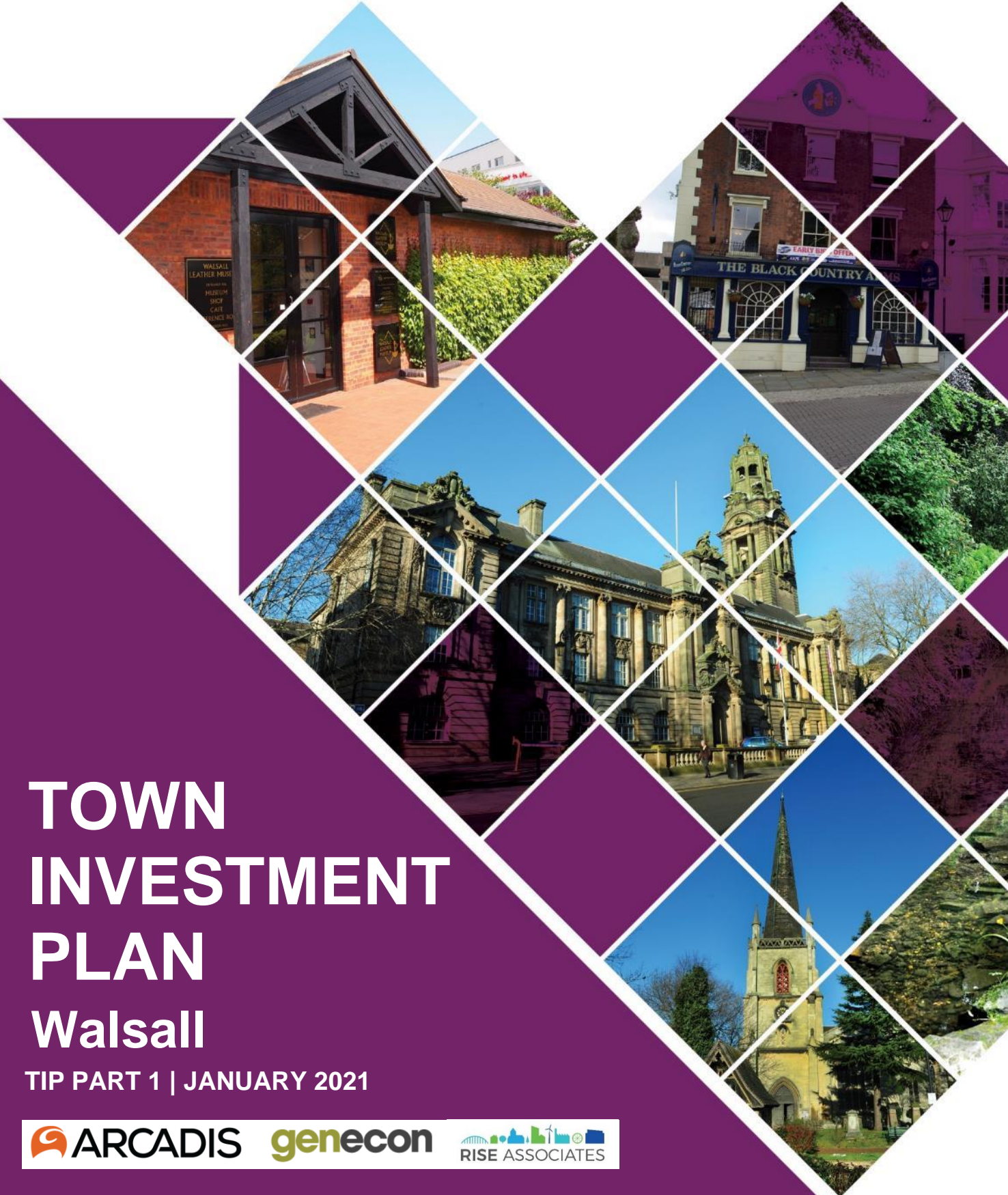




Walsall Council



TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN Walsall

TIP PART 1 | JANUARY 2021



ARCADIS

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RISE ASSOCIATES



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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 – Karl Woodward



"It is my pleasure as Director of a locally based business and chair of the Walsall Advisory Board to support and commend to you this exciting Town Investment Plan. Local people and businesses have worked hard together to develop a programme of projects we believe will make positive, sustainable, and measurable difference to the future success of the Town. Developing this ambitious plan and the vision for the Town has been an intense, strenuous and rewarding process; we now 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



"The Walsall Investment plan provides the impetus required to make positive and lasting improvements within the town of Walsall, acting as anchors to attract investors to create a vibrant mix and offer of employment, housing and leisure. Through strong partnership working, this creative programme of innovations will support us to develop the skills and infrastructure that can empower local people with the skills and confidence they need to succeed. The programme is ambitious, but achievable and builds upon the energy and creativity that is present in the borough to ensure continued growth for the residents and businesses of Walsall."

Councillor Nawaz, Leader of the Labour Group



"The Town Deal Investment plan for Walsall represents a welcomed major step towards achieving our vision for the Town. Enabling the Council, key partners and stakeholders to work together to ensure that the Town becomes a key employment, enterprise, learning and economic driver for the area. Linked to a variety of recreational, retail and leisure proposals it will become a place of choice to live, for job growth and vitality now and into the future, an environment that is accessible by all, where new businesses thrive, are vibrant and sustainable. Where all of Walsall's diverse communities prosper together in harmony."

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."

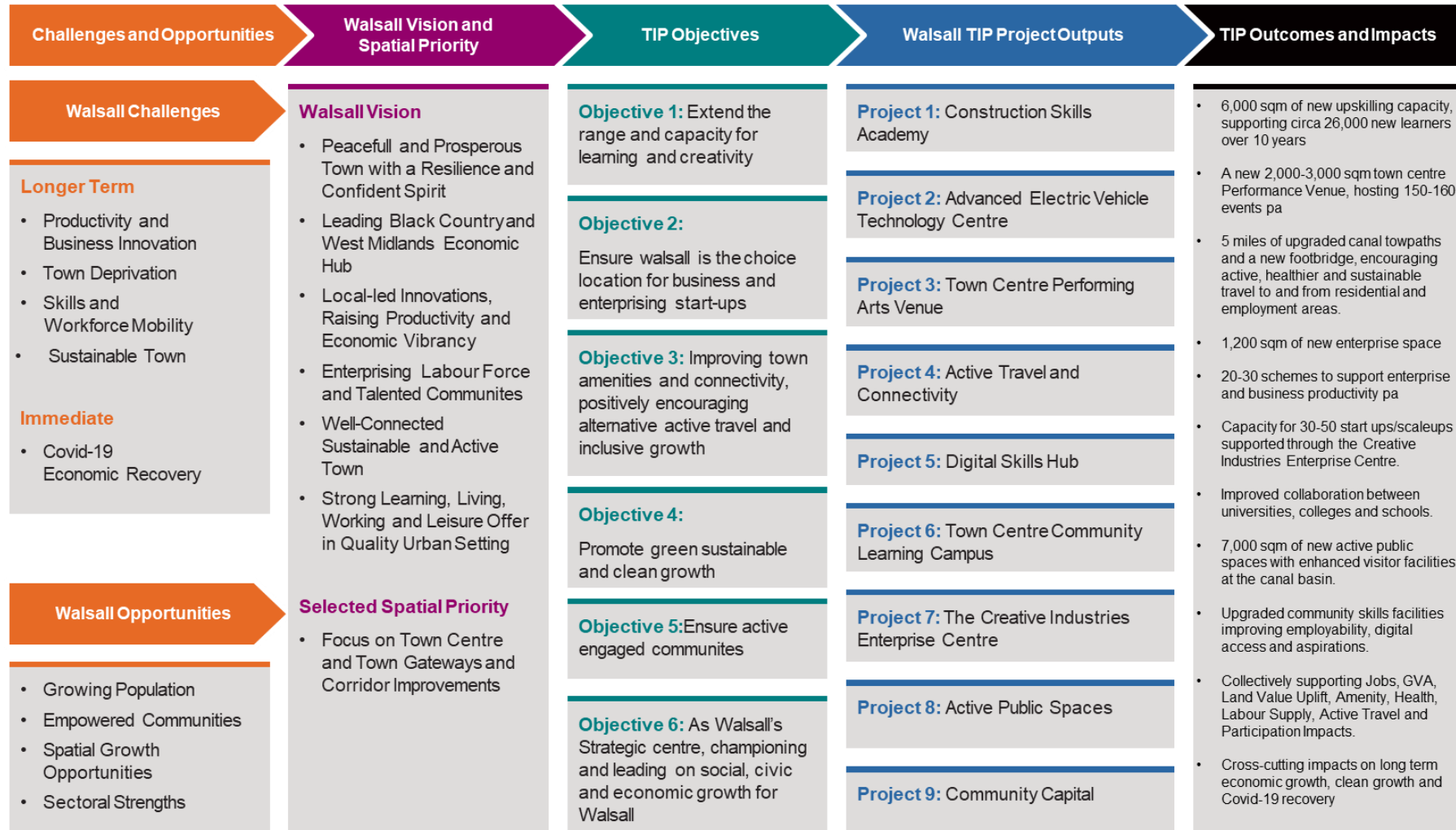


1

Executive Summary

1 Executive Summary

In the historic home of leather and locks – ‘the town of a hundred trades’ - Walsall will build on its culturally rich and industrious past, to transform the historic market town centre of Walsall, into a peaceful and prosperous place that empowers its wider residents, encourages enterprise and welcomes visitors to share in a creative and sustainable future. 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 Walsall total funding are requesting a capital ask of £25m for the nine prioritised projects as summarised in the logic models below.





2

Context Analysis

2 Context Analysis

2.1 Walsall - The Black Country Town of a Hundred Trades

Walsall is the social, civic and economic centre for Walsall Borough. Amid a densely populated, polycentric borough, our town is a key employment hub and shopping destination not only for our residents but also for the surrounding towns of Bloxwich, Aldridge, Willenhall, Brownhills, and other smaller settlements, and beyond. We serve a wide catchment population of over 3 million people and we continue to be a major driving force for the economic success not only of the borough but also of the Black Country.

Our town's origins span a millennium and by the 14th century we were known as the 'town of a hundred trades'. The Industrial Revolution brought transformation and we grew from a village of 2,000 people in the 16th century to a town of over 86,000 in just 200 years. Our town thrived on the back of production success, where coal mining, limestone quarrying and the production of saddles, chains, spurs and metalware were all mainstay industries.

The demise of coal mining sparked economic reinvention and our town quickly became an internally renowned centre for the manufacture of leather goods. We continue to be the 'Leather Capital of Britain', boasting 90 leather factories that provide handbags to the Queen and leather goods to the Prince of Wales, among others.

On the back of late-Georgian to mid-Victorian optimism our town thrived, spurred on by the delivery of the Walsall Canal in 1799 and our retained rail line and station in 1849. Rapid growth with limited town planning inevitably brought areas of slum development and between the wars we embarked on a major slum clearance programme which saw thousands of 19th-century buildings demolished and replaced with 1920s and 1930s housing estate development, largely to the north of the town centre.

The post-war era also saw major tower block development nearer to our town core, and in the 1960's we also delivered our first indoor shopping centre (now derelict), followed by major 1970's modernisation, with a new town centre being built at the expense of some of our medieval properties. In the 1980's we delivered the Saddlers Centre as our then modern shopping mall.

Today we retain limited historic assets, although our mid-late Victorian 170-acre Arboretum country park is a unique feature for the town, providing an unrivalled rural retreat and sports and leisure opportunities stretching right to the heart of our town. Last year, the Black Country also proudly received UNESCO Geopark status, in recognition of our internationally important geology and cultural heritage. Walsall Arboretum has been designated as a supporting Geosite within the Park.

Our prolific leather industry legacy as a 'saddler town' is engrained in our culture and today we celebrate our industrial and cultural legacy, largely through the Walsall Leather Museum, Walsall Museum and The New Art Gallery Walsall.

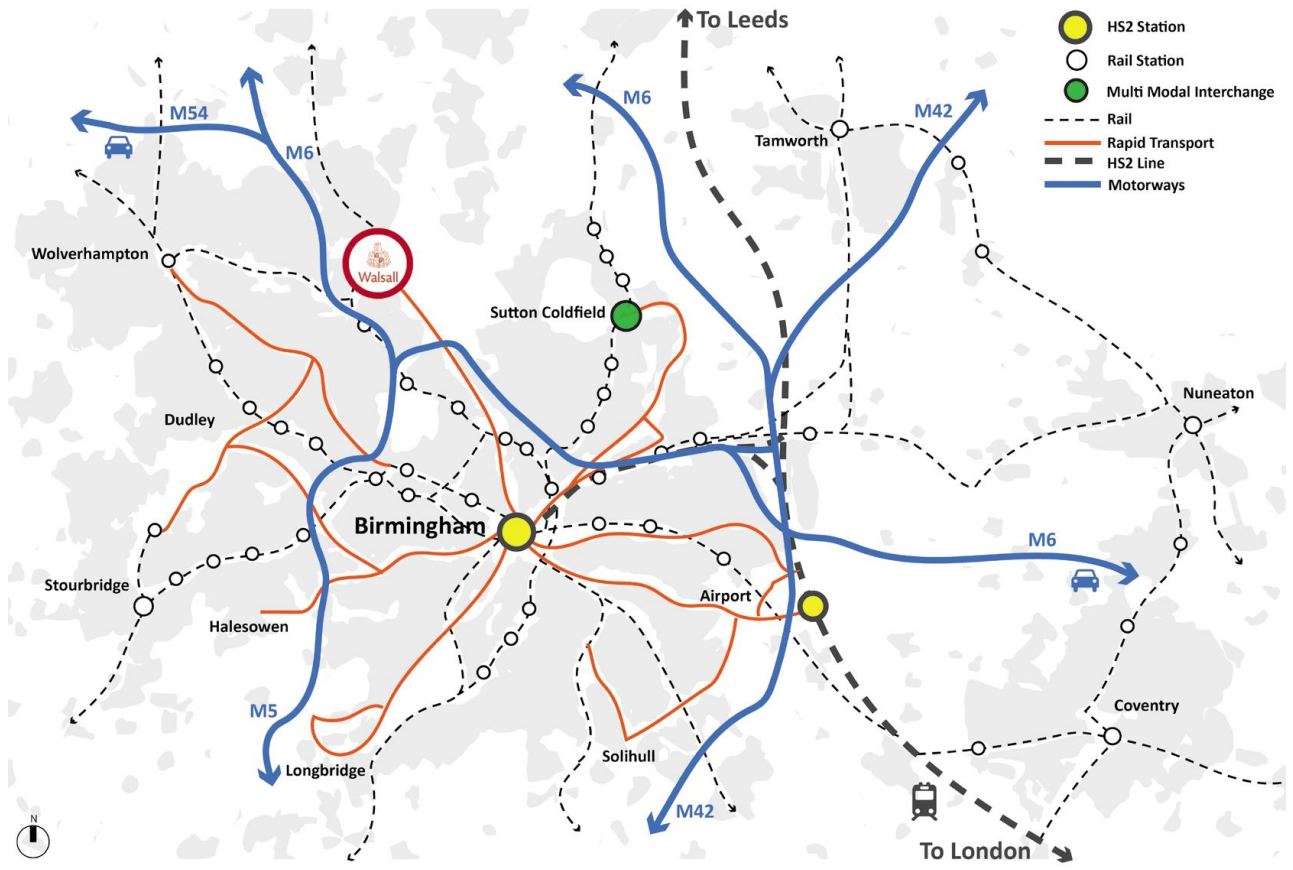
Our towns continued development has meant that over the years we have developed various specialisms and alongside leather goods, other industries in Walsall include iron and brass founding, limestone quarrying, small hardware, plastics, electronics, chemicals and specialist parts for cars and aircraft.

