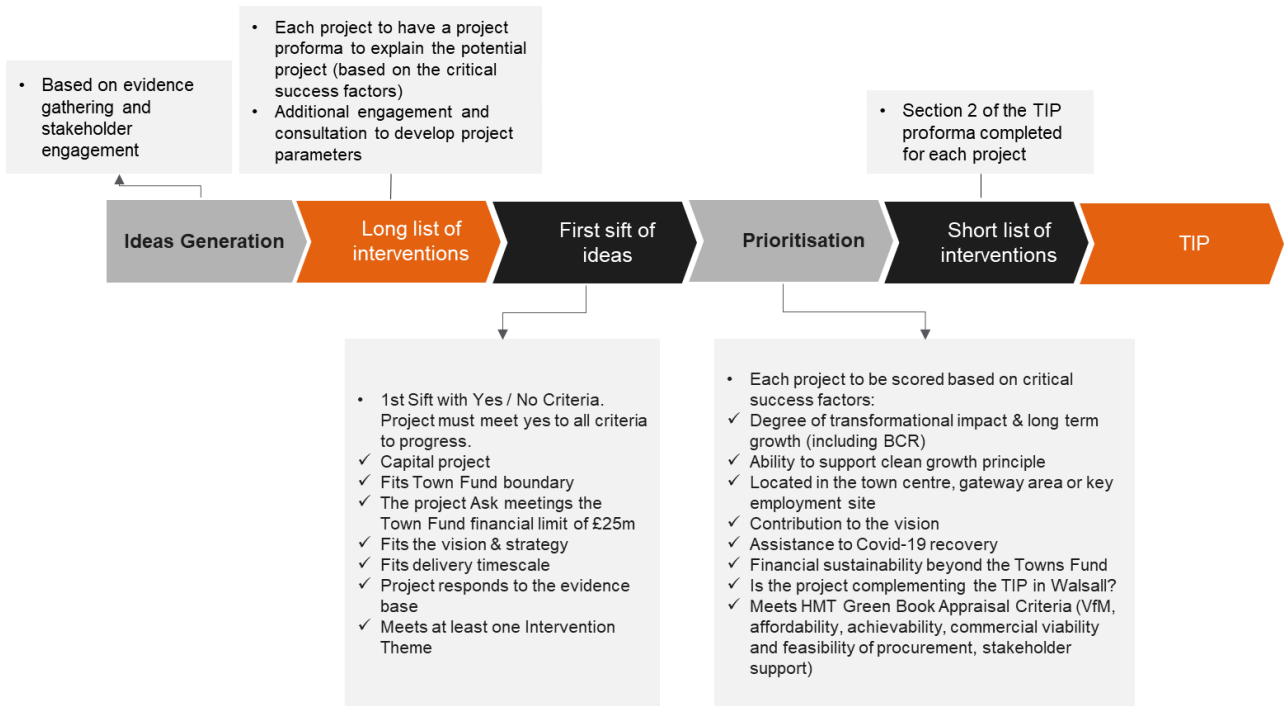
# 4 The Bloxwich TIP Projects

## 4.1 Project Development

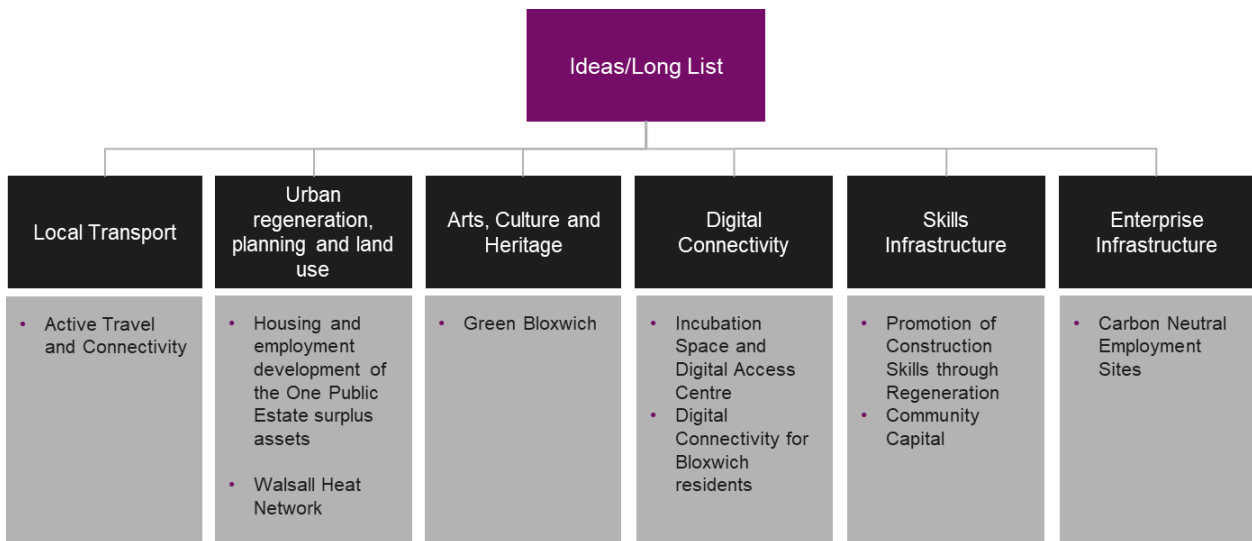
The ideas generation and long list of projects were developed with stakeholders, the Advisory Board, Town Board and project partners. The Advisory Board was tasked to enable the project development process and recommend their views to the Town Board, ensuring alignment with the Town Fund Guidance.

A sifting and prioritisation criteria was developed in line with the Town Fund Guidance and Town Fund Delivery Partner’s Project Prioritisation Tool which was approved by the Town Board. The long list were put through a first stage of sifting which was a pass/fail process. Following this, they entered a second stage of scoring and ranking in line with the town specific criteria and HMT Green Book appraisal criteria.

The detailed process is mapped in the flowchart below.



The ideas generation informed the long list of nine interventions which are listed thematically below.





## 4.2 Accelerated Stronger Town Fund Interventions

1. **Sustainable Transport Interventions:** Bloxwich-wide plan developed for interventions which can be delivered in a phased way to transform access to jobs and training, provides clear target for future investment and early outputs to influence Town Fund submission. With a focus on high unemployment and low skills areas.
2. **Bloxwich Town Area Environmental Improvements:** Physical improvements to promote a feeling of well being and safety, promoting footfall that connects people to jobs, training and businesses.
3. **Improved Community Safety:** Improvements to CCTV in shopping areas Bloxwich Town and local community shopping and Business Park areas. To support a feeling of wellbeing and community safety within and around key economic centres. To encourage trade, investment and footfall.
