



SURREY HEATH BOROUGH COUNCIL



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023-2028



March 2023

Surrey Heath Borough Council  
Knoll Road, Camberley GU15 3HD



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# I. Purpose of This Document

This document sets out an updated strategic framework for economic development for the borough of Surrey Heath from 2023 to 2028. It has been prepared based on a detailed body of evidence including a comprehensive borough economic profile, briefings on relevant topics and issues on the horizon and the need for addressing spatial development priorities, improved digital and physical connectivity and addressing climate change imperatives. In parallel, the strategy has been informed by discussions with senior officers of the Council and its main strategic partners. It should be noted that at the time of producing the strategy, national and local economies are experiencing times of continued uncertainty. The strategy sets the strategic direction for supporting businesses, however it is intended that subsequent actions plans should be flexible in order to meet the current needs of Surrey Heath.

Set out in this strategic framework are the following topics:

- a) The strategic context
- b) An overview of the challenges for achieving economic growth within the borough
- c) Opportunities for growth and change
- d) The strategic ambitions for the future of the borough and sub-region
- e) Strategic objectives for delivery of robust economic growth
- f) Intervention priorities for bringing forward the economic growth opportunities
- g) Supporting measures to assure balanced and sustainable economic growth

A detailed evidence base document supports this strategic framework (Appendix I).



## 2. Executive Summary

Surrey Heath has a vibrant and dynamic local economy, a high quality of life and strong connectivity. The Borough's officers and members are committed to delivering, enabling and supporting economic development to ensure that existing and new opportunities are exploited for the benefit of businesses, residents and visitors.

This Surrey Heath Economic Development Strategy provides an ambitious road map for good growth and prosperity of the local economy from 2023 to 2028. It identifies opportunities for accelerated economic growth and resilience whilst, taking a proactive approach to mitigating the global, regional and local challenges impacting the Borough.

Reinforced by an extensive evidence base, the strategy incorporates 8 strategic priorities that focus on outcomes to support businesses and residents. The strategy builds on the momentum of key industries such as manufacturing, health technologies and pharmaceuticals but also recognises future growth sectors such as film production, the creative industries and the green economy. The Council acknowledges that Camberley Town Centre has an imperative role in our place ambitions, however this strategy reinforces the need for focused delivery in more rural areas which make up nearly a quarter of the Borough's economy. This strategy places 'people' at its core and highlights the need to provide support to the Borough's deprived areas to increase social mobility, whilst also retaining and inducing talented workers to support local businesses.

Despite the Borough's strong economic performance it has been susceptible to momentous events including the Covid 19 epidemic and the current cost of living challenges. The strategy recognises these events, and emphasises the need to counteract broader challenges through economic initiatives that cement the Borough's desire for an inclusive, highly productive economy. It also identifies challenges associated with the regional economy and its relative



underperformance compared with in recent years and offers solutions to maximise its potential and re-establish its competitive edge.

Surrey Heath can deliver on the 8 strategic priorities through a combination of six priority interventions oriented to major transformational impact. These are outlined below, with further detail included within the strategy where complementary actions outside of these projects are also highlighted.

Project No. 1: Delivering Inward Investment and Business Retention

Project No. 2: Accelerating High Speed Digital Connectivity

Project No. 3: Boosting SME Skills, Productivity and Business Performance

Project No. 4: Assuring the Appeal and Vibrancy of Camberley Town Centre

Project No. 5: Enhancing the Economies of the Villages and Rural Areas

Project No. 6: Developing Active Travel Infrastructure

Although the Borough Council can create the conditions for achieving these priority projects, the council appreciates that the strategy cannot be delivered in isolation and incorporates a partnership approach with key stakeholders to ensure that residents, businesses and visitors are all able to benefit from delivery.

This strategy provides the Borough Council with a strategic focus and sat beneath are a series of action plans for officers to deliver. It is the intention that the strategic priorities will remain the same for the duration of this strategy, however the action plans will be flexible to incorporate the latest economic challenges and opportunities.



## 3. Summary of Context and Issues

### 3.1 Thrust of the 2018 Economic Development Strategy

The Surrey Heath Economic Development Strategy 2018 recognised that Surrey Heath has an active business community with several prestigious and global firms located in the Borough. The Strategy contains a vision oriented to maintaining the Borough's competitive and entrepreneurial performance and enhancing the quality of place that makes Surrey Heath a desirable location for businesses, residents and visitors. Specified objectives have been to create:

1. A sustainable place to live, work, shop and play; creating the conditions for growth through transformational actions in its town centres and significant employment sites.
2. A great place for business to flourish, that is open for businesses, large and small.
3. A great place for people to succeed by ensuring the local economy trains, recruits and retains the right talent required for continued growth.

### 3.2 What Has Happened Since

These are worthy objectives, no less valid now than in 2018. However, momentous events since have changed the focus of what needs to be done to secure lasting economic prosperity within the borough.

- The Covid epidemic rocked the country. Large parts of the economy have bounced back but some sectors in Surrey Heath such as accommodation and food services have been severely impacted. Major shifts in working practices have been brought about since the imposed lockdowns.
- Major economic challenges have arisen by way of reduced trade in goods and services with Europe, a cost-of-living crisis and a failure of the UK's economic performance to return to pre-Covid levels. An economic slowdown is





looming in the UK due to rising inflation and interest rates prompted by rising energy costs amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

- Significant labour shortages have emerged nationally due to many over 55s taking early retirement, EU nationals leaving and an ageing population. Attracting talent to Surrey Heath is now a major issue.
- There have been notable shifts in Surrey Heath's key sectors, with large job losses in aerospace manufacturing and engineering consultancy and research. In contrast, some significant inward investments have occurred or are in prospect.
- High streets have changed away from solely retail-led locations to offering a wider range of uses including leisure, culture, arts, heritage, civic, education, healthcare, youth employment support, tourist and other amenities/attractions. Home working has reinforced the concept of the walkable 15 minute neighbourhood.

