

Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

15th December 2014

Black Country Propositions

The Black Country is in the right place at the right time. We are at the heart of an internationally competitive economy with global high value manufacturing companies and a vibrant supply chain. Our vision of the Black Country in 2033 is to grow that world class supply chain with the world class skills it demands. Our 30 year vision also includes the transformation of the environment, higher quality housing and a genuinely inclusive society.

We need to be bolder and more ambitious if we are to deliver that vision. Over the next six years we will pursue a programme which will enable us to go further, faster: creating HVM-City; developing a network of new urban garden villages; delivering a transport system fit for the 2020s; establishing a brownfield centre of excellence.

Action of this scale and ambition is needed if the Black Country is to take advantage of the unprecedented opportunities available to it. They include: the arrival of HS2; the presence of clusters of world class businesses in automotive and aerospace; and the potential for radical place-changing.

Our proximity to Birmingham is a key factor in our economy, housing market and connectivity. A combined authority encompassing the Black Country and Birmingham will enable us to exploit that synergy and act with the confidence needed to deliver our vision and contribute to national economic growth.

Our strengths

Our location, our world class businesses, and our stable workforce provide the foundations for significant economic growth. We have a prime central location at the heart of the national road and rail network and with a major airport. We have leading businesses in sectors with opportunities for export and on-shoring, particularly in high value manufacturing. And our workforce is renowned for its experience and reliability.

Our opportunities

The Black Country Bullet highlights the world class supply chain that already exists in this area. But there are real opportunities to further develop that supply chain by, for example, manufacturing more parts for the state of the art automotive engines that are now being built in the Black Country.

HS2 will have a massive impact:

- Strengthening Birmingham's economic dynamism as a regional centre;
- Driving demand for additional housing and employment sites across the region;
- Enhancing the Black Country's connectivity.

The presence of an HVM corridor running through the Black Country provides a spatial focus for automotive and aerospace businesses, enabling the development of a number of clusters of companies with significant potential for innovation and growth.

Our brownfield sites are often referred to as a challenge. In fact provide an opportunity for radical place-shaping to enable innovative housing and employment developments.

Our propositions

We have a growth plan to exploit these opportunities focusing on five core propositions. They are:

- Accelerating the growth of businesses in our manufacturing corridor, with its clusters in the aerospace and automotive sectors. The Black Country's **HVM-City** will rival London's Tech-City in terms of its economic dynamism and impact.
- Developing a network of **Urban Garden Villages** which deliver a step change in the quality of our residential offer and help meet the housing needs of the wider region.
- Creating a national **Brownfield Centre of Excellence** to deliver our place-changing ambitions and maximise the economic benefits of doing so.
- Implementing **Fit for Purpose Skills System** that turns the rhetoric of employer leadership into reality.
- Investing in our **Transport Infrastructure** to support the UK's national and international growth ambitions.

These growth ambitions are underpinned by our wider commitment to a programme of **Public Service Reform**. The aims of that programme are to respond to reductions in public expenditure by enabling communities to become less dependent on the state, and to contribute to and benefit from economic growth.

HVM-City

Our ambition is to do everything we can to enable the further growth of high value businesses in the manufacturing corridor that runs through the heart of the Black Country. Our **NEXT STEP** will be to build on our high quality evidence base and get an even better understanding of our business clusters and innovation ecosystem. This will inform the development of a bespoke programme of business support and site provision to meet the specific needs of individual Black Country businesses and to attract new investment to the area.

Urban Garden Villages

We are determined to exploit the space available in the Black Country to transform our residential offer – using a large scale approach to drive value and confidence. We will focus on the quality of schools and the environment as well as the new housing stock. Our **NEXT STEP** will be to identify potential sites and invite developers to help us create a new partnership framework to achieve our ambition. This will be place-changing at its most radical, changing perceptions as well as the physical environment.

Brownfield Centre of Excellence

Our place-changing ambitions – to create urban villages and HVM-City – will require a step change in our performance in bringing brownfield land back into productive use. This means new techniques and new funding models. This challenge is not confined to the Black Country, but we face the biggest challenge and the biggest opportunity. Our **NEXT STEP** will be to identify a University Partner with whom we will establish a Brownfield Centre of Excellence which will enable us to develop the capacity to deliver our ambitions, to make that experience available to other places and to benefit economically from doing so. This will build on learning from institutions such as the Montreal Centre of Excellence in Brownfield Reclamation and the Frieberg Interdisciplinary Centre for Brownfield Reclamation.

Fit for Purpose Skills System

We need a skills system that will both support the needs of Black Country businesses with the ambition to grow and enable Black Country residents to benefit from that growth. We will build a new partnership between businesses, schools, colleges and other training providers. Our **NEXT STEP** will be to develop a network of “Skills Factories”. Led by an industry specialist, each “Factory” will use its knowledge of local businesses to enable the provision of bite-sized provision to meet their needs.

We will also develop:

- A concerted drive to work with schools to improve the quality of Information, Advice and Guidance focussing on our growth sectors.
- A programme to enable improved engagement of businesses and schools including, for example, better representation of business on governing bodies.

Transport Infrastructure

We have a new approach to transport in the Black Country which will:

- Recognise the national importance of our motorway, rail and air links;
- Meet the local transport needs of today and tomorrow.

The key elements include:

- Better utilisation of the M6 Toll, the M54-M6 toll link and the Western Orbital;
- A refreshed approach to rapid transit which reflects our growth corridors and other local transport requirements;
- Steps to maximise the benefits of capacity on the West Coast Main Line as a result of HS2;
- An improved cycle network.

Our **NEXT STEP** will be to agree a transport strategy which meets the needs of today rather than those of 20 years ago.

Public Service Reform

The move to a combined authority provides an opportunity to develop a more ambitious approach to public service reform. In order to prepare for that opportunity and to share experience across the Black Country our **NEXT STEP** will be to share our experience in taking action to help vulnerable

younger children from struggling homes to get a better chance in life and explore the potential of a Black Country-wide approach.

We will also

- Share learning from our other transformation initiatives and explore the scope for more joint work;
- Explore with government the appetite for co-designing a public service reform programme in the Black Country or wider West Midlands.