



West Sussex Economic Strategy 2025–2035

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By 2035, West Sussex will capitalise on its dynamic businesses, excellent international connectivity, and outstanding natural assets to amplify innovation, opportunity, and growth. We will ensure a more productive, inclusive, and sustainable economy.

The West Sussex Economic Strategy covers the period 2025 to 2035. It sets the framework for delivering a more productive, sustainable, and inclusive economy across the county over the next decade. It supports the growth ambitions set out in the UK Industrial Strategy by focusing on our high growth and growth potential sectors and places; it is outward-looking and future-focused.

We have a resident population of around 900,000 and an economy that is worth £27 billion. Over 379,000 people work in over 42,000 businesses. We have some of the UK's most outstanding natural assets, including much of the South Downs National Park, making our county well-positioned to taking a leading role in the development of the green economy.

The county is home to the UK's second largest airport, London Gatwick, and we have good connections to London, Brighton & Hove, and the Portsmouth/Southampton conurbation. We have some of the UK's most outstanding and innovative businesses and West Sussex is a popular destination for both national and international visitors.

Our productivity is modest compared with England and the South-East region, reflecting our sector makeup and with variations between different parts of the county; transport links, particularly between the east and west of the county, have long been cited as a barrier to growth; and variable skill levels and pockets of deprivation blight the life chances of too many of the county's residents.

Growth in our resident population is projected to be largely concentrated amongst the post-working age residents. We must attract and retain more working age residents, who will be the engine of our future economy. We need to create better paying jobs building on our growth-driving sectors; improve efficiency in our least productive sectors; provide the right type of housing in the right locations that people can afford; ensure that our urban centres and rural areas are vibrant and attractive to younger people; and improve how people and goods move to, from, and within the county.

DID YOU KNOW?

The West Sussex economy is worth around

£27 billion

We will address these challenges and seize opportunities as they arise, collectively. We have five ambitions to do this:

- We will boost productivity growth, investment, and innovation
- We will ensure that we have a dynamic and skilled workforce
- We will boost green innovation, enhance natural capital, and support the transition to net zero
- We will deliver new development and infrastructure and maximise the benefits of our international transport hubs; and
- We will sustain our distinctive and vibrant places and grow our visitor economy.

These ambitions will help us to secure the investment that we need from investors and government. Each ambition is underpinned by strategic priorities and our dynamic action plan provides the practical interventions that will make our vision and ambitions a reality.

We know that our economic geography is varied and that economic activity in West Sussex impacts beyond its administrative boundaries. We will be confident and outward-looking in our approach, and we will work with partners at the right spatial level to deliver what is needed to enable our residents and businesses to thrive.

The business-led West Sussex Economic Growth Board (WSEGB) (Annex III) will oversee the implementation of the strategy, championing the county's interests. It will advise Elected Members on public sector investment decisions, ensuring that they support our businesses to generate wealth and create good quality jobs.

The Economic Strategy covers the period when changes to local government are expected to take place. This will see powers devolved to a Mayor through a Mayoral Combined County Authority from May 2026. Alongside the plans for the Mayoral Authority are separate but related plans for re-organising local authorities.

The Economic Strategy and associated action plan will provide a clear framework for activity in the short to medium term. The strategy will also importantly set out the economic growth agenda for West Sussex which can help inform future arrangements.

This is a strategy for everyone – our residents and our businesses and all those with a stake and interest in the county. We will build on our strong track record of working together within, across and beyond the county to position West Sussex as a county of choice for investors, businesses, visitors, learners and residents.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The West Sussex economy is worth around £27 billion. This is 8% of the South-East region's economy (£336 billion). It has 379,000 employees (9% of the South-East total) working in over 42,600 businesses (9% of the South-East total).

Our resident population is around 900,000. This is 35,000 (+4.0%) more than in 2018. In 2022, there were 400 more businesses, but 6,000 fewer people employed in the county than there had been in 2018. Over the same period, our economy grew by 15% in current prices, but by less than 2% when inflation is considered. Our population is projected to increase by more than 50,000 by 2035, driven by significant increases in residents aged 65+, and with only a modest increase (+1,000) in the working age population.

West Sussex has a varied economic geography. We have an extensive mix of businesses, including world-leading corporates, strong public services, and a rich array of innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and creative freelancers. It is one of the UK's most attractive counties, with extensive natural and heritage assets, a rich network of vibrant towns and villages, and international connectivity.

Ours is a successful economy, but we could do better. Productivity¹ in most parts of the county is lower than the national average and there are signs that it is beginning to fall further behind South-East productivity rates. Some parts of the county have a paucity of working age people, whilst high residential property prices make it difficult to attract and retain talented working age people.

Although we are well-represented by business in some of the growth-driving sectors identified by the UK Government in its Industrial Strategy², West Sussex has become too reliant on lower value economic sectors. The projected increase in post-working age residents risks exacerbating this, with increasing pressures on the labour-intensive health and social care sector. There is plentiful employment, but it is not of sufficient value to support the high earnings that are needed for working age people. In addition, skills levels are variable, and there are some challenges with transport connectivity.

Sustainable economic growth is essential for the county's future. It is about creating better value using the same or fewer resources; doing things differently and more effectively; making best use of new and emerging technologies; and working collaboratively at the right spatial level. Our approach emphasises the need to ensure the benefits of growth are shared fairly across and beyond the county.

We have followed a sequential approach to develop the strategy: We reviewed previous economic collaboration work, updated the evidence base (see report on the West Sussex Economic Strategy engagement portal), summarised the current state of the West Sussex economy (Annex I), and considered the changing national and local strategic context. We engaged widely throughout the development of the strategy.

¹ As measured by GVA per hour worked.

² Invest 2035: The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy; UK Government; 2024 - (Growth-driving sectors: Advanced manufacturing; clean energy industries; creative industries; defence; digital & technologies; financial services; life sciences; and professional & business services)

2. SETTING THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

This strategy is set within the wider political, social, and environmental context. This can change rapidly and unexpectedly. Unforeseen events over the past decade have had a profound impact on the UK's economy. The Covid-19 pandemic, geopolitical instability, and the impacts of the UK's departure from the European Union have all been major contributors to the country's economic trajectory. The economic climate remains challenging and there will almost certainly be new, external headwinds that make forecasting the path of the UK economy fraught with uncertainty.

The UK inflation rate has had a turbulent journey over the past few years with some of the largest increases seen in recent times. The rate has lowered from its peak in October 2022, but the high cost of living continues to impact the economy.

Climate change and working towards net zero is influencing how goods and services are produced, delivered, and consumed. How businesses and local areas adapt to the green economy will have a strong bearing on their future resilience and performance. The energy landscape is also changing, with more being asked of the infrastructure we have. New, innovative technologies are supporting a rapidly decarbonising power sector. It is likely that there will be significant increases in the number of jobs needed to support the transition to net zero.

The age profile of the population is rising, adding to pressures to deliver health and well-being services more efficiently, and influencing the demand for services that are delivered. The dependency between the economy and health is increasing with more people being out of work due to long-term sickness.

Digital technologies are having an increasingly dominant role in people's lives, allowing services to be delivered remotely and enabling many people to work more flexibly and from a wider range of locations. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is expected to replace many existing jobs or, at least, alter how work is undertaken. High quality, future-ready digital infrastructure needs to be in place and used effectively.

Our high streets and town centres are adapting to changing consumer demands. On-line shopping has reduced their reliance on retail. They must diversify to thrive, embracing urban living and providing recreation and leisure opportunities that serve their communities, as well as being distinctive and attractive to visitors.

Public finances are under pressure. The new Government, elected in July 2024, wants stronger than forecast economic growth so it can invest in public services and to improve people's economic well-being. Its priorities for sustainable economic growth include: building more homes; attracting business and institutional investment; setting the framework for better trading conditions with international partners; addressing energy, infrastructure, and climate change; establishing a new Industrial Strategy; developing a collaborative approach to meeting the country's future skills needs; replacing business rates; and developing a new deal for working people. The Government is committed to extending [Devolution in England](#) to help drive its growth agenda.

Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy sets the Government's framework for delivering sector and business led growth. The Government's aim is to capture a greater share of internationally mobile investment, and it identifies eight growth-driving sectors, which will be its main focus: advanced manufacturing; clean energy industries; creative industries; defence; digital & technologies; financial services; life sciences; and professional & business services. Sector and sub-sector plans will be developed, and spatial clusters of growth-driving and emerging sectors will be identified and supported.

The Get Britain Working white paper sets out the Government's commitment to building an inclusive and thriving labour market. Their approach is based on 3 pillars; a modern Industrial Strategy and Local Growth Plans; improving quality of work through Plan to Make Work Pay; and employment reforms to get more people into work.

The Government will also be setting out further announcements including Department for Business and Trade SME Strategy and the **Business Growth Service; Skills England** plans, including for apprenticeships; reforms to the **Planning and Infrastructure bill**, including on affordable housing; and plans for the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**.

All these national and international factors impact on the West Sussex economy, and we will anticipate and respond to future trends.

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3. WEST SUSSEX – OUR COUNTY

Our Place

West Sussex covers an area of 769 sq.miles. It is bordered by Hampshire to the west, Surrey to the north and East Sussex and Brighton & Hove to the east.

We have strong urban centres, a rich cultural heritage, diverse leisure assets, and a wide range of market towns and villages. Alongside this, we have some of England's most outstanding natural assets. Almost a fifth of West Sussex is covered by woodland, making it one of the most densely wooded areas of the country. This, combined with the 50 miles of varied coastline, the South Downs National Park (SDNP), and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty is what makes our county distinctive.

Its access to London and to international markets through London Gatwick Airport and Shoreham Port, make West Sussex an attractive business location. The quality-of-life offer is important in attracting and retaining investors and in creating an environment in which people want to live, work and visit.

West Sussex is an administrative area with a County Council and seven constituent districts and boroughs – Adur, Arun, Chichester, Crawley, Horsham, Mid Sussex, and Worthing, as well as the South Downs National Park Authority, and Town and Parish Councils. The County Council's overall strategic plan, 'Our Council Plan', sets out the priority for a sustainable and prosperous economy, underpinned by a commitment to protecting the environment. The seven District and Borough Councils have their own economic plans or strategies, which set out their local priorities and the South Downs National Park Authority is guided by its Partnership Management Plan.

Each district and borough council and the South Downs National Park Authority prepares a Local Plan. These set out the visions and frameworks for the future development of their areas. This includes addressing demand for new housing and commercial development and identifying the infrastructure that will be needed to mitigate their impacts on communities and the environment. Local Plans are a key mechanism for agreeing local priorities and they will drive plans for investment in new development and associated infrastructure.

Economic growth needs to be balanced with sustainability goals and the challenges of climate change. West Sussex County Council and the Districts and Boroughs all have climate change strategies/climate emergency plans, which inform the strategy.

Transport connectivity and developing the right infrastructure to support economic ambitions remains a perennial challenge for West Sussex. A lack of investment in major improvements to the A27 trunk road has long been an inhibitor to growth. It weakens the county's links to Portsmouth and Southampton, and it impacts on the ability of local businesses to move goods and people efficiently to the west. It also weakens links eastbound along the coast towards Brighton & Hove, London Gatwick Airport and the A/M23 corridor. There are also constraints on the Brighton Mainline which impact north south rail capacity in the county.

The county has a network of rural roads and urban centres that have sustainable travel infrastructure constraints. East-west rail connectivity and West Coastway journey times between West Sussex towns and key economic hubs is poor compared to radial rail routes to London. Public transport can be infrequent and inaccessible in rural areas. This all contributes to challenges around opening up new locations for housing and employment, and to the movement of people and goods, weakening access to jobs and markets.

Significant government investment in the A27 is unlikely in the foreseeable future. This must remain on the table in discussions with Government, but we need to explore alternative transport infrastructure investments. This includes providing better sustainable transport, improving rail connectivity, and utilising digital infrastructure effectively. The West Sussex Transport Plan and the Transport for the South-East's (TfSE) Strategic Investment Plan, which highlights a number of West Sussex schemes that will inform these considerations.

West Sussex has attractive towns and villages. Developments in technology and increased online shopping have changed consumer habits and created challenges for high streets and town centres. Targeted support will be needed to maintain the vitality and attractiveness of our places.

The county's business parks and industrial estates are key drivers of the West Sussex economy. The Manor Royal Business District is one of the south east region's premier mixed activity business hubs with over 600 businesses, providing 30,000 jobs.

There are challenges in accessing high quality fibre and mobile connectivity across the county. This will require continued collaboration across the private and public sectors to stimulate commercial investment in our digital infrastructure.



West Sussex has benefited significantly from UK Government investment in recent years, including from the Local Growth Fund³. Growth Deals between the County Council and the District and Borough Councils have focussed on investment in infrastructure that supports our shared economic priorities. This has included public realm and active travel improvements; enabling sites to be developed for housing and employment use; and improvements to transport infrastructure. There are also opportunities to maximise the use of public sector assets, freeing up land for new homes and specialist housing.

The future public sector funding landscape is challenging. Funding allocations to support local economic growth are not yet clear, but they are likely to be constrained, at least in the medium term. We need to continue to work together to deliver the best economic and social outcomes in the right places, and ensure that the infrastructure is in place to enable this to happen. The county's eight Local Plans will be a key reference for this work and will inform future Growth Deals.

³ Around £150,000,000 of Local Growth Funding/ Getting Building Funding from Coast to Capital LEP was awarded for schemes in West Sussex since 2016 for mainly place based infrastructure projects for town centres, employment space, highways, and digital infrastructure.

Our People

In 2023, West Sussex had a resident population of over 900,000⁴. This is 9.5% of the South-East region's resident population. But it has 11.2% of the South-East region's 65+ year old residents. This causes significant workforce pressures and capacity constraints, and it inhibits our opportunities to innovate and to create higher value employment. Between 2018 and 2023, the county's population increased by 34,600 (+4.0%). This included 16,500 more working age residents, over 14,000 post-working age residents, and around 4,000 more residents aged 0-15 years.

Working age residents (16-64 years) account for 59% of our population, compared with 63% across England. But this masks significant differences within West Sussex: just 56% of Arun's residents are aged 16-64 years, compared with 65% of Crawley residents. Future population growth is projected to be driven by an increase in post-working age residents.

Previous work⁵ has highlighted a tightening labour market and an ageing population as a challenge to growth. To some extent this is true, but the working age population grew by over 16,000 between 2018 and 2023, with proportionately larger than average increases in Chichester (+4.0%), Horsham (+4.1%) and Mid Sussex (+5.2%). However, the working age population is forecast to grow only modestly (+1,000) between 2025 and 2035, compared with an increase in the post-working age population of +50,000.

The Covid-19 pandemic changed working patterns. Hybrid working is now common in many sectors of the economy. This makes it easier for West Sussex residents to get higher paying jobs outside of the area, whilst working at home, exacerbating local recruitment challenges.

Talented working age people are the bedrock of a thriving and productive economy. The choices that they make about where to live are driven by housing affordability, transport connectivity, town centre vibrancy and good quality, well-paid and accessible jobs. Average earnings for West Sussex's residents have not kept pace with increasing housing and living costs and they are lower than the South East average. We need to find new ways of attracting, retaining and upskilling more working age people. A better balanced population will help us to deliver our productivity ambitions.



⁴ Population Estimates by Local Authority (2023); ONS via NOMISWEB

⁵ West Sussex Economic Collaboration Final Report; Metro Dynamics; 2023

Schools and post 16 providers play an important role in ensuring a diverse range of options for young people and adults to access education, employment, or training locally. This includes provision for young people who are or who are at risk of being NEET (not in education, employment, or training), and in work training opportunities to enable people to progress through the labour market.

