

# **Draft Economic Development Strategy 2018 – 2023**

This Economic Development Strategy (EDS) is about how Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council (NULBC) will work with the business community, local partners and wider community to improve the economic prospects for everyone living and working in our Borough.

The strategy is driven by the Council Plan – “Our Newcastle Plan 2020” - to create a Borough that is ‘Prosperous, Clean, Healthy and Safe’. The EDS focuses on ‘Creating a Borough of Opportunity’ to encourage investment and inclusive growth in the Borough which will bring jobs and improve prosperity as well as improving the well-being of our citizens and their communities.

The Council will seek to use its assets both in terms of commercial portfolio and community assets to support the economic development of the Borough. We recognise the provision of such facilities plays an important role in supporting small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), businesses and community based organisations that provide valuable services in our community.

The strategy also reflects our links to the Council’s Stronger and Safer Communities Strategy which highlights the importance of partnership working between the Council and its key partners, which is integral to the delivery of inclusive growth.

The Strategy is closely aligned to the Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) Strategic Economic Plan and reflects the inclusive growth approach, which is detailed in the emerging post-Brexit, UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Add borough map...

## **Strategy at a glance**

The Strategy will set the context for long-term investment for the whole of our borough.

Each section sets out a series of priorities the Council proposes to take forward and looks at the strengths which the Borough has to offer, the opportunities which may be capitalised on and develops proposals which take advantage of these.

A number of challenges are identified relating to the economy, skills, perceptions of place and interventions to address or mitigate them.

Newcastle is changing. All around us we see new development, which in the town centre will result in over 2000 student accommodation spaces for Keele and Staffordshire University students by 2020 as well as a bespoke dementia care facility “Belong Village” providing 100 accommodation spaces and 150 new jobs.

Castle House will be the new town centre hub for the Council, Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire County Council, Newcastle Library, Newcastle Registry Office and Aspire Housing Group.

This will make the existing Civic Offices site available for the planned Ryecroft retail and housing development, with completion planned for 2020. We recognise this development is a once in a generation opportunity, which will change the shape of the town centre and boost business and confidence in the area.

Over the last few years, working with our partners at Newcastle Business Improvement District (NBID), the Creative People and Places Programme - Appetite and The New Vic Theatre, the towns emerging cultural economy has grown from strength to strength.

The focus has been on celebrating the life and legacy of Philip Astley, founder of the modern circus, inventor of the circus ring and born in Newcastle 1742. Recent investment from Arts Council England and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) amounts to over £1M to celebrate the importance of Philip Astley to the cultural heritage of the town. Newcastle will be at the heart of the 2018 celebrations, “C250”, to mark 250 years since the first circus.

Since the borough became a HLF Priority Development Area in 2015, over £3M has been secured from HLF to support a wide range of cultural heritage projects right across the borough.

The Council will continue to approach this strategy by building a broad consensus, through consultation with our partners, with the local business community and wider community who will help to influence the work that the Council should undertake and will also play their own part in delivering elements of this strategy.

A key element of the approach will be prioritisation. The Council (and ever reducing public budgets in general) can't do everything. It is important to focus on the things which are going to have the greatest impact and which the Council is best placed to influence. Where possible, we will follow the principal that ‘resources follow priorities’.

Some of our priorities are sub-regional, rather than specific to the Borough, and here we will work closely with our partners such as Stoke on Trent City Council, Staffordshire County Council, Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP), The Constellation Partnership and The Midlands Engine.

The strategy's action plan sets out in greater detail who will lead on each activity, what it will achieve and how this will be resourced.

## Strategic alignment

### District Deal

We work in partnership with Staffordshire County Council to deliver the District Deal, which focuses on the following key priorities for delivering economic regeneration benefits to the communities of our borough.

- Newcastle Town Centre Ryecroft Development
- Public Sector Service Hub (Castle House)
- University town
- Newcastle Business Improvement District (NBID)
- Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership (Go Kidsgrove)
- Villages and rural communities
- Keele University Science and Innovation Park
- Strategic transport
- Knutton Enterprise Centre

### Keele University

Keele University and Keele Science and Innovation Park are both located within our Borough and we recognise the unique contribution they make to the local area. The Stoke and Staffordshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) identifies the Science and Innovation Park as the premier development site in North Staffordshire.

The Council is one of five partners signed up to a plan for investment in innovation-led growth called The New Keele Deal, which is a plan for £70 million of investment by Keele University, Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust and the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP, which sets out eight development priorities over the next five years:

- Keele Research and Innovation Support Programme (KRISP)
- Mercia Centre for Innovation Leadership (MCIL)
- Smart Energy Network Demonstrator (SEND)
- NHS-University-Industry collaboration
- Harnessing global reach and visibility for local economic impact
- A strategic site of The Constellation Partnership
- Higher level educational provision
- A spatial masterplan for the University campus and local area

The Council recognises the University is a priority investment site which will help to accelerate economic growth across our Borough as well as further afield. We will continue to support the University's growth plans in accordance with existing planning policies.

### The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP)

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) was formed in 2011 and brings businesses and local authorities together to drive economic growth and create jobs. The vision is to create 50,000 jobs and grow the economy by 50% in the next 10 years by building on the region's strong transport links, educational institutions and high quality of life to ensure that Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire continues to be an attractive place to live, work and do business.

The SSLEP wants to make Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire the best place in Britain to do business and focuses on providing the support that businesses need whether they wish to start-up, grow or relocate.

The SSLEP has a single inward investment team Make it Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire and an Education Trust, which is working with education providers and businesses to address the skills gap, while Destination Staffordshire is working with tourism businesses to market the county as a place to work and visit.

The SSLEP Strategic Economic Plan focuses on five main objectives – City, Connected County, Competitive Urban Centres, Sector Growth and Skilled Workforce. This is informed by an evidence base recently gathered, which focuses on Infrastructure and Place, Site and Premises, Skills, Innovation, Business Intelligence and Growth. This EDS is aligned to delivering these.