### **3.3 Issues on the Horizon**

New fast growing business sectors are emerging, each with a reliance on advanced digital technologies. Examples include data science, artificial intelligence, blockchain technology, genomics and the sharing economy. Up to 40% of traditional jobs will disappear by 2040 and digitalisation will continue to affect every aspect of work and the skills required.

The Government has announced stringent targets and accelerated timescales in response to climate change. Its priorities are to accelerate modal shift to public and active transport; readiness for electric vehicles; to transform 'last mile' deliveries; and take forward place specific carbon reduction solutions.



## 4. Key Challenges Facing Surrey Heath

### 4.1 Regional Economic Under Performance

Some local economies in Surrey and the Enterprise M3 region are employing fewer people than in the past, particularly in high productivity “frontier” sectors such as digital and professional services, despite such employment increasing nationally. Analysis by Enterprise M3 indicates that this is due to competition, with companies in priority sectors moving to other areas and taking with them people with important talent and skills. Suggested causes are under-investment in what is needed to make the area a good place to do business and tough regional labour supply constraints affecting the frontier industries. An increased flow of 30–45-year-olds into the area has occurred primarily to live but not to work, meaning the local service economy thrives but not the frontier sectors. An ongoing risk is that the Levelling Up policies and Brexit may exacerbate this problem. Because more of the businesses that Surrey have relied upon for its prosperity and high quality employment in the past are becoming more eager to move elsewhere. Surrey Heath needs to create a strong competitive edge, focusing on attracting retaining growth businesses, creating better operation conditions and promoting better productivity and business performance.

### 4.2 Delivering Inward Investment

Surrey Heath has proved successful in capturing new businesses to replace some major employers lost in recent years and is well placed for attracting businesses in technologies such as advanced engineering, software, advanced health technologies and professional, scientific and technical services. Recent interest has also come forward from major film studios. To remain competitive and vibrant, Surrey Heath needs to continue to attract significant businesses and scale-ups in innovation-led, high productivity sectors, bringing in more well-paid jobs and local spending. Commercial space is available in Camberley, Frimley and Bagshot and some rural locations where there is scope for recycling and redevelopment of older commercial properties where demand can be suitably marshalled.





### **4.3 Boosting Business Productivity**

Productivity is a key determinant of successful economic growth and performance, but in the British economy has remained sluggish due to over-reliance on low cost European immigrant labour prior to Brexit. More recently, labour shortages caused by increasing economic inactivity amongst 55-64 year olds and a predominant ageing population have been stifling economic growth. Businesses now need to achieve more with less by increasing the capabilities for their workforces and investing in labour saving technologies. It is the SMEs, the largest source of future employment, who need to raise their game but most do not have the expertise and resources to find solutions to these constraints. If focused support oriented to productivity growth can be offered to these businesses, a major boost to local business growth and performance could be achieved.

### **4.4 Developing Closer Relationships With Key Businesses**

The existence of the four advanced technology clusters in Surrey Heath (specialist engineering, pharmaceuticals, computer sales and programming and health) has been a major source of prestige and wealth creation for the borough. However, some have been severely weakened whilst several high value clusters are emerging. A priority now must be to ensure that these activities are nurtured and retained and that any associated benefits from local expansions or the attraction of like-minded industries are securely grasped. Accordingly, it will be important for Surrey Heath to develop a strong business engagement capability to build relationships with the strategically significant companies, understand the issues facing them and to find solutions to any problems that could cause threats to their long term continuation within the borough. Camberley has been named the UK's Top Town for Business 2022 by Enterprise Nation, recognised for its outstanding support for entrepreneurial spirit. Useful work to engage town centre businesses is being undertaken by the Business Improvement District, Collectively Camberley. However, evidence indicates that many early stage businesses require better business planning and marketing capabilities. Through the Council's Key Account Management programme and engagement with smaller businesses, assurance will be



provided on what needs be done to address such gaps and the sources of early stage business advice and support that can be deployed, including for under-represented businesses.