West Sussex has pockets of deprivation.⁶ Around 18% (65,000) of households are affected by 'health & disability' deprivation, 11% (42,000) are affected by 'education deprivation' and over 138,000 adults in West Sussex do not have the essential digital skills for life.⁷ There are 67,400 Universal Credit claimants, 30,000 of whom are in employment and 37,400 who are out of work.⁸

West Sussex has 104,000 (20%) 16 – 64 year old residents who are economically inactive, but only 11% (12,000) of this group are actively seeking employment.⁹ Despite limited higher education provision across the county, half (47%) of 16–64 year olds have a qualification at Level 4 or higher, compared to 45% for England.¹⁰ However, higher qualified residents tend to work in higher paying jobs outside of the county, making it difficult for the county to retain its talented residents.

Businesses are more interested in people's skills and personal attributes than they are with qualification levels. We need to increase the supply of people with technical skills through apprenticeships and make work-based learning more relevant and accessible to our SMEs, in particular. We must provide innovative solutions to supporting our economically inactive residents back into work, so that the skills that people have match those that are in demand.

⁶ There are four Low Level Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Arun and one in Crawley that are in the 10% most deprived in England; Indices of Multiple Deprivation; Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG); 2019

⁷ **West Sussex Digital Inclusion, Access, and Safety Strategic Framework**

⁸ Department for Work and Pensions, May 2024

⁹ Annual Population Survey March 23 – April 2024

¹⁰ Annual Population Survey January – December 2023



Our Economy

In 2022, the West Sussex economy was worth just under £27 billion. This is 8% of the value of South-East region's economy. Our economy grew by 15% between 2018 and 2022, based on current prices, but by less than 2% when inflation is considered.

West Sussex's diverse, polycentric nature means that it does not fit comfortably into a neat economic geography – Crawley is an important sub-regional employment and commercial centre; Worthing and Adur have strong links to Brighton & Hove; and Chichester has a relatively greater connection towards Portsmouth and East Hampshire. Challenges and opportunities in coastal areas, rural areas and in the north of the county are not always the same.



Between them, Crawley (22%) and Worthing (18%) account for around 40% of the county's economy, but only¹¹ around a quarter of its residents and 20% of its businesses.¹² Traditionally, there has been a strong narrative, which suggests that the coastal area is characterised by lower productivity, weaker economic performance, and relative disadvantage, whilst the north-east of the county has often been viewed as more productive. There may be some evidence of coastal 'catch up' largely driven by relatively high productivity in Worthing; whilst Crawley has had to wrestle with significant socio-economic challenges, because of the fall-out from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Productivity (£39.69 per hour worked) is, generally modest across the county compared with the England (£40.30) and the South-East region (£44.40), reflecting an over-reliance on low-productivity sectors. Workplace earnings are also low, driven in part by the labour required to support the care needs of an ageing population. Increased productivity across the economy will result from both the growth of higher value sectors, and greater efficiency and productivity of all businesses.

High house prices and the ability of some residents to work from home on London salaries exacerbates recruitment and retention challenges. Regeneration sites can be difficult to progress due to infrastructure and environmental constraints, including transport connectivity, whilst water neutrality has been having a major impact on development within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone. This has included delays to the delivery of over 10,000 new jobs in the zone.

¹¹ Current Price (Smoothed) GVA (B) per hour worked (£): ITL2 and ITL3 sub-regions 2004–2022 Office for National Statistics

¹² UK Business Counts (local units) – 2023

Our Businesses

In 2023, West Sussex had over 42,600 businesses¹³ – 405 more than there had been in 2018 – employing 379,000 staff.¹⁴ Horsham (19%) and Mid Sussex (19%) have the largest share of local businesses. Business start-up rates are below the England average, but 3-year survival rates are higher, except for in Crawley.

We have internationally renowned companies including Rolls Royce Motor Cars, BAE Systems, Ricardo, Thales, Siemens, Creative Assembly, Universal Quantum, GlaxoSmithKline, and Gatwick Airport Limited. The vast majority (97%) are micro and small businesses, many of which are part of the supply chains of larger, local businesses. A smart and segmented approach to supporting growth is needed, as well as a strategic approach to employment development sites. Crawley has the highest percentage (3.0%) of businesses which employ over 100 in England, apart from the City of London.

All our businesses have an important contribution to make to economic growth. They need support to adapt to future challenges and opportunities, including access to finance, digital adoption, climate resilience, recruitment, and access to the right employment space.

The public sector, education & health, aviation industry, tourism & the creative industries, the land-based sector, construction, and advanced manufacturing are key contributors to our diverse economy.

Our sector specialisms include manufacture of medical devices & electronic instruments; pharmaceuticals and biotech; video production; agriculture, horticulture and viticulture; non-scheduled passenger air transport and services supplementary to air transportation, linked to London Gatwick Airport.

At sub-county level, sector specialisms become more pronounced but emerging evidence suggests that local innovation networks are under-developed, and we need to derive more benefit from local research specialisms.

The largest employment sector in West Sussex is wholesale & retail (60,000 employees), followed by human health & social work (48,000), administrative & secretarial support (38,000), accommodation & food service (32,000) and education (32,000).



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¹³UK Business Counts 2023; Office for National Statistics via NOMISWEB

¹⁴Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) 2022; Office for National Statistics via NOMISWEB

Real Estate (£4.7 billion) makes the greatest contribution to the West Sussex economy, in GVA terms. However, £3.6 billion of this is accounted for by owner-occupiers imputed rental. Manufacturing contributes £3.5 billion; human health & social work £2.2 billion, transport & storage £2.0 billion, construction £1.7 billion, administrative & secretarial support £1.6 billion, and education £1.5 billion.

Some sectors contribute a greater share of employment than GVA to West Sussex. These are: Wholesale & retail, accommodation & food service, professional, scientific & technical activities; information & communication; administrative & support services; education; human health & social work activities; arts, entertainment & recreation; and other services. They account for 71% of the county's jobs, but just 44% of its GVA. These are lower value sectors.

Other sectors contribute a greater share of GVA than employment to the county. These are manufacturing; construction; finance & insurance; and real estate.¹⁵ Between them, they contribute 32% of the county's GVA¹⁶, but just 19% of its employment. These are the county's higher value sectors.



¹⁵This excludes Owner-Occupiers Imputed rental

¹⁶The remaining GVA is accounted for by Owner-Occupiers Imputed Rental (12%) and sectors which contribute similar shares of employment & GVA: Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water & waste; and transport & storage

4. OUR ECONOMIC ASSETS AND STRENGTHS

Evidence from the previous studies, further data analysis and engagement with partners and businesses has identified the county's significant economic assets. These will help to shape the strategy's ambitions and strategic priorities.

Natural Capital & Green Economy

The county's abundant natural assets make a major contribution to our economy. It is an exceptional sustainable tourism destination, a resource for land-based enterprise, and a natural environment that supports nature-based businesses and clean energy industries. Our agriculture businesses make a key contribution to the management of West Sussex's outstanding landscape. A key natural asset is the South Downs National Park.

Our county has one of the country's leading horticulture clusters, contributing more than £1 billion in annual sales and providing over 9,000 jobs to the local economy. West Sussex has the third largest area of land in England allocated to viticulture (321 hectares), with a significant increase in coverage over the past decade.

We also have a considerable opportunity to convert natural capital into an economic asset, including boosting its biodiversity and natural capital linked to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. West Sussex is the second most wooded county in England, and it is well positioned to benefit from carbon trading markets in the future.

The Rampion Windfarm, located off the West Sussex coast, has the capacity to generate renewable electricity for 350,000 homes each year and there is an application for Rampion 2, which if commissioned, is planned to be operational by 2027.



Many of our companies are at the cutting edge of supporting the transition to net zero, with activity including clean energy projects at business parks; hydrogen powered transport including buses and planned hydrogen-powered flights by 2035 from London Gatwick Airport; and sustainable agriculture initiatives to improve water quality. Business-led Local Energy Communities (LECs)¹⁷ are supporting local businesses to take control of their energy transition.

Larger organisations hold most of the skills, knowledge, and resources to respond to climate change. This needs to be extended to our smaller businesses and climate change adaptation needs to be presented, as a business opportunity, rather than a cost.

¹⁷For example, the ReEnergise Manor Royal Community Benefit Society.