### **The Constellation Partnership**

The Council is one of seven local authorities along with two Local Enterprise Partnerships, which form The Constellation Partnership. The partnership has strong ministerial backing from Government and a unified fast-track approach to plan-led economic development. The partners share a single vision - a single economic footprint creating a coherent investment market boosted by the international investment magnet of High Speed Rail connectivity. The partnership's ambition is to deliver 100,000 new homes and 120,000 new jobs by 2040.

### **The Midlands Engine**

The Midlands Engine is focusing on five priority areas to improve connectivity, strengthen skills, support enterprise and innovation, promote the Midlands and enhance quality of life. It plans to create 300,000 new jobs and £34billion worth of growth over the next 15 years to 2030.

### **UK Industrial Strategy**

The emerging Industrial Strategy focuses on 10 pillars; Investing in Science, Research and Innovation, Developing Skills, Upgrading Infrastructure, Supporting Businesses to Start and Grow, Improving Procurement, Encouraging Trade and Investment, Delivering Clean Energy and Clean Growth, Cultivating World-Leading Sectors, Driving Growth across the whole Country, Creating the right Institutions to bring together Sectors and Places

### **Brexit**

With Brexit talks still at an early stage we can only assume at this point that the regeneration of our areas, including the funding we have be accustomed to accessing, will change and we will have to re-think our approach whilst living through these uncertain times.

The Industrial Communities Alliance recognises the unique needs of older industrial areas such as our own, which have benefited greatly from EU Structural Funds such as European Regional Development Funding and European Social Fund. Going forward The Alliance is suggesting a post-Brexit regional policy that is well funded, strongly targeted, within and between regions, driven by objective evidence of need and opportunity, tailored to local tasks in hand, flexible in delivery and managed locally and democratically.

## **Business intelligence and support - growth and sustainability of the business base**

The economic pressures resulting from Brexit, the 2017 Rates revaluation, the development of HS2 and increasingly rapid evolution in technology to name but four will impact significantly on local prosperity over the life of this strategy. Whilst we can't predict exactly what affect these and other external forces will have on local business, we will endeavour to mitigate them through the strategic aims set out below.

### **1. Continue to develop an economy in which the growth of innovative and niche businesses can flourish to increase both the amount of knowledge intensive employment and the proportion of high quality jobs in new and traditional sectors.**

The most successful places are those that build on their existing strength and develop diverse specialisms. This is the Council's strategic approach to promoting the Borough, attracting new business and increasing employment opportunities. North Staffordshire boasts a number of niche industrial specialisms which have been highlighted as providing significant opportunities for growth. While the Council will continue to work with its partners in the LEP and The Constellation Partnership on sub-regional objectives, it will focus on promotion of Newcastle's distinctiveness, as reflected in:

- A differentiated town centre offer working with the BID and specific marketing activities aimed at attracting inward investment and new business start-up in the town centres.
- A strong professional and financial services sector
- Prospects for providing a balance of high quality and affordable housing including accommodation for almost 2000 students in our town centre
- A thriving research based university and science and Innovation Park

### **2. Developing a co-ordinated approach to business support which puts business first and supplies a relevant mix of services that is well publicised and accessible to all businesses.**

We will continue to work with the areas strong network of business support providers such as the Growth Hub who encourage the growth and development of new and existing enterprises across the borough. We also benefit from a network of enterprise centres which offer a supportive environment to new enterprises and in some cases the capacity to grow on to larger units where required.

We will continue to work with the LEP and with partners to develop a range of measures designed to support business development including:

- Promotion of the area as a premier investment location at a national and international level using the 'Make it' brand
- Continue to work with our single point of contact for business, the Growth Hub
- Development of a business mentoring service
- Support for rural businesses through the Rural Enterprise Grants and the Leader programme
- Support to deliver broadband access and superfast broadband across the area and particularly in rural areas
- Access to finance for business investment via the LEP and other partners

We will continue to support the services of the Growth Hub and other partners by signposting and promoting them to local businesses and seeking to be more proactive in informing businesses of opportunities available to them.

The Growth Hub, which is a public/private sector partnership, funded through Regional Growth Fund, helps to drive strong, sustainable business growth by joining up national and local business support, making it easier for businesses to find the help they need.

The Stoke and Staffordshire Business Helpline is the first point of contact for business support across Staffordshire, including accessing the Growth Hub. The helpline provides a central point of contact for a range of free (and paid for) business support which includes start up, growth, finance, regulation, people and contacts.

- Where the Council is able to add value to the Growth Hub, for example through co-ordination or hosting activities, this will also be on offer.
- Although the opportunity to attract external funding is now much reduced, the Council will support co-ordinated bids, where the opportunity arises, to attract funding for enterprise activity.
- The Council recognise the importance of catering for the needs of existing businesses as well as supporting start-ups and will support improving networking and communications with and between local companies.

**3. Support activities which encourage entrepreneurialism and new business formation. We need to address the business formation rate in Newcastle, which is still below the regional and national average and business survival remains a challenge with a business failure rate that is slightly above the national average.**

Developing entrepreneurs starts at an early age, and in addition to the actions that our partners already take to support enterprise in schools, the Council will continue to support the Newcastle Employment and Skills Group, the LEP Locality project and the Carousel of Opportunity, which focuses on primary schools, to develop innovative ways to engage young people in enterprise

We will support continuation of the annual Newcastle Business Boost competition. This brings together public, private and education sectors in support of local businesses and, since its inception in 2008, has provided in excess of £80,000 direct investment in their growth and development

We will continue to signpost businesses to appropriate sources of assistance, including those offered by the Council such as rates advice, licensing, waste disposal, planning and environmental health. We will ensure that advice on the council's website is kept up-to-date and includes links to appropriate partner sites

**4. Supporting our higher and further education establishments in the development of knowledge intensive sectors.**

Newcastle benefits from being home to both Keele University and Staffordshire University is just a few miles away in Stoke on Trent.

The study range of offered courses between the two includes science, creative, technology, business and humanities opportunities for research and study. These are the drivers of the area's knowledge intensive jobs both through enterprise support to graduates and through the accommodation and services offered to business.