Spatially, our location in the Black Country and West Midlands region makes Walsall excellently connected and accessible by car from all directions and we have good connections to the national motorway network via the M6, which skirts the town. We also benefit from two bus facilities and the excellently connected Walsall Railway Station, with public transport bringing 15 million passengers per year right to the heart of our town.

We are 10 miles from Birmingham, 7 miles from Wolverhampton, 17 miles from Tamworth and 19 miles from Stafford and our evolution as a higher interconnected economy with an upwardly mobile town workforce has served us well.

Looking forward, we will always function as a key regional economic centre with a highly connected dynamic labour force, but we recognise the need for building a sustainable offer that truly benefits our communities. We want a strong learning, living, working and leisure offer that empowers our communities and instils a resilient and confident spirit in our town.

Walsall in the context of the Wider West Midlands Region



Walsall Context

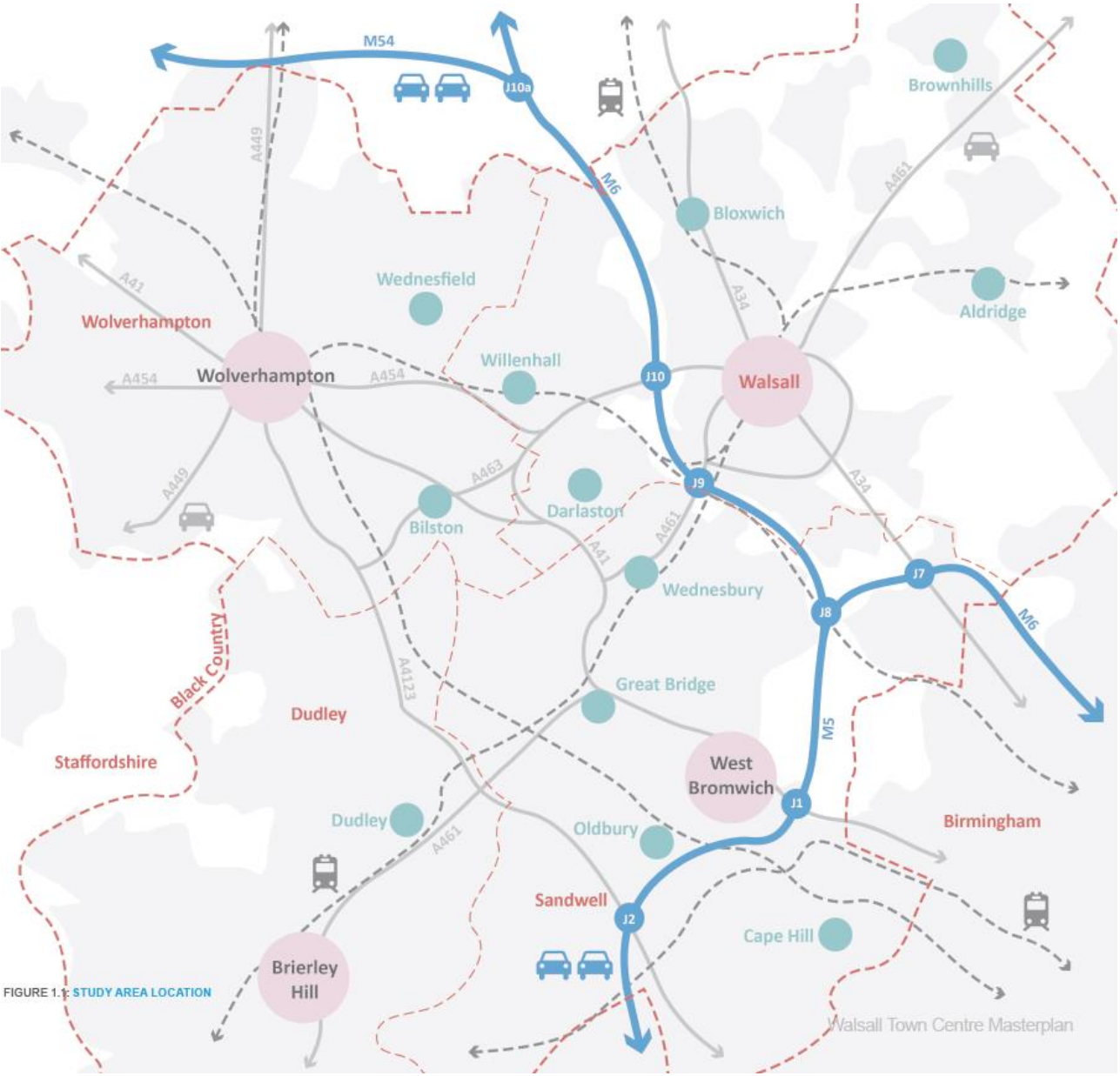
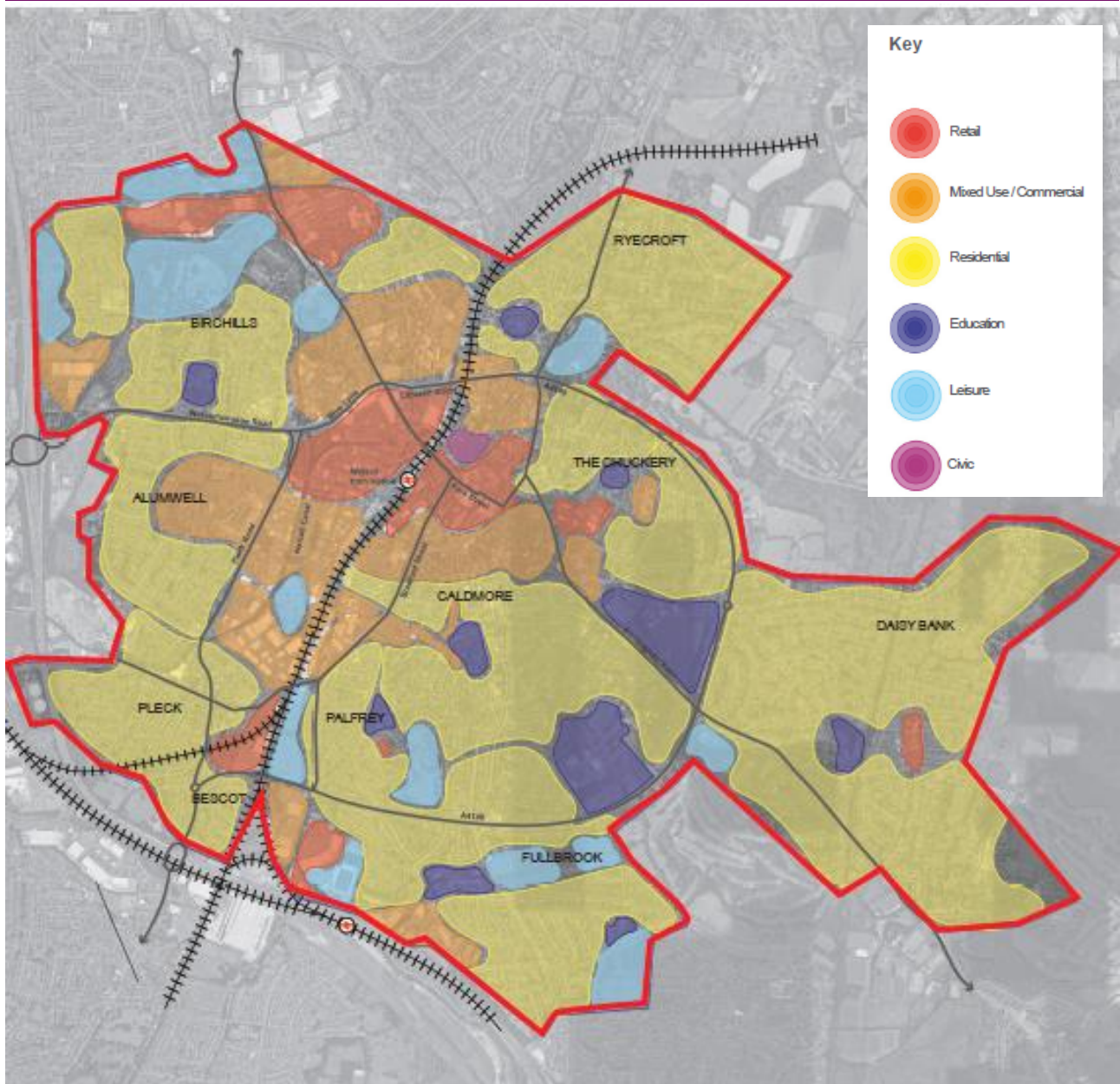


FIGURE 1.1 STUDY AREA LOCATION

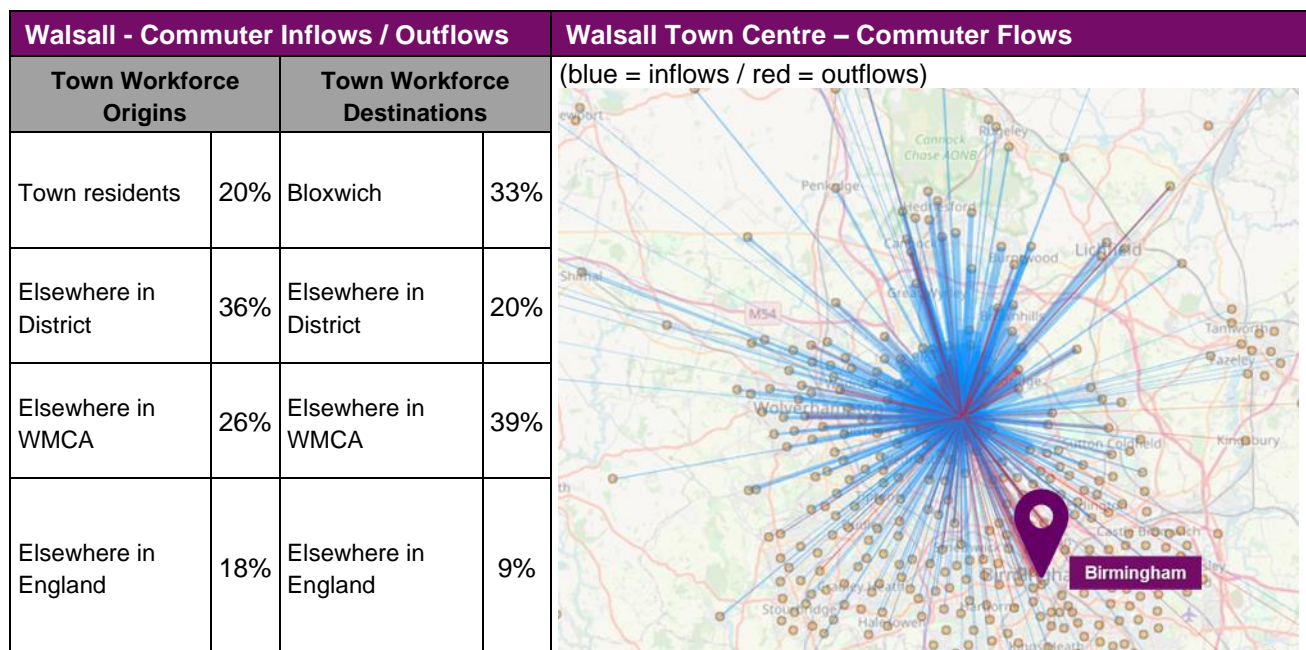
Walsall Town Deal Boundary



2.2 Town Assets, Performance and Economic Drivers

Home to 72,400 residents and 2,365 businesses, Walsall is an increasingly attractive town where population growth since 2015 (+4.8%) has significantly outstripped growth nationally (+2.2%, England), largely due to growth in younger and working-age residents. This provides a strong platform for our future town workforce, which at current levels extends to 44,000 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) town jobs. Against our 45,200 working-age residents, we have a very high jobs density of almost 1 FTE jobs per working-age resident and our town is not short of job opportunities.

The benefits of having a critical mass of commercial activities locally have however not always benefited our communities and at the time of the last Census, just a third of working-age residents were working within our town and just 1 in 5 town jobs were filled by our residents.