4. **Park & Green Spaces Improvements:** Schedule of interventions in parks and green spaces across Bloxwich to improve quality of spaces and enhanced sports facilities, to promote health and wellbeing for residents and the workforce.
5. **Improving Transport access Across Bloxwich:** Improved traffic flow in Bloxwich, including journey time, traffic flow rates and energy efficiency improvements to traffic lights to improve the experience for visitors to the Town Centre, for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.

## 4.3 Proposed TIP Long-Term Projects

Following the prioritisation process, five projects, as listed below, were identified. The total capital ask stands at £25,000,000. The projects have not attracted capital co-funding investment at this stage. Some projects have confirmed revenue co-funding only at this stage and further co-funding will be explored again at Business Case stage.

RANK	PROJECTS	Capital Ask (£)	Co-funding (£)	Total cost (£)
1	Active Travel and Connectivity	3,731,700	Revenue	3,731,700
2	Promotion of Construction Skills Through Regeneration	10,946,000	To be determined at Business Case stage	10,946,000
3	Community Capital	2,575,000	To be determined at Business Case stage	2,575,000
4	Incubation Space and Digital Access Centre	3,090,000	Revenue	3,090,000
5	Green Bloxwich	4,657,300	Revenue	4,657,300

**Project 1. Active Travel and Connectivity:** Physical interventions which create active connections - including cycling and walking - between Bloxwich high street, Walsall town centre and local employment sites. This will involve a range of interventions to the road and canal infrastructure which improve the pedestrian experience and safety through improved footways, lighting, CCTV, signage following Secured by Design and accessibility principles. The extent of the works will cover the station to the town centre, high street and canal towpaths. The project will attract co-funding from the Canal and River trust enhancing the benefits to the residents of the wider Walsall Borough.