Growth plans for Keele include an increase from the current 10,500 students to 13,000 with further potential expansion contributing up to 6,000 jobs and £0.4billion per year to the regional economy.

The University's Strategic Plan 2015-20 sets out how it will bolster its role as a centre of excellence, research, teaching and scholarship and boost economic growth, in particular

innovation-led high value employment growth. The expansion of the University and Science Park is necessary to sustain Keele's nationally important position, given the highly competitive environment in which the University must compete for key staff, students, businesses and research commissions.

The Borough is also home to Newcastle under Lyme College, (Newcastle and Stafford College Group since 2016).

NSCG is financially one of the strongest of its kind in the country with very high success rates, amongst the top 10 per cent nationally. The group is currently home to a population of over 5,000 full-time students, around 620 students on higher education programmes, over 2,000 part-time or adult learners and 2,000 apprentices with over 800 individual employers.

- **Specialist business accommodation**

Keele University and Science and Innovation Park is the Borough's flagship accommodation offer to knowledge intensive industries. The high specification of the innovation centre buildings and the strong links to the university naturally attracts businesses specialising in research and development and higher level skills. IC5 opened in 2016 with plans for further specialist accommodation during the life of this strategy.

- **Keele University business gateway**

This is the university's single point of contact for the services it offers to business including research and innovation support, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, licencing opportunities and smart energy network demonstrator.

- **Low carbon and environmental sustainability**

Keele University and Science and Innovation Park is the primary driver for growth in the environmental sustainability field. In addition to the Science and Innovation Park accommodation and business offer, the university is committed to developing an environmentally aware and outward facing campus with an extensive commitment to carbon reduction including plans to introduce renewable energy on campus and BREEAM 'very good' status to all new and refurbished buildings.

Keele University Sustainability Hub acts as a focus for the research into, teaching of, and management for sustainability and green technology that takes place at Keele University. Building upon this the university aims to significantly expand its capacity in energy / renewables research, particularly around wind, solar and geothermal.

The LEP area has a strong cluster of companies within the environmental technologies sector, including the District Heat Network and many renowned international brands such as Siemens and General Electric. These companies already invest heavily in research and development, and this could be actively supported by high quality academic research to create truly innovative energy solutions.

- **Manufacturing**

Newcastle has a strong manufacturing base which employs a significant number of people. Support for this sector is principally delivered through working with the SSLEP Education Trust and Staffordshire STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) centre to ensure the workforce possesses the skills that enable them to meet market needs and innovate effectively.



Inward investment of manufacturing companies is supported through Make It and ensuring there is suitable employment land available for development in the Borough.

- **Applied material**

Originally a part of the SSLEP City Deal, the work to develop the Applied Materials Research, Innovation and Commercialisation Company (AMRICC) highlighted the potential to build upon existing strengths of materials companies and innovation in the area. Comprising a research laboratory, pilot plant and educational facility, AMRICC will provide an environment which joins together scientific success with the business acumen needed to make innovation a commercial reality. A number of companies at the heart of this sector are based in the Borough, including, KMF Sheet Metal Fabrication and Precision Engineering and Intelligent Orthopaedics.

- **Medical technologies**

The medical technologies sector is still relatively small in terms of employment numbers, although employment in scientific research and development (R&D) in medical technologies has grown over the last few years. The School of Medicine at Keele University, the University Hospital of North Midlands NHS Trust and Keele University Science and Innovation Park represent an opportunity for attracting more growth in this area.

The Research Institute at Keele University focuses on four key themes for research: Bioengineering and Therapeutics; Clinical and Diagnostic Science; Infection, Inflammation and Immunity; and Neuroscience and Metabolism. A number of leading medical technology and healthcare companies are based at Keele including TRB Chemedica, Biocomposites, Cobra Biologics and Intelligent Orthopaedics.

- **Creative industries**

Digital creative firms continue to be a potential growth area for the Borough. A number of highly respected video production companies set up by Staffordshire University students exist in the area already. Attracting, growing and retaining this type of firm relies on the availability of superfast and reliable broadband, the right style of business premises and the opportunity to cluster with other digital technology firms. Further actions include:

- Working with the LEP and its partners in the higher and further education sectors aiming to encourage the growth of creative industries, promote technology transfer and provide specialist business accommodation
- The Council will support the re-use of existing property in the town for businesses such as graphic design, film and media, publishing, animation, music and computer/console games software development including, where suitable, its own premises
- The Council will continue to work with Keele University and Science Park to encourage development of Keele Science Park Phase 3 and attract knowledge intensive businesses to Keele Science Park through marketing support, lobbying for infrastructure investment and planning advice.

6. **Making the most of existing strengths in the professional and business services and logistics sectors.**

Professional and business services are an important knowledge intensive sector for the Borough. The improvement in broadband connectivity, development of new technologies and new working practices coupled with good transport links means that this sector offers

the potential for continued growth. Our approach is based around three main activity areas:

- Ensuring the availability of appropriate accommodation (both commercial and residential), which is necessary to attract and retain highly skilled workers in these sectors.
- Support the growth and diversification of the rural economy. A number of potential funding streams are available to rural businesses during the first few years of this strategy, including new build and conversions to business use. The roll out of superfast Broadband continues making the Borough's rural hinterland an increasingly attractive option for business start-ups.
- Logistics has been a major growth area in our economy which is due largely to the good connectivity that the area enjoys and our position close to the centre of the country.
- Through the Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone the Council plans to continue the development of Chatterley Valley on land to the west of the JCB Blue Planet building, (described as Chatterley Sidings and Peacock Hay). We will work with the landowners and their agents to explore bringing forward Peacock Hay for light industrial development.

## **7. Making the most of business opportunities in the tourism and leisure sectors**

The Borough is home to a number of business and leisure tourist destinations including the Brampton Museum and Art Gallery, the Dorothy Clive Garden, the New Vic Theatre, Apedale Community Heritage Park, the Trent and Mersey canal and famous Harecastle Tunnel, Newcastle town centre and Keele University.