What this means for the strategy

- Maximise our natural resources and opportunities to restore or create local natural capital, where it can have the most benefit for our communities, wildlife, and economy.
- Recognise the contribution of our agriculture and horticulture sectors to food production, net zero targets and landscape management; support our farmers and growers, including through regenerative methods and the adoption of emerging digital technologies.
- Maximise the growth of viticulture, including driving forward wine tourism, as part of a sustainable and regenerative approach to the visitor economy.
- Support the growth of clean energy industries and the low carbon sector, including through transport decarbonisation, building on major investments (such as Rampion), and green innovation, but also tackling blockers to their deployment through Local Area Energy Planning.
- Embed the transition to net zero across all sectors, building the skills and knowledge for wide scale transformation, supporting growth in green businesses, and helping them adapt to climate change.



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High value sector specialisms

West Sussex has a successful economy with a diverse range of sectors and an extensive business base. We have local concentrations of innovative companies in sectors such as photonics, biotech/medtech, sensors and computer hardware. There are broader specialisms in immersive technology, digital creative industries, and artificial intelligence.

There is emerging sector activity, including hydrogen powered transport, in quantum technologies and data centres. There is also significant innovation in our food and agriculture sectors.

Manufacturing is a high-value sector. We have specialisms in chemicals and minerals manufacturing, consumer electronics, steam generators, electromedical production, manufacture of electronic industrial process equipment and motor vehicles manufacture.

Supporting small businesses to use digital and other advanced technologies (including artificial intelligence) effectively across all sectors and making improvements to our innovation ecosystem will increase productivity across our economy.

We also have a strong university sector with research & development and innovation across a range of specialisms including health innovation and green growth. Our business parks and industrial areas are home to some of our most innovative and productive businesses.



What this means for the strategy

- Strengthen and develop innovation networks that link regional university expertise, businesses, and innovation hubs and organisations with our current and emerging sector strengths.
- Work collaboratively to secure innovation and seed funding and to boost growth in high value sectors.
- Work with key business assets to promote sector specialisms.
- Increase the adoption of digital and other advanced technologies by businesses across all sectors.
- Align our strengths with the growth-driving sector identified in Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy.

International Transport Hubs

West Sussex has major international transport hubs through London Gatwick Airport and Shoreham Port. It is also close to Portsmouth and Southampton, one of the UK's most important marine clusters, and to Newhaven Port.

Over 40.9 million passengers pass through London Gatwick Airport in 2023. This supported over 76,000 jobs and contributed £5.5 billion to the UK economy, of which 22,000 jobs and £1.6 billion were in West Sussex. Shoreham Port handles over 2 million tonnes of commercial cargo, lands £18 million of fish each year and it supports over 150 small and medium sized businesses.

With the right partnerships and connections, more could be made of links west to Portsmouth and Southampton, including with Solent Freeport. To the east, Newhaven provides an opportunity for collaboration across Sussex ports and to strengthen the visitor economy.

International hubs are attractive to inward investors; they provide competitive advantage for international trade, giving easier access to global markets; and they are gateways for the international visitor economy. They can also be a focus for sector and innovation clustering. Transport connectivity between the international hubs, the wider county and beyond plays a key role.



What this means for the strategy

- Develop a clear approach to inward investment and international trade to promote the county's assets and opportunities, linked to Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy
- Focus on sustainable transport connectivity to improve reliability and to increase use of sustainable modes of transport between key business locations and the international transport hubs.
- Establish stronger collaboration to the east across Sussex ports and explore links to the west including with Solent Freeport.

¹⁸This includes direct, indirect, induced, and catalytic effects impacts. Microsoft Word – Ivy Holdco Limited Consolidated FS 31 December 2023 4.4

¹⁹Local Economic Impact of London Gatwick 2023; Oxera 2024

A Great Visitor Destination

West Sussex has major international The visitor economy in West Sussex supported over 36,000 jobs and had a value of £2 billion in 2022.²⁰ Traditional English villages, the county's natural assets including a its coastline and the South Downs, cultural and sporting venues and events, and outstanding attractions are all major reasons why West Sussex is a great visitor destination. These include, Goodwood, Arundel Castle, renowned gardens and outstanding vineyards. There are new opportunities, including in regenerative tourism.

The millions of visitors who pass through London Gatwick Airport every year provide a great opportunity for the county to attract international visitors, as to a lesser extent, does the Newhaven to Dieppe route.

A new pan Sussex Strategy for Growth to 2035 has the ambition of increasing the value of the sector from £5 billion to £7.5 billion through a better coordinated approach to the visitor economy, including a greater focus on international visitors. We have achieved accreditation from VisitBritain/VisitEngland as a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for East Sussex, Brighton & Hove and West Sussex. There is a new destination partnership, **Experience Sussex**, covering East Sussex and West Sussex and there are local destination management arrangements in several of the county's Districts and Boroughs.



What this means for the strategy

- Sustain and harness opportunities to grow the impact and value of the visitor economy, with a stronger focus on international visitors.
- Use the Sussex Strategy for Growth and pan-Sussex arrangements to grow the sector.

²⁰Tourism GBTS-DVS County Level & Value: 2 year Average 2021-2023

Digital Infrastructure

We have made major strides in improving our digital infrastructure over the past decade. The county's OpenDigital programme has resulted in around 98% of premises in the county able to access a superfast service, with 75% able to access gigabit speeds.

We have developed innovative digital approaches, including in the land-based sectors, and we have improved broadband connectivity in hard-to-reach areas. We have used public sector assets to encourage commercial investment in both gigabit capable connectivity and in improved mobile services.

The West Sussex Digital Infrastructure Strategy sets out our shared ambition to enable future-ready infrastructure that will support our diverse economy, stimulate growth and innovation, and unlock the potential of our rural economy.



What this means for the strategy

- Enable commercial investment in future-ready digital infrastructure through an open access approach to policy and public and private sector collaboration.
- Create connected places that unlock value for communities, businesses, public services, and the environment through technology and innovation, in line with the Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy aim of creating a pro-business environment.
- Ensure that our business parks and industrial areas have access to the digital infrastructure that they need to support business growth and attract investment.
- Improve access to connectivity in hard-to-reach areas, reducing the digital divide.

Strong Skills Landscape

Nearly a quarter of a million of our residents have a degree or equivalent qualification²¹ and there is potential to retain more of the 16,000 people who graduate from the universities of Chichester, Sussex, and Brighton each year. There are around 28,500 students enrolled at Chichester College Group. There are also a range independent training providers offering apprenticeships and other courses.

The Surrey and Sussex Institute of Technology (SSIoT) aims to deliver the best in higher technical education focussed on the jobs of tomorrow through a collaboration between universities, further education colleges and industry. Specialisms include engineering, manufacturing, digital and construction. Developing STE(A)M²² skills will be an important focus for delivering economic growth.

We have an active Careers Hub working with employers, schools, and colleges to raise students' aspirations and to prepare them for the fast-changing world of work. We link education and employment to help schools and colleges to deliver high-quality careers education.

The Future Skills Sussex Local Skills Improvement Plan aims to make technical education and training more responsive to employer and local labour market needs. Partners are increasingly collaborating to ensure that our workforce is inclusive, diverse and offers opportunity for all, and our voluntary and community sector supports our residents to develop skills to find and remain in work.



© Chichester College, new STEM and Higher Education Centre

What this means for the strategy

- Continue to build connections between local employers, education providers (schools, colleges, universities and independent training providers) and the voluntary and community sector to improve understanding of local opportunities and to help fill skills gaps.
- Respond to the skills needs of business, including in growing sectors and clusters and make skills training more accessible for SMEs.
- Support and enable local planning frameworks to maximise the development of affordable housing and workspaces to make West Sussex a more attractive location for working aged people.
- Ensure that employment is available for all, and that employers can benefit from the opportunity offered by a diverse and inclusive workforce.

²¹ 49% of 16-64 year olds in West Sussex have degree level qualifications or higher, compared to 47% for England.

²² Skills science, technology, engineering, arts and maths

5. OUR AMBITIONS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We have identified five key ambitions to achieve our vision. The ambitions are interconnected and support each other. Within each ambition we have set out the strategic priorities. Our dynamic action plan provides the practical interventions that will make our vision and ambitions a reality.

