



The Economic Strategy for Worcestershire

2008 – 2018

In ten years time, technology-led growth will have contributed to the sustainable development of Worcestershire and strengthened its role as an economic driver for the region – acting as a catalyst for all sectors of the economy and areas of the County to benefit and providing well paid and highly skilled jobs and high quality of life for residents

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Introduction

Worcestershire is located in the heart of England and possesses both urban and rural characteristics. The County is home to spectacular rural features such as Malvern Hills, one of the Britain's most picturesque geological features. The rural landscape consists of combination of fields, orchards, woodlands, meadows, ancient forests and rivers. This is interspersed with thriving town and villages possessing a variety of characteristics. As a County Worcestershire has high quality of schooling, high tech employment opportunities low crime rate, low unemployment rates, there is a track record of achieving success through partnership and there is a great potential to increase the economic success. However, there are challenges too. These include significant levels of worklessness, dependency on vulnerable sectors in certain areas (particularly low value-added manufacturing and agriculture) and gaps in skills in high tech and management skills.

Therefore, the primary focus of the Worcestershire Economic Strategy is to address the key economic challenges facing the county, particularly focusing on intervention that can begin now to have a positive impact over the next 20 years. The strategy is intended to be an integrated document and whilst the central focus is the economy, inevitably there is a broader frame of reference that incorporates social, environmental and spatial factors. Similarly in policy terms the document is intended to complement a number of important strategies that cover the county. Specifically after the review of the Regional Economic Strategy there is a need to refresh the County Economic Strategy to reflect changing circumstances and to align priorities where relevant.

The production and co-ordination of the strategy is being led by Economy and Transport Theme Group of Worcestershire's Local Strategic Partnership and also the creation and delivery of the actions follows very active partnership approach with the understanding and recognition that not one organisation or agency can succeed alone in achieving the vision and ambitions. Acknowledgement should be given to Advantage West Midlands as one of the key partners along with other members of the Theme Group such as District Councils, Business Link, Chambers of Commerce, Learning and Skills Council and representation from the Voluntary Sector.

An Economic Strategy for Worcestershire

2008 – 2018

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An Economic Strategy for Worcestershire 2008 – 2018

1.1 Vision

The Worcestershire's Economic Vision

The vision for Worcestershire set out in the previous Economic Strategy was that:

“In ten years time, Worcestershire will be economic driver for the region – with a prosperous and sustainable economy, driven by technology – led enterprises, offering well paid and highly skilled and high quality of life for its residents”

The above was a very aspirational vision and it is envisaged that this ambition will remain and vision for technology-led growth creating a high skill, high wage economy in Worcestershire remained realistic and achievable. This transformation is now underway, and the vision can be strengthened and broadened through highlighting a stronger emphasis on sustainable development, and using the technology led growth underway to strengthen economic competitiveness across all sectors and areas of the County. Furthermore, as the economic development and regeneration activities are a continuous process and also in view of the new Regional Economic Strategy we propose the following new vision:

“In ten years time, technology-led growth will have contributed to the sustainable development of Worcestershire and strengthened its role as an economic driver for the region – acting as a catalyst for all sectors of the economy and areas of the County to benefit and providing well paid and highly skilled jobs and high quality of life for residents”

It is reasoned that economic prosperity in Worcestershire would support improvements in the Quality of Life and well being of all residents of Worcestershire. However, economic growth and prosperity will need to be pursued with due attention to the natural and built environment, which is an attractor for residents and visitors. The activities related to the Economic Strategy will seek to balance the opportunities and needs of the County.

1.2 Context

a. The Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of the Economic Strategy for Worcestershire is to provide a shared vision, framework for developing and transforming the economy of the County over the next ten years. Specifically, the Strategy aims to:

1. provide a link between the Regional Economic Strategy and sub regional delivery of economic development activity, ensuring that Worcestershire takes advantage of and adds value to the regional economy
2. ensure the delivery of the economic element of Worcestershire's Community Strategy
3. provide a context and framework for complementary 'local' strategies
4. provide a strategic context to the Economic Delivery Plan / Local Area Agreement

These strategic linkages are set out in diagram 1.

