

**Dudley Council**

# Dudley Town Investment Plan

Dudley Town Deal

January 2021



# Foreword

## Andrew Lovett

Chair Dudley Towns Fund Board

Dudley is an enormously important centre for people, history and manufacturing, in both the Black Country, as well as the West Midlands. Its remarkable history has been the foundation of what is shaping-up to be a remarkable future.

Dudley and the wider borough, with its four well-loved town centres, world-class tourist attractions and new designation as a UNESCO GeoPark, is rightly focussed on the dreams of its people, not just their memories. It recognises the opportunities that emerge from regeneration.

Our Towns Investment Plan highlights a shared vision for Dudley; taking advantage of existing strengths, including a number of bold regeneration projects that have already made a positive and long-lasting impact on the town.



However, we now want to go further to maximise the huge economic potential that exists within Dudley, through the combined resources, effort and goodwill of partners from the public and private sector, alongside voluntary, community and faith groups, and social enterprises.

As part of the Town Investment Plan, we have identified an opportunity to establish a new University Centre in the town which will be an important gateway building into the town centre and complement adjacent facilities, including the Black Country Institute of Technology, opening to students in autumn 2021. Our plan is seeking investment of £25m towards its total cost of £36m.

Dudley and its borough is repositioning itself. It is taking strategic decisions to lift aspirations, improve connectivity, provide better life-chances and fulfil its potential.

## Councillor Patrick Harley

Leader of Dudley Council

Dudley borough is in the midst of an unprecedented level of investment which will see the town centre transform with greater connectivity links, world-class technology and major new educational developments.

Building on our strong track record of regeneration, a structured package of public sector led interventions have been implemented since 2012 and the next phase of investment is now currently underway, with seven significant projects under development. The proposed university centre will provide the missing piece of the regeneration jigsaw.

The Towns Investment Plan provides the framework for delivering the wider Regenerating Dudley programme, which has attracted significant funding from other public and private sector partners.

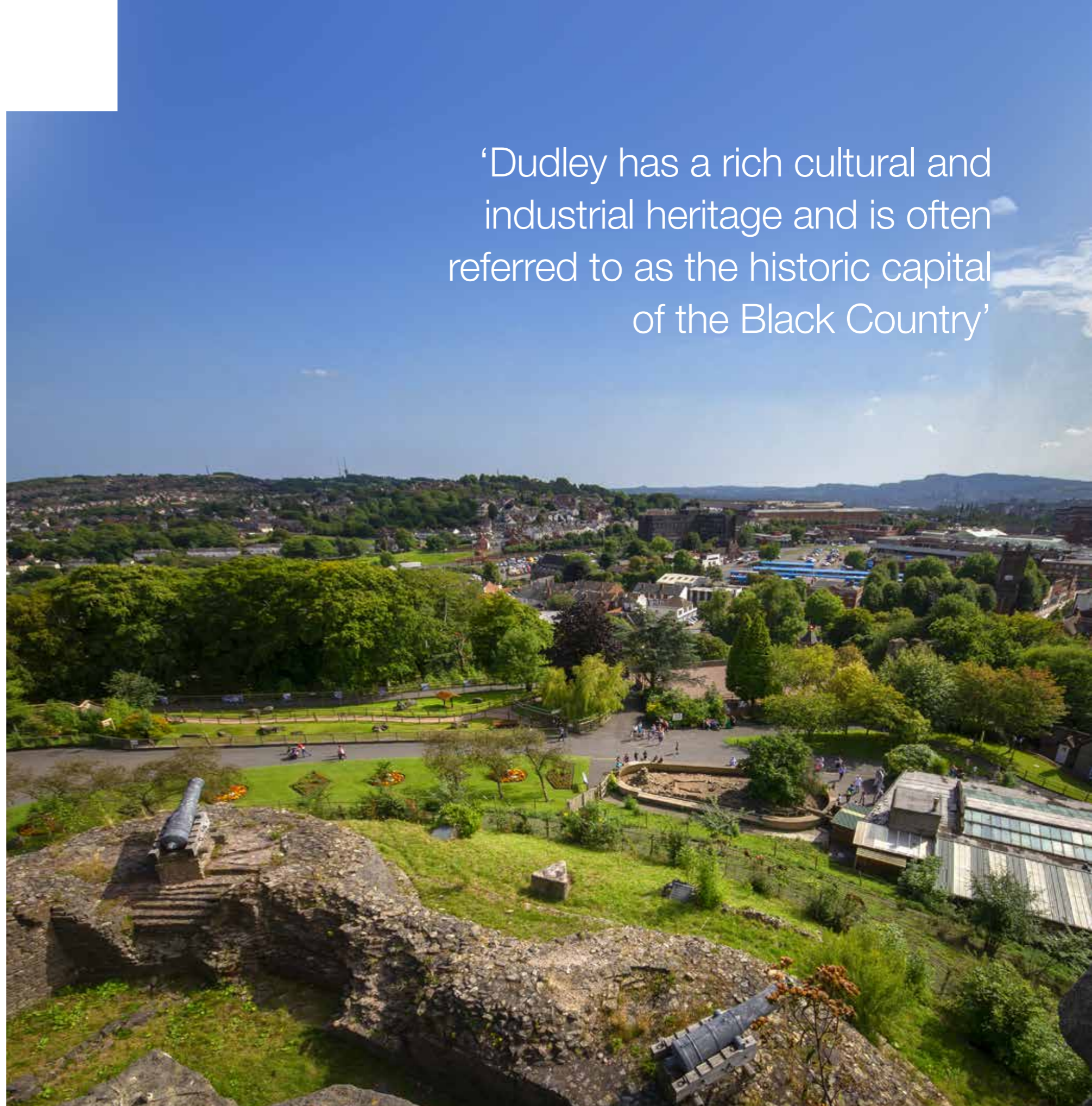
This is an exciting time for our borough and working alongside a wide range of partners we will continue to engage with our communities and businesses, to advance the opportunities available to local **people**