Ambition 1: Boost productivity growth, investment, and innovation

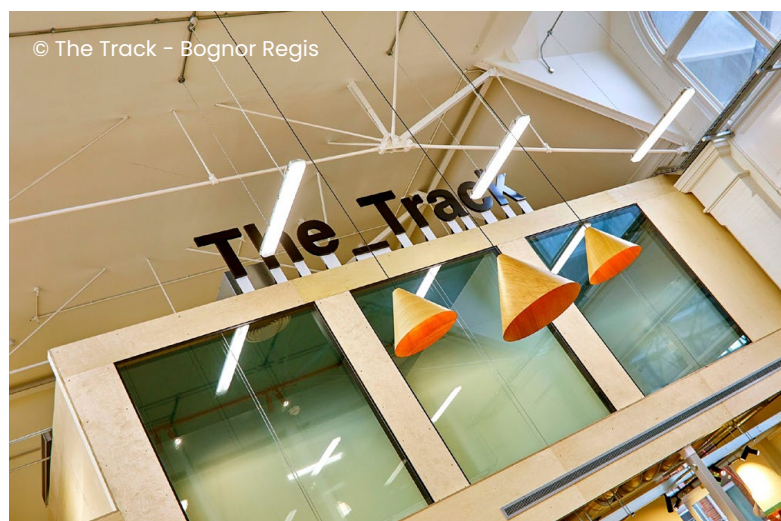
Strategic Priorities:

- **Grow high value sectors and distinctive clusters, and strengthen innovation networks aligned with the National Industrial Strategy** – strengthening strategic partnerships between the universities, government (including Innovate UK) and business.
- **Improve efficiency and value in sectors with modest or low productivity** – including through better utilisation of digital technology and artificial intelligence in sectors such as health and social care.
- **Strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors** – to ensure high-quality support for micro, small and medium sized businesses and engagement of large businesses.
- **Promote the county as an attractive investment and international trade location** – focusing on high value specialisms and making best use of London Gatwick Airport and access to other international transport hubs.

Ambition 2: Ensure a dynamic and skilled workforce

Strategic Priorities:

- **Increase employment in high value sectors and specialisms** – developing the right vocational and technical skills including green and digital skills, with pathways for residents, students, and graduates.
- **Strengthen business engagement in careers and talent development** – to promote opportunities in West Sussex including through links between employers and education.
- **Boost the proportion of working age residents** – intervene to attract and retain the workforce our businesses and economy need.
- **Facilitate an inclusive workforce** – support priority groups into work and promote workforce diversity, including through strategic relationships with health.



²³ Biotech/medtech, life sciences, photonics, defence, sensors, and computer hardware.

²⁴ Advanced manufacturing, immersive technology, digital creative industries, artificial intelligence, professional & financial services, and clean energy industries.

Ambition 3: Boost green innovation, enhance natural capital, and support the transition to net zero

Strategic Priorities:

- **Position West Sussex as a market leader in innovation and investment** – developing new products and services and innovative approaches to agriculture, horticulture and viticulture.
- **Enhance the county's biodiversity and natural capital** – balancing communities and wildlife, alongside securing economic value including through regenerative tourism.
- **Support the transition to net zero and resilience to climate change** – supporting businesses, developing clean energy industries, decarbonising transport, and embedding circular economy principles.

Ambition 4: Deliver new development and infrastructure and maximise the benefits of our international transport hubs

Strategic Priorities:

- **Promote opportunities for new development with supporting infrastructure to enable growth** – ensuring that the planning system supports sustainable growth, and by maximising the use of our public and community sector assets.
- **Improve how people and goods move around the county** – boost active and sustainable travel and deliver the right strategic transport infrastructure, including east-west links taking account of social and environmental impacts.
- **Enable future-ready digital infrastructure and connectivity** – stimulating innovation and digital transformation in businesses and sectors to improve productivity.
- **Maximise the benefits from our international transport hubs** – focusing on inward investment and trade, international visitor economy, and innovation in the aviation and marine sectors.
- **Build homes in the right locations that working-age people can afford** – developing innovative approaches to enable more affordable homes.



© Shutterstock – Shoreham by Sea

Ambition 5: Sustain our distinctive and vibrant places and grow the visitor economy

Strategic Priorities:

- **Ensure our urban centres, employment hubs and rural areas are vibrant and attractive** – supporting resilience and diversification of our places including through town centre regeneration.
- **Harness the unique opportunities from the visitor economy** – increasing the value of the sector and its role in amplifying the county as a place to live, work and invest.
- **Enable the creation of connected places** – including using innovative data technology to unlock vibrancy, opportunity, and value in our places.



6. OVERSIGHT, COLLABORATION, AND INVESTMENT

This is an economic strategy for the whole county – its businesses, residents, its public and voluntary sectors, and those with a stake in West Sussex’s economy.

It is overseen by the West Sussex Economic Growth Board (WSEGB), established in 2024 as part of Government arrangements following the demises of Local Enterprise Partnerships. The WSEGB brings together leaders in business, local government, education, and health. The WSEGB acts as a convener, facilitator, and enabler, providing strategic leadership where required and promoting West Sussex locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

The WSEGB has a line to the West Sussex Leaders’ Board, made up of the political Leaders of the County Council and the seven District and Borough Councils. West Sussex County Council has formally adopted the Economic Strategy and acts as the accountable body with Government.

Strong partnerships will be essential to ensure a focus on the ambitions and strategic priorities. We will collaborate to progress innovative ideas and investment propositions and will look to the public and private sector to unlock investment. We will ensure broad engagement around the strategy and high-level action plan through communication activities, and we will bring people together working within existing structures and establishing appropriate new ones where this will add value.

A dynamic action plan will provide the focus for taking forward the ambitions and strategic priorities. The strategy is broad and long-term, and so the actions will be prioritised and phased. It will include a small number of transformational, but deliverable, projects that will make the most impact on the county’s economy.

In terms of investment, there is no single, central source of funding to deliver against the ambitions and strategic priorities. Public funding is currently constrained and uncertain, but devolution may, in time, provide new funding opportunities.

Where funding is available, we will advocate for investment decisions to be guided by the strategy’s ambitions and strategic priorities. We will make best use of government funding and other available funding where the objectives and criteria match what we are striving to achieve. We will also work collaboratively to make the case for investment from multiple funding sources, supported by the private sector where appropriate.

7. MEASURING SUCCESS

We will assess and measure progress of the strategy through tracking the implementation of the high-level action plan and the overall state of the West Sussex economy.

We will monitor in 'narrative' terms progress against the high-level actions annually. We will also report on performance indicators relevant to key activities in the action plan as they come forward. Alongside the annual review of progress, we will consider whether the high-level actions remain the right ones, and will adapt them, where necessary, to ensure the work to achieve the strategy remains 'live' and up to date.

We will also monitor the overall performance of the West Sussex economy, including through monthly economic snapshots. We will use a set of high-level indicators relevant to our ambitions. We will set a baseline using the latest data available at the point the strategy is adopted (spring 2025). These high-level indicators should be seen as contextual since many of the influences on them will be outside the control of local partners. The high-level indicators are:

Draft high level indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Description	Target	Source
Economic Growth	£26,727 billion (2022)	GVA of the economy	Match or exceed growth rate in the South East region	Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region: TLJ South East; ONS
Productivity	£39.69 (2022)	GVA per hour worked	Match or exceed growth rate in the South East region	Labour Productivity by Local Authority; ONS
Business survival	63.6% (2018 business births)	3-year Business survival rates	Match or exceed the survival rate in the South East region	Business Demography; ONS
Qualifications	49.1% (2023)	% of 16-64 year olds with RQF level 4+ qualifications	Match or exceed the increase in higher qualified residents in the South East region	Annual Population Survey; ONS
Apprenticeships	2,350 (2023/4)	Number of apprenticeship completions	Match or exceed the percentage increase in apprenticeship completions in the South East region.	Department for Education
Claimant count	2.6% (2023)	% of 16-64 year old residents who are claiming out of work benefits	Maintain or reduce the 2023 claimant count rate	Claimant count; ONS
Employment rates	77.7% (July-23 to June 24)	% of 16-64 year old residents in work	Exceed the employment rate in the South East region	Annual Population Survey; ONS
Working age population	59%	% of residents who are aged 16-64 years	Maintain the existing percentage of residents who are working age	Population estimates; ONS
Workplace Earnings	£34,274 (2023)	Median annual gross earnings for full-time workers	Match or exceed the increase in median, annual gross workplace earnings for full-time workers in the South East region	Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings (ASHE)
Housing Affordability	11.38 (2023)	Ratio of median house prices to median gross annual workplace earnings for full-time workers	Reduce the ratio from the baseline	Ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace earnings by county; ONS

From time to time we will review other indicators, including town centre vacancy rates, digital connectivity, carbon emissions and sustainable transport use.