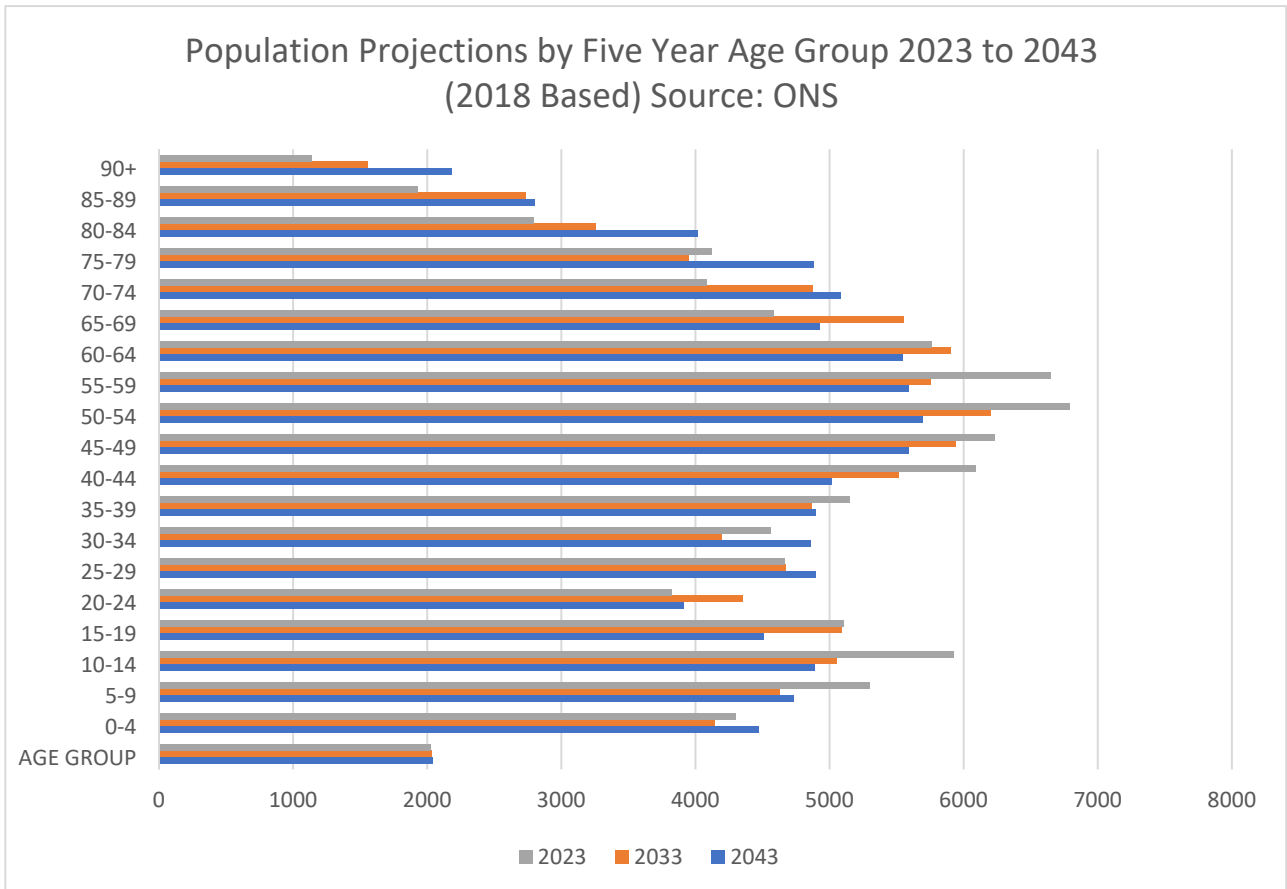
#### **4.5 Advancing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills**

As digitalisation continues to affect the jobs available and the skills required to perform them, businesses will need to focus on upgrading their workers' skills in these areas and nearly half will need retraining. Significant additional pressure on the local skills pipeline may arise as a result of recent inward investment in the region from large international film studios. In Surrey Heath, the lack of further and high education within the borough is a constraint and efforts are needed to marshal the demand for these skills so that a case for stronger local education and training provision can be made.

#### **4.6 Attracting Young Professionals and Ensuring Access to Talent**

The borough has an ageing population and to achieve future economic vibrancy a balanced demographic profile needs to be obtained. Surrey Heath needs to maintain the supply of young, talented workers so many more young people in their mid-20s and early 30s need to be attracted and retained to keep its businesses functional. To achieve this, the borough needs to deliver a wide choice of housing at affordable prices, access to high quality job opportunities locally and in neighbouring areas, high quality retail experiences, cultural, entertainment and leisure opportunities, good transport, digital connectivity and community infrastructure.





### 4.7 Accelerating High Speed Digital Connectivity

Measures to accelerate and remove barriers to the installation of gigabit capability fibre connections to homes and business premises in Surrey Heath are of considerable importance. Tomorrow's industries will be predominantly digitised and data-driven and intensively dependent on high-performance digital connectivity. High speed digital connectivity is key to boosting productivity and wealth creation and Surrey Heath needs it to compete for the types of investment that can deliver high-quality, well-paid jobs. The drive towards net zero, reduced need to travel and constrained supply of commercial property have intensified the need for alternative work patterns, with hybrid working becoming more prevalent. High broadband speeds are essential to enabling and maintaining these newly emerged work patterns and can improve the viability of Surrey Heath's rural areas.



## 4.8 Diversification and Enlivening of Camberley Town Centre

Surrey Heath needs a strong quality of life offer which will be attractive to young people moving to the area, embrace the needs of people working from home and remain attractive to skilled workers as a basis for retaining and attracting inward investment. There is also a need to attract and accommodate the types of activity that reflect the changing landscape of urban centres and high streets. Defined by the borough's Town Centre Area Action Plan as its top priority, Camberley town centre is to fulfil this role by becoming a leading retail centre meeting the needs of the North West Surrey and Blackwater catchment population. For this, the town centre will need to build its brand and image through a stronger and a more diversified retail offer, culture, entertainment and leisure focus and food and beverage sector, improved permeability and integration of its various quarters and the station and comprehensive net zero infrastructure. Initiatives to bring a lively atmosphere in the town centre for children, to attract young people by providing more performance spaces, comedy and music festivals, community cafes and a vibrant evening economy need to be maintained and further developed. Artists, creatives and youth workers also need to be involved. The promotional activities of the BID and its programming of activities to promote footfall should continue to be supported and initiatives to build weekend activities in the town centre intensified.

## 4.9 Supporting the Small Towns and Villages

Of key importance will be maintaining the economic vibrancy of the rural areas and viability of important commercial, culture and leisure activities and public sector services in the locations outside of the core urban areas of Surrey Heath. They are important from the point of view of attracting talent, as sources of job creation and for growing the economy more generally. The local economies of Chobham & Windlesham and West End & Bisley account for 24% of all businesses and 13% of employment in the borough yet have accounted for 24% of the borough's employment growth in the past five years. Local strategies need to be developed for supporting these rural economies and for enhancing their quality of life and wellbeing. Getting gigabit capability connections to hard-to-reach rural premises will



be of key importance, along with measures to improve public transport accessibility to Camberley town centre from the villages. Building the visitor economy to boost rural visitors and spending such as on rural arts, recreation, staycations and food services can help sustain key retail, hospitality and other community support businesses, subject to avoiding activity that could detract the from the natural beauty of these areas. The demand for high quality business premises and workspace needs to be fully understood and where necessary addressed through the continual upgrading and revitalisation of the rural commercial buildings.