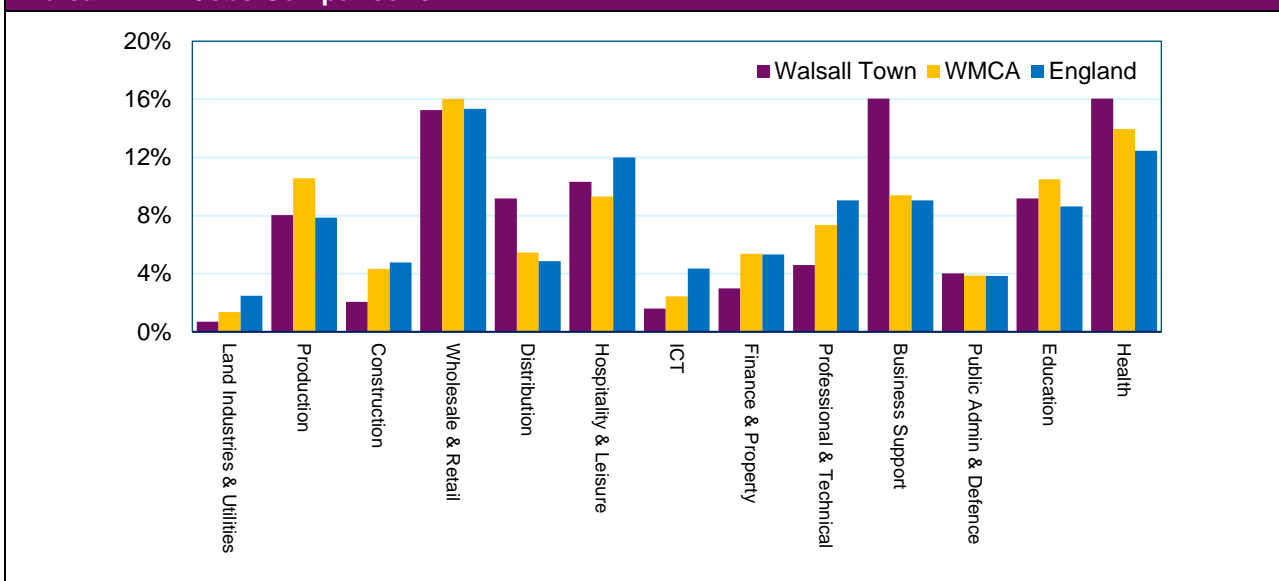


In truth our excellent connectivity across the West Midlands has meant that we continue to function as a major sub-regional economic driver, but with high levels of in and out commuting for work daily, we have reasonably low levels of town ‘self-containment’, with associated daily congestion, air quality and carbon emission challenges.

We need our town to develop sustainably and we also identify a significant need to re-engage particularly hard to reach communities in our labour force.

Internally, our towns jobs market has strengths in the business support, distribution and health, collectively accounting for 1 in 4 FTE town jobs. These strengths have served us well, but we are lacking critical mass in the professional, technical, IT and finance and construction sectors when compared against wider averages.

Walsall - FTE Jobs Comparisons



Although significant recent progress has helped to ‘level up’ our town’s £2.0bn economy, with above WMCA and England average population growth and some improved resident-based labour market performance, business, job and GVA growth in our town has been slow and in relative terms, this has diminished our towns contribution to the national economy. Our existing per worker productivity gap has widened in recent years and to reverse this trend we must facilitate business innovations. Although we boast a strong business community, there have been low levels of business dynamism and innovation and start-up rates are low locally. In this respect, we have a legacy of a reasonably static business community that has remained rooted in the town, but our town has lacked churn.

Walsall Borough Businesses



Perhaps as challenging, is that 1 in 6 of our residents have no formal qualification and against a national average of 1 in 13, we have significant entry level skills challenges that then filter right up the skills system. From a supply perspective, continued efforts to upskill our residents and improve labour mobility is critical, particularly in communities experiencing acute employment deprivation. More than 60% of our neighbourhoods are among England’s most deprived 20% of areas and for decades this has remained a key town challenge.

Across performance indicators, our town currently contributes around 40-50% towards the borough’s economy and around 2-4% towards the WMCA economy.

The table below demonstrates progress made in Walsall to date, with significant progress towards closing resident-based performance gaps, albeit from a low base. Despite some workplace-based business and economic improvements, our town has generally lagged wider observed growth in recent years, and we must improve this position.

Walsall – Key Indicators and Direction of Travel (2015-2018)						
	Walsall Town	WMCA	England	Direction of Travel (2015-2018)		
				Town Change	Vs WMCA	Vs England
Demography and Skills						
Resident Population (total, 2018)	72,400	2.92m	55.98m			
Population Growth (2015-2018)	4.8%	2.9%	2.2%	↗	↗	↗
Working-age Residents (16-64)	62.4%	63.1%	62.6%			
Working-age Residents in Employment	66.2%	68.2%	75.4%	↗	↗	↗
Working-age Residents in Unemployment	4.2%	6.5%	4.2%	↗	↗	↗
Residents in Higher Order Occupations	40.0%	40.6%	46.8%	↗	↗	↗
Residents qualified to NVQL2+ (16-64)	59.7%	66.3%	75.0%	↗	↗	↗
Residents qualified to NVQ4+ (16-64)	31.8%	30.5%	39.0%			
Residents with no formal qualifications	17.5%	12.9%	7.6%	↗	↘	↘
Business and Economic Performance						
Businesses (total, 2018)	2,365	103,520	2.70m	↗	↘	↘
Businesses per 10,000 Residents	397	355	482			
Total GVA (2018)	£2.0bn	£69.7bn	£1.64tn			
GVA Growth (2015-2018)	+3.6%	+15.7%	+11.7%	↗	↘	↘
GVA per FTE (2018)	£45,980	£55,000	£61,220			
Jobs (total, 2018) *LSAOs	44,000	1.27m	26.84m			
Jobs per 100 Working-age Residents	97	69	77	↗	↗	↗
Jobs Growth 2015-2018	+4.8%	+2.8%	+3.5%			

2.3 Town Achievements to Date

Walsall Council's commitment to prioritise economic development in partnership with developers, funders and the community has ensured the delivery of high-quality commercial, industrial and residential developments. With over £415 million of town centre development alone we have secured multiple national and international operators.

Our town centre regeneration focus has been on three prime development areas, namely Walsall Gigaport, Walsall Waterfront and St Matthew's Quarter, each of which has a particular sector focus and function.

Town Achievements – Walsall Gigaport

Hatherton Court



Delivery:

- 1,900 to 17,100 sq. ft self-contained offices
- Completed 2020

Impact/Outcome:

- Enhanced jobs capacity and business diversification

Teddesley Street



Delivery:

- 33 residential units on 0.57ha site
- Completed 2019

Impact/Outcome:

- Improved town living

Wisemore Central



Delivery:

- 1,994 sqm / 60 bed Travelodge hotel
- 550sqm McDonald's restaurant & 4 retail units
- £7.8m, completed 2019

Impact/Outcome:

- Improved leisure and visitor offer

Jhoots Pharmacy HQ



Delivery:

- 1,850 sqm office
- £3.2m, completed 2015

Impact/Outcome:

- Enhanced jobs capacity and business diversification

Walsall Housing Group HQ



Delivery:

- 4,000 sqm office
- £7m, completed 2011

Impact/Outcome:

- Retained civic function

Tesco



Delivery:

- 10,880 sqm retail, 1,725 sqm gym
- £55m, completed 2010

Impact/Outcome:

- Improved retail offer

Walsall College Campus



Delivery:

- 24,645 sqm education facility
- £65m, completed 2009

Impact/Outcome:

- Enhanced skills infrastructure

Town Achievements – Walsall Waterfront

Waterfront North Phase 2



Delivery:

- 897 sqm restaurant and bar
- £2m, completed 2017

Impact/Outcome:

- Improved hospitality and evening economy offer

Wharfingers Cottage



Delivery:

- 200 sqm Piri Fino restaurant
- £350k, completed 2017

Impact/Outcome:

- Hospitality and evening economy offer improvements

Waterfront North Phase 1



Delivery:

- 3,000 sqm Light Cinema
- 4,000 sqm restaurant space
- £12m, completed 2016

Impact/Outcome:

- Leisure and evening economy offer

Cardan Pointe



Delivery:

- 44 apartments for Walsall Housing Group's over 55 well-being scheme
- £5.5m, completed 2016

Impact/Outcome:

- Extended town living offer

Waterfront



Delivery:

- 100-bed Premier Inn hotel and Brewers Fayre
- £10m, completed 2012

Impact/Outcome:

- Visitor economy improvements

Waterfront South



Delivery:

- 10,880 sqm retail, 1,725 sqm gym
- £40m, completed 2013

Impact/Outcome:

- Improved retailed and leisure offer

Town Achievements – St Matthews Quarter – Retail-led Investment Area

The Quarter



Delivery:

- 8,257 sqm retail, including Poundland and Pep&Co and B&M
- £14m, completed 2017

Impact/Outcome:

- Improved town centre retail offer

St Matthew's View



Delivery:

- 9 residential units and 747 sqm ground floor commercial space
- £2m, completed 2017

Impact/Outcome:

- New town centre living product

Old Square – Phase 1



Delivery:

- 4,000 sqm Primark and 900 sqm Co-op and Coffee Republic
- £7m, completed 2015

Impact/Outcome:

- Improved town centre retail offer

Goldmine Centre



Delivery:

- 2,000 sqm multi-use enterprise, learning, performance and conference facility
- £3m, completed 2012

Impact/Outcome:

- New skills and conference offer

St Matthew's



Delivery:

- 10,355 sqm Asda, 1,000 space carpark and 41 new apartments
- £25m, completed 2007

Impact/Outcome:

- Improved retail and town centre living offer

Walsall Town Achievements

1. Walsall Gigaport

- Hatherton Court
- Teddesley Street
- Wisemore Central
- Jhoots Pharmacy HQ
- Walsall Housing Group
- Tesco
- Walsall College Campus

2. Walsall Waterfront

- Waterfront North Phase 2
- Wharfingers Cottage
- Waterfront North Phase 1
- Cordan Pointe
- Waterfront
- Waterfront South

3. St Matthews Quarter - Retail led investment area

- The Quarter
- St Matthews View
- Old Square - Phase 1
- Goldmine Centre
- St Matthews Asda

4. Pheonix 10

Key

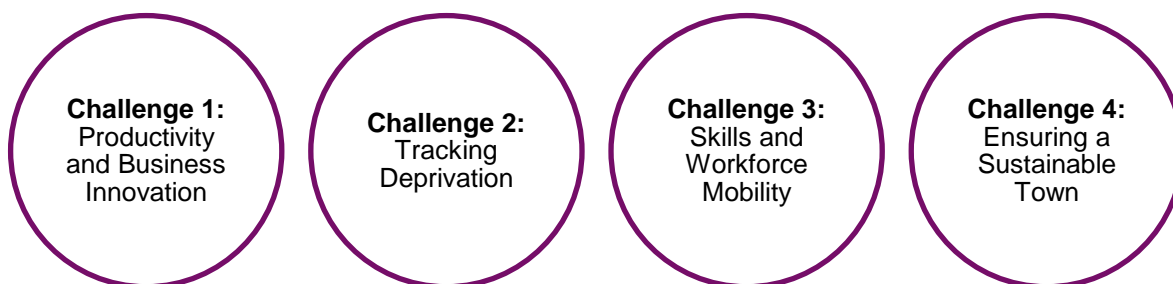
-  Achievement areas
-  Commercial achievements
-  Residential achievements
-  Educational achievements
-  Community achievements
-  Leisure achievements
-  Retail achievements
-  Canal
-  Railway
-  Road network
-  Site boundary



FIGURE 1.7: WALSALL ACHIEVEMENTS

2.4 Longstanding 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: Productivity and Business Innovation

The legacy of reasonably low-value activities in Walsall has meant that at current levels, average 'GVA per FTE job' is around £15,250 lower than the England average.

Overall GVA growth in the town has also marginally fallen since 2015, with business agglomeration being in typically low value activities. The result is that our productivity gap has significantly widening by around £5,000 per FTE job on national averages in just four years.

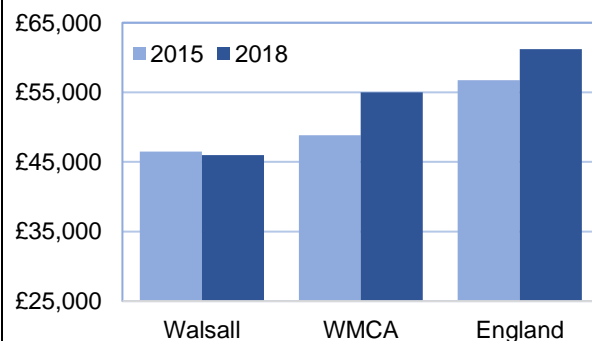
Business innovation among our 2,365 businesses is critical to reversing the growing per worker productivity gap and levelling up the town, but product, service, process and business model innovation rarely happens organically.

To this end, we need to create the platform for modern business practice, encourage greater collaborations, reverse a declining trend in business start-up rates locally and encourage new enterprise and new innovation, but at present our town has traditionally has very little by way of dedicated innovation infrastructure beyond some softer initiatives.

We are seeking to address this, in part through recent investment in the flagship Creative Industries Enterprise Centre innovation makerspace within the town and the West Walsall E-ACT Academy Innovation Centre for training and learning located at the edge of the town.

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

GVA per FTE Job Comparisons



Challenge 2: Tackling Deprivation

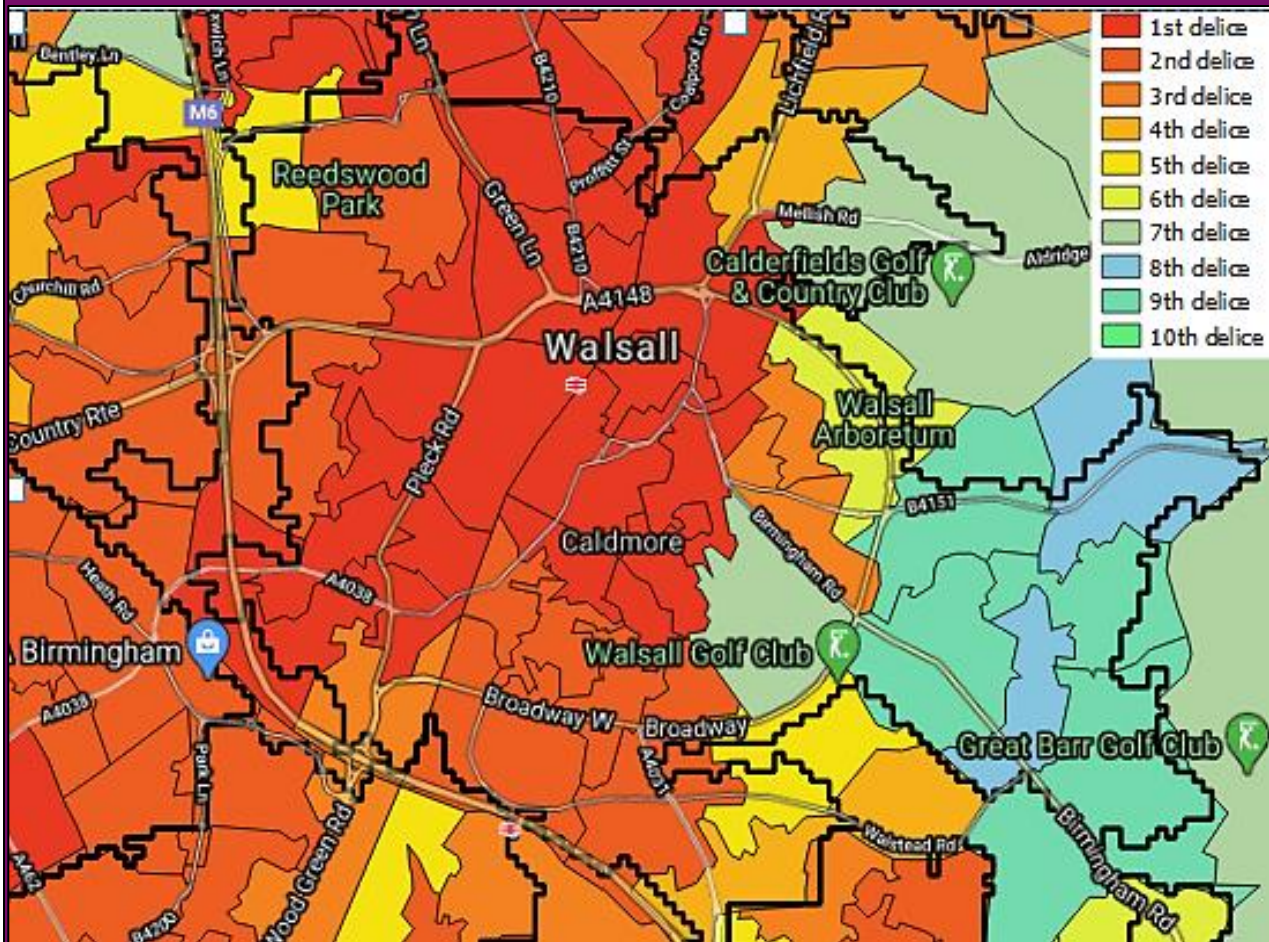
Our borough is the 25th most deprived in England (out of 317 local area), placing it among the 10% most deprived areas nationally. Relatively, the boroughs position has worsened over the years, falling from 45th in 2007, to 33rd in 2015, to 25th in 2019.