Its central location also makes it a good resting place for visitors to other parts of the county. We work closely with Enjoy Staffordshire, the Destination Management Partnership for the county, which is the main organisation responsible for promoting the area to business and leisure visitors. They also recognise the importance of sector specific support to develop skills and products amongst local tourism businesses. We will:

- Promote diversification amongst rural businesses, for example through the LEADER programme and Rural Enterprise Programme.
- Work with the town centre BID to encourage new businesses into the town centre.
- Work with the BID to maximise the opportunities afforded by the growth of student accommodation in Newcastle town centre, expected to reach 2000 by 2018.

## **8. Optimise the benefit to local companies from public sector procurement.**

Over the life of this strategy, the Council will continue to identify ways of making savings and reducing its spend on procuring goods and services. However, even this reduced amount could represent significant income for local businesses. The councils spend profile includes a significant number of lower value contracts which are particularly suitable for smaller businesses.

The council also considers social value in awarding contracts and is keen to engage with all types of providers, including small and large businesses and social enterprises. New ways of working will be considered such as joint ventures with other partners and procurement models from other areas of the country that encourage tenders from small businesses.

There remains a statutory requirement to advertise all larger high value contracts through the Official Journal of the European Union. This will be monitored as Brexit begins to gather pace.

The Council will also comply with the requirement to advertise any contract over £25,000 on Contracts Finder. The council will support measures that make it easier for smaller businesses to tender for these and will also support emerging processes to standardise tender documentation.

## **Place and infrastructure – physical transformation**

This section of the Economic Development Strategy sets out what action the Council will carry out to enhance the quality of the place and infrastructure of the Borough to promote its economic development.

### **Improving the town's retail offer**

The age, size and configuration of many of Newcastle's retail premises, many of which are nineteenth century, are valued as being aesthetically pleasing but are not necessarily what modern retail businesses require. However, these premises do lend themselves to the independent sector, from dog-boutiques to gin bars!

The market continues to be an integral part of the life of the town centre. The Council recognises the importance of the market and it has partnered with Market Place Management, an award winning market operator that has a wealth of experience in the market sector to take forward the delivery of markets in Newcastle town centre from February 2018.

There is strong competition from out of town retail locations such as Trentham Retail Village, Wolstanton Retail Park and Festival Park, all of which provide free parking and the convenience of level, single storey shop units. But, Newcastle's growing reputation as a town for independents, especially in the food and drink sector, has helped the town centre to remain buoyant.

The town centre vacancy rate is currently 13%, which is above the West Midlands average and which we expect to decrease over time, due to the large number of students moving in to the newly built accommodation.

The shape of our town centre is changing as we see huge developments such as The Sky Building emerging from the former Jubilee Baths site. The site stands at one of the main entrances to the town and will provide accommodation for 244 students with views directly over Queen's Gardens and newly built Castle House.

The former Bristol Street Motors site just on the edge of the town centre will provide another 499 apartments for students and key workers and the former Blackburn House site, now named Keele House, provides another 147 student apartments.

The Council, in partnership with the County Council, acquired the former Sainsbury's site on the northern edge of Newcastle Town Centre and, through a competitive process, Henry Davidson Developments (HDD) was appointed to deliver a £50 million investment in the town. This will provide 65,000 sq. ft. of new retail accommodation in 10 or 11 units, mostly of a size and configuration not currently provided in the town centre with a view to appealing to the modern retailer.

HDD's plans will also make provision for 513 apartments which will add to the footfall and general 'busyness' of the town, increase spending in local shops and also add to the townscape appeal of the scheme as a whole.

In terms of jobs, it is expected that the Ryecroft retail scheme will result in around 350 additional jobs and that Castle House, as well as accommodating the existing staff based at the Civic Offices, will also accommodate a further 100 office jobs currently located elsewhere in the Borough. The new residential development will result in additional jobs in the town centre as well, as a result of the additional spending in local shops and other services estimated at around £30 million per year.

The 'Belong Village' development mentioned earlier in the strategy, on the site of the former Maxims Nightclub, will also provide a new gallery, funded through HLF, which will link to the town's existing Brampton Museum and Art Gallery and strengthen the town's arts and cultural offer.

### **Providing for new business accommodation**

For many years the Council has promoted the aim of accommodating more business space in and around the town centre, both to strengthen the role of the town and to increase its vitality. Town centres are also the most sustainable location for housing a workforce, given their accessibility by means other than car and the proximity of shops and other services to a daytime workforce.

The establishment of the Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone (which includes Chatterley Valley West) will provide some opportunity for Council investment in new business space since it will be a requirement of the EZ governance that the retained business rates will be invested into Growth Priorities. In the Borough these are Keele Science and Innovation Park, Newcastle Town Centre and Chatterley Valley.

As a result, once future rate income arising from development at Chatterley Valley West can be accurately calculated, borrowing can be made against this figure and a schedule of investment in new business accommodation to meet market need can be put to the LEP.

### **Improving the public realm**

Newcastle has arguably the most attractive town centre in the North Staffordshire conurbation. Its inherent attractiveness is down to a number of factors including:

- Attractive groupings of well-maintained Georgian and Victorian buildings around the town
- A safe and convenient pedestrianised environment
- The street market
- The large number of cafes, bars and restaurants around the town and
- A relatively low shop vacancy rate

All of this helps to convey an ambience and a sense of place which masks a number of economic challenges that the town faces. On its own, enhancing and protecting the best features of the town's public realm will not bring new investment into the town but helps to influence investment decisions and add to the pleasure of visiting, shopping, living in or working in the town.

The Council will improve the public realm by:

- Selectively investing in valued buildings, particularly those 'at risk'. This may include the use of conservation grants, such as those made toward the improvement of Mellard's Warehouse or be a factor in negotiating land deals, such as that which helped to enable the refurbishment and re-development of the former Maxim's nightclub to the Belong Village.