#### **4.10 Addressing Mismatches in the Supply of Employment Sites and Buildings**

The Employment Land Technical Paper Update 2019 highlighted the need to identify and allocate strategic and locally important employment sites, providing appropriate protection for employment land required to meet identified needs and to resist the loss of premises that provide suitable accommodation for SMEs, whilst seeking to increase choice for smaller or start-up businesses requiring cheaper accommodation. It reported that the borough has low vacancy rates for both office and industrial accommodation at just 2% and 1% respectively and that nearby authorities are likely to compete with the offer in Surrey Heath.

There is a need to address the major surge in demand for industrial property that has emerged in recent years. Industrial units can house high quality businesses involving clean production, high tech activity and R&D, where served by good connections to the motorways. There is scope to convert dated office space in business parks like Yorktown to such uses viably.

As regards distribution, a certain amount will be necessary such as for last mile delivery and Amazon type businesses, but not sprawling complexes of warehouses, as the borough does not have the capacity in its local road system to cope with large increases in freight traffic to service the wider sub-region. A selective approach



is advocated in favour of focusing on those activities that are of close relevance to the Surrey Heath local economy. Despite increased home working, offices remain in demand particularly where businesses require close collaboration amongst their staff. In this part of Surrey, Grade A properties are widely sought after. Because there are few such properties readily available and with most stock being somewhat dated, unless adequate supply can be generated, inward investors with office requirements will choose competing centres elsewhere in the Blackwater Valley and more outlying neighbouring towns.

#### **4.11 Supporting Post Covid Working Practices and Conditions**

As a result of nearly half the working population of the United Kingdom having worked at home during the pandemic, major benefits became recognised by both employers and employees: avoiding long commutes, enhanced employee well-being through work hours flexibility, better utilisation of communication technology and reduction in distractions. Negative issues have included reduction of mental well-being due to isolation, lack of staff engagement and difficulty switching off from work when at home.

The Opinions and Lifestyle Survey undertaken by ONS in April 2022 was able to demonstrate the marked difference in working from home intentions by businesses across different sectors. Across all of the sectors, the percentage of businesses using or planning to use increased homeworking as a permanent business model in April 2022 was 23%. However, 53% of information and communication businesses and between 25% and 43% of professional and business services, education and arts businesses stated that they would be increasing homeworking. The proportion for industrial and distributive operations is, understandably, lower being between 3% and 16%. Extrapolating these figures based on the current sectoral employment mix of Surrey Heath suggests that some 12,400 workers, out of a total of 53,945 in the borough, will be working from home for part of any given week. A key challenge for Surrey Heath will be to ensure that the town centre and village centres will be able to support home workers by offering faster reliable internet access and if necessary encouraging the provision of more local drop-in workspace centres and





a supportive environment. The changing demand for shared workspace provision in general needs to be better understood, assessing what is needed where and how it can be provided viably.

## **4.12 Integration of Net Zero Activity and Economic Development**

Surrey Heath's economic development strategy needs to embrace the green agenda given the depth and breadth of forthcoming change driven by the Government's net zero targets. By way of focus, decarbonisation of transport and buildings are priorities and the new green industries required need to be prepared for. For this, new types of infrastructure and buildings will need to be provided, for which economic benefits need to be articulated to provide the case for funding them. In parallel, the skills and supply base will need to be prepared to ensure these systems are functionally successful. There is a big requirement for education in how to install these enhancements and to get a firm base of competence within local areas for the supply and application of these new technologies. Local suppliers and a local hub for modern methods of construction need to be attracted. The green economy is also giving rise to a range of growth sectors in such technologies and low carbon hydrogen, green public transport and active travel, Jet Zero (an initiative to reduce carbon emissions from aviation), carbon capture, usage and storage and green finance and innovation. These are a source of well paid jobs for Surrey Heath if it can successfully attract them.

## **4.13 Upgrading the Rail Service**

Connecting Camberley, Frimley and Bagshot to surrounding towns will become increasing important for sustainable travel but frequencies are poor and the numbers of rail users for the stations in Surrey Heath are considerably lower than for centres elsewhere in the County. This has contributed to the decline of office use in Camberley town centre. Addressing connectivity is key to supporting the borough to alleviate the constraints on labour and business connectivity.



## 4.13 Identified Pockets of Deprivation

Despite Surrey Heath being a largely affluent area, there are still pockets of deprivation across the Borough. These are most notable in the Old Dean and St Michaels however they are apparent in other areas too. Government's current priority of levelling up, where everyone is given the same opportunity to flourish, is complementary to the commitments within Surrey Heath's Five Year Strategy. That said, this is not a challenge that can be delivered in isolation, nor one that needs solely an economy focus and partnership work is required to obtain the benefits of enhanced social mobility and reduced deprivation across the borough.

# 5. Opportunities for Growth and Change

## 5.1 Sector Growth Prospects

Surrey Heath sectors which have shown strong resilience since the Covid period include manufacturing, construction, retail, warehousing storage and finance and insurance. In addition, there appears to be strong potential for further growth in the following activities.

### Manufacturing

Engine and turbine manufacturing has seen an increase of 1,000 jobs in the last five years. Other manufacturing sectors have been growing including electrical equipment and machinery and equipment food products and furniture. A presence in advanced motor manufacturing has appeared in the borough in recent years with the attraction of Gordon Murray, a racing car company that has recently located to Windlesham, complementing the presence of McLaren who are located is on the outskirts of the borough.