Across the town there is acute urban area deprivation, with over 60% of our 40 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) being among the 20% most deprived areas in England.

Underlying sub-domain evidence points to high levels of income, employment, education, skills and training, health and living environment deprivation locally.

This significant longstanding challenge will only be exacerbated by Covid-19 induced economic challenges and clearly a multi-agency holistic approach is required to removing barriers, addressing poverty and raising living standards among hard-to-reach communities. Town partners at all levels continue to progress various initiatives to improve the lives of our residents.

Relative Deprivation in Walsall (2019)



Challenge 3: Skills and Workforce Mobility

Tackling skills deficits among our communities has been a long-standing town and borough-wide challenge.

Today 1 in 6 adult residents in our town have no qualification, compared to 1 in 13 nationally, and we have comparably low basic skills and qualification rates amongst our adult population at most qualifier levels.

Although gaps are closing, we need a skilled town workforce fit for future business needs, but a significant number of local businesses have indicated that lack of skills, poor attitudes and low aspirations among our town residents prevent the recruiting of new staff.

A person's ability to access employment is intrinsically linked to the skills and qualifications they possess but we must also offer a range of accessible employment opportunities, particularly to hard-to-reach communities where car ownership is low and workplace options are more limited.

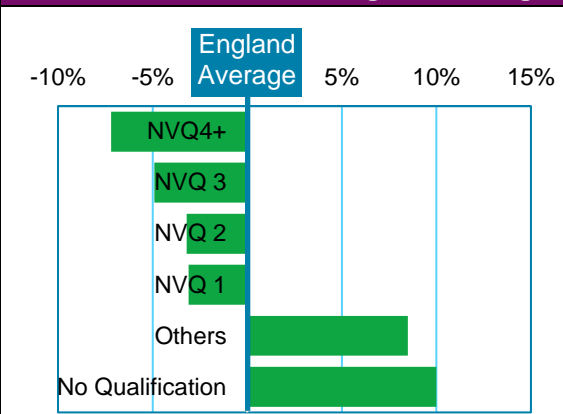
Similarly, in an age where recruitment campaigns are typically through online platforms, we must offer easy internet access to our communities, particularly those more deprived communities where many households cannot currently afford home broadband.

Improving supply-side factors will be critical to improving workforce mobility in Walsall, thereby helping to address wider socio-economic challenges, including worklessness, low incomes / poverty, economic deprivation and ultimately even health challenges in our town.

Clearly achieving a demonstrable shift in our town's skills base takes time, but we must provide skills infrastructure and accessible job opportunities that can meaningfully improve the chances of individuals to succeed. We must therefore provide ample upskilling and lifelong learning opportunities, accessible digital infrastructure and a range of job options to ensure readily available career progression for all.

Local businesses engaged through the Walsall Economic Board stated when interviewed that they often struggled to recruit for jobs they advertised as not enough local people had the necessary skills and training.

Skills Deficits – Town vs England Average



Challenge 4: Ensuring a Sustainable Town

Our excellent connectivity to wider Black Country and West Midland centres has meant that we have high levels of in and out commuting and currently just 1 in 4 jobs within our town are filled by town residents.

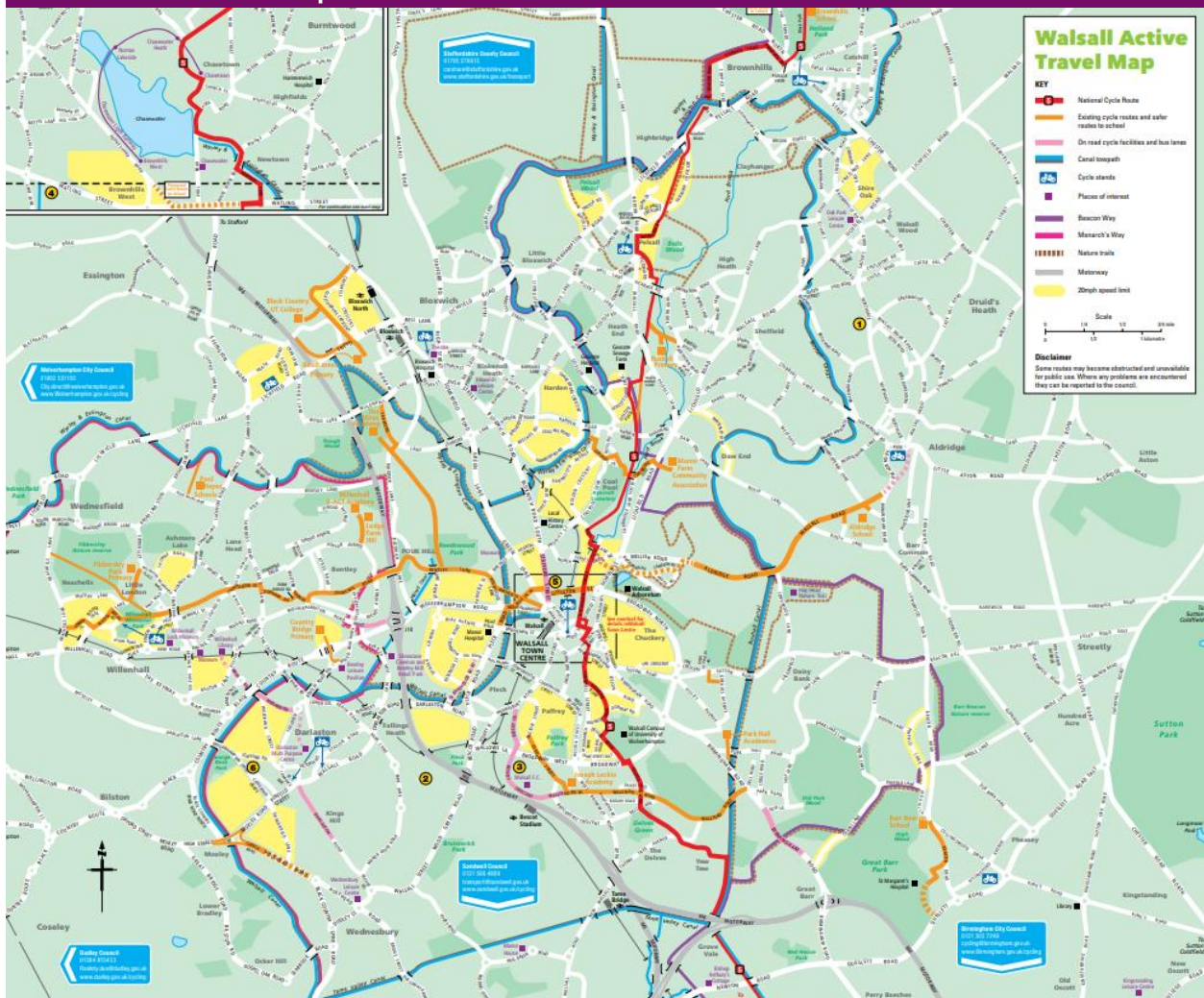
For a dense urban area this unsurprisingly creates significant congestion challenges locally, as well as significantly contributing to our towns carbon footprint and poor air quality, the fourth largest risk to public health.

Areas of poor air quality are centred around key road networks. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) emissions from vehicles and resultant impacts on air quality in the town arising from vehicles are to the extent that the borough has been declared as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), as required under the Environment Act 1995.

For a more sustainable town we must move away from being a car-based commuter town and the advent of electric vehicles and other more sustainable technologies will go some way towards our contribution to the Governments Road to Zero strategy.

We aspire for more sustainable active travel to, from and within our town and alongside rail and bus improvements, a core ambition is to pursue initiatives that encourage greater levels of town self-containment, whereby town jobs are filled by our residents. For this we must invest in internal connectivity and active travel route improvements, particularly between existing and emerging employment centres and residential areas. We have made good recent progress, including new cycleway investments, but parts of our town still have limited active travel options and some routes need upgrades, including the key route along our canal.

Walsall Active Travel Map



2.5 The Immediate COVID-19 Challenge

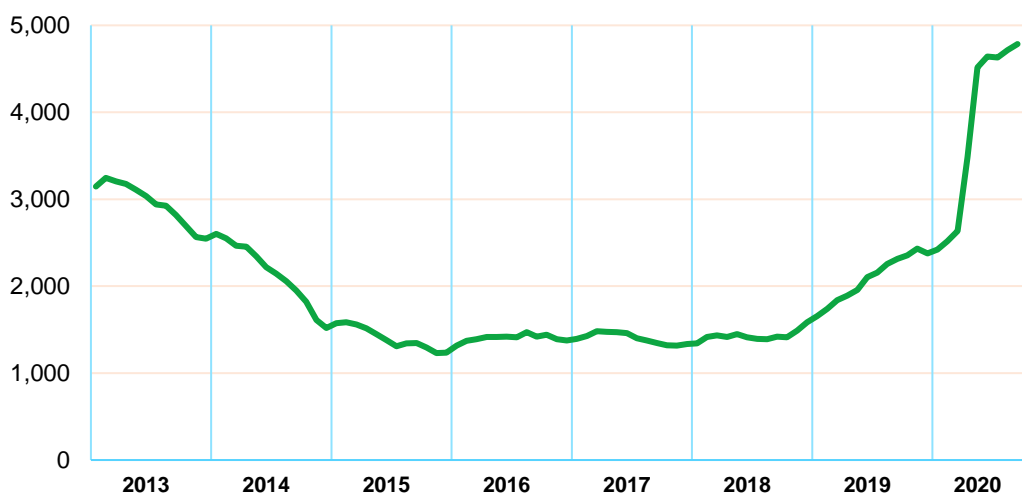
By September 2020, the WMCA area had witnessed the highest proportion of eligible residents furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and 14,600 of Walsall South Parliamentary Areas residents had been furloughed.

Whilst furlough and self-employment support has offered protection against redundancies, the two schemes will ultimately taper off. With ongoing lockdown measure in place there is a pressing unemployment concern and we are already seeing worryingly sharp increases in town claimants (as a proxy for unemployment). During October 2020, a record 4,770 town residents received welfare support, more than doubling in the space of a year.

Furloughed Jobs, August 2020

	Total	% of Eligible
Walsall South	14,600	36%
WMCA	866,700	34%
England	8,067,700	32%

Walsall Claimant Counts (January 2013 – October 2020)



We must collectively get the economy moving again, but lockdown measures have ultimately resulted in a dramatic fall in footfall across the town. Many businesses remain temporarily closed and the fear is that some may never recover. The immediate challenge is to identify actions to meaningfully rejuvenate Walsall 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 promising population growth, empower our communities, deliver success outcomes on major development sites and build on our existing sectoral strengths and capitalise on new emerging technologies, as outlined below.



Opportunity 1: Capitalising on a Growing Population

Local planning is responding to above average town population growth locally, thereby helping to ensure our residents have access to modern and varied living offer.

Our town has grown its population by around 3,300 new residents in the last four years, more than double the national average (+4.8% vs +2.2% nationally) and this is indicative of Walsall becoming an increasing attractive place to live, particularly for younger and working-age individuals.

The attraction of younger more dynamic working-age residents to the town provides a strong basis for bolstering our future town workforce, thereby helping to improve labour supply locally. Having a strong future workforce offer will significantly improve investor appeal in Walsall which in turn will catalyse future investment, but we are keen to ensure that the benefits of population growth are retained locally and that our town simply does not further extend its role as a commuter town.

As such maintaining our growing population provides significant opportunity to help narrow our productivity gap and increase town vibrancy, footfall and spending locally, particularly in our town centre.

As a proud town with a rich history, we have an excellent offer to build upon, including our unique Arboretum, collection of cultural museums, art and performance spaces and our canal network. Moreover, recent efforts to strengthen our leisure and evening experience offers are now paying off and looking forward we see further place-shaping initiatives as being a real driver of the continued attractiveness and economic prosperity of our town, including by investment to improve public spaces and our arts and leisure offer in the town centre as a mechanism to bring renewed vitality.

Opportunity 2: Empowering Our Communities

We pride ourselves on a long history of community-led regeneration, perhaps best evidenced through One Walsall, which brings together the voice of our community groups, local charities, social enterprises and the voluntary sector. This includes initiatives such as Moseley Big Local and One Palfrey Big Local, which are resident-led programmes empowering and supporting communities, including by upskilling residents and giving them the confidence to achieve.

For example, Walsall Council's EU funded Community Grants programme has small grants up to £20k available to support local community organisations to play a role in supporting local people into training and support to get them back into roles that support the local economy.