- Working with the county council in investing and helping to design improvements to the streetscape, such as that which improved the partially pedestrianised High Street, associated investment in new market stalls, improvements to Red Lion Square and improved pedestrian access to Newcastle Bus Station.
- Commissioning artists to create designs for the town centre roundabouts and subway entrances and working with the County Council on structural refurbishments, all of which help to make the town more accessible and safer for pedestrians.
- Investment in, and continued improvement to, the town's parks and gardens, such as the Queen's Gardens, The Brampton, Station Walks, Grosvenor Gardens and Queen Elizabeth Park, mainly financed through neighbouring development schemes or sponsorship.
- Making use of our town centre public spaces to present arts and cultural events.

### **Working with Newcastle BID (Business Improvement District)**

The Council supported the establishment of a town centre Business Improvement District (BID) in 2015, run by the local business community and funded from an additional levy on the business rates on businesses in and around the town centre. This now operates as an independent entity to promote the town, develop the distinctive Newcastle under Lyme experience, and support growth, development and investment.

The Council partners with the BID in promoting positive news about the town centre and working to encourage landowners and local businesses to invest in the quality of the visitor experience. It also helps it to develop funding applications to secure investment from external bodies such as Arts Council England (ACE) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The Council has also worked with the BID to gain Purple Flag accreditation, which is a prestigious award for those towns who manage their night life to an excellent standard by providing an entertaining, diverse safe and enjoyable night out. Newcastle has held Purple Flag status since 2014.

### **Helping Keele University Science and Innovation Park to grow**

Keele University is one of the UK's top ranked universities, and together with its Science and Business Park is a key motor of the North Staffordshire economy. Helping it to grow and thrive will be critical to the future success of the area, ensuring that the sub-regional economy is fit for a future which will be typified by rapid technological change.

Overall the university currently contributes £125 million per year into the local economy and supports around 3400 FTE jobs in Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle, including 1750 directly, 350 through its supply chain, 440 from staff and student spending in the local area and a further 810 working for firms based at the Science Park (source: Regeneris Consulting).

In a relatively low waged economy such as North Staffordshire, the calibre of jobs supported by the University and Science Park is particularly valued. Many of the jobs at the University are in highly skilled academic, managerial and professional professions with high pay and prospects of career progression. Those working for firms at the Science Park are in growing sectors such as medical technologies, energy, IT and advanced materials.

The University is consistently recognised in national surveys for its student satisfaction rating, graduate employment and affordability and its graduates are officially recognised as the most employable in the country. In 2017 the university has achieved Gold Standard in the Teaching

Excellence Framework, first in the world for Green Setting and Campus Infrastructure and University of the Year for Student Experience.

In order to provide for the University's growth ambitions and to ensure that North Staffordshire maximises the full potential of this prestigious University, the Borough Council has worked alongside the University and the County Council to commission a masterplan for a Newcastle Western Expansion, based around the university campus and adjoining land to the north (a former Municipal Golf Course) and south (toward the A53).

This aims to provide for a sustainably designed form of development, on the shoulder of the North Staffordshire conurbation, where high quality employment and high quality housing are provided on 'garden settlement' principles where land value capture provides an income stream to meet the costs of the necessary infrastructure investment and for the long term stewardship of shared assets.

The emerging masterplan is based on the 'Innovation District' model which sees the creation of co-located working and living environments in a much denser urban form to the existing campus layout. It would not be possible to reproduce this form of development anywhere else in North Staffordshire, since nowhere else has the co-location and critical mass of university, the concentration of knowledge-based industries and the potentially superb residential environment.

Providing 3000 additional high quality jobs and 2700 new houses in a superb living and working environment will have a transformative impact not only on the local economy but also on the local housing market, helping to counter outmigration of high earners (usually to remoter rural villages some distance from the Stoke/Newcastle urban area) and to attract new people to the area.

The University plans to redevelop part of its older central core to a higher density, complete the development of its current Science Park (Keele Science Park phase 3, where IC5 and the new Centre for Autism Research are being built) including the development of four further Innovation centres and a hotel and conference facility and provide for a further 22 hectares extension to the science park for further development. Regeneris Consulting estimate that as a result of these growth plans the total quantifiable economic contribution of the University and Science Park will have doubled to over 7000 FTE jobs by 2040.

### **Realising the wider benefit of housing development**

New housing development is a significant driver of inclusive growth through the local supply chain as people use local professional services to fit out and furnish their new houses. Over the longer term, an increased resident population means more money spent in local shops, cafes, restaurants, leisure providers and a whole host of businesses dependent on consumer spending.

One of the Borough's economic aims is to significantly raise the number of new houses built in the Borough each year from its modest current annual average of 297 (2012-2017) in order to address the current housing shortage and to provide housing choice

A key factor in formulating new housing proposals in the forthcoming Joint Local Plan, currently being put together in partnership with Stoke on Trent City Council, will be the consideration of its impact across our borough, planning factors such as green field/brownfield, density, sustainability and design will all be considered.

Significant housing development is being included in plans for the Newcastle Western Extension around Keele University as well as new employment proposals. This will provide a mix of housing including provision for housing appealing to higher income groups, provision for self-build plots and affordable housing in line with the Council's policy.

## **Maximising the benefit of High Speed Rail (HS2)**

Plans for HS2, the high speed rail link between London, Birmingham and the North, have been developed by The Government and HS2 Ltd. to transform the national rail system.

HS2 will significantly reduce travel times between London and the key regional cities of Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, and Birmingham and so improve the attractiveness of these 'northern' cities for future investment and links with the Government's strategy for 'The Midland Engine' and 'The Northern Powerhouse'.

The Government announced in November 2016 that the construction of HS2 Phase 2a (the section from Birmingham to Crewe) HS2 has been accelerated and will now be completed by 2027.

Through the establishment of a partnership of Local Authorities in Cheshire and North Staffordshire, which is called The Constellation Partnership, work is underway to maximise the economic advantage that can be gained from the siting of the planned new Rail Hub near to Crewe Railway Station with the aim of bringing together a better HS2 service with the existing rail network.