### Professional Scientific and Technical Services

Surrey Heath has a very strong professional scientific and technical services sector with 950 businesses employing 6,000 individuals. Over 1,000 job losses have occurred in engineering technical services and business consultancy along with the



closure of a number of related small businesses. However, it is expected that that this will be bounce back in the post Covid period.

### **Health Technologies**

150 jobs have been created in Biotechnology R&D. UBC, a Belgian Pharmaceutical company has acquired a 47 acre campus in Windlesham for one of their three global R&D hubs. Hospital activities which have seen an increase of 2000 additional jobs and Frimley Park Hospital, being a hospital of regional significance, could have scope for additional research-related activity.

### **Information and Communications**

The area has a robust computer programming presence which has not reduced despite the pandemic.

### **Film Production and Supporting Creative Industries**

There has been significant interest from a number of international film production companies such as Disney and Netflix for locations in Surrey Heath or its immediate environs. Should any of these materialise it could have a major impact on the demand for related supply chain activities within the area and for skilled people within the job market. At Fair Oaks, there is already a cluster of related support industries and current interest in from international participants expanding the existing film studio activity, subject to resolving a complex planning issue. Should the Fair Oaks proposal move forward, there will be a need to be ready to respond to the major supply chain and educational opportunities that would be generated for the local creative industry ecosystem. To evolve, this sector would need boosting, including an assessment of the workspace provision needed for a stronger grouping of creative supply and support activities.

### **Accommodation and Food Services**

Weakened by lockdown, this sector has shed 1,500 jobs in the last five years. However, the regeneration and diversification of the town centre in Camberley should provide good opportunities for the recovery of the sector.



## **Green Economy**

Activities such as civil infrastructure for decarbonised transport, net zero construction and specialist low carbon technologies are expected to surge in the coming years.

## **Fair Trade**

There is a desire that Surrey Heath becomes an advocate of fair trade and the Council develop initiatives aligned to the Fairtrade initiative. This provides a significant opportunity to ensure a set of standards are met in the production and supply of a product or ingredient supporting both local businesses and farmers across the world.

## **5.2 Transformational Opportunities**

### **Existing Sites with Potential For Transformation**

There are no major greenfield sites available under current allocations, but the following existing sites have scope for redevelopment or refurbishment. York Town area is dated and could be brought up to scratch with a mix of new or refurbished office and industrial space. The old Stihl HQ is a warehouse site up for development. Fair Oaks Airport is close to the M25 and could be developed for film studios. It is emphasised that the council would need to work with existing employers to make this happen. Frimley Park has some potential for more and improved industrial space.

### **London Road Block**

The London Road Block comprises an opportunity for a significant residential-led regeneration scheme comprising 550 apartments with ancillary ground floor shops, restaurants and community uses, based on exemplary design and sustainability standards. It will be integral to the successful regeneration of Camberley town centre since new housing will boost footfall and the viability of the commercial



centre whilst the ancillary uses will contribute significantly to town centre diversification.

### **Land East of Knoll Road**

Should there be a relocation of a mix of traditional civic and community uses this site has the potential to deliver several hundred new homes including affordable housing.

### **Land East of Park Street, North of Princess Way (House of Fraser Store)**

This corner position site provides the opportunity to provide a modern civic and community hub for the delivery of a local authority, police, health, library and museum services.

### **Camberley Rail Station**

In conjunction with Network Rail and other stakeholders, Camberley Rail Station is identified for redevelopment for a new/refurbished station and new homes, providing another gateway into the town centre and with public realm improvements.

## **5.3 Connectivity Benefits**

### **Physical Accessibility**

In recent years Camberley has benefited from a number of accessibility improvements including the upgrading of the Meadows roundabout providing the interchange of the A30 with the A331, improvements to London Road and the Golden Grid project which provides high quality travel experience on local bus routes. There is scope to build on these schemes to further develop the accessibility and permeability of the town centre and wider borough. There are funding streams available to initiate and develop walking and cycling routes conducive to the switch from car usage to active travel. Once developed, this will have a major impact on local productivity, personal health and well-being and the appeal of the town centre



to young people as a desirable place to live, work and recreate. The above development schemes in the town centre will boost the case for these improvements along with the possibility of an upgraded rail service.

### **Digital Connectivity**

Surrey Heath is on course to receive high capacity full fibre connections enabling Internet speeds of up to a 1000 megabits per second, with over 76% of the Borough already covered. This opens up opportunities for new business concepts, increased business productivity and new, flexible forms of working. Though it will be a challenge to ensure that all parts of the borough receive access to these high capacity services, this upgraded digital connectivity will have a substantial impact on the efficiency and wealth creating potential of the borough.

## **5.4 Funding for Communities and Place, local Business and People and Skills**

Surrey Heath has been awarded £1 million over three years from the Shared Prosperity Fund. This will enable a number of important economic development and regeneration initiatives to be accelerated. These will include enhancements to local green spaces, local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities, sports, business support and networks and workspace schemes. Employment support, development and promotion of the visitor economy and support to decarbonisation will also be funded. These activities can provide a foundation for securing funding from other sources and project financing schemes yet to be brought forward. This economic development strategy aligns and informs the proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund spend.





## 6. Strategic Alignment

### 6.1 Surrey Heath Corporate Plan – Five Year Strategy

Surrey Heath's Corporate Plan is a Five Year Strategy whose Economy theme sets out the following aims.

#### Invest In the Urban and Rural Areas

- Identify a minimum of five sites across the Borough for the Council to invest in to deliver regeneration and community facilities.
- Deliver increased housing from the London Road Block through the development of a viable and high quality scheme.
- Undertake an assessment of our rural areas to identify and deliver infrastructure needs that will improve community facilities and enhance our villages and communities.

#### Improve Transport Infrastructure

- Enable the delivery of local infrastructure improvements across the Borough through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spending strategy, including a review of the CIL rates in line with Government policy.