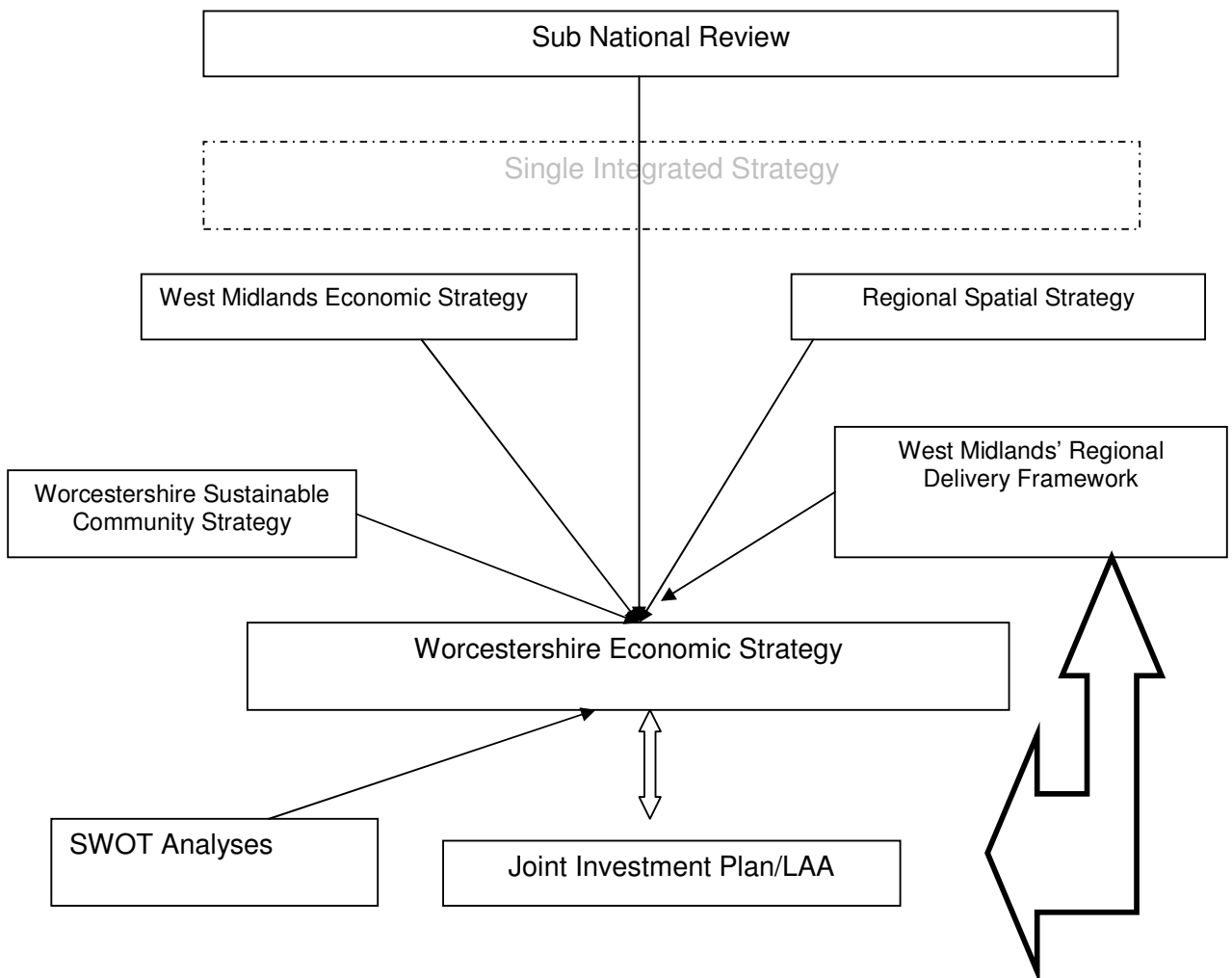
1.3 How the Strategy will operate

1. Scope

The Strategy is built upon Worcestershire's distinctive strengths and offers an aspirational and ambitious vision of the economy of Worcestershire in ten years time – technology-led growth contributing to the sustainable development of Worcestershire and strengthened its role as an economic driver for the region – enabling the delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy in Worcestershire through a range of 'local' strategies, Joint Investment Plan/LAA and enabling Worcestershire's distinctive strengths (as developed through those local strategies) to add value to the Regional Economic Strategy.