*Respondents to the Government's #MyTown survey wanted to see better links to Bloxwich Station and a pedestrianised high street at weekends.*

## **Project 2. Promotion of Construction Skills Through Regeneration:**

Promoting long term local employment and construction skills training for Bloxwich residents through a fund that will deliver neighbourhood renewal. The fund will seek applications from local housing associations and developers to financially support the remediation of existing derelict brownfield sites, and the environmental upgrading of existing dwellings. To access the fund applicants will be asked to make commitments to providing local jobs for local people, the use of local supply chains and the delivery construction skills and training for local people by developers. Outcomes will include; improved quality of neighbourhood, reduced carbon emissions and costs, together with people trained and employed. Through this fund strong partnerships with new and existing skills centres/social enterprise projects will be built, including the new construction skills centres as part of the Walsall TIP proposals. Enabling local people to upskill and secure sustainable employment which ultimately promotes improved health and wellbeing across the communities.



*Stakeholder interviews with local businesses found that low skills are often a barrier to employing more local people. This project will help to upskill local people.*

**Project 3. Community Capital:** Grants programme, seeks submissions for funding from local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and social enterprise organisations. All supported activities must be linked to supporting the economic development of local people or companies and meet town deal capital rules criteria. Examples include; the provision or improvement of learning venues that provide skills and employment support for local people, that drive economic growth.



*Stakeholder engagement with local residents and businesses found that respondents wanted to improve perceptions of their town by fostering a sense of community and improving connections between residents and local businesses.*

## **Project 4. Incubation Space and Digital Access**

**Centre:** This project will provide an incubation hub in Bloxwich High Street which can be accessed by a range of partners. The facility will provide incubation space for local start-ups and small businesses and allow access to digital connectivity for local residents who do not have home access to broadband. The facility will also include the provision of co-working rented spaces which allows the businesses to collaborate and provides an income stream for the facility.



This project will help promote and support local SME business as well as providing residents with opportunity to improve digital skills allowing them access to digital services, improved employability/business skills. The location will also drive an increase in footfall in the town centre.

The partnership and delivery model will be worked up with OneWalsall, Walsall College and a University partner.

*Stakeholder interviews with local businesses found that ensuring local people had the right skills was important for being able to recruit, expand and grow the local economy.*