#### Deliver a New Local Plan for Surrey Heath

- Identify and allocate appropriate development sites for housing to be delivered in line with National and Local Planning Policy.
- Identify and acquire land that can be used for SANGs (Suitable Alternative Natural Green space) to unlock housing development in the Borough where it is most needed Local Plan.
- Agree and implement a clear vision, strategy and master plan for the development of Camberley Town.



## Investment in Infrastructure

- Develop and implement an infrastructure delivery plan for the Borough as a whole identifying priorities for investment over the short, medium and long term.
- Implement a new Community Infrastructure Levy charging scheme linked to the development of a new Local Plan, subject to any Government reviews of the scheme.

## Supporting Businesses and Attracting Inward Investment

- Actively encourage independent, artisan and environmentally sound businesses into our Town, Village and community centres through a package of benefits for new start-up businesses as a means to promote facilities, services and experiences for residents.
- Be recognised for a pro-business approach across all Council Services to build a reputation for the borough as a good place for businesses to invest and grow.
- Increase the amount of Council procurement spent locally and promote local spending to other businesses.
- Deliver, with partners, initiatives to help develop people's skills and get them into employment e.g., The Youth Hub.
- Work with partners to deliver a 'unique selling point' for Camberley Town Centre, keeping up with emerging technology opportunities; to support innovation in the retail and town centre economy.
- Support new and growing business through council facilitated meetings, business clinics and growth hub.
- Support the development of the green economy, and support businesses to achieve net zero carbon emissions.
- Deliver a robust economic development strategy supporting economic recovery and sustainable growth in the borough including the key business hubs.



## 6.2 Imperatives for Addressing Strategic Ambitions

A summary of relevant the aims and objectives of strategic partners such as the LEP and County Council is set out in the Appendix 2. Surrey Heath will need to align with common themes of these strategic policies and ambitions. Taking account of these and the above challenges, opportunities, the following areas of focus will need to be considered.

- Stimulating and supporting high value, high growth business activities.
- The need for high impact interventions to boost investment in and the performance of the borough's local economy.
- Inducing talented workers to live and work in Surrey Heath by way of measures to offer high lifestyle quality and good career opportunities.
- Improved rail journeys, decarbonisation of transport and creating the conditions for active travel and reduced car dependence.
- Addressing the impact of digitisation in terms of connectivity, business process innovation and reskilling.
- Town centres fit for the future and high quality place making.
- Employer-led skills development, oriented to boosting productivity and creating added value.
- Readiness to respond to major opportunities for transformation of outdated commercial property to resolve shortages of employment space.
- A planning policy framework to facilitate and respond to ongoing growth and change.



## 7. Strategic Framework

### 7.1 Vision

A thriving local economy made-up of high value, growth orientated businesses delivering well paid jobs and self-advancement prospects to local residents, supported by excellent public transport and active travel links, state-of-the-art digital connectivity and attractive, well diversified town and village centres with wide local appeal.

### 7.2 Strategic Objectives

1. To fully exploit Surrey Heath's key economic growth opportunities and emerging growth clusters across rural and urban areas.
2. To accelerate gigabit connectivity across the borough.
3. To raise the productivity and performance of the borough's SMEs and their workforces.
4. To optimise responses to inward investment prospects by addressing shortages of commercial space and encouraging the upgrading of outdated commercial property.
5. To create the required economic conditions for accelerated achievement of net zero carbon emissions.
6. To enhance Camberley town centre's appeal as a thriving and attractive urban hub.
7. To secure investment in transport infrastructure to reduce car usage, improve links from the villages to the town centre and enable comprehensive active travel.
8. To advance the employment prospects disadvantaged residents and those living in the borough's most remote locations.



## 7.3 Where Surrey Heath Aims to Be

### Inward Investment

- Larger numbers of high value, leading edge businesses attracted to Surrey Heath. The successful retention and capturing of expansions of Surrey Heath's key businesses through a clearly defined and communicated investment offer, tailored to key sectors.
- Existing strategically important businesses in the borough engaged in finding solutions to their expansion and adaptation requirements in Surrey Heath, avoiding the need to move to alternative locations.
- Successful repurposing and renewal of dated commercial buildings to provide high quality space solutions to major inward investors.

### Vibrancy in the Small Towns and Villages

- Smaller town and village centres provided with good range of services to support residents' needs and enhanced lifestyle quality, benefitting from faster and more reliable internet access and a supportive environment for remote working. Stronger visitor economy, cultural activities and accommodation and food services boosting local jobs. Improved options for accessing Camberley town centre by public transport. Becoming a Fairtrade Borough to contribute to the Fairtrade vision of: a world in which trade is based on fairness so that producers earn secure and sustainable livelihoods.
- The vast majority of homes and premises in towns and villages throughout the borough benefitting from gigabit capability fibre connections to homes and business premises, with hard to reach areas supported with alternative solutions for gigabit capability where fibre connections are not viable.



## Business Productivity and Performance

- A step change in the borough's SME's economic performance through higher numbers of SMEs engaged in workforce development, adoption of innovation and automation measures in their business processes, leading to measurable increases in business productivity and performance.
- Start up and early stage businesses demonstrating higher rates of survival and growth as a result of engagement and delivery of high quality advice on support on business planning, marketing and management.

## Workforce Preparation

- Delivery of skills provision which is more tightly oriented to today's business environment through deeper intelligence of employers' workforce development needs, intensified collaboration between businesses with local skills providers and a proactive response to the preparing and retraining of workforces for digitalisation.
- Stronger partnerships between public and voluntary sector partners for gaining access to socially isolated and vulnerable people and for support measures for removal of barriers to less advantaged residents in accessing employment.
- A healthy and productive workforce addressing the aims of the boroughs' health and well being plan and physical activity strategy.