2. Delivery and Performance Monitoring

The need for delegation of responsibility and resources to the sub – region to deliver agreed economic priorities has gained significance. The Government's Sub National Review of Economic Development has subsequently reinforced the same. In addition, the process mapping work undertaken indicated the need for a County level Action Plan. This Joint Investment Plan would form the basis for identifying roll forward Local Area Agreement outcomes and will act as the delivery mechanism for this Strategy. Progress towards achieving the vision will be monitored through specific measures and outcomes in the Joint Investment Plan. The relationship between Regional and County Level strategies and delivery is summarised below:



1.4 Objectives and Spatial Focus

The revised Regional Economic Strategy sets out three main strategic components of the economy (business, place and people) with a fourth underpinning component (powerful voice):

<p>Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Seizing market opportunities ✓ Improving competitiveness ✓ Harnessing knowledge 	<p>Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increasing Birmingham's Competitiveness ✓ Improving infrastructure ✓ Sustainable communities 	<p>People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sustainable living ✓ Raising ambitions and aspirations ✓ Achieving full potential & opportunities for all
Powerful Voice		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Improving the evidence base for policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Engaging UK and International decision makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Position the West Midlands as a global centre where people and businesses

A significant change in the revised Strategy, is a spatial focus with the following spatial priorities identified:

Primary:

- i. Areas of market failure and disadvantage (Regeneration Zones including the Rural Regeneration Zone)
- ii. Concentrations of knowledge assets (including the Central Technology Belt)
- iii. Birmingham

Secondary (more limited investment)

1. Growth Points and strategic centres (including Worcester)
2. Towns undergoing economic restructuring (including Kidderminster and Redditch)
3. Market towns as a focus for rural regeneration

To align with the Regional Economic Strategy Objectives, the following three Strategic Objectives vis-à-vis Worcestershire have been identified. The delivery mechanisms of these are linked and interdependent:

Business – *promoting technology-led growth benefiting all sectors and parts of the County*

Place – *supporting the sustainable development of the County through infrastructure development (especially transport) and establishing Worcester as an accessible West Midlands Growth Point*

People – *removing barriers to employment and improving skills*

These would be underpinned by a fourth objective:

Powerful voice - *ensuring that Worcestershire's economic interests are effectively represented at all levels*