The Constellation Partnership will showcase key sites within the Borough for development including Keele University Science and Innovation Park and the Ceramics Valley Enterprise Zone (which includes Chatterley Valley). It has appointed an independent Chair and has commissioned a Growth Strategy comprising spatial plans, a development viability study, financial modelling, masterplans for Crewe and Stoke Railway Stations, a skills supply chain and local labour strategy.

## **Making provision for inward investment and for local firms to grow**

We want businesses to prosper in our borough and there are some things the Council can do to help. These include a low tax environment, the availability of attractive and affordable development sites and premises which are accessible to the primary road network and for the local workforce, and adequate car parking.

Chatterley Valley, a 40-hectare development site in the north of the Borough, is one of six sites in North Staffordshire which comprise the Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone where, as an incentive for investment, businesses are not required to pay business rates for the next 25 years. The Council is working with the developers, Harworth Estates and with the County Council to bring forward the development of this site through help with the provision of a new site access and a 'can-do' planning regime. Potentially this site could bring around 1500 new jobs to the area in addition to the JCB investment made at Blue Planet on former Council owned land adjacent.

Newcastle Town Centre hosts the Borough's principal collection of professional services companies, many of which are housed along King Street, Queen Street and The Brampton. In order to attract more such businesses (and retain those which exist) lessons need to be learned from the provision in Etruria Valley. We recognise that businesses often prefer modern office premises and need convenient on-site car parking (which town centre premises are rarely able to offer). The Council will work with developers to bring forward potential sites with business needs in mind and will continue to work with the 'Make It' Inward Investment Service to attract firms to available premises in and around the town.

During the last 25 years considerable development of employment land has taken place across the Borough including the development of the whole of Lymedale Park, Phase 2 of Keele Science Park (including the first five Innovation Centres and the School of Medicine), Centre 500, High Carr Business Park, phase 1 of Chatterley Valley (JCB), Silverdale Enterprise Park, Knutton and Silverdale Industrial Estates, Rosevale Business Park, the later phases of Parkhouse Industrial Estate, and parts of West Avenue and Rowhurst Industrial Estates.

Together these comprise over 150 hectares of development land resulting in an estimated 7500 to 8000 jobs. And, significant sites within and on the edge of Newcastle Town Centre have also been redeveloped - the Newcastle College and Performing Arts Centre on Knutton Lane, the new Sainsbury's, the new Fire Station, the Aldi development at Blackfriars and the new Travelodge.

### **The local development plan 2013-2033**

The Newcastle/Stoke-on-Trent Employment Land Review 2015 (one of the sources the next local plan will rely on to identify need) identified the need for between 44 and 133 hectares of employment land in the next local plan period, 2013-2033.

The review also identified that there was an existing supply of 85 hectares of employment land in the Borough. The local plan issues consultation document therefore concluded that it will be critical for additional sites to be identified if full economic growth is to be realised over the plan period.

The new Joint Local Plan will identify a major employment site of 45 – 50 hectares to address the current shortage of available development land in the mid-term. Only once sites are identified in an approved Local Plan can steps be taken to marshal the resources (people, money and commitment) to bring forward development land, not least the necessary highway infrastructure and off-site services. This will have implications for future bids for Government funding and financial support from Staffordshire County Council as well as funding allocated through the UK Industrial Strategy and post Brexit UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

### **Marketing, promotion and cultural economy**

Marketing and promotion in the Borough is primarily carried out by three organisations, which are supported by the Council both financially and through investment in staff time:

- Make It Stoke and Staffordshire

Within North Staffordshire, enquiry handling and promotion of the area as an inward investment and business growth location is primarily carried out by the Make It Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire team. The 'Make It' team has a county-wide remit and provides key links for Newcastle to both Staffordshire wide and regional marketing initiatives.

- Enjoy Staffordshire

The 'Enjoy Staffordshire Partnership' is the County's principal agency for promoting the area to visitors, including its principal attractions such as its theme parks, gardens, ceramic factories and tours, canals, and the nearby Peak District, all of which are easily accessible from Newcastle. More indirectly, Destination Staffordshire's promotional campaigns play an important role in raising the public profile and appeal of the area to a national audience which inevitably impacts on the perceived desirability of the area as a place to live, in terms of staff recruitment and, indirectly, on business location decision-making.

- Newcastle BID and Go Kidsgrove CIC

The BID was established in 2015, to support all businesses and organisations in the town within the BID levy area. The BID has three Objectives:

1. Promotion of the town – its key strengths and characteristics as a vibrant, university, market town and build awareness of its retail, leisure and professional services sectors and its college, regionally and nationally.



2. Development of the distinctive Newcastle experience – that is a safe, attractive and appealing experience for visitors, students, residents and workers to enjoy.
3. Growth, Development and Investment – to build on the strengths of the businesses and organisations of the town to support and promote growth, development, investment and sense of business community.

Go Kidsgrove is the brand name for Kidsgrove Town Centre Community Interest Company. This is a business led initiative for town centre businesses. It has been set up as a Community Interest Company, which was incorporated in September 2013.

The Board of Directors comprises representatives from local businesses supported by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Kidsgrove Town Council. The main purpose of Go Kidsgrove is to work in partnership with local businesses and organisations to build on the town's key strengths and cultural heritage through the development of a programme of events and activities.

Kidsgrove is also home to Borough's railway station which currently has direct links to Crewe, Derby, Manchester, London and Stoke on Trent. 2018 will see £4M investment in the station to improve pedestrian access and car parking for the annual 230,000 customers. This will help to realise the aspiration of Kidsgrove becoming a transport hub.

There may be potential through HS2 to improve connectivity from Kidsgrove and local stations Stoke on Trent and Crewe. We will work with our partners in the Constellation Partnership to gain more detailed information once this becomes available.

### **Cultural Economy**

We recognise the value of placing arts and culture at the heart of our town to create a vibrant place that people enjoy.