## Responding to Climate Change

- A strong foundation of local competences in net zero building techniques and technologies, decarbonised transportation infrastructure and sources of advice and support to local businesses needing to transform their activities to cut out carbon emissions.

## Camberley Town Centre

- An appealing grouping of independent retail operators differentiating Camberley town centre from its rivals together with a vibrant mix of community support amenities and culture and leisure activities with strong appeal to local residents, workers and visitors, responsive to changing roles of town centres and the needs of younger people.
- A robust and exciting evening economy and programme of weekend activities in the town centre.
- Timely completion of high volume housing development and affordable homes. Business performance of retailers and operators benefitting from more walking and cycling passing traffic.
- Enhanced attraction of high value businesses, home buyers, visitors and spending to the town centre generating high volumes of footfall and spending in the town centre to sustain viability.

## Transport

- A significant switch to the use of high quality bus services.
- A comprehensive network of dedicated walking and cycling routes throughout the urban areas providing improved permeability in and between



towns, served by charging points, bike storage and an ecosystem of commercial operators offering “micro mobility” services.

- Significantly reduced car usage, congestion, carbon emissions and costs of travel. Smoother journeys leading to higher productivity and enhanced economic performance.
- Higher frequency and usage of rail passenger services.

## 7.4 How Surrey Heath Will Get There

Surrey Heath will achieve these outcomes through a combination of six priority interventions oriented to major transformational impact.

Project No. 1: Delivering Inward Investment and Business Retention

Project No. 2: Accelerating High Speed Digital Connectivity

Project No. 3: Boosting SME Skills, Productivity and Business Performance

Project No. 4: Assuring the Appeal and Vibrancy Camberley Town Centre

Project No. 5: Enhancing the Economies of the Villages and Rural Areas

Project No. 6: Developing Active Travel Infrastructure

In addition to and supported by the high impact projects, a series of supporting actions will be necessary under the following thematic headings.

- Enterprise, Innovation and Productivity
- Delivering Land and Property Solutions
- Workforce Preparation
- Transport Connectivity
- Working Towards Net Zero



## 8. Proposed Actions

Actions to deliver the above six priority intervention projects are set out in the first table below.

The second table sets out the proposed thematic supporting actions as listed above.



<b>Table 1: Priority Transformational Projects Proposed Actions</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Corporate Plan Alignment</b>
<b>Project No. 1: Setting Up Inward Investment Delivery</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulate inward investment offer</li> <li>• Agree protocol with Surrey County Council</li> <li>• Business plan for inward investment delivery</li> <li>• Development of Surrey Heath fact sheets and marketing collateral</li> <li>• Programme of visits to key, strategic businesses</li> </ul>	SCC/ SH ED	SH ED	High value, leading edge businesses attracted to and retained by Surrey Heath.	Pro-Business Approach & Supporting Businesses
<b>Project No 2: Accelerating High Speed Digital Connectivity</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaison with parish councils and community groups in hard-to-reach areas</li> <li>• Relationship building with service providers</li> <li>• Liaison with Enterprise M3 on extension of internet Spine to the rural areas</li> <li>• Protocols with public bodies to get constraints to full connectivity removed</li> </ul>	SH ED	Parish Councils, Community Groups and Partners	Gigabit capability widely available to homes & premises across borough.	Investment in Infrastructure
<b>Project No. 3: Boosting SME Skills, Productivity &amp; Business Performance</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project specification, plan and</li> </ul>	SH ED	EM3 &	Step change	Pro-Business



<b>Table 1: Priority Transformational Projects Proposed Actions</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Corporate Plan Alignment</b>
<p>business case for high impact productivity intervention programme for SMEs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify match funding sources aligned to Shared Prosperity Fund business plan</li> <li>Identify deliverers for SME engagement and delivery programme</li> </ul>		BSOS	in SME skills, business efficiency, productivity and performance	Approach & Supporting Businesses
<b>Project No. 4: Assuring the Appeal &amp; Vibrancy of Camberley</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commence meanwhile uses programme</li> <li>Culture and entertainment development plan</li> <li>Updated and enhanced town centre activities programme</li> <li>Programme to further develop town centre streetscape, signage, highways, cleaning &amp; arrival points.</li> </ul>	SH ED SH ED BID Planni ng & Prope rty	BID BID SH ED	Vibrant town centre with strong appeal to residents & incoming young people.	Invest In the Urban and Rural Areas
<b>Project No. 5: Enhancing the Economies of the Villages</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local area needs assessments</li> <li>Formulation of local area action plans</li> <li>Decisions on priority initiatives</li> </ul>	SH ED	Parish Councils	Enhanced prosperity, lifestyle and transport options.	Invest In the Urban and Rural Areas



<b>Table 1: Priority Transformational Projects Proposed Actions</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Corporate Plan Alignment</b>
<b>Project No. 6: Developing Active Travel Infrastructure</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy and designs for walking and cycling network</li> <li>• Economic impact assessment and business case(s)</li> </ul>	SCC	SH ED	Reduced car usage, emissions and costs	Investment in Infrastructure

<b>Table 2: Thematic Support Activities Proposed Actions</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Corporate Plan Alignment</b>
<b>Enterprise, Innovation and Productivity</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and intelligence of existing business networks</li> <li>• Comprehensive business engagement plan</li> <li>• Launch programme implementation</li> <li>• Review of small business support budgets and delivery arrangements</li> <li>• Small business action plan developed</li> </ul>	SH ED SH ED SH ED SH ED SH ED	BID & Surrey Chs BID & Surrey Chs SCC & EM3 SCC & EM3	Extensive business engagement conducive to well targeted interventions.	Pro-Business Approach