We are led by the communities we serve and through active civic engagement and co-operation whenever it makes sense, we will always look to work in partnership with our businesses and our communities to help shape regeneration activities not only to achieve buy-in and ownership, but also to empower, raise aspirations and maximise the benefits of our regeneration activities.

True partnership is not activity for its own sake, it is a collective commitment to improve Walsall, grounded in the realisation that we can achieve more together than we can alone.

Going forward our town will build on this success, working innovatively and collaboratively with strong and resilient communities, public sector partners, voluntary organisations, schools and businesses to shape the sustainable future of our town.

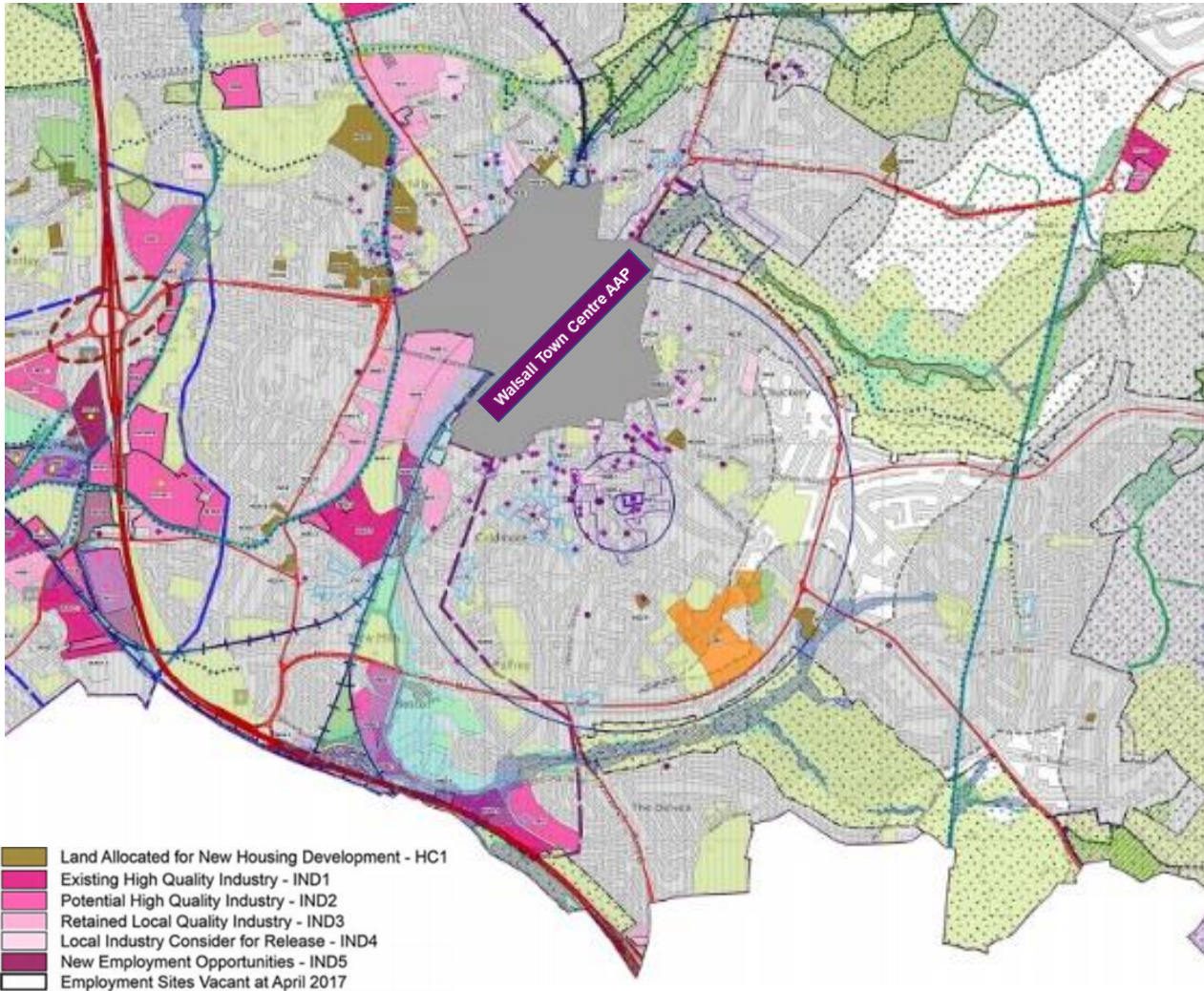
Vibrant, cohesive and tolerant communities with a strong sense of pride will work collaboratively with established statutory agencies and leading local businesses to support our towns success. It is this model which ultimately instils civic pride and a confident spirit in our town.

Opportunity 3: Spatial Growth Opportunities

Local planning has identified the spatial development opportunities for Walsall, which largely focus on town centre development, as identified through our adopted Area Action Plan (2019).

Beyond Walsall Town Centre, there are very few large edge-of-town developments sites within the town deal boundary, with the focus in recent years largely being on large-scale opportunities around J10 of the M6 and the Darlaston Enterprise Zone, as shown below. This includes the existing 44 acres Phoenix 10 opportunity, comprising major regeneration of the former IMI/James Bridge Copper Works to support a new industrial and business park supporting around 1,100 new jobs.

Town Development Opportunities



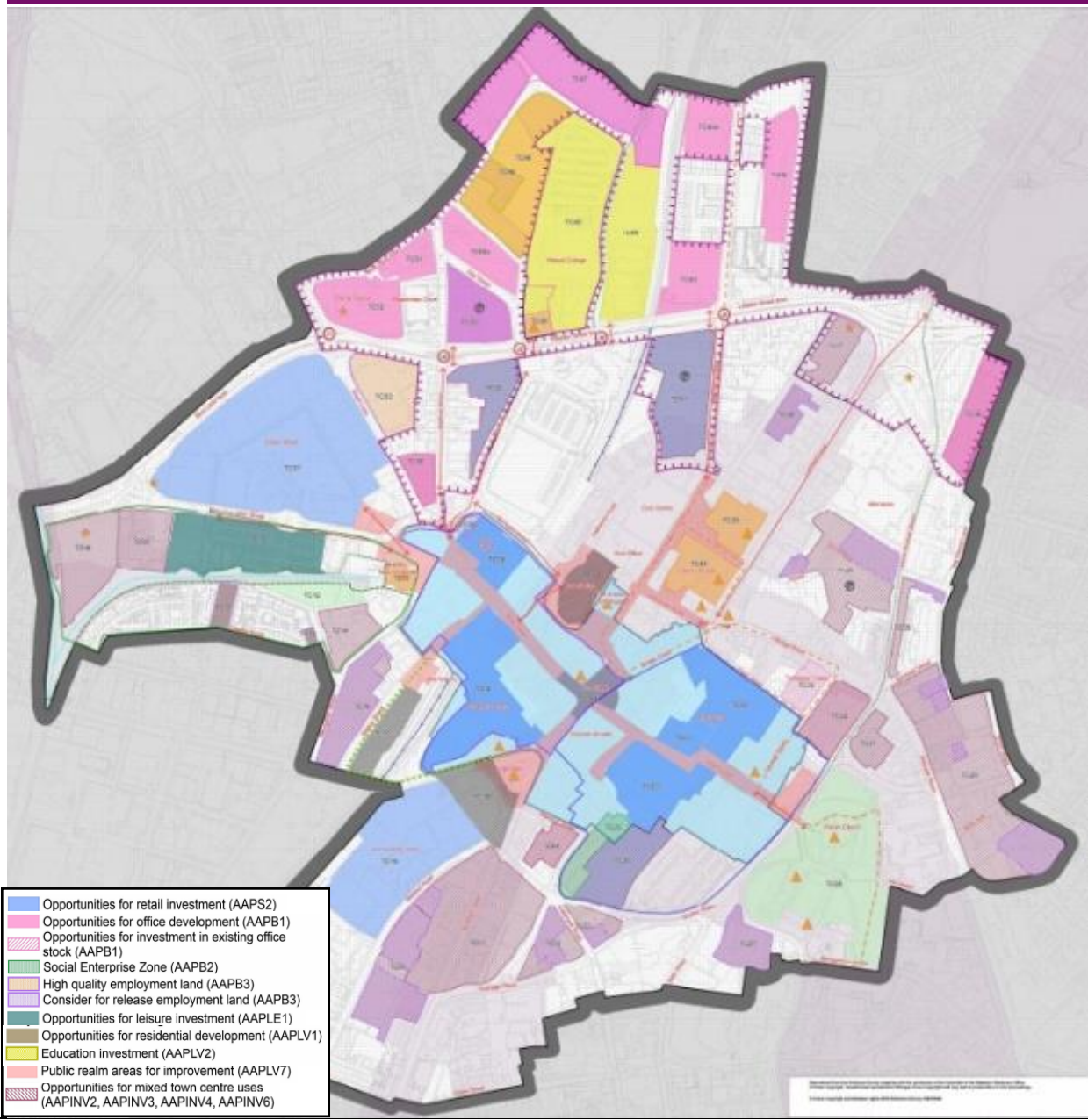
There is however a range of commercial, residential, educational and mixed-use opportunities across our town centre developed through the AAP process, also shown below, with significant opportunity for major town centre urban renewal to build on the successful delivery of new development in the St Mathews Quarter, Walsall Gigaport and the Waterfront area.

Some opportunities are progressing through alternative mechanisms, such as our recent provisional Future High Street Fund award, and other capital funds.

There are also a range of smaller infill housing development opportunities across the town, being promoted through local planning and some larger housing opportunities to the north of the town centre, close to the town boundary with Bloxwich.

Similarly, there are a host of internal infrastructure improvements that would significantly improve connectivity across Walsall and ensure a well-functioning economy, including a range of active travel scheme opportunities, including along our canal.

Town Centre AAP Opportunities



Opportunity 4: Building on Sectoral Strengths and Emerging Technologies

We are a town committed to backing winners and our largest employment sectors will continue to be the key driver of our economy. Collectively, Business Administration, Health, Retail, Education, Distribution and Manufacturing support 7 in every 10 town FTE jobs (30,000 FTEs out of 44,000 town FTE jobs) with a similar proportional contribution to our towns £2.0bn economy.

In recent years we have seen significant growth in our already strong Business Administration and Support and Transport and Storage sectors, alongside growth in Hospitality, Cultural and Leisure activities, supporting 4,000 new FTE jobs in the town since 2015.

Like most urban centres, our town centre has seen a hollowing out of Retail activities, with some recent losses in our Finance, Professional Services and Health sectors and some losses in Construction activities, although there is opportunity to redress this.

Walsall has traditionally lacked a critical mass in the Construction sector when compared to wider averages, but there is a significant opportunity to redress this shortfall in the town, with notably high demand for construction jobs locally, largely driven by major infrastructure initiatives including HS2, the Walsall to Wolverhampton Growth Corridor, Phoenix 10 in Walsall, Future High Street Fund (FHSF), Stronger Towns Fund and 'Build Build Build'.

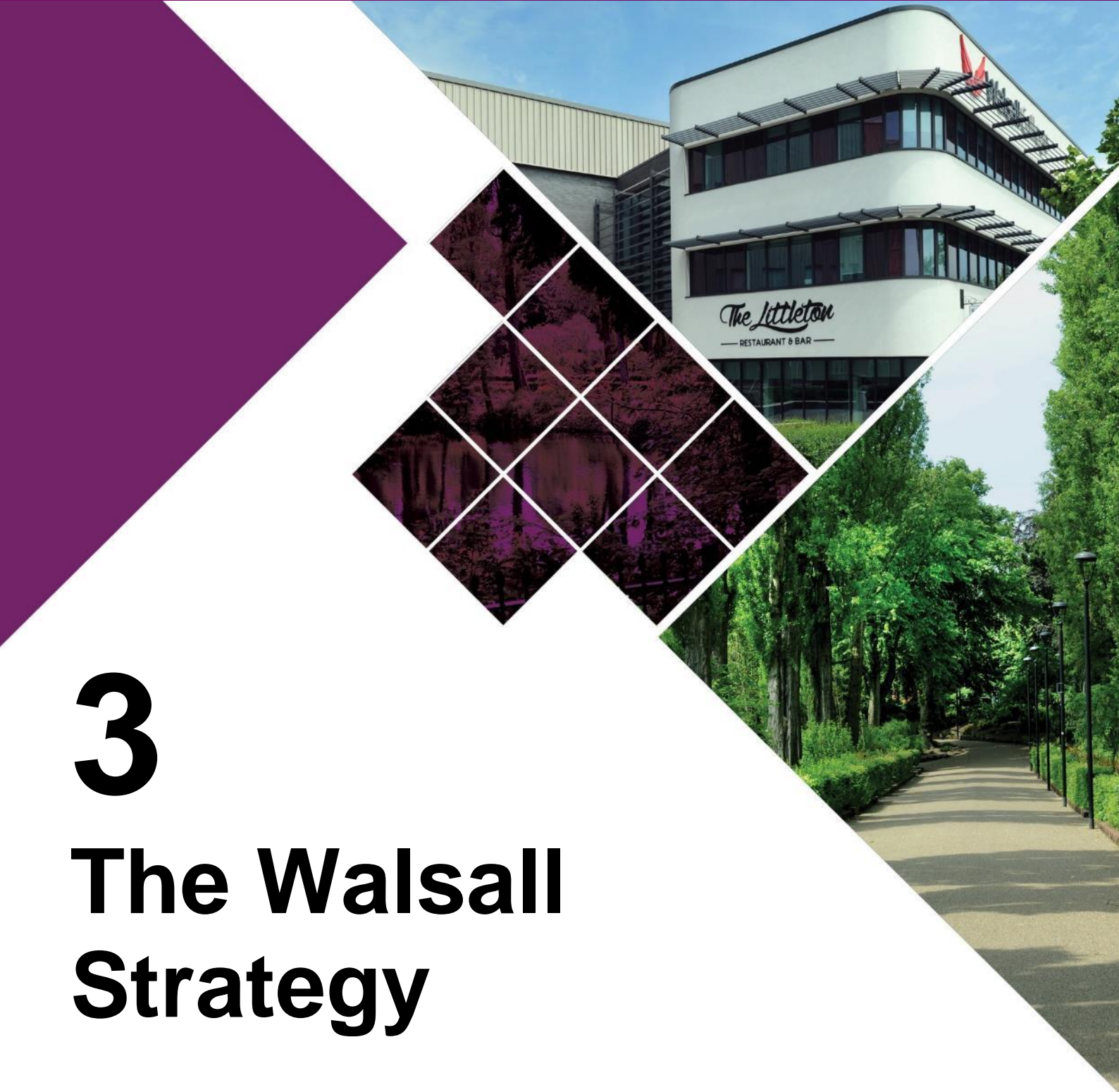
Similarly, as well as prioritising the focus for our TIP (and FHSF) on supporting a more vibrant and more resilient town centre, we see opportunity to drive footfall and spending at the core, thereby supporting more resilient town centre retail performance going forward.