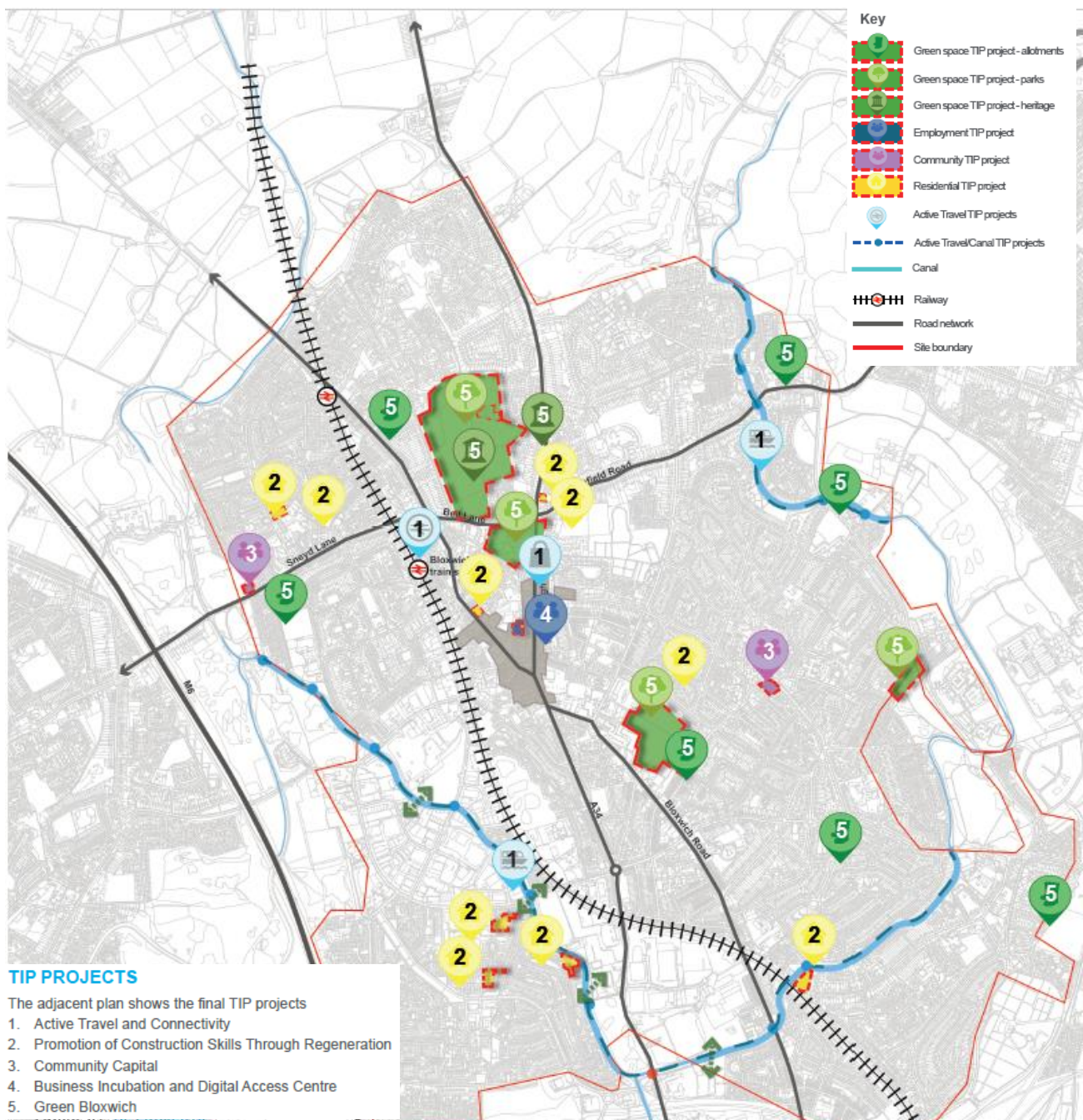
**Project 5. Green Bloxwich:** Creating multi-use spaces which will incorporate new parks, sports arenas, allotment spaces for growing food and zones to attract and encourage wildlife. The spaces will include a social events and public space for festivals and presentations and events. It will provide children, young people and adults a space to dwell and socialise providing positive social and health benefits and assist in providing the residents with local access to the outdoors which supports with Covid-19 resilience. This project also includes the refurbishment of heritage buildings in King George's V Park to bring them into economic use such as the conversion to community café and skills training facility. As the project develops it will focus on designing out crime and anti social behaviour to create a space which attracts positive use.



*Stakeholder engagement with local residents and businesses found that respondents from Bloxwich often raised improved green spaces and outdoor activities as a key issue that would make the biggest difference to their community.*

### TIP Projects Location Map

The project site boundaries and precedent visuals are in Section 4 of **Appendix A** – the Town Investment Plan Design Report.



## 4.4 Project Alignment

As a check, each of the priority projects have been cross-checked back against the Challenges, Opportunities and TIP Objectives set. This analysis is presented below identifying where each of the following prioritised projects is likely to have a direct or complementary impact:

**Project 1:** Active Travel and Connectivity

**Project 2:** Promotion of Construction Skills Through Regeneration

**Project 3:** Community Capital

**Project 4:** Incubation Space and Digital Access Centre

**Project 5:** Green Bloxwich

Bloxwich TIP Project Alignment					
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
<b>Challenges</b>					
Living Standards and Urban Renewal	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓✓
Productivity and Business Innovation	✓		✓✓	✓✓	✓
Deprivation, Skills and Social Mobility	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Reputation and Civic Pride	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Covid-19 Response	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
<b>Opportunities</b>					
Growing Population	✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓
Sector Strengths	✓			✓✓	
Community-led Development		✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Sustainable Town	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
<b>Objectives</b>					
Labour Supply	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	
Urban Renewal and Green Infrastructure	✓✓	✓✓			✓✓
Business and Start-up Success			✓✓	✓✓	
Amenity, Connectivity and Active Travel	✓✓				✓✓
Sustainable Clean Growth	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓
Active Engaged Communities	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓

✓✓ = Direct

✓ = Complementary





# 5

# Engagement

## 5 Engagement

### 5.1 Town Deal Board

The combined Walsall and Bloxwich Town Deal Board has and will continue to deliver the roles and responsibilities set by government for both towns, supported in their work by the Bloxwich and Walsall Advisory Boards.