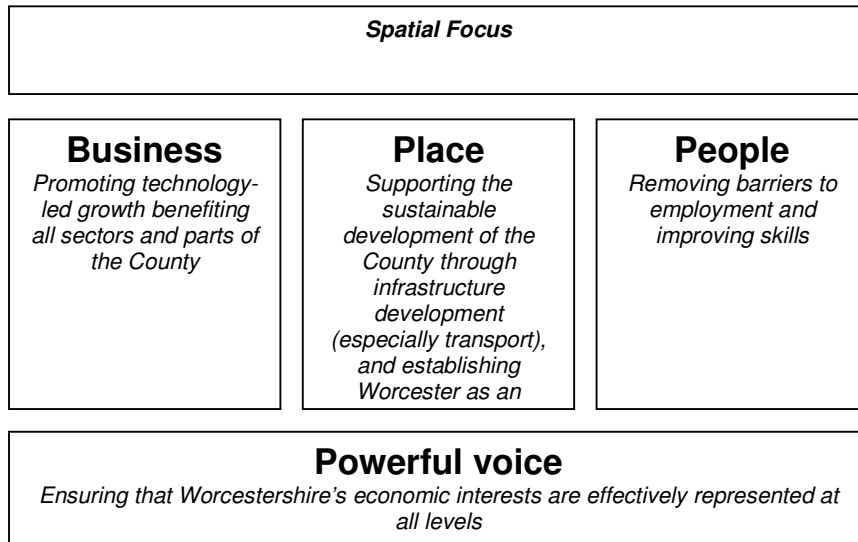
Spatial Focus

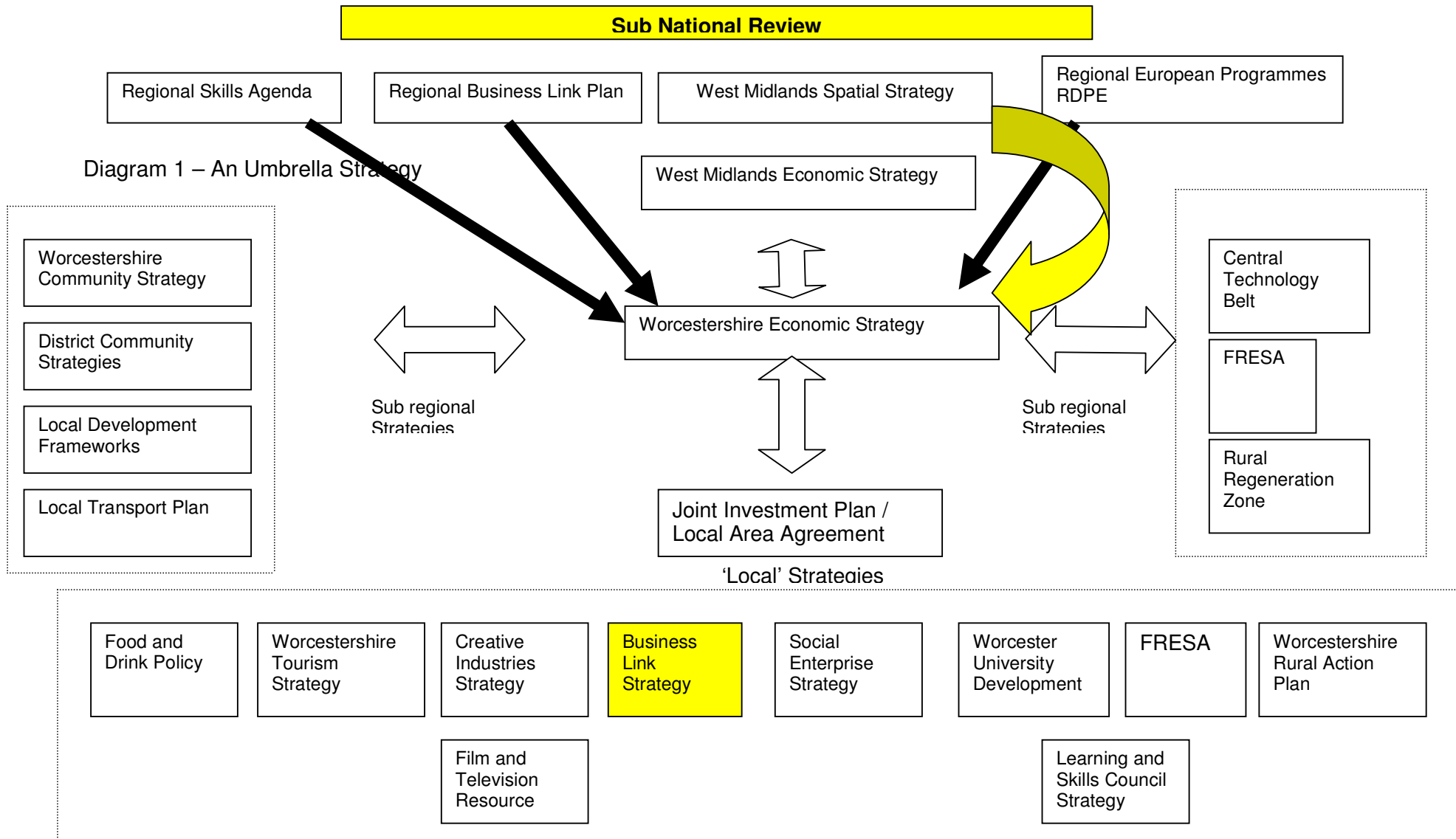
In order to align with the revised Regional Economic Strategy and the future role of AWM in bringing together spatial and economic strategy at the sub

regional level, there are strong arguments for the revised County Economic Strategy to have an explicit spatial dimension. This will require further development but could include:

- Areas of market failure and disadvantage – Rural Regeneration Zone
- Concentrations of knowledge assets – Central Technology Belt
- Strategic Growth Point – Worcester City
- Towns undergoing economic restructuring – Kidderminster, Redditch
- Larger towns providing a focus for economic activity – Bromsgrove, Droitwich Malvern
- Market towns as a focus for rural regeneration – Pershore, Evesham, Bewdley, Stourport, Tenbury

The objectives and spatial focus can be shown as:





As an umbrella, the Strategy forms a framework for co-ordinating sub regional and local strategies towards a single vision for Worcestershire's economy – increasing their impact and effectiveness. Many of the actions in the Strategy will be included in, and delivered through, these local strategies.