What is clear is that our town's longstanding strengths as a social, civic and economic centre will continue and looking forward we also see opportunity for growing our cultural and leisure offer, built on the success of our existing museums, our wider cultural offer and key town heritage assets, including our underutilised canal network.

There are also inherent opportunities for our town to take advantage of emerging opportunities, including in the digital economy and digitalisation of services, new electrical vehicle technologies and modern methods of construction, among others.

The development and the evolution of digital technologies in particular will be central to our ambitions for the Town and its surrounding communities and district centres. Our proposals include the town centre based Digital Skills Hub and Community Learning Campus, designed to equip local people with the skills required to make the most from a future in digital technologies, and neighbourhoods will also have improved internet access, both directly and through community venues.

We must continue to support activities that ensure the town has a well-balanced economy, not least to ensure available career opportunities for our residents and in building on our sectoral strengths, we see opportunity to strengthen collaboration and drive innovation in our key sector and their supply chains as a mechanism for raising town productivity.



3

The Walsall Strategy

3 The Walsall Strategy

3.1 Town Vision and Intended Outcomes – Rediscovering Walsall as a Dynamic Town of a Hundred Trades

In the historic home of leather and locks – ‘the town of a hundred trades’ - we will build on our culturally rich and industrious past, to transform the historic market town centre of Walsall, into a peaceful and prosperous place that empowers its wider residents, encourages enterprise and welcomes visitors to share in a creative and sustainable future.

We will build on almost a **millennia of production success and reinvention**, to extend our strategic position as a **leading and inclusive Black Country and West Midlands economic hub**.

Investment in our town will spark **local-led innovations** and our **increasingly talented communities** will be empowered to showcase their abilities, ensuring our businesses can grow with an **enterprising and dynamic labour force**.

Walsall will attract more inward investment and build our reputation for **nurturing local entrepreneurs to raise our productivity and economic vibrancy**. As our **well-connected, sustainable town** thrives, **active travel modes** will be commonplace and carbon emissions will be reduced.

Walsall town centre will become a destination of choice, where our residents and visitors of all ages benefit from a **strong learning, living, working and leisure offer** in a **high-quality urban setting**. **Our community will be the heart** of our ambition, driving our future reputation as a proud, Black Country town with a **resilient and confident spirit**.

By 2030,

- **Our high streets will be a place where people will want to work, live, play, learn and worship.**
- **We will develop dynamic zones, festivals, and governance, that will change spaces, moods, and voices, facilitating regeneration, enterprise and social benefits to the residents and businesses within the high street, and beyond.**

3.2 Spatial Strategy

The detailed Spatial Strategy for Walsall can be found in **Appendix A** and is summarised below.

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

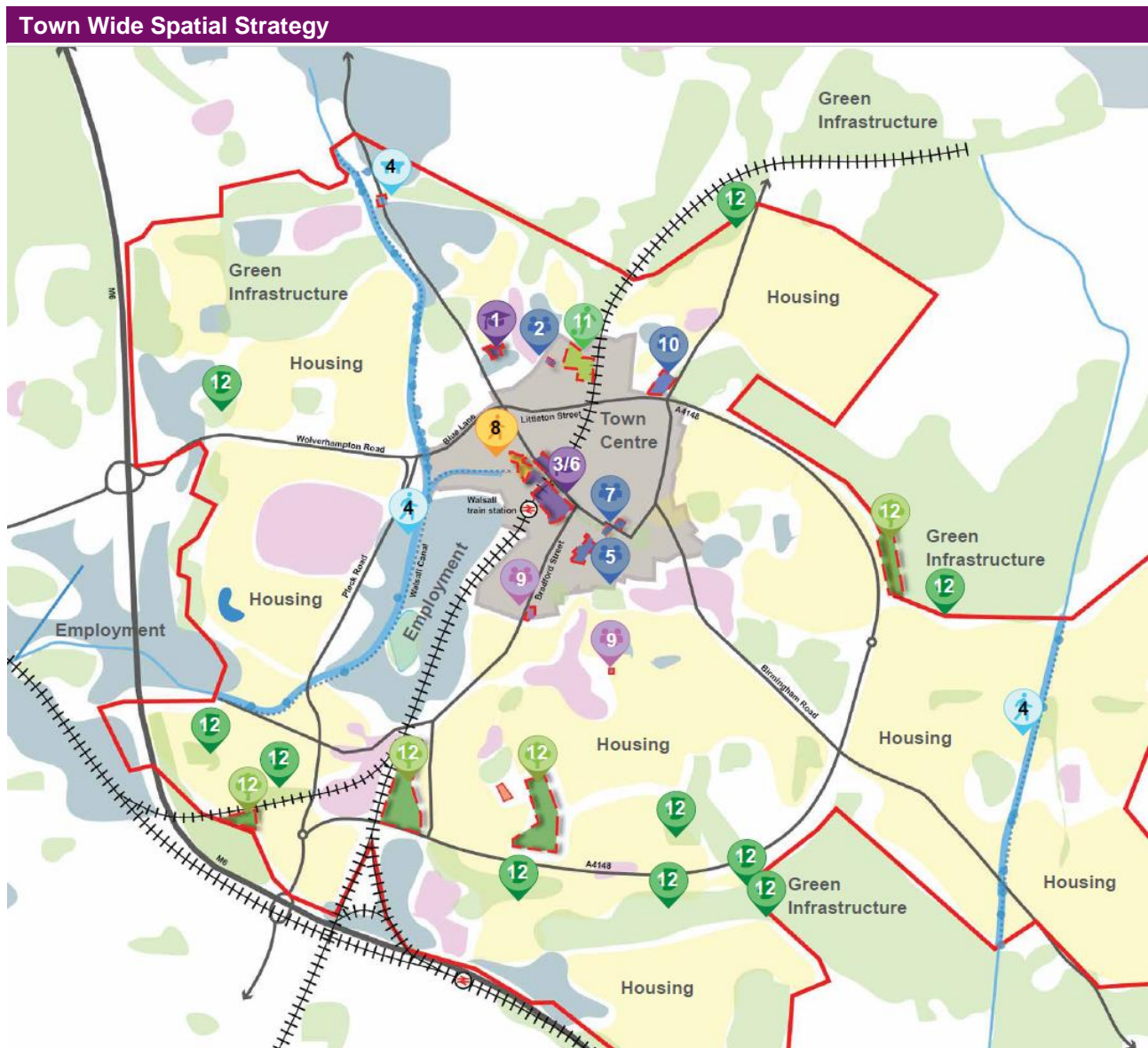
- **Growing:** Regeneration through development, revitalising the high street and making the most of built assets
- **Community:** Community development, skills, partnerships, and community services
- **Connecting:** Better accessibility for active travel, road, rail, and bus services.
- **Place-making:**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

Growing Walsall builds on the vision of the Black Country Core Strategy (part of the Local Development Plan for Walsall), which places Walsall within an employment-based regeneration corridor. Walsall and the rest of these corridors will help to grow the local economy and sustainable communities with good local services and accessibility. This includes making existing assets such as the canal network into integral elements of new development.

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 to help them better access the labour market. This links into several projects identified in the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan.

Connecting Walsall seeks to build on Walsall'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 town centre and railway station. This reflects both local planning policy and priorities that have emerged through stakeholder engagement.

Place-making recognises Walsall'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 providing new community spaces, investing in local heritage, and improving the quality of the local environment were all key priorities for the local community.



3.3 TIP Objectives

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

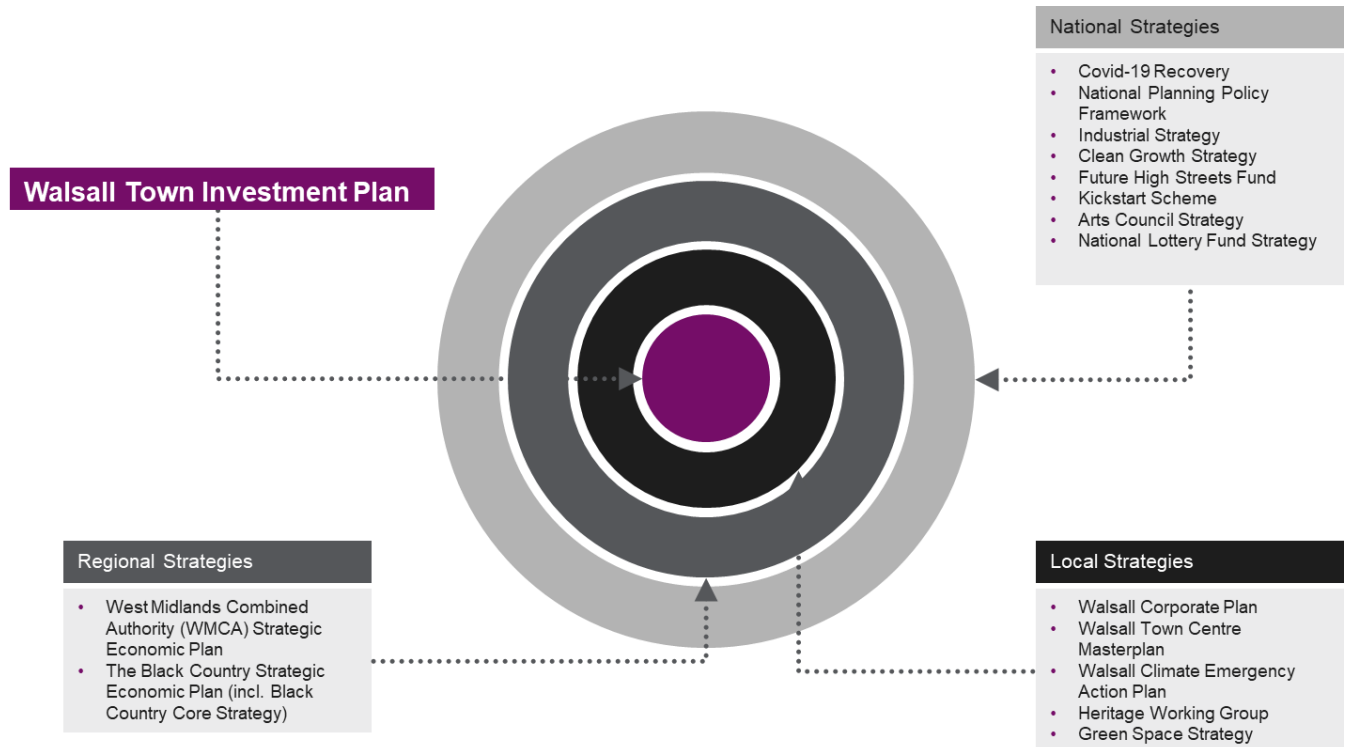
Objective 1. A Centre for Learning and Creativity: Radically extend the towns capacity as a centre for learning and creativity for the borough, providing new targeted skills infrastructure that responds to both community and business needs, ensuring that all enterprising residents excel.

Objective 2. Technology Change and Business Growth: Respond to opportunities arising from technological change and the need for effective digital connectivity, ensuring that Walsall is the choice location for business, including ensuring the town is the ideal platform for entrepreneurial home-grown start-ups, to address the productivity gap.

- **Objective 3. Amenity, Connectivity and Inclusive Growth:** Improve town amenity, connectivity and navigability to encourage active travel and enable new options for accessing employment to ensure inclusive growth.
- **Objective 4. Sustainable and Clean Growth:** Promote green, sustainable and clean growth, ensuring that TIP projects embed localism and are within environmental limits.
- **Objective 5. Active Engaged Communities:** Ensure active communities are engaged at the very heart of our economic success, instilling civic pride and confidence in Walsall.
- **Objective 6. Leading Social, Civic and Economic Centre:** Continue to be the social, civic and economic centre for Walsall Borough that serves a wide catchment, to ensure the success of nearby Bloxwich and other Borough, Black Country and West Midlands centres.

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 for the 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 be aligned 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, Creative industries, Automotive Sector Deals.

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.

Future High Street Fund (FHSF): Walsall Council has received provisional funding for the transformative investment of the rail and bus stations either side of the high street in Walsall town centre to radically improve the visitor experience on the high street, drive wider regenerative benefits and re-position Walsall's economic status as a sub-regional centre.

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 turning and young people on the scheme to be 'job ready'.

Arts Council Strategy 2020 – 2030 is centred around three outcomes: Creative People, Cultural Communities and a creative and cultural country. To achieve this investment will be focussed on four key principles: Ambition & Quality, Inclusivity and Relevance, Dynamism and Environmental Responsibility. The Arts Council have also launched the Culture Recovery Fund to give the sector a vital financial boost.

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 Town Centre Masterplan is a visionary and deliverable masterplan that will provide a framework for physical change in Walsall Town Centre over the next 15-20 years. It will provide a development framework for the re-imagining of Walsall to reverse the decline and ensure Walsall town centre, once again, becomes the town of choice for the borough whilst also attracting visitors from the wider region to maximise the benefits of such a large catchment.

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 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.