The Town Deal Board brings together key representatives, with a full list of Town Deal Board members included in **Appendix C**. The organisations represented include:

- Private Sector businesses / major local employers; Jhoots Pharmacy, Homeserve, ZF Lemforder and the West Mids Co-op.
- Public Sector representation including; Walsall Council, West Midlands Combined Authority, Member of Parliament.
- Local Community, Voluntary Sector Representatives and Advisory Boards
- Anchor Institutions including Walsall College and the University of Wolverhampton
- Groups and Partnerships including Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

Their work is complemented by the Bloxwich and Walsall Advisory Boards, which add significant value through their membership, with both group chairs holding a seat on the Town Deal Board itself.

### 5.2 Stakeholder Engagement to date

Community and stakeholder engagement that has been undertaken to date is summarised below. This includes an extensive **online survey**, several **focus groups** and **individual interviews** with key stakeholders as well as the Government's **#MyTown page**. The feedback from this engagement has been used to inform the selection and prioritisation of projects for this TIP. There were partial limitations to the engagement undertaken, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, social distancing and lockdown measures.

#### 5.2.1 Online survey

An online survey was created to allow local people to identify opportunities under the Town's Fund intervention themes where their town could be strengthened to address growth constraints and help drive the Covid-19 recovery. The impact of the pandemic led to a greater focus on online engagement including contacting numerous key local stakeholders directly, as outlined below.

The survey can be found in **Appendix D**. The survey was carried out covering the Town Investment Plans for both Bloxwich and Walsall.

To help drive engagement, a press release about the survey was published by Walsall Council and several local media outlets. It was shared by stakeholders including local MP Eddie Hughes and Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust and on several local Facebook pages. Written versions of the survey were carried out with local pupils at Blue Coat Church of England Academy. The survey was also shared directly with numerous key local stakeholders.

This included:

- Education and training institutions
- Health institutions
- Local councillors
- Key local businesses
- Key leisure, arts and culture stakeholders
- Key local housing providers
- Key regional stakeholders

In total, 367 responses were received. These responses are summarised in **Appendix E**. A sample of the feedback provided is shown below:

- Q: Which of the following do you think is holding your community back?

1. Lack of jobs (37.5%)
2. Other (27.7%)
3. Lack of education and training opportunities (23.4%)
4. Poor public transport (6.8%)
5. Poor digital connectivity (4.6%)

- Most common 'other' reasons identified:

1. Community safety (16)
  2. Overall lack of investment (11)
  3. Poor environment (10)
  4. Lack of pride in town centre (10)
- Lack of education and training opportunities (10)

Q: What type of town centre should we be trying to create?

A: A thriving centre that capitalises on the level of independent traders that already exists and mixes with providing opportunities for start-up businesses to take residence.

Q: Where should we be focusing growth and prioritising development opportunities?

A: Most definitely within the youth services. creating hubs for support, social and inclusion. Providing a provision for raising awareness to the wider opportunities within the borough. Stretching the ambition to extending day to day living beyond a 2-mile radius of where young people live.

## 5.2.2 Focus groups

In addition to the survey, focus groups were also organised jointly for Walsall and Bloxwich. This included:

- One focus group with six 'community champions'
- Two online focus groups with around 50 individuals from the voluntary sector

The outcomes of the focus groups are summarised in **Appendix F**. A sample of the feedback provided is shown below:

*"There are no community centres where people can meet and as a result there's lots of anti-social behaviour and people loitering around in the street. If there was a hub or new facilities where young people could go and get training or start on a programme that would have a massive impact. There's no youth service provision and it's left a big gap."*

## 5.2.3 Interviews

The following interviews have been carried out jointly for Walsall and Bloxwich:

- Senior Engagement Manager at the National Lottery Heritage Fund
- President and School Governor for Walsall College
- Six interviews with local businesses, approached through Walsall Economic Board

The outcomes of the interviews are summarised in **Appendix G**. A sample of the feedback provided is shown below:

*“Skills are a big issue for us. We’re looking to recruit people and they haven’t got the skills we need. If we’re going to grow our local economy, we have to focus more on getting young people skilled up and employable.”*

#### 5.2.4 #MyTown survey

At the onset of the Towns Fund programme, the Government created the #MyTown webpage where communities could share their thoughts on potential projects. This allowed for another form of direct engagement with local residents on their ideas and concerns.