2. Economic Context

2.1 Worcestershire's Distinctive Strengths

a. The natural and built environment.

Worcestershire is located in the heart of England and has a beautiful natural landscape; this is a real asset in attracting visitors, businesses and workers into the County. The built environment is often historic and appealing. In many cases, the towns have even greater potential for environmental distinctiveness. The rural landscape consists of combination of fields, orchards, woodlands, meadows, ancient forests and rivers. Both the rural and urban environment contribute to a high quality of life in Worcestershire.

b. Urban/rural opportunities.

A major asset of the County is its complementary mix of the urban and rural. As well as making possible the provision of interdependent services, this mix gives benefits to both local businesses as well as their workforce.

c. Innovation and knowledge transfer

Worcestershire has a track record of innovation and knowledge transfer. DERA/QinetiQ at Malvern continues to be responsible for many of the technological advances that have driven the world economy. Through the development of Malvern Hills Science Park, Bromsgrove Technology Park and the wider Central Technology Belt, we intend to ensure that these developments are 'spun out' to enable full economic benefit to the region.

d. The local business base.

Worcestershire has a history of entrepreneurship with both world-renowned businesses as well as smaller indigenous enterprises. An historical strength of the County has been traditional industries, these needs to be supported whilst they move towards a greater emphasis on innovation and technology in order to increase the added value within the local economy. Successful diversification is reducing some of the vulnerability of the County, for example, a growing proportion of employment is in the service sectors and high technology industries attracted into the County through the Central Technology Belt.

d. Robust communities.

It is recognised that there are inequalities across the County and that there is a need to strengthen both urban and rural communities to cope with economic change. However, regeneration programmes have made a good start in developing the infrastructure and capacity within these communities to transform themselves. We will build upon this strength and roll out examples of good practice across the County.

e. Partnership Working

Worcestershire has a track record of effective partnership working – particularly in the delivery of economic development and regeneration through Worcestershire Economic Partnership. The creation of the Planning, Economy

and Performance Directorate as a result of restructuring of Worcestershire County Council about two years ago has given a significantly higher profile County Council's commitment & focused approach towards economic development issues. This is also complemented by the Worcestershire Partnership structure, which adds strategic context and added value to this work. Key responsibility for the stewardship of the Worcestershire Economic Strategy lies with the Economy and Transport Theme Group. Responsibility for monitoring the delivery of the Strategy lies with Worcestershire Economic Partnership, with much of the delivery through local strategies and partnerships.

f. Worcester City

Worcester City is a vibrant regional centre well placed at the heart of England. Its position on the River Severn established Worcester's importance as a centre of trade and industry for centuries. With its enviable position, attractive rural setting, vibrant local economy and host of business opportunities Worcester is considered to be a very lucrative place for companies to invest and grow. Situated between junctions 6 and 7 of the M5 and close to the M40 and M50 makes it easily accessible to other parts of the Country. Two railway stations within the city offer an alternative way of travel accessing London Paddington, Birmingham and the NEC network. Birmingham International Airport and the Eurohub are within an hour's ride, with direct flights to the USA and 28 European countries. There are many developments on the horizon for Worcester but to maximise their potential, additional resources will be needed. Worcester has been designated sub-regional Growth Point in West Midlands Spatial Strategy and will need to accommodate somewhere in order of 7000 – 12000 additional homes by 2026. The expansion of the University of Worcester on to a second campus greatly enhances the local skills offer and attracts more young people to the city. The University of Worcester and Worcester College of Technology will also act as a catalyst to attract high and new technology businesses. Worcester City has a higher than average percentage of highly qualified people which will enable the city to fulfil the demands of High Tech Businesses besides fulfilling the demands of businesses in Central Technology Belt, High Tech Corridor, Malvern Hills Science Park and Bromsgrove Technology Park.