ANNEX I

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS – ANALYSIS

The West Sussex Economic Collaboration Report contained an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the West Sussex economy. These have been refreshed following the economic strategy work.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful economy with diverse sectors and an extensive business base • Extensive natural capital, with outstanding coastal and rural assets • International connectivity through London Gatwick Airport and Shoreham Port • World leading businesses and thriving business centres • Talented residents and workforce • Proximity to London and the wider economic opportunities of the South-East Region and an affluent hinterland • Established land-based industries and emerging viticulture sector; strong aviation sector; high value manufacturing; popular visitor destination; and strong arts and creative industries sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modest productivity • Over-reliance on lower value economic sectors • Inadequate transport connectivity, including the east-west road and rail network (A27) and in rural areas • Constraints on the Brighton Mainline which impact north south rail capacity in the county • High levels of health and disability deprivation in some parts of the county • Increasing economic inactivity • Demographic imbalance specifically an ageing population • Tight labour market and skills gaps • High residential property prices • Some gaps in digital connectivity
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential of high value clusters and sectors • Natural capital and links to economic value and green innovation • Growth acceleration associated with technology adoption • International transport hubs including potential expansion at London Gatwick, and ports outside the county • Distinctive innovation assets with prospects for future development • Positioning of the visitor economy through pan-Sussex collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure pressures particularly associated with the transport network • Continued environmental and regulatory pressures impacting development and growth ambitions (e.g. water neutrality) • Market changes impacting on town centre vitality and viability • Prevailing economic conditions

ANNEX II

SUMMARY OF PLACE BASED PRIORITIES

The following sets out place based priorities reflecting local plans and strategies.

Adur & Worthing Councils

Adur & Worthing Councils are commissioning their formal Economic Strategy in 2025, which will take precedence over the below in due course.

Adur District

Adur is refreshing its vision for the future by consulting residents of Sompting, Lancing, Shoreham, Southwick, and Fishersgate to shape an economic strategy that fosters sustainable growth over the next 15 years. Adur is collaborating with the County Council and other partners to explore opportunities for new housing, strengthen the local economy, and develop sustainable infrastructure with environmental benefits.

Adur's unique location, nestled between the South Downs National Park and the West Sussex coastline, poses challenges for development but underscores the importance of achieving a balance between sustainable growth, regeneration, and environmental preservation. Drawing on lessons from recent regeneration initiatives at Shoreham Harbour and New Monks Farm near the airport, initial research suggests that regenerating Lancing village could further support the local economy. Residents and businesses will be actively engaged in shaping proposals for the next priority area, paving the way for potential partnership investments.

Worthing Borough

Worthing is committed to open and transparent engagement with residents and is working in partnership with its communities. The Council is transforming its operations in response to growing customer demand for services and the challenges of climate change. Worthing's plans aim to ensure support and housing for those in need by partnering to build new homes while protecting and promoting biodiversity within green spaces, such as the plan to regenerate Montague Place.

Worthing is dedicated to carbon-neutral growth and development, supported by innovative partnership schemes like the new Heat Network, which will provide cleaner and greener energy to key public buildings starting in 2025.

Adur and Worthing priorities	Ambition/ intervention	West Sussex Economic Strategy strategic priority alignment
<p>FAIR:</p> <p>Access to good quality work</p> <p>Safe, secure and sustainable housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnering with local further education and higher education institutions to build a skilled local workforce that meet local employment needs; supporting key sectors, to help promote inclusive and green growth Invest in new homes through the re-use and redevelopment of our land and buildings; support community land trusts and co-operatives to build new homes; develop and support sustainable social housing development; support community owned energy provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase employment in high value sectors and specialisms Facilitate an inclusive workforce Promote opportunities for new development with supporting infrastructure to enable growth Build homes in the right locations that working-age people can afford
<p>GREEN:</p> <p>Decarbonisation</p> <p>Sustainable Growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support businesses to transition to net zero, accessing grant funding, supporting community owned renewable energy generation and supply; develop a local approach to circular economy initiatives to reduce waste increase reuse. Develop opportunities to pursue skills for green growth sectors; support Worthing/Adur to establish itself as a regional hub for fairer, greener, sustainable zero carbon business activities; develop a green business park at Decoy Farm; support local, sustainable, low carbon renewable energy infrastructures, including district heat networks, green hydrogen production and supply, solar power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the transition to net zero and resilience to climate change Position West Sussex as a market leader in innovation and investment
<p>LOCAL:</p> <p>Wealth</p> <p>Workforce</p> <p>Assets</p> <p>Economic Democracy</p> <p>Connectivity</p> <p>Culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harness the procurement power council and other stakeholders; localise economic activity and reduce leakage and financial extraction Pay the Living Wage and encourage staff to spend and save locally Use council and partner assets, to lever in additional investment Support alternative models of economic governance, for example around the Council's assets which give citizens greater investment in and control over their economic future Develop green critical and active travel infrastructure and green public realm; build on our digital infrastructure to ensure digital inclusivity and accessibility Invest in cultural provision and celebrate our heritage to ensure Worthing/Adur has a unique and identifiable offer; curate and invest in the green regeneration of our land and buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote opportunities for new development with supporting infrastructure to enable growth Facilitate an inclusive workforce Improve how people and goods move around the county Enable future-ready digital infrastructure and connectivity Ensure our urban centres and rural areas are vibrant and attractive

Arun District

Arun's vision is to create a dynamic, competitive, and sustainable place to live, work and do business. Arun has already attracted significant funding to support economic growth and we want this to continue. We recognise that working in partnership is the best way to create a dynamic new future and this document sets out clearly our shared vision for Arun and how we can work together to achieve this. Arun represents a significant opportunity for sustainable growth, focussing on developing its key employment and housing sites, improving infrastructure and R&D through business support and cluster/sector development.

Arun District priorities	Ambition/ intervention	West Sussex Economic Strategy strategic priority alignment
Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing and optimising key sites to provide destinations and experiences for both residents and visitors. Encouraging activity that increases footfall. Support our town centres to respond to changing retail patterns and to evolve as new trends are established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote opportunities for new development with supporting infrastructure to enable growth Ensure our urban centres and rural areas are vibrant and attractive
Employment Space and Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect existing employment sites; promote strategic employment sites across the district. Develop employment space for the creative cluster, knowledge-based employment, cultural and leisure sector; and support strategic housing development that strengthens communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote opportunities for new development with supporting infrastructure to enable growth Build homes in the right locations that working-age people can afford
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve walking/cycling infrastructure and promote the use of low carbon energy vehicles Support road and rail improvements –e.g: A27 Arundel bypass and A29 realignment Ensure all parts of the district has access to full fibre broadband 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the transition to net zero and resilience to climate change Improve how people and goods move around the county
Business support & Sector development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify R & D funding and cluster development and start up support and deliver business networks Support the creation of new business incubator space and move-on units Support the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, horticulture and creative & digital sectors Target higher skilled/value businesses and help retain higher skilled residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow high value sectors and distinctive clusters, and strengthen innovation networks aligned with the National Industrial Strategy Strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors Increase employment in high value sectors and specialisms Strengthen business engagement in careers and talent development Boost the proportion of working age residents

Crawley Borough

To ensure their future socio-economic prosperity, Crawley aims to create a vibrant digital town with a transformed “green” economy. This will be underpinned by high quality local services, state-of-the-art amenities, a pioneering advanced engineering Business Park and Innovation Centre at Manor Royal alongside extensive sustainable homes, excellent transport links and green tech business. By diversifying the local economy, Crawley will enhance the economic resilience of the borough and boost long term sustainable growth, attracting investment and creating better job opportunities for local residents.