To date, 13 responses have been received for Bloxwich. These are summarised in **Appendix AH**. A sample of the feedback provided is shown below.

*“More heritage shopfronts to enhance the two conservation areas that are at risk. They make a real difference to the character of the area where they have been installed.”*

### 5.3 Further Engagement

The established governance structure will be utilised to ensure the Town Deal Advisory Board can continue to offer advice and guidance to the Town Deal Board to support ongoing engagement with business, community and the general public throughout the lifetime of the Town Investment Plan and project delivery. Membership of the Advisory Board will be flexible to ensure key stakeholders for each element of the programme are able to engage effectively in relation to their expertise, such as clean growth or youth activity.

Project sponsors are members of the Town Board who have also taken delivery accountability on specific TIP projects. They will provide regular updates on progress to the Advisory and Town Board, to support the resolution of any potential issues and to ensure long-term understanding and buy-in for all activity.

Press and social media activity will deliver regular reporting on the Town Deal, highlighting ongoing development and progress for each project in the local area. The Town Deal website will be regularly updated with news and information and will provide a feedback facility for comments.





# 6

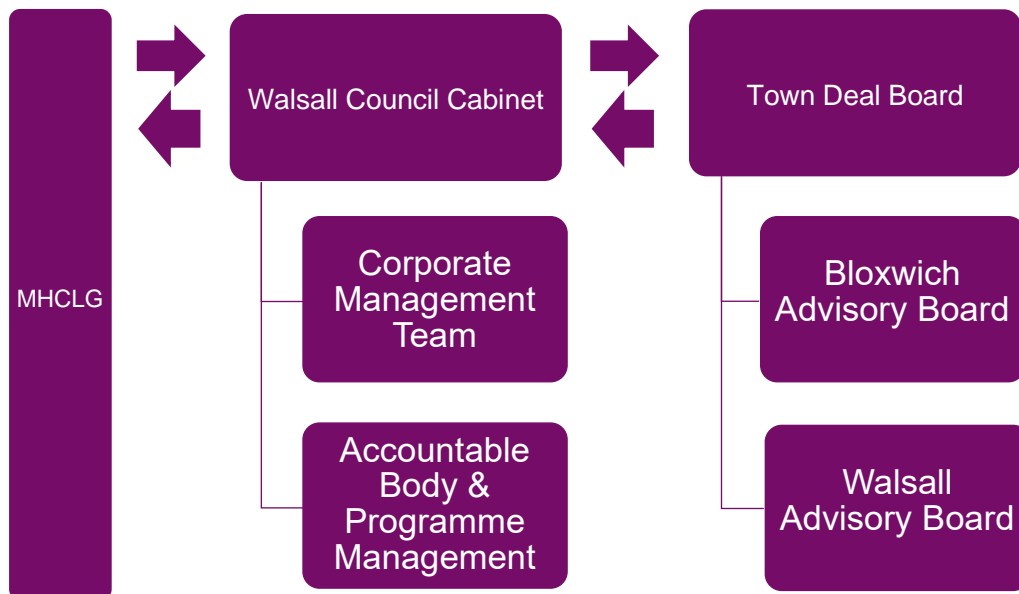
## Delivery Approach

## 6 Delivery Approach

### 6.1 Governance

Walsall Council together with local businesses, community groups, politicians, local government and key stakeholders have formed and constituted the Bloxwich & Walsall Town Deal Board. Chaired by the Chief Executive of the Jhoots Pharmacy Group, consisting of 20 members it holds responsibility for representing both Bloxwich and Walsall Town Deal areas. In delivering these roles, the Town Deal Board is guided by the Bloxwich and Walsall Advisory Boards, who provide the local knowledge and expertise to shape projects and programme recommendations to the Board. Walsall Council has accepted and will be delivering all roles and responsibilities associated with being the Accountable Body, Programme Managers and Secretariat for the programme.