Brampton Museum, set in the beautiful Brampton Park, attracts 56,000 visitors annually to view existing collections and the programme of arts and contemporary makers. Working with our partners over the last few years we have built a positive reputation for delivering high quality cultural activities that celebrate our unique cultural heritage.

Working with Newcastle BID, Appetite Creative People and Places Programme and Arts Council England (ACE), we have presented the best of national and international new circus at the heart of our town centre and have drawn huge crowds who have returned year on year.

In 2012 we became a Priority Development Area for Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF), which meant we were allocated dedicated officer time to provide information sessions and advice on potential project ideas. This has resulted in over £3 million investment from HLF in the area for a wide range of projects including support for the Philip Astley profile-raising work.

Internationally acclaimed No Fit State circus will return to Newcastle for almost two months to rehearse and present their new show Lexicon as part of the wider Circus, Past Present and Future project managed by The New Vic Theatre. We believe this will place Newcastle firmly on the cultural tourism map, build on the attractiveness of our town to encourage more visitors and support our local businesses.

## **Skills - addressing issues around the skills agenda**

The Newcastle Employment and Skills Group (NESG) has been established in Newcastle for 10 years and brings together key providers who deliver in Newcastle along with the Council, the core membership is the Aspire Group, Newcastle and Stafford College Group, DWP/Job Centre Plus, National Careers Service, Business Enterprise Support, Support Staffordshire, Staffordshire County Council – Libraries and Adult Learning.

One of the priority focus areas is to help people who are claiming ESA (Employment Support Allowance) into training and work, especially those who are struggling with mental health issues.

The LEP Skills Strategy provides a framework within which to address the skills gaps through more focus on schools and business working together, further education and business working together and higher education providers and business working together.

Since 2009 we have been working with partners to successfully deliver the Carousel of Opportunity, which is aimed at primary school students to introduce them the career opportunities available in the current jobs market. A 'speed-dating' format is used to introduce a wide range of career options from engineers to administrators and dog-wardens to IT specialists.

### **Long-term worklessness**

Although we currently have historically low Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Income Support and Universal Credit levels, which are running at 1.3% (1085) we still have almost 4000 people who have been out of work over a longer period of time claiming Employment Support Allowance (ESA). These are the people who are furthest from the training and jobs market who require more intensive support from a range of agencies.

Up to 6% of people claiming ESA are living with mental ill health – listed as 'Mental and Behavioural Disorders'.

The Employment and Skills team at Aspire Housing continues to support customers to become less dependent on benefits by helping them to gain employment, whilst tackling generations of worklessness that resided in many neighbourhoods.

The Aspire Employment and Skills Team has also delivered a range of externally funded employability contracts over the years, including DWP, Coalfields Regeneration, NHS and Staffordshire County Council funded contracts. During 2017/18 team has started to deliver several ESF funded employability contracts aimed at enhancing the employability of local people in our borough.

### **Apprenticeship LEVY**

We know that apprenticeships provide people with the chance to learn and to gain nationally recognised qualifications whilst receiving a weekly wage. They are also recognised in the SSLEP Apprenticeships Strategy 2015-2017 as a key component in the drive to increase employability and growth and a main route for increasing participation in education and training.

The most significant change to apprenticeships has been the introduction by central Government of the Apprenticeship Levy April 2017, which aims to create 3 million quality apprenticeship starts over the next 5 years. All large businesses with a pay bill over £3 million have to pay the levy of 0.5% of their annual pay bill.

NSCGs (incorporating Newcastle-under-Lyme College, Stafford College and training provider Axia Solutions) provides expert advice, guidance and support on all aspects of work based learning, including: apprenticeships, traineeships, bespoke training and professional development. The

Staffordshire Providers Association (SPA) provides a network of Staffordshire training providers many of which are based in Newcastle. Two of the main local providers are PM Training and Newcastle and Stafford College Group (NSCG).

## **Volunteering**

We recognise that formal volunteering opportunities can offer similar routines to regular paid work and can help people who are unemployed build their confidence and self-esteem to help them get back into training and work.

## **Working towards getting the right skill mix to increase productivity (skills strategy)**

The Council will continue to work with the SSLEP who have identified three priorities;

1. Developing a more enterprising culture both at school and beyond
2. Ensuring that young people and adults are equipped with basic employability skills required by local businesses
3. Ensuring we are delivering the education and skills needed to fill jobs now and in the future

## **Innovation**

It is widely recognised that innovation at the heart of business will improve efficiency and increase production. However, the challenge is how to create the conditions for innovation to increase economic growth and ensure that everyone benefits.

Reflecting the UK Industrial Strategy and Midlands Innovation we will work with our partners to create a more innovative economy building on our world leading sectors based at Keele University Science and Innovation Park and others such as KMF Sheet Metal Fabrication and Precision Engineering and JCB World Logistics.

Working with the SSLEP we will help our businesses to access the resources required to build on existing good practice and introduce new innovative approaches to enable further growth and development of new technologies to drive growth across the borough.

We will work with partners to make the most of the Medical Technology sector, which has seen significant growth in our area. Although it is still quite a small sector when statistically defined, accounting for nearly 500 jobs across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, Newcastle-under-Lyme has a concentration of employment in this sector that is more than twice that seen nationally, primarily comprising companies involved in the wholesale of pharmaceutical products.

Working with SSLEP we will help to further raise the profile of the growing number of leading medical technology and healthcare companies, including TRB Chemedica, Biocomposites, Cobra Biologics and Intelligent Orthopaedics, which are based at Keele Science and Innovation Park and in the Borough.

In line with the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Strategy, which aims to deliver growth and success in STEM related industries, we will work with partners in education and skills to encourage growth and success within this area.

## **Artificial intelligence (AI)**

Known as the 4th Industrial revolution, the role of automation and AI will provide a significant boost to the economy but has potentially negative impact on the availability of jobs, particularly middle skills/income positions. By 2030 it is estimated that many knowledge-based professions will be

impacted by the use of AI in the workplace leading to a polarisation of the workforce and a change in workplace practice.