g. Worcester Library

The library project will see the first super library in England. The aim is to create a learning and technical resource centre that can be accessed by the public, students, graduates and businesses – all under one roof. This will compliment the second campus of the University of Worcester which is also under construction, on the site of the old Worcester Royal Infirmary in Castle Street. This is an example of local stakeholders pooling resources and demonstrating real added value to all local communities, highlighting what can be achieved with additional resources. The library will be able to serve local population whilst providing a very modern facility to fulfil the research needs of local businesses.

h. Housing Growth in Worcestershire

Worcestershire has housing market characteristics of high prices, high demand and acute affordability problems as per the Regional Spatial Strategy. Worcestershire has experienced significant economic change and the towns of Kidderminster, Redditch have been identified as Local Regeneration Areas where the aim is to improve their longer-term economic prospects. The Worcester City has been identified as one of the West Midlands “New Growth Points” in the RSS and will act as a sub-regional focus for longer term growth in the County. As well as a development node in the Central Technology Belt and one of the County’s Strategic Centres, the City is also developing a range of other services to meet the needs of the wider sub region

To fulfil its role as focus for balanced development, the growth of Worcester City will need to extend beyond its administrative boundaries and this will need to be strategically managed, if development is to be sustainable in environmental, social and economic terms. This will require cross boundary cooperation between the authorities of Worcester City, Malvern Hills and Wychavon in the development of Joint Core Strategy (in draft stage), to ensure that development takes place at optimum locations and that necessary transport and other supporting infrastructure is provided.

In the case of Redditch the town is designated as a WMRSS Settlement of Significant Development. Development given the scale of housing required to meet its needs.

The West Midlands RSS Phase Two Revision – Draft Preferred Option December 2007 proposes that Worcestershire should make provision for 36,600 dwellings over the period 2002 – 2026. Following submission of the document to government, concerns were expressed at Ministerial level about the amount of housing growth put forward for the Region in the light of the government’s agenda to increase house building across the country. In view of this the Government Office for the West Midlands has commissioned further work by consultants to look at options that could deliver higher housing numbers and this will be considered as part of the public examination into the plan This is expected to take place in April 2009. Clearly whatever the final housing figures are for the County, delivering them will require major investment in associated infrastructure. This will particularly be the case at Worcester and Redditch. Both settlements are in line for major growth. As part of the supporting documents, the draft Implementation Plan sets out a list of regionally significant infrastructure requirements arising from the RSS Preferred Option. In Worcestershire these include improvements to the A4440 Southern Link Road and platform lengthening and station enhancements at Bromsgrove Station.

2.2. Barriers to Economic Development

A major issue is the loss of skilled young people from the County, through lack of Higher Education and job opportunities, and through lack of affordable housing in rural areas. **Of those young people remaining in the County, 21% are either not in employment, education or training, or are in jobs**

without training, severely limiting their longer term career prospects (need clarification). Higher level skills in some sectors and areas are lacking, including for example management and skilled trades in engineering, manufacturing and construction, and the low average wage levels in the County are a disincentive and limit the overall growth of the economy. Historically, long term unemployment in Worcestershire is below national and regional however, worklessness is a considerable issue in the county. There are around 20,000 unemployed people on Incapacity Benefits and about 5000 economically inactive Lone Parents living in the county demanding our attention. There are 22.5% of residents of Worcestershire having poor numeracy and literacy levels. External awareness of the County and what it has to offer are low, hampering inward investment and restricting the growth in the Tourism economy. Although infrastructure and accessibility are good, poor rail access to the high speed network remains a problem, the road infrastructure is poor in parts of the County, and the rural areas in particular lack a good ICT infrastructure.

2.3 A 10 Year Vision

We will work to reduce our dependence on declining industries, particularly agriculture. We will have a balanced approach to investment and industrial development – with low unemployment we don't anticipate large-scale inward investment or large-scale growth in the number of jobs. However, ensuring/supporting economically inactive people into employment would be our focus for the future in the most deprived wards of the County.