The governance structures and accountable body arrangements have been approved by the Town Board on 6 October 2020.

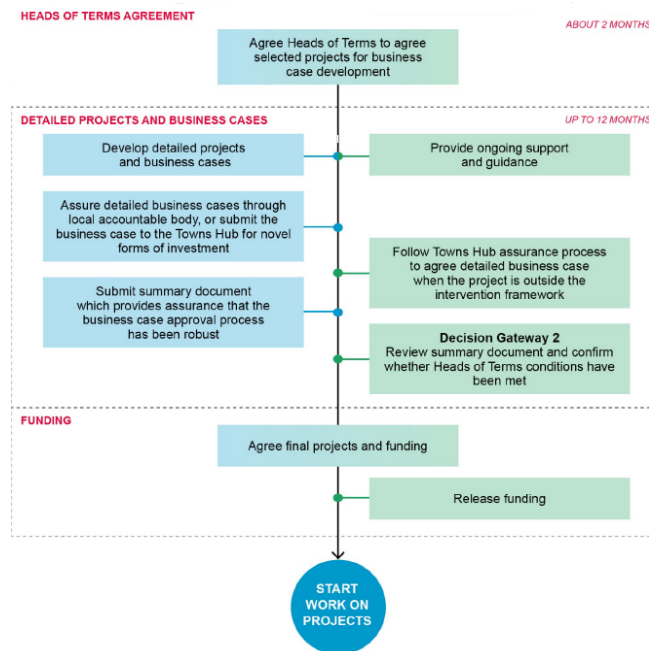


The roles of the accountable groups are outlined in the table below.

	Cabinet	Corporate Management Team (CMT)	Accountable Body – Walsall Council	Town Deal Board (TDB)	Bloxwich Advisory Board	Walsall Advisory Board
Role	Major Decisions and programme oversight and scrutiny through its committee structures.	Senior Operational Leadership & Management Overview of programme and Accountable Body roles.	Accountable Body and Programme Management & Secretariat functions.	To provide strategic guidance and direction and sign off / oversee each step of the Town Deal and its compliance.	Local advice, Input, challenge and representation for the Bloxwich Town Deal Area at the TDB	Local advice, Input, challenge and representation for the Walsall Town Deal Area at the TDB
Responsibility	Key decisions & programme oversight through Cabinet reports and delegated authority to officers and Portfolio Holders.	To provide oversight guidance and senior leadership.	Town Deal contract management and programme accountability.	Delivering roles & responsibilities in accordance with government guidance.	To provide local guidance, direction and input into project development and on-going programme delivery.	To provide local guidance, direction and input into project development and on-going programme delivery.
Accountability	Constituents	Cabinet	To CMT and Project Board	Individual organisations governance	Town Deal Board	Town Deal Board
Authority	Power to consider and make key decisions.	Operational responsibility and management oversight for all Council functions.	Appointed by cabinet to deliver Accountable Body roles & responsibilities.	Constituted by Walsall Councils Cabinet to discharge its duties.	Constituted by Walsall Councils Cabinet to discharge its duties.	Constituted by Walsall Councils Cabinet to discharge its duties.

## 6.2 Business Case Development and Appraisal

Once the Heads of Terms are agreed, the projects within the TIP will be developed into a Full Business Case, following HM Treasury’s Green Book Five Case and methodology and the WMBC, the accountable body’s compliant assurance processes. These will be delivered within 12 months of the Heads of Terms approval. Responsibility for preparing the business cases will be with WMBC and external support will be procured where applicable. The key processes and gateways which will be adhered are outlined in the timeline below.



All business cases will be reviewed using the defined local assurance process to ensure transparency of decision making and value for money:

1. Preparation of Outline Business Cases by the accountable body to demonstrate the suitability of the project, ensuring alignment with the TIP, illustrate its return of investment and establish its deliverability.
2. Preparation of the Full Business Case and appraisal by an independent party or external consultant to ensure Green Book compliance;
3. Review and sign-off of the Full Business Case by the Town Board and relevant groups from the council such as the S151 officer and cabinet;
4. Funding agreement, with appropriate conditions, put in place between WMBC, as the accountable body, and the project sponsors, which will include clear agreement such as a memorandum of understanding.