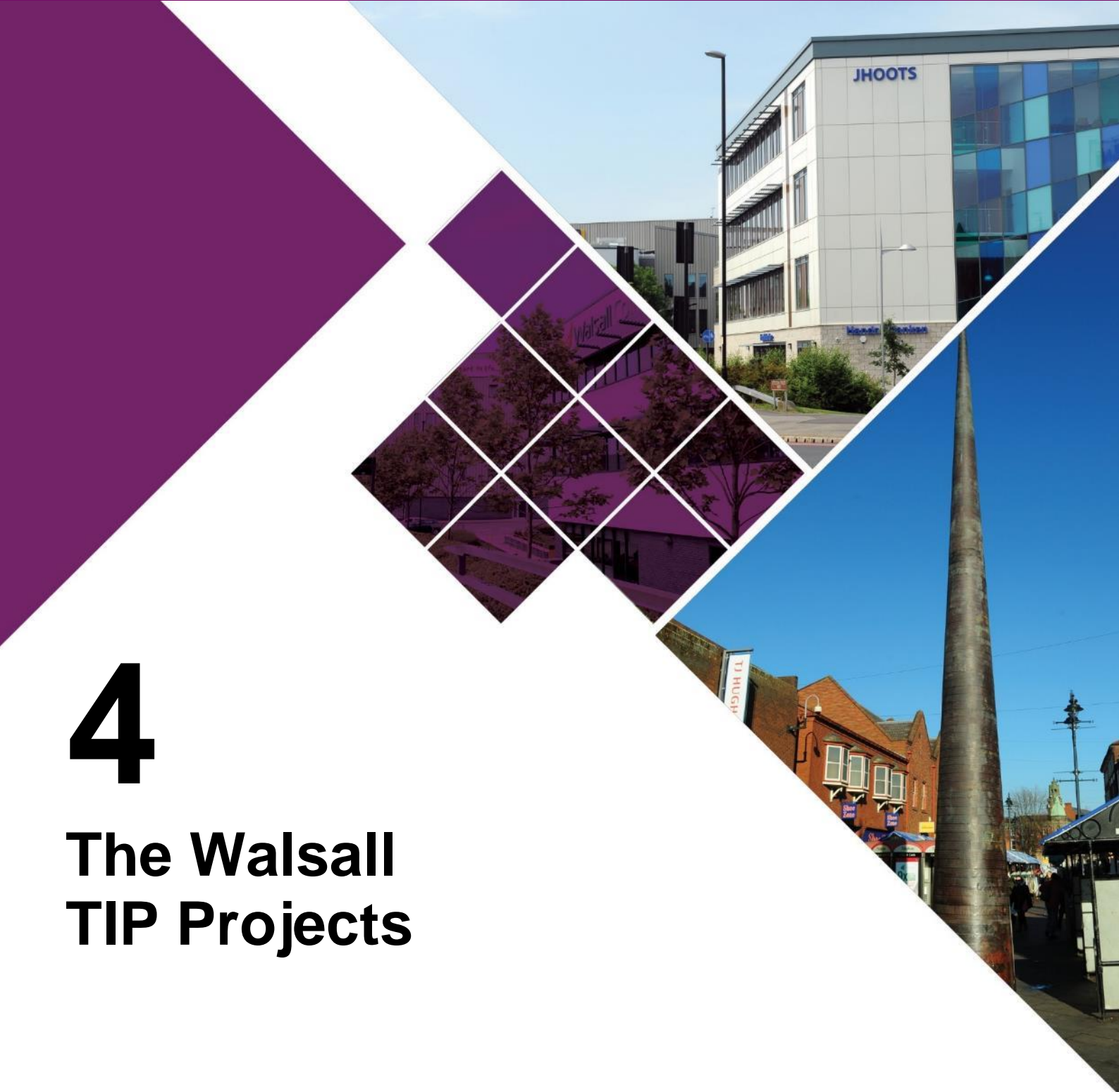
The Walsall Council Heritage Working Group exists to support the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Capacity Programme, which aims to rebuild capacity and resilience within the Council and community, creating a vibrant heritage sector with opportunities to tackle inequalities in health & wellbeing,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

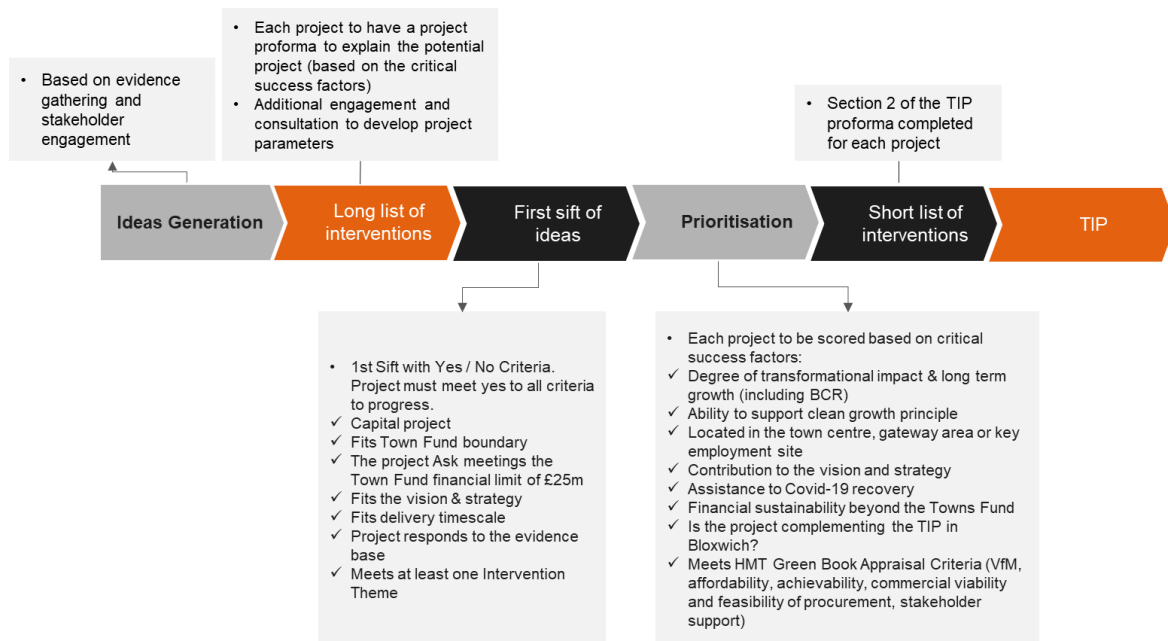
4 The Walsall TIP Projects

4.1 Project Development

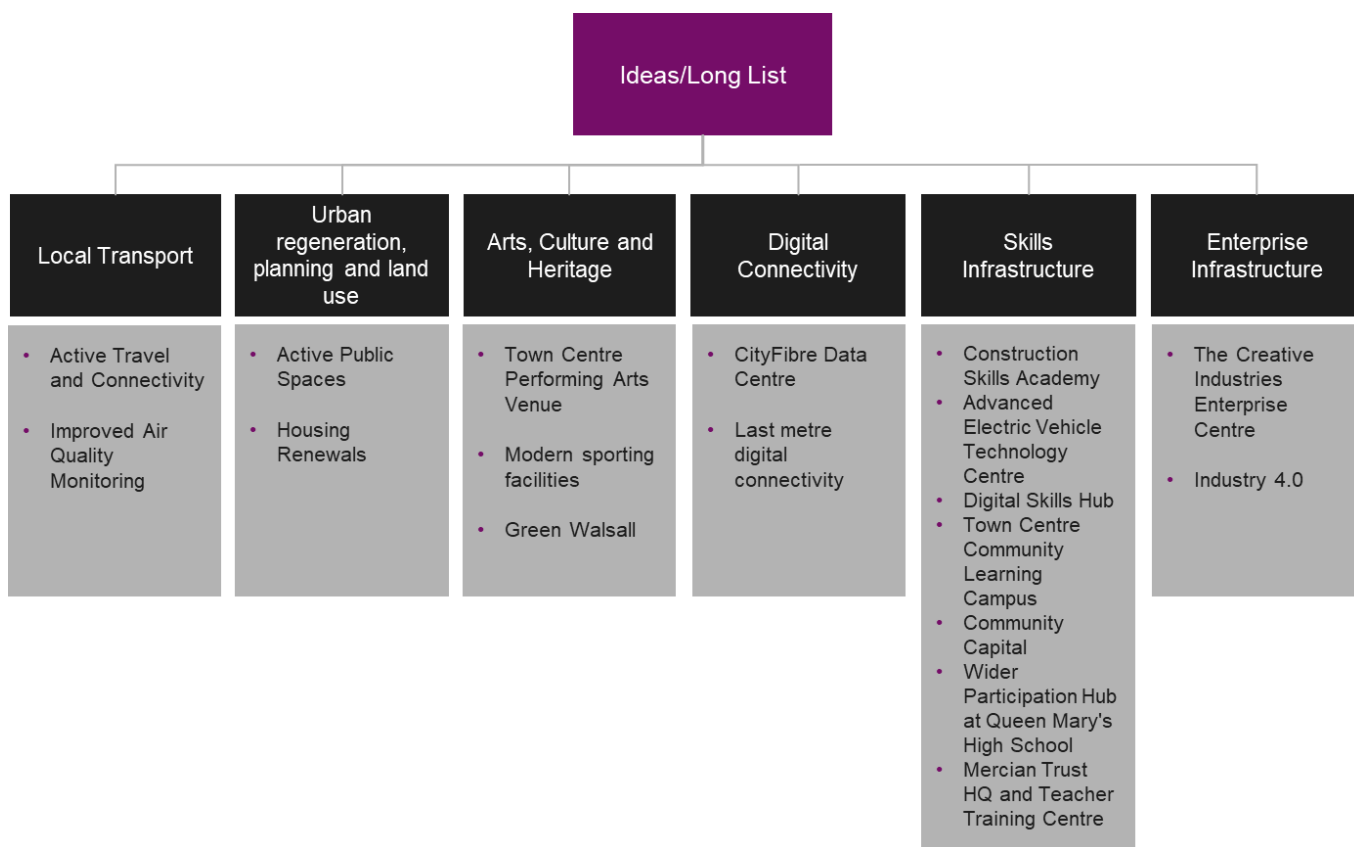
The ideas generation and long list of projects were developed with stakeholders, the Advisory Board, Town Board and project partners. The Advisory Board was tasked to enable the project development process and recommend their views to the Town Board, ensuring alignment with the Town Fund Guidance.

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 eighteen interventions which are listed thematically below.



4.2 Accelerated Stronger Town Fund Interventions

1. **Improving the Economy of the Walsall Town area:** Building on the work of the Walsall Town Centre masterplan, the development of a Walsall Town Area Plan to enhance our public realm. To include wayfinding, public art, lighting, seating, planting etc. This work will inform the development of the Walsall area TIP.
2. **Walsall Town Area Environmental Improvements:** Building from the work in the masterplan, to design and deliver a range of improvements to the environment that promotes a feeling of well-being and safety, increasing footfall that connects people to jobs, training and businesses; and promotes economic growth.
3. **Park & Green Spaces Improvements:** Schedule of interventions in local community parks and green spaces across Walsall Town area; to improve quality of spaces and enhanced outdoor sports facilities, promoting health and wellbeing for residents and the workforce.
4. **Improved Community Safety:** Improvements to CCTV in shopping areas Walsall 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.

4.3 Proposed TIP Long-Term Projects

Following the prioritisation process, nine projects, as listed below, were identified.

The total capital ask stands at £25,000,000, which attracts a capital co-funding amount of £23,665,800, bringing the total capital investment in the town through TIP projects to a total of £48,665,800, approximately twice the ask. 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	Construction Skills Academy	1,400,000	2,514,000	3,914,000
2	Advanced Electric Vehicle Technology Centre	968,200	3,151,800	4,120,000
3	Town Centre Performing Arts Venue	10,000,000	1,250,000	11,250,000
4	Active Travel and Connectivity	1,031,600	Revenue	1,031,600
5	Digital Skills Hub	968,200	13,000,000	13,968,200
6	Town Centre Community Learning Campus	3,000,000	3,750,000	6,750,000
7	The Creative Industries Enterprise Centre	1,900,000	Revenue	1,900,000
8	Active Public Spaces	4,800,000	Revenue	4,800,000
9	Community Capital	932,000	To be determined at Business Case stage	932,000

Project 1. Construction Skills Academy: Providing a range of construction skills training to ensure Walsall residents benefit from the investment in house building and construction in the town and the wider area. Supporting entry level construction skills training, creating apprenticeships and providing training in advanced methods of construction to support supply chain development. Relocating the existing activity at Hollemeadow Avenue in Bloxwich and building on the activity on the Green Lane Campus (close to Walsall Town Centre) and creating a new, improved facility which will provide lasting and sustainable impact on communities accessing training and employment. This will support young and employed adults to gain skills to move into employment as Walsall experiences high demand for construction skills and courses due to the heightened activity in the region and borough.



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 2. Advanced Electric Vehicle Technology Centre: The provision of a new training facility that will meet the skills ambition of the West Midlands to become a centre for advanced vehicle technology. The facility will provide learning opportunities in the new and emerging electric vehicle market and will be delivered in partnership with Walsall College within their Wisemore Campus. This will create the skills to service a more sustainable town, region and nation which is shifting to lower carbon emitting electric vehicles which contribute toward to the Government's Clean Growth and Road to Zero strategy.



Focus groups with local community champions identified a lack of well paid, secure jobs to replace those lost in manufacturing. This project would help to address this.

Project 3. Town Centre Performing Arts Venue: The creation of a modern, multi-use entertainment and performance arena within Walsall Town Centre aligned to the ambitions of the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan. The multi-function 1,000 seat performing arts and cultural space will replace a poorly located out-of-centre existing venue. The new arena will be accessible to all communities and organisations across the borough, located on Walsall high street and adjacent to the transport hubs providing sustainable connectivity for all. This project will drive footfall and spending at the town core, thereby supporting the vitality of the town centre day and evening economy and in doing so, the strategic repositioning of the venue will also free-up capacity for delivering future housing on its current site.



Respondents to the Government's #MyTown survey wanted to see a new music or entertainment venue in the town centre.

Project 4. Active Travel and Connectivity: Delivering interventions which create active connections - including cycling and walking - between Walsall town centre, Bloxwich high street, and local employment sites such as Phoenix 10. 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 road works is being developed using the Accelerated Town Fund interventions. The project will also attract co-funding from the Canal and River trust enhancing the benefits to the residents of the wider Walsall Borough.



Stakeholder engagement with local residents and businesses found that respondents cited a borough-wide cycling network and safer routes between the town centre and green spaces as some of the things that would make the biggest difference to their community.

Project 5. Digital Skills Hub: Creating a new digital skills hub in Walsall town centre. Aimed at accelerating digital growth and a 'ready to go' employable workforce with the skills, knowledge and experience to succeed. This will further build on the Mercian Trust investments in the town centre. The project will provide ample upskilling and lifelong learning opportunities, accessible digital infrastructure and connectivity and will improve future career opportunities.



Stakeholder engagement with local residents and businesses found that respondents wanted to see more jobs, apprenticeships and training – especially for young people.

Project 6. Town Centre Community Learning Campus: Aligned to the ambitions of the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan this project will see the development of a fit for purpose adult/community education facility on the high street. Creating a new and improved offer that is accessible to all the borough and will attract more people to the town; providing day and night economic activity; and deliver wider education and learning strategies.



Stakeholder engagement with local residents and businesses found that respondents cited a lack of jobs, education and training opportunities as some of the key things holding Walsall back.