We will not compromise the quality of our environment and our quality of life through inappropriate development. Instead we will be a driver for the regional economy in knowledge transfer and spin out, creating high added value technology led businesses; providing high skilled and high wage jobs. The majority of this growth will be indigenous through the creation of new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses. We will ensure high quality development that enhances, rather than detracts from, the quality of the environment. We will aim to spread the benefit of this economic growth to the people of Worcestershire, reducing out commuting and creating more sustainable communities. We will market the County more effectively and develop the Tourism economy to its full potential, to the benefit of the County and region.

Our aspirations for the Worcestershire are therefore: technology and knowledge-based growth leading to sustainable development; high wages and high skills; maintaining environmental quality; ensuring access to jobs; reducing worklessness. Our Vision is:

“In ten years time, technology-led growth will have contributed to the sustainable development of Worcestershire and strengthened its role as an economic driver for the region – acting as a catalyst for all sectors of the economy and areas of the County to benefit and providing well paid and highly skilled jobs and high quality of life for residents”

Part Three – Delivering the Vision

1. Four Strategic Objectives

One – Business – promoting technology led growth benefiting all sectors and parts of the County

The Central Technology Belt forms the cornerstone of the Strategy, the catalyst for modernising and diversifying the County's economy. This will be supported by cluster development directly related to the Belt (Medical Technology and Services); but also spreading the benefits of the technology led growth to all sectors throughout the County including the underperforming sectors such as Agriculture and Manufacturing. We will be seeking to develop established industries towards higher skills and higher GVA (Food and Drink, Tourism), and developing cluster activities in the emerging industries (Creative Industries). To ensure that we have the businesses to support this activity, we will support existing and new indigenous business formation and growth through SME's, self-employment and new social enterprises. All endeavours would be made to develop environmentally sustainable economy by having more environmental friendly businesses so that economic growth of the county should not be at the expense of the environment. We will also be encouraging local markets and local sourcing to minimise carbon footprint.

We will ensure that the appropriate skills base is in position to enable the technology led knowledge driven economy to grow, and ensure that the people of Worcestershire have the right skills to access those jobs. We will develop and retain the skills of the County's young people, as well as improving the skills of the existing workforce: Our priorities will be:

- Ensuring spread of benefits of technology/ knowledge to all sectors and parts of the County
- Modernising and diversifying the business
- Developing clusters with growth potential
- Supporting new business formation
- Retain/develop skilled workforce to support high tech jobs and businesses
- Developing skills of work force in environmental management.
- Develop skills for emerging sustainable technologies
- Improving the Environmental performance of Businesses
- Improving the skill levels of the workforce to identified business needs

Two – Place: Supporting the sustainable development of the County through infrastructure development especially transport, and establishing Worcester as an accessible West Midlands Growth Point

Although we are not seeking to attract large numbers of new jobs, we must ensure that the infrastructure is in place to meet the new demands of a changing economy. We must ensure that there is the right supply of land and property -the right size, type and quality, in the right place at the right time,

and that key strategic sites are brought forward. Knowledge based industries will require adequate ICT and transport infrastructure and we must ensure that this infrastructure and enterprise potential is available throughout the County. Worcester city offers unique opportunities vis-à-vis development, redevelopment and with the higher status of the University, all elements are in place to support the expansion of the city and making it a sub-regional focus of economic growth. It is also envisaged that other towns such as Kidderminster and Redditch undergoing economic restructuring will benefit from the work done with the city of Worcester. We will revitalise the County's other towns; promote a rural renaissance through regenerating the rural parts of the County; and exploit the potential of key regeneration sites and projects. Although we are not seeking large-scale inward investment, we will provide a first class property service for inward investors and growing indigenous businesses, and will market the County effectively to attract investors and skilled workers. Our priorities will be:

- Developing the transport infrastructure
- Establishing Worcester City as a West Midlands Growth Point
- Revitalising the rest of the County's towns
- Regenerating the rural parts of the County
- Exploiting the potential of key regeneration sites
- Ensuring the right supply of land and property
- Developing the ICT infrastructure
- Marketing the County and attracting inward investment
- Improving energy efficiency
- Increasing proportion of energy generated from renewable resources
- Improving resilience to the impact of climate change like floods and other such natural calamities