<b>Table 2: Thematic Support Activities Proposed Actions</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Corporate Plan Alignment</b>
<b>Working Towards Net Zero</b>				
Engagement with low carbon support organisations including Zero Carbon Guildford, Surrey Climate Change Commission & Enterprise M3 Net Zero advisory service	Climate Change Officer	SH ED	Strong local supply & skills base for construction of net zero housing & infrastructure and for carbon reduction by local businesses.	Net Zero Carbon Emissions & Resilience to the Impacts of Climate Change
Net zero support green economy needs review for transport, construction and business support				
<b>Delivering Land and Property Solutions</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposals for renewal and redevelopment of the outdated business parks and industrial estates</li> </ul>	Planning & Property	SH ED	Supply & quality of commercial space meeting demand.	Attracting Inward Investment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Borough-wide demand study of workspace requirements</li> </ul>	SH ED & Planning	Planning & Property	Successful and productive start-ups, clusters and home workers.	Supporting Businesses



<b>Table 2: Thematic Support Activities Proposed Actions</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Corporate Plan Alignment</b>
<b>Workforce Preparation</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of existing skills coordination mechanisms</li> </ul>	SH ED		In depth intelligence on skills demand.	Supporting Businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surrey Heath workforce development plan</li> </ul>	SH ED	EM3, DWP et al	Skills provision fully aligned with identified needs. Solutions local delivery of further education & HE.	Supporting Businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposals for supporting disadvantaged groups in accessing job opportunities.</li> </ul>	SH ED	3 <sup>rd</sup> sector groups	Reduction of employment barriers to less advantaged residents.	Safeguard and Support
<b>Transport Connectivity</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify priority highways, active travel and public transport improvements</li> </ul>	SCC	SH Planning	Travel behaviours switched from car use to active	Investment in Infrastructure





<b>Table 2: Thematic Support Activities Proposed Actions</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Corporate Plan Alignment</b>
			travel and mass transport.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic impact assessment of improved rail frequencies</li> </ul>	SH ED	SCC	Funding approval for more frequent rail services from Camberley, Frimley and Bagshot.	Investment in Infrastructure

## 9. Creating the Conditions for Investment and Economic Growth

### 9.1 Linking Economic Development Opportunities to Local Planning Policies

Because development issues in Surrey Heath are highly complex, Surrey Heath's economic development strategy needs to inform and be consistent with the emerging Local Plan. The current Local Plan to 2028 is being revised. The new Local Plan will set out the challenges and priorities for the next 18 years. These will centre around provision of housing to meet allocations; improving the supply of affordable housing; employment growth, particularly amongst SMEs; achieving net zero carbon targets; and regeneration of Camberley town centre and the villages. 90% of the borough is green belt with the existence of a number of special protection areas.



The new plan will specify the types of new economic activity Surrey Heath wants and where it goes; which are the key employment sites which will be protected; and the development policies affecting the urban and rural areas. It will set out how much employment land is likely to be needed in the plan period to support the predicted level of growth in employment in the borough. The new Economic Strategy working alongside the Local plan will provide clear direction so that areas can be allocated for development coherently and employment uses protected. Decisions will be needed as to key target sectors and activities that need to be retained and encouraged and how and where each type of employment activity will be accommodated in the context of selective growth. To achieve this, the major economic drivers and their potential and impact will need to be clearly understood and reconciled in order to defining the best uses from the available sites and floorspace.

## 9.2 Bringing Forward the Priority Interventions

Within this strategic policy framework, proactive interventions will be required in order to bring forward development of growth opportunities that Surrey Heath wants to support.

- Feasibility studies to inform on-going development planning.
- Where necessary, master plans and the preparation of development briefs
- Costed implementation projects and programmes.
- Detailed plans for public realm investment and improvement to assure the quality of development proposals.
- Project programming and costing, setting up fast track procurement mechanisms.
- The selection of delivery partners.
- The formulation of business cases and the preparation of funding bids.



### **9.3 Bringing Forward Strategic Infrastructure**

In particular, the lasting prosperity of Surrey Heath urban areas depends on having strong transport infrastructure capacity, as this is a magnet for all other investment and for which significant amounts of funding can come from the government. Adequate forward planning and preparation is essential as given deadlines for submission of bids, these are unlikely to succeed if the planning of a project only starts once the funding scheme is announced.

### **9.4 Alignment of Funding Resources**

Required conditions for successful applications for external funding of important infrastructure projects of benefit to Surrey Heath will be:

- Agreeing priorities with the County Council and government funding bodies at an early stage.
- Programming of funding sources such as CIL and Section 106 over a number of years so that there is certainty in place for initiatives that involve the County Council and other funding partners. Including adhering to Government legislation.
- Streamlined processes for releasing Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funds to assure match funding within the timescales allowed for external funding bids whilst adhering to Government legislation.

### **9.5 Business Case Readiness**

Business case readiness is a fundamental key to success, based on early identification of infrastructure development priorities in conjunction with funding partners and initiating upfront planning and feasibility work for bringing forward projects together for local infrastructure projects in advance of the funding schemes being announced. This enables partners to be more confident about the costs and risks and to significantly improve the chances of getting projects funded. There must also be a willingness to take a flexible stance on funding allocations if priorities change or more significant opportunities appear.



## 10. Concluding Comments

This document has highlighted the major challenges faced by Surrey Heath and the opportunities to be grasped in delivering robust, sustainable and shared prosperity across the borough, in line with the council's corporate plan.

A description of what this will look like has been provided under a number of thematic headings. Key elements of the required delivery programme, by way of six priority intervention projects along with a series of proposed supporting actions to deliver these outcomes have been defined.

It is now for Surrey Heath Borough Council to deliver from this programme, with its new economic development team playing a key role in initiating, leading and orchestrating the required actions in close conjunction with its partner bodies.

This strategy has been prepared with the support of a specialist economic growth agency, Economic Growth Management.