Project 7. The Creative Industries Enterprise Centre: Creation of a makerspace, creative incubator and skills development hub. Aimed at small enterprises and local residents and to be integrated within the wider ecosystem of support to our creative industries sector. Providing a high street presence, with the potential to create Walsall's version of the Digbeth Custard Factory or Bristol Engine Shed. This will build on the Mercian Trust investments in the St Matthew's area of Walsall.



Focus groups with local volunteers identified a need to diversify the high street to become a community space and not just a retail environment.

Project 8: Active Public Spaces: Developing an inviting, engaging and quality public space which better links the high street to the New Art Gallery and edge of town retail. Aligned to the ambitions of the Town Centre Masterplan this project will help to change the Walsall Experience through physical and visual links which draw people into the town and Waterfront. This high-quality space will put Walsall New Art Gallery at its heart and improve this critical space for town centre users and canal boaters. The project will deliver facilities which will encourage boaters to visit and extend their stays around the Canal Basin, creating a vibrant and active waterfront.



Stakeholder engagement with local residents and businesses found that respondents wanted to see a higher quality environment, cleaner public realm and a more attractive town centre.

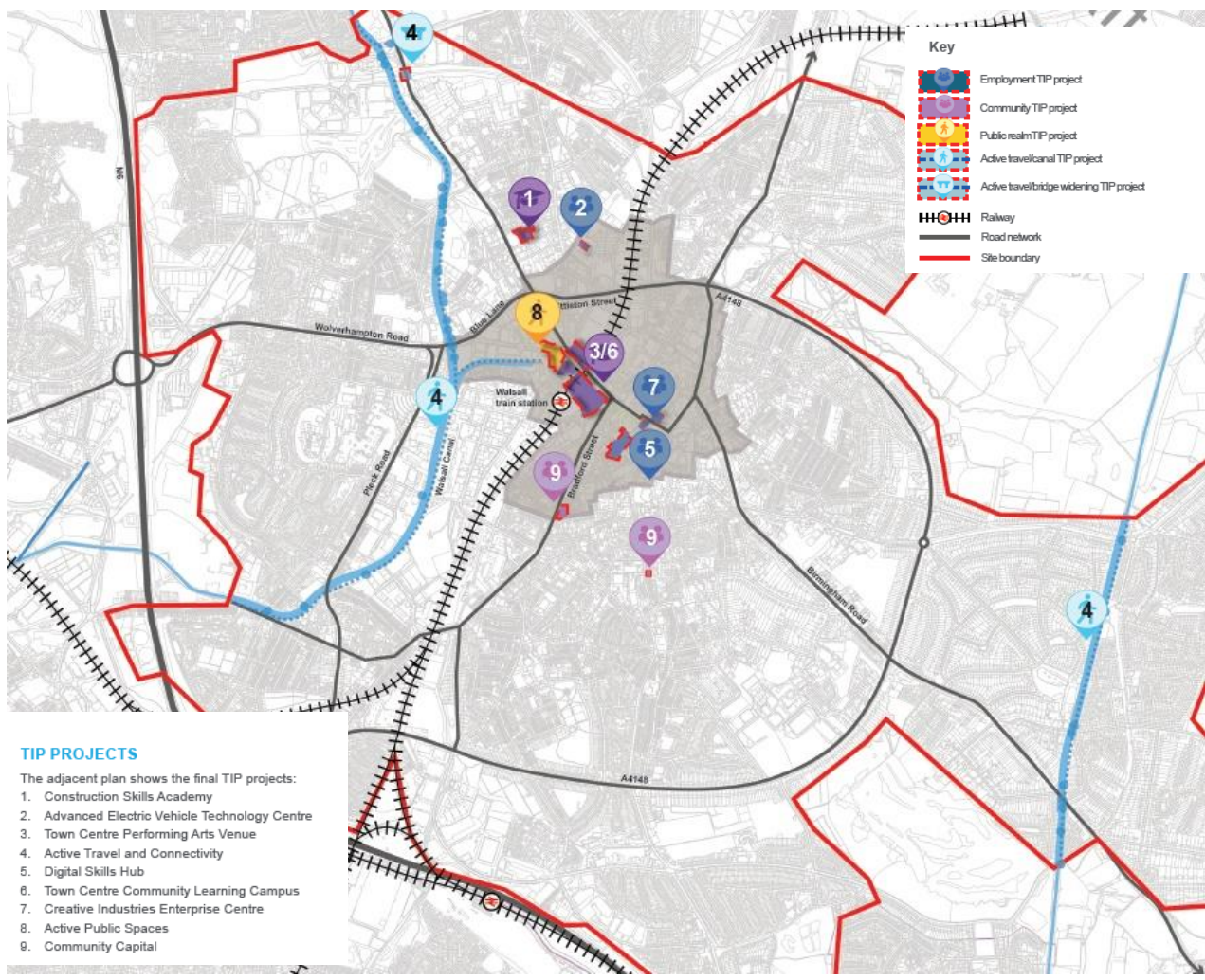
Project 9. Community Capital: Grants programme, seeks submissions for funding from local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and social enterprise organisations. All supported activities must be linked to supporting the economic development of local people or companies and meet town deal capital rules 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.

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: Construction Skills Academy

Project 2: Advanced Electric Vehicle Technology Centre

Project 3: Town Centre Performing Arts Venue

Project 4: Active Travel and Connectivity

Project 5: Digital Skills Hub

Project 6: Town Centre Community Learning Campus

Project 7: The Creative Industries Enterprise Centre

Project 8: Active Public Spaces

Project 9: Community Capital

Walsall TIP Project Alignment									
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Challenges									
Productivity and Business Innovation	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Deprivation	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓		✓✓
Skills and Workforce Mobility	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Sustainable Town	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Covid-19 Response	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓✓		✓✓
Opportunities									
Growing Population	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓
Empowered Communities	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Spatial Growth Opportunities		✓✓		✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	
Sectoral Strengths	✓✓	✓✓			✓✓		✓		
Objectives									
Centre for Learning and Creativity	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		
Technology Change and Business Growth	✓✓	✓✓		✓	✓		✓✓		✓✓
Amenity, Connectivity and Inclusive Growth	✓	✓		✓✓				✓✓	✓✓
Sustainable and Clean Growth	✓	✓✓		✓✓				✓✓	✓
Active Engaged Communities	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
Leading Social, Civic and Economic Centre	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓

✓✓ = 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 Board, 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 place due to the Covid-19 restrictions, social distancing and lockdown measures. To overcome this, a variety of local networks were utilised to help to share the online survey and drive levels of engagement. This is outlined below.

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 Walsall and Bloxwich.

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**. Some 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)*
- 5. Lack of education and training opportunities (10)*

Q: What do you feel would make the biggest difference to your community?

A: Opportunity and hope to succeed – vision that the communities believe in – Economy, Education, Employment – lets create the right environment for communities to succeed - Made in Walsall Borough.

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

A: A community place to go and belong with no huge agenda. A space for school and community performance, a space for opt in education.

5.2.2 Focus groups

In addition to the survey, focus groups were also organised. 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**. Some of the feedback provided is shown below:

"A lot of good manufacturing jobs have gone and not been replaced. There are a shortage of well-paid jobs and people don't think there are enough opportunities out there to get on."

5.2.3 Interviews

The following interviews have been carried out:

- 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**. Some of the feedback provided is shown below:

"There is a good story to tell about Walsall's heritage and it should be a source of pride."

"Waterfront developments and the open square by the art gallery could be a catalyst for significant change."

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, 100 responses have been received for Walsall. These are summarised in **Appendix H**. Some of the feedback provided is shown below.

“Build a lot more bars, restaurants and cafes along the canal. Walsall needs its own version of Brindley Place. This would draw visitors in and make the town a more pleasant and desirable place to live.”

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

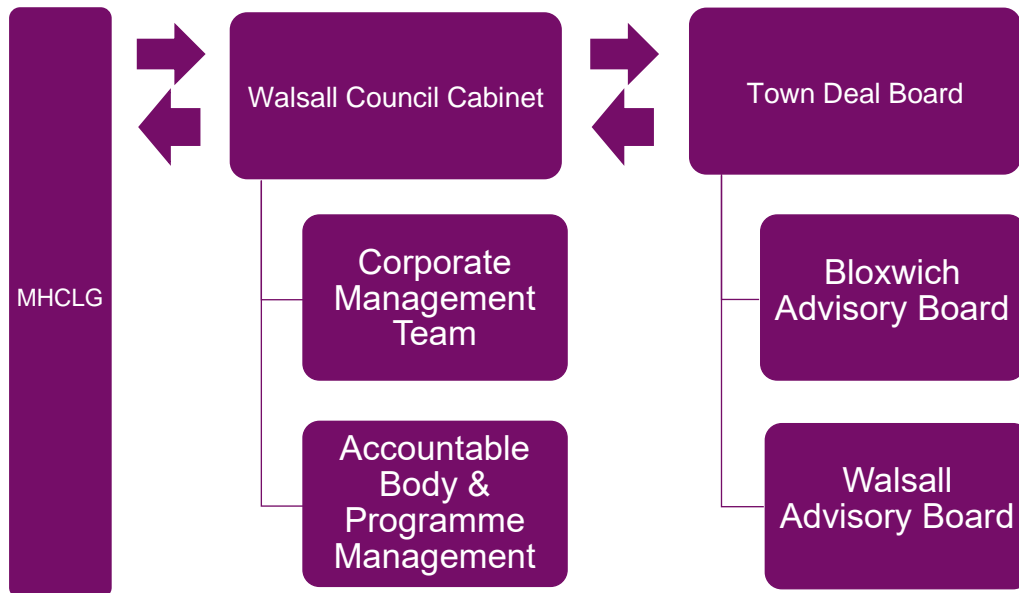
Delivery Approach

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.

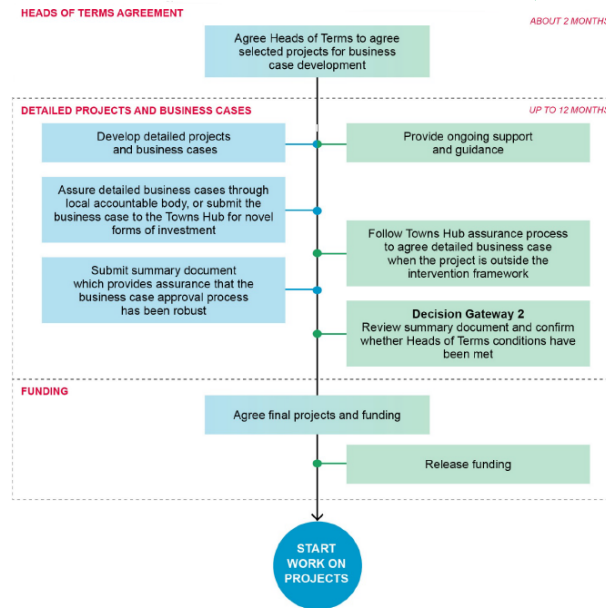


The roles of the accountable groups are outlined in the table below.

	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 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	Construction Skills Academy	Walsall College	WMBC	Land to be acquired	Benchmark costs	Not anticipating any issues	Site abnormalities	Identified	No significant issues
2	Advanced Electric Vehicle Technology Centre	Walsall College	WMBC	Land to be acquired	Benchmark costs	Not anticipating any issues	Site abnormalities	Identified	No significant issues
3	Town Centre Performing Arts Venue	WMBC	Walsall College	Identified owned by WMBC, further studies required on suitability	Benchmark costs	Not anticipating any issues	Site abnormalities, railway approvals	Additional capital funding to be identified (such as Arts Council)	Revenue funding
4	Active Travel and Connectivity	WMBC / Canal & River Trust	West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)	Works on WMBC land and Canal and River Trust assets. Land to be acquired from WMCA	Benchmark costs and cost plan	Not anticipating any issues	Site abnormalities, traffic management	Additional capital funding to be identified	No significant issues
5	Digital Skills Hub	Vine Trust	WMBC	Site identified	Benchmark costs	Not anticipating any issues	Site abnormalities	Identified	No significant issues
6	Town Centre Community Learning Campus	Walsall College	WMBC	Identified owned by WMBC, further studies required on suitability	Benchmark costs	Not anticipating any issues	Site abnormalities, railway approvals	Identified	No significant issues
7	The Creative Industries Enterprise Centre	Urban Hax	WMBC	Property identified and to be acquired	Benchmark costs	Heritage constraints to be met	Site abnormalities	Additional capital funding to be identified (such as Heritage Lottery)	No significant issues
8	Active Public Spaces	WMBC / Canal & River Trust	n/a	Land in WMBC ownership. Potential acquisition of additional land.	Benchmark costs	Not anticipating any issues	Site abnormalities, traffic management	Additional capital funding to be identified	No significant issues
9	Community Capital	WMBC	Voluntary Sector	Focus sites identified	Estimate	Not anticipating any issues	No issues identified	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.

Walsall 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	
Construction Skills Academy																									
Feasibility																									
Business case																									
Detailed design (RIBA Stage 2/3) and planning																									
Land acquisition																									
Procurement																									
Construction																									
Advanced Electric Vehicle Technology Training Centre																									
Feasibility																									
Business Case																									
Detailed design (RIBA Stage 2/3) and planning																									
Acquisitions																									
Procurement																									
Construction																									
Town Centre Performing Arts Venue																									
Feasibility																									
Business Case																									
Detailed design (RIBA Stage 2/3) and planning																									
Acquisitions																									
Procurement																									
Construction																									
Active Travel and Connectivity																									
Feasibility																									
Business Case																									
Detailed design (RIBA Stage 2/3) and planning																									
Acquisitions																									
Procurement																									
Construction																									
Digital Skills Hub																									
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Business Case																									
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Construction																									
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Construction																									
The Creative Industries Enterprise Centre																									
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Acquisitions																									
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Construction																									
Active Public Spaces																									
Feasibility																									
Business Case																									
Detailed design (RIBA Stage 2/3) and planning																									
Acquisitions																									
Procurement																									
Construction																									
Community Capital																									
Set up capital fund governance																									
Feasibility/Project Scoping																									
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	£4.16	£9.41	£11.07	£0.19	£0.17	£25.00
	Financial profile for match/co-funding - In £million, insert number only	£6.50	£7.20	£6.92	£3.05	£0.00	£0.00	£23.67
	OVERALL TOTAL	£6.50	£11.36	£16.32	£14.12	£0.19	£0.17	£48.67