### 6.3 High level delivery plan

WMBC, over the last 10 years, delivered capital projects amounting to £425m in Walsall town alone. WMBC, supported by their appointed strategic advisor (external consultancy support), has established a robust governance structure to control all their capital projects. This structure feeds seamlessly into the Council’s corporate governance to align decision making processes and multi-level mandates. Similarly, the project sponsors are experienced and capable in delivering capital projects.

A programme management approach will be taken across all the projects with dedicated project leads, ensuring a consistent approach and learning across projects. A global programme reporting will be provided to the accountable body and Town Board on a regular basis providing assurances in terms of: project health, progress, viability, financial management and risks.

The Council has vast experience of managing project finances, payments, grant income and claims for multi-million-pound Government funded schemes and programmes; for example, the Growth Deal programme, and the Darlaston SDA and M6 Jct10 transport projects.



The current high level delivery overview with risks and interdependencies for the proposed projects are shown in the table below. The alignment to Policy Support is outlined in **Appendix I**.

Project	Sponsor	Partners	Land/site secured	Cost certainty	Planning approval	Delivery constraints	External Funding	Viability	
1	Active Travel and Connectivity	WMBC / Canal & River Trust	West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)	Works on WMBC land and Canal and River Trust assets.	Benchmark costs	Not anticipating any issues	Site abnormals, traffic management	Additional sources to be identified subject to final costs	No significant issues
2	Promotion of Construction Skills Through Regeneration	WMBC	RSLs, Private Sector, Public	Land/sites identified	Estimate	Not anticipating any issues.	Contamination and remediation, structural issues to existing buildings	Additional capital funding to be identified	No significant issues
3	Community Capital	WMBC	Voluntary Sector	Focus sites identified	Estimate	Not anticipating any issues	Not anticipating significant issues	Additional capital funding to be identified	No significant issues
4	Incubation Space and Digital Access Centre	OneWalsall	WMBC, Walsall College, whg, University	Land/sites identified, but landowner negotiations not commenced	Benchmark costs	Not anticipating any issues	Not anticipating significant issues	Additional capital funding to be identified	No significant issues
5	Green Bloxwich	WMBC	-	Sites identified	Benchmark costs	Not anticipating any issues	Not anticipating significant issues	Additional capital funding to be identified	No significant issues

## 6.4 Timescales and Funding Profile

Each project will have a detailed delivery programme that will allow monitoring of progress and the funding profile. The indicative delivery timescales for the TIP projects are identified below.

Bloxwich TIP Programme	FY 21/22			FY22/23			FY 23/24			FY 24/25			FY 25/26												
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
<b>Active Travel and Connectivity</b>																									
Feasibility																									
Business Case																									
Detailed design (RIBA Stage 2/3) and planning																									
Procurement																									
Construction																									
<b>Construction Skills Through Regeneration</b>																									
Set up capital fund governance																									
Feasibility																									
Business Case																									
Detailed design (RIBA Stage 2/3) and planning																									
Acquisitions																									
Procurement																									
Construction																									
<b>Community Capital</b>																									
Set up capital fund governance																									
Feasibility/Project Scoping																									
Business Case																									
Detailed design (RIBA Stage 2/3) and planning																									
Procurement																									
Construction																									
<b>Incubation Space and Digital Access Centre</b>																									
Feasibility																									
Business Case																									
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Procurement																									
Construction																									
<b>Green Bloxwich</b>																									
Feasibility																									
Business Case																									
Detailed design (RIBA Stage 2/3) and planning																									
Procurement																									
Construction																									

The summary of the funding profile which aligns with the above timescales is summarised below:

Total		20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	Total
	Financial profile for Towns Fund funding - In £million, insert number only	£0.00	£4.15	£8.02	£6.70	£4.35	£1.78	£25.00
	Financial profile for match/co-funding - In £million, insert number only	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>		<b>£0.00</b>	<b>£4.15</b>	<b>£8.02</b>	<b>£6.70</b>	<b>£4.35</b>	<b>£1.78</b>	<b>£25.00</b>