Three – People: Removing barriers to employment and improving skills

We will ensure that the benefits of the new technology/knowledge driven economy are enjoyed by the residents of Worcestershire through quality job opportunities and enhanced quality of life. We will remove barriers to employment for disadvantaged groups and communities; At the same time we will work to improve the quality of training provision, with improved facilities, and much greater flexibility to meet employer and learners needs. All possible endeavours would be made to change people's attitude to sustainability and consumption at home. Our priorities will be:

- Developing and retaining the skills of the County's young people
- Addressing Worklessness by removing barriers to employment for groups like Lone Parents and People on IB
- Improving opportunities for 19 years old who are not in Education, employment and Training (NEET)
- Improving the quality of the training infrastructure
- Removing barriers to employment to other disadvantage groups

Four – Powerful Voice: Ensuring that Worcestershire's economic interests are effectively represented at all levels

One of the great strengths and opportunities for Worcestershire lies in the diversity as well as uniqueness of its people, places and Economic Growth. It is considered paramount to highlight these and protect our interests at the regional as well as national levels. All endeavours would be made to explore and be part of sub-regional, regional and national programmes. We would also take limited opportunities offered by the existing and new EU programmes matching our economic and social objectives. Our priorities will be:

- Be heard in national and regional forums
- Participating in sub-regional and regional economic projects
- Exploiting limited opportunities offered by existing and new EU programmes

2. Delivering the Regional Economic Strategy in Worcestershire

These Strategic Objectives are aligned with the objectives of Regional Economic Strategy (RES), and will help to deliver the RES priorities of cluster and technology corridor development. The Worcestershire Economic Strategy will enable sub-regional delivery of the RES and enable Worcestershire's economy to be an economic driver for the region:

Worcestershire Strategic Objectives	RES Strategic Objectives
Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Promoting technology-led growth benefiting all sectors and parts of the County 	Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Seizing market opportunities ✓ Improving competitiveness ✓ Harnessing knowledge
Place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supporting the sustainable development of the County through infrastructure development, and establishing Worcester as an accessible West Midlands Growth Point 	Place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increasing Birmingham's Competitiveness ✓ Improving infrastructure ✓ Sustainable communities
People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Removing barriers to employment and improving skills 	People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sustainable living ✓ Raising ambitions and aspirations ✓ Achieving full potential & opportunities for all
Powerful voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensuring that Worcestershire's economic interests are effectively represented at all levels 	Powerful Voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Improving the evidence base for policy ✓ Engaging UK and International decision makers ✓ Position the West Midlands as a global centre where people and businesses choose to connect

Actions, activities, strategic links and measures

The strategic objectives and priorities will be delivered through a series of actions and activities. Many of these actions and activities are contained within existing or developing local strategies. The Worcestershire Economic Strategy forms an umbrella for those Strategies (Diagram 1), and any new activities identified will be integrated into local strategies. Monitoring and evaluation will be on the basis of identified measures, enabling the impact of the overall strategy to be assessed, informing the Joint Investment Plan / Delivery Plan.

3. Worcestershire Economic Delivery Plan

To address the 'action gap' between strategy and delivery identified through process mapping; enable delegation of delivery to the sub region (under the Sub National Review); and secure partner investment in activities to deliver against Strategy objectives an Economic Delivery Plan will be developed. The Plan will have the following features:

- Three year rolling timescale (revised and rolled forward annually)
- Identifying a limited number of priority activities and projects to deliver sub regional objectives
- Identifying and developing Local Area Agreement outcomes
- Providing a basis for monitoring, review and evaluation

These will form the basis of an Action Plan setting out specific activities to deliver the actions. This will be monitored, reviewed and updated on three yearly bases by Worcestershire Economic and Transport Theme Group of Worcestershire Partnership.

4. Cross cutting activity

As well as specific activities, a range of cross-cutting actions are needed to ensure effective delivery of all the strategic objectives and priorities. These are:

- Raising the profile of Worcestershire
- Ensuring access to information
- Rural proofing of policies
- Sustainability
- Securing access to external funding

These cross-cutting activities will also be reviewed through annual monitoring.