Crawley Borough priorities	Ambition/ intervention	West Sussex Economic Strategy strategic priority alignment
Renew Crawley as an attractive, abundant, diverse economic powerhouse, founded on “green growth” and digital innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Crawley as the key business destination in the South East for advanced engineering and professional services Develop a pioneering “niche” innovation identity for Crawley, benefiting advanced engineering, logistics and construction Maximise the economic benefits arising from growth at Gatwick Airport, whilst diversifying Crawley’s economic profile to ensure long-term, sustainable growth. Meet the needs of current and future business through enhancing Crawley’s existing employment locations and identifying and unlocking significant new employment land including a Strategic Employment site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow high value sectors and distinctive clusters, and strengthen innovation networks aligned with the National Industrial Strategy Promote the county as an attractive investment and international trade location Maximise the benefits from our international transport hubs
Establish Crawley at the forefront of “green growth” and as a low carbon economy where green technology businesses thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drive growth of green tech and construction businesses & jobs Deliver vital carbon emissions reductions in Crawley by maximising renewable energy and providing grid resilience Unlock investment in “green” infrastructure, transforming Manor Royal into a digital Business Park with a highly productive green technology and advanced engineering business base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase employment in high value sectors and specialisms Position West Sussex as a market leader in innovation and investment Support the transition to net zero and resilience to climate change
Secure a vibrant neighbourhood and sustainable economic future for the town centre via significant qualitative investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement “Invest in Skills For Crawley” programme to transform vocational skills facilities and training provision for residents Address the skills gap to enable local people to access higher skilled employment, creating the right conditions for career opportunities within the borough Enable business from high value growth sectors in Crawley to recruit successfully from local workforce and overcome skills gaps by ensuring Crawley offers the right skills profile to cater for the needs of current and future employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase employment in high value sectors and specialisms Boost the proportion of working age residents Facilitate an inclusive workforce Strengthen business engagement in careers and talent development
Enhance a “green” economic future by delivering low carbon transport and hyper digital connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve quality and range of sustainable transport infrastructure Maximise capacity of digital infrastructure Establish Crawley as a first choice advanced technology business location due to its highly competitive digital infrastructure offer Establish Crawley as the centre of a major and extensive network of hydrogen fuelled public transport services which in turn drive sustainable local economic growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote opportunities for new development with supporting infrastructure to enable growth Improve how people and goods move around the county Enable future-ready digital infrastructure and connectivity Support the transition to net zero and resilience to climate change

Chichester District

Chichester District's Economic Development Strategy for a prosperous and sustainable economy has four priorities – Inward Investment; Supporting the High Street; Create the conditions to support growth-oriented and sustainable businesses; make best use of the district's natural and cultural assets.

Chichester District's Regeneration Strategy drives sustainable growth by revitalising and developing key sites and enhancing infrastructure across the city. It aims to diversify the city's offerings, attract investment, and foster an inclusive, prosperous economy, while improving quality of life for residents and improving the visitor experience. At the same time, the strategy prioritises preserving Chichester's unique heritage and ensuring its long-term economic sustainability.

Chichester District priorities	Ambition/ intervention	West Sussex Economic Strategy strategic priority alignment
Developing a vibrant economy driving innovation and change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving digital connectivity and infrastructure throughout the district to support the city and the rural areas Improving travel connectivity throughout the district with a focus on the A27 Maximising the contribution of public sector assets to the local economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable future-ready digital infrastructure and connectivity Improve how people and goods move around the county Enable the creation of connected places
Developing an inclusive and sustainable economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting investment in the Green Economy Encouraging businesses to prepare for a low carbon economy and to adapt to climate change through a combination of training and funding support Develop a co-ordinated approach to engage, support and promote the food and drink sector so that Chichester District is recognised as one of the country's leading food and drink producers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the transition to net zero and resilience to climate change Position West Sussex as a market leader in innovation and investment Facilitate an inclusive workforce
Attracting a more varied age-profile and demographic to live and work in the district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversifying the retail offer and visitor experience, using cultural heritage assets, to enable a more flexible retail offering that combines experiential retail and leisure Growing the evening & night-time economy and attracting international and staying visitors to festivals and events Providing more homes of different types and improving affordability to support the growth of the district Supporting the university, college and other education institutions to encourage entrepreneurship Providing safe and navigable streets, which promote sustainable travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boost the proportion of working age residents Ensure our urban centres and rural areas are vibrant and attractive Build homes in the right locations that working-age people can afford

Chichester District continued

<p>Growth and investment in key sectors including those that bring high value employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality and range of sustainable transport infrastructure • Maximise capacity of digital infrastructure • Establish Crawley as a first choice advanced technology business location due to its highly competitive digital infrastructure offer • Establish Crawley as the centre of a major and extensive network of hydrogen fuelled public transport services which in turn drive sustainable local economic growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote opportunities for new development with supporting infrastructure to enable growth • Improve how people and goods move around the county • Enable future-ready digital infrastructure and connectivity • Support the transition to net zero and resilience to climate change
<p>Enable Chichester City regeneration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A better-connected city ensuring regeneration sites are sustainably linked into the city's existing historic core and key nodes • A greener, healthier and safer city – ensuring the fabric of the city centre provides a safe and high-quality public realm and ensuring green travel modes are prioritised. • A diverse and inclusive city ensuring all our residents have the skills and knowledge to access new employment opportunities. • An economically prosperous city focusing on working in partnership to ensure that the current and future needs of businesses are met • An attractive and vibrant city destination to expand the range of experiences that the city has to offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure our urban centres and rural areas are vibrant and attractive • Strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors • Promote opportunities for new development with supporting infrastructure to enable growth • Harness the unique opportunities from the visitor economy • Enable the creation of connected places

Horsham District

Enterprising Horsham, the Economic Strategy within Horsham, will realise the full potential of the local community, economy, and variety of places, striving toward the realisation of a fairer and greener economic prosperity and deliver the shared aims of District and County strategies. Enterprising Horsham's overarching Vision is: To improve prosperity and the quality of life for residents whilst enhancing the area as an attractive and sustainable place to live, work, visit, invest and do business with a focus on driving job creation and retention for the benefit of current and future generations.

Horsham District priorities (Guiding Principles)	Ambition/Intervention (Priority Actions)	West Sussex Economic Strategy strategic priority alignment
Securing Green Prosperity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead partnerships to deliver the Council's Green Business Strategy, promoting a 'Buy Local' policy, circular economy principles, and green skills development to support the transition to a low-carbon economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the transition to net zero and resilience to climate change
Nurturing Business Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and drive a 'One Council' approach to supporting local businesses and the local economy, including publishing and championing a Business Charter Working in partnership with the Growth Hub to align local and strategic business support offers Work with partners to develop a Horsham Business Awards offer Support the development of, and synergies between (clusters), key local sectors including creative industries, specialised manufacturing, knowledge based industries, construction, the visitor economy, retail and the land based economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors Grow high value sectors and distinctive clusters, and strengthen innovation networks aligned with the National Industrial Strategy
Creating and Curating Sustainable Quality Places:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the Your Horsham Business Improvement District Improving local town centres and high streets as hubs for local communities and commerce Develop an inward investment offer in partnership with local and strategic partners Ensure that sufficient employment land is allocated and delivered to meet business ambitions including bringing forward key development sites for employment Convene a Workspace Forum to understand the demand for and supply of employment workspace Support the development of the local infrastructure plan including improving public transport reliability and frequency, particularly in rural areas and ensuring that businesses and residents have the digital infrastructure that they need to thrive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote opportunities for new development with supporting infrastructure to enable growth Improve how people and goods move around the county Enable future-ready digital infrastructure and connectivity
Enhancing the Skills Base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Careers Hub, the Local Skills Improvement Plan and the Department for Work & Pensions to align local skills development with workforce needs, focusing on improving training and employment access for disadvantaged and excluded groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boost the proportion of working age residents Facilitate an inclusive workforce

Mid Sussex District

Mid Sussex's focus is on sustainable economic growth with an emphasis on promoting access to high value employment, supporting new business startups, delivering employment sites such as the Science and Technology Park in Burgess Hill, continuing to improve digital infrastructure and supporting the regeneration of the Martlets shopping centre in Burgess Hill. Plans also protect the special characteristics of the district enhancing biodiversity through sustainable land management and rewilding initiatives and fostering sustainable growth particularly through investment in sustainable infrastructure, progressing towards net-zero carbon emissions, encouraging social value through local procurement, and supporting economic, environmental, and social improvements.