Careful consideration and forward planning is required within the term of this strategy to work with education partners and other stakeholders to develop the future skills required, with many estimates suggesting the main growth area for work will be within the care sector, creative industries and high skill areas (post-graduate

## **Implementation, Monitoring and Review**

An Action Plan will be prepared each January/February and will set out in more detail how the aims and objectives agreed will be carried out. Like the strategy itself, these will also be based around the four themes of

- Business Intelligence and Support
- Place and Infrastructure / Sites and Premises
- Skills
- Innovation

The Action Plans will identify lead bodies and timescales for implementation.

At the end of each year the Council will publish an annual progress report, reviewing the year as well as agreeing the action plan for the following year, giving decision makers in the Council and their partners the opportunity to assess success to date.

The review may also take the opportunity to consider fresh Government initiatives or changes in the economic or financial landscape.

## **ACTIONS**

We will work with our partners to deliver the following:

### **Business Intelligence and Support**

Action	Partner / Lead	Resources	Timescale
Increase both the proportion of knowledge intensive employment and the proportion of high quality jobs in retail, leisure, tourism and distribution	LEP Keele NSCG Council	Review in line with changes to EU funding	2020-22
Support development of emergent knowledge intensive sectors, building on higher and further education expertise	LEP Keele NSCG Council	EU funding	2020-22
Support development of the professional and business services sector	Growth Hub Finest Chamber Council	LEP funding Company membership of relevant organisations Staff time	Ongoing
Make the most of the Borough's successful logistics sector	LEP Make It Council	LEP Staff time	Ongoing
Focus on support and development of local SMEs	Council LEP Chamber	Staff time	Ongoing
Seek to optimise the benefit to local companies from public sector procurement.	Council SCC Anchor institutions	Staff time	2020

## Place and Infrastructure

Action	Partner / Lead	Resources	Timescale
Work with Newcastle BID and Go Kidsgrove to promote the town centre's as a places to visit, work and live	BID Go Kidsgrove Council SCC Town Centre Businesses Appetite York Place and other investors	BID membership levy Go Kidsgrove fundraising Staff time	BID until 2020 subject to re-ballot
Work with the developers of the Ryecroft area of town to secure a development that will add to the economic vitality of the town.	HDD Council SCC LEP	Private sector investment Possibly LEP funding Possibly Sustainable Transport funding Staff time	2018-20
Promote Keele Science and Innovation Park for high tech inward investment including new Innovation Centres and a new Training and Conference Hotel	Keele Council SCC LEP Make It	Private sector investment EU funding SCC funding Possible central government funding Staff time	2018 onwards
Work with partners in the Enterprise Zone to attract employment investment to sites and premises around the Borough including land at Chatterley Valley	LEP Council SCC Stoke CC Private Investors	Private sector investment EU funding SCC funding Possible central government funding	2017 onwards

Bring forward proposals for retail and business accommodation in Newcastle Town Centre with priority placed on growing its professional services and a distinctive retail offer	BID Council HDD York Place	Staff time Private sector investment Rural Enterprise Grants Staff time	Ongoing private investment Up to 2020 for grants
Enable the development of a wide range of housing, including affordable and higher quality housing for current and future residents.	Homes and Communities Agency Registered Providers Council Private Developers	Private Developers HCA funding S106 funding to support affordable housing Staff time	Ongoing
Bring forward new sites for employment and housing through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document to enable the further growth of the Borough.	Council SCC Stoke CC	Staff time	2022
Explore options to improve M6 connectivity at Junction 15 in line with the SMART Motorway improvements	Council LEP Highways England Local MP's	Staff time	Ongoing

## Skills

Action	Partner / Lead	Resources	Timescale
Continue to work with Newcastle Employment and Skills Group and providers to support people furthest from training and jobs and ensure effective communication between service deliverers	Council Aspire Housing NSCG DWP National Careers SCC / Libraries Providers	Staff time	Ongoing

Work with the SSLEP Education Trust and partners to deliver the Skills Strategy priorities	LEP Council SCC Stoke CC	Staff time EU funding Central Government Funding Private Sector Investment	Ongoing (including review of EU funding)
Work with the SSLEP Locality Project and Stoke on Trent and Newcastle Cultural Education Partnership to encourage a more enterprising culture within our schools	LEP – Education Trust Council Careers and Enterprise Company Cultural education Partnership	Staff time EU funding	Ongoing subject to EU funding
Continue to work with both Keele University, Staffordshire University and Newcastle and Stafford College Group to address skills gaps	LEP Universities NSCG	Staff time	Ongoing subject to EU funding
Raise skills and increase training and employment rates to increase productivity	NESG partners Universities NSCG LEP Providers	Staff time EU funding	Ongoing subject to EU funding
Stimulate demand for higher skills and create opportunities for people to acquire skills for current and future industrial structure	NESG partners Universities NSCG LEP Providers	Staff time EU funding	Ongoing subject to EU funding

## Innovation

Action	Partner / Lead	Resources	Timescale
Continue to support further development of Keele University and Science and innovation Park as detailed in The New	Keele LEP SCC	EU funding Private Sector Funding SCC	Ongoing



Keele Deal	Council	Staff time	
We will work for a well-funded, strongly targeted funding structure that is flexible in delivery and managed locally and democratically post Brexit	LEP Universities Council Local businesses	Staff time UK Shared Prosperity Fund	Ongoing
Encourage a greater level of innovation amongst our local businesses including Medtec.	LEP Universities Local Businesses	EU funding Private Sector Funding SCC Staff time	Ongoing
In line with our Local Plan develop employment sites and premises that support creation and investment of innovative businesses	Council Universities Private Developers LEP	Staff time Private Investment	Ongoing
Monitor the growing influence of AI and automation on job trends and skill requirements and work with the education partners to develop courses and structures to enable people to train within the identified growth areas.	Council Universities and wider education sector LEP	Staff time	Ongoing
Consider the support in terms of housing, services and benefit provision to mitigate against the impact of work-force polarization resulting in an increase in unemployment and of low-paid and insecure jobs.	Council LEP	Staff time	Ongoing