Mid Sussex District priorities	Ambition/ intervention	West Sussex Economic Strategy strategic priority alignment
Deliver sustainable communities and infrastructure to shape a place that people want to work and live.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver new housing and infrastructure to meet the Government's housing targets • Secure the infrastructure to support planned growth and facilitate delivery and use of sustainable travel infrastructure and services • Continue to deliver enhanced digital infrastructure and promote its use as a catalyst for growth and innovation across all sectors in the district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote opportunities for new development with supporting infrastructure to enable growth • Enable future-ready digital infrastructure and connectivity • Build homes in the right locations that working-age people can afford
Enable development of strategic employment sites to support business and employment growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support delivery of a 48-hectare site north of the A2300 and adjacent to the A23 as a Science and Technology Park (STP), generating over 5,000 new high-quality jobs • Provide sufficient employment sites to meet the needs of new and existing businesses so they can locate and grow in the district • Maintain the high employment rate in Mid Sussex and reduce out-commuting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow high value sectors and distinctive clusters, and strengthen innovation networks aligned with the National Industrial Strategy • Promote opportunities for new development with supporting infrastructure to enable growth • Boost the proportion of working age residents
Delivering regeneration in Mid Sussex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve and enhance infrastructure to support growth • Address historic capacity issues at the A23 / A2300 junction • Promote Mid Sussex's assets, ambitions and potential to attract inward investment and help businesses to locate, survive and grow in the District. https://www.opportunitymidsussex.co.uk/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve how people and goods move around the county • Promote the county as an attractive investment and international trade location • Harness the unique opportunities from the visitor economy
Developing an inclusive and sustainable economy and social well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support sustainable economic development, combat climate change, sustain and increase biodiversity and promote health and well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate an inclusive workforce • Enhance the county's biodiversity and natural capital • Support the transition to net zero and resilience to climate change

ANNEX III

West Sussex Economic Growth Board

The West Sussex Economic Growth Board (WSEGB) brings together leaders in business, local government, education, and health to oversee and help achieve the West Sussex Economic Strategy 2025 – 2035.

The Board will provide leadership on the strategy's five ambitions, lobby on behalf of the county, and ensure on-going dialogue with West Sussex businesses.



Alison Addy – Head of External Engagement and Policy at London Gatwick

Alison has been Head of External Engagement and Policy at London Gatwick since 2020, leading on external affairs strategy, with a focus on developing meaningful relationships with key local and national stakeholders and influencing public policy.



Melanie Asker – Managing Director at The Greenwood Group

Melanie has been Managing Director at the Greenwood Group for since 2023 – an award-winning sustainability leader within the horticultural sector. Melanie has a keen interest in sustainability and environmental ecosystems.



Gabby Day – Communications Manager at Pentagon Plastics Group

Gabby is the HR and Marketing Manager at Pentagon Plastics Group, where she drives business growth and development through sales, marketing and strategic planning. and marketing. As a passionate people professional (Assoc CIPD) and an advocate for the manufacturing sector she is committed to supporting the future of UK engineering and manufacturing, diving up essential industry skills and the development of wider employment opportunities within the sector.



Rachael Dines – Director & Founder at Shake It Up Creative

Rachael Dines is a Chartered Marketer and the founder of Shake It Up Creative, an award-winning marketing agency based in Worthing, West Sussex. With 20+ years of experience, she has strong expertise across both traditional and digital marketing and is well-connected locally. Rachael is a respected small business advisor, speaker and mentor known for her approachable style.



Phillip Kennedy – Managing Director at Eschmann Technologies Ltd

Phillip has been Managing Director at Eschmann Technologies Ltd since 2019 as well as being Chair of the Association of British HealthTech Industries (ABHI) since 2015. At ABHI he has overseen the development of a focused, long-term strategy that has increased the association's impact with its many stakeholders.



Di Mill – Managing Director – Commtel Ltd

Di Mill has over 15 years of leadership experience as well as the Managing Director at Commtel. Commtel is a UK-based manufacturer of robust IP, 4G and telephone-based intercoms that provide secure entry solutions. Drawing on her extensive customer service background, she provides strategic operational oversight, ensuring Commtel's commitment to delivering reliable, expertly engineered systems and supporting the company's sustained growth.



Simon Pringle – Chief Executive Officer at Red River Software

Simon founded Red River Software in 2008, specialising in designing software and products to revive and transform businesses. Simon enjoys challenging, complicated projects that allow a creative approach to using technology and transforming businesses.



Councillor Paul Marshall – Leader of West Sussex County Council

Paul has been Leader of West Sussex County Council since 2019 after being elected as a County Councillor and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People in 2018. Paul has experience in change management through his work in local government as well as in the retail and leisure industries.



Councillor Garry Wall – Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills

Garry Wall is a local businessman and had the privilege to serve as the Leader of Mid Sussex District Council from 2009 to 2019 where he worked to bring forward the Northern Arc Development in Burgess Hill. Garry has served on a number of business Boards including, Gatwick Diamond, Coast to Capital LEP Board, and Transport for the South East. In 2025 he was appointed Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills at West Sussex County Council. He brings significant knowledge and expertise to support economic ambitions across Sussex.



Councillor Jeremy Gardner – Leader of Adur District Council

Jeremy is a former newspaper journalist with vast experience in corporate communications in the public sector, partnership working and public engagement. Jeremy is also Vice Chair of Healthwatch West Sussex after being appointed in 2018.



Councillor Adrian Moss – Leader of Chichester District Council

Adrian has been leader of Chichester District Council since 2023. During his business career Adrian was the International Business Development Director and Sales Director for International Software Businesses working on a global footprint. In more recent years Adrian has run a consultancy practice working with businesses to improve behavioural change within their sales processes and strategies.



Ana Christie – Chief Executive at Sussex Chamber of Commerce

Ana has been Chief Executive at Sussex Chamber of Commerce since 2014. With a strong track record in strategic leadership and client relationship management, she champions initiatives that drive regional economic growth and support the local business community.



Professor Symeon Dagkas – Vice-Chancellor & CEO at the University of Chichester

Professor Symeon joined as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Chichester in November 2024. With a PhD from Exeter University, he has held senior academic leadership roles at institutions including St Mary's University, Twickenham, and Canterbury Christ Church University. His research focuses on diversity and inclusion in sport and education.



Andrew Green – Chief Executive Officer at Chichester College Group

Andrew became Chief Executive of Chichester College Group in 2021, a group of 7 FE Colleges and a number of commercial businesses. During his career at Chichester College Group (formerly Chichester College), Andrew became Deputy Principal in 2020, was appointed Executive Principal in 2017 and led the group through two Outstanding Ofsted inspections in 2014 and 2020. Andrew is passionate about changing lives through learning and Further Education (FE).



Stephen Lightfoot – Chair of NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board

Stephen is a resident of Sussex and the Chair of NHS Sussex, bringing over 30 years of experience in the life sciences industry where he worked on the development, manufacture and commercialisation of medicines and medical devices for UK and global healthcare companies. He is committed to improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities for the population of Sussex, as well as supporting local economic growth as the NHS is a major employer in the area.



**West Sussex
Economic Growth Board**



West Sussex
Economic
Strategy



Contact us

business.support@westsussex.gov.uk