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‘Dudley has a rich cultural and industrial heritage and is often referred to as the historic capital of the Black Country’



# Executive Summary

## Overview

In September 2019, Dudley was one of 100 places in England invited to develop a proposal for a Town Deal with Government. The overarching aim of the £3.6m Towns Fund, announced to support the Towns, is to drive the sustainable economic regeneration and to deliver long term economic and productivity growth.

Since that date, partners within Dudley have established the Town Deal Board and have been working to develop the Town Investment Plan alongside 'Regenerating Dudley', which will provide much of the wider package of funding needed to transform the Town. The plan describes the key challenges facing the Town, the strengths and opportunities arising and the objectives that will be pursued by partners to achieve the vision:

'By 2030, there is a shared vision for Dudley Town Centre to be a vibrant, regenerated centre where people are proud to live, work, visit, shop and spend leisure time. There will be expanded opportunities for learning, a high quality living environment, improved connectivity, and increased footfall which will transform the night-time economy. It will have a diverse cultural offer and thriving faith communities working in partnership to bring forward social transformation.'



## CHALLENGES

Dudley, the historic capital of the Black Country, was once a key industrial town generating wealth from coal and limestone mining, glassmaking and iron and steel. Despite a decline in activity since the 1970's the area has retained manufacturing as a core industry, and today the sector employs 18,000 and contributes 15% of the economy's GVA. However, this over-reliance on manufacturing has resulted in a weakened economy in need of diversification, with lower levels of business enterprise and productivity compared with regional and national averages.

These trends are underpinned by relatively low skills levels and educational attainment amongst Dudley residents and retention of higher-skilled workers in the area, as many commute out to Birmingham and the wider West Midlands conurbation. The prevalence of lower value-added jobs within the workforce also presents a further challenge as a greater number of these jobs are at risk of automation in the future. Alongside concentrations of deprivation within the borough where disadvantaged communities are excluded from the labour market, there is a growing need for targeted intervention to ensure that residents are able to gain the skills and experience needed to enter and progress in the labour market, and businesses are able to attract highly skilled workers to improve their competitiveness.

Like many other Towns, Dudley is also facing challenges associated with declining footfall on the high street and declining visitor numbers – both exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Connectivity within the Town and particularly between the Town Centre and Castle Hill and the cultural quarter remains a key issue, impacting on the image and perceptions of the area.

## STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Notwithstanding these key issues, Dudley has started an exciting new chapter in its history, with Regenerating Dudley attracting significant public and private sector funding to the Town. A structured programme of public sector-led interventions have been implemented since 2012, which have included £11m investment for the Castle Hill visitor attractions; construction of the new Dudley and Sandwell Archives building; £6m investment into connectivity and public realm within the Town Centre; and £5m investment to improve historic buildings within the town centre Conservation Area.

In addition to recent investment, the area has the following key strengths to build on:

- **People and communities** – diverse, healthy and safe communities; thriving community and voluntary sector; and strong civic pride and community resilience;
- **Place** – world renowned cultural and heritage assets; strategic transport investments; a growing learning quarter; excellent digital connectivity and commitment to a sustainable environment;
- **Business** – sectoral strengths (health, retail, manufacturing, education); Dudley Enterprise Zone; Dudley Business First.

## THE TOWN PLAN OBJECTIVES

In order to achieve the vision described earlier, the Town Deal Board have identified five strategic objectives to transform the Town Centre related to: increasing the vibrancy and attractiveness of the Town Centre; building a skilled workforce; promoting innovation and enterprise; strengthening the heritage and cultural offer; and improving connectivity. These priorities are underpinned by two cross cutting principles – delivering clean, green sustainable growth and promoting inclusive growth. The Dudley Town Investment Plan has been designed to align with the seven aspirations set out within Dudley Borough’s Vision, ‘Forging a future for all’ for 2030; and national, regional and local policy priorities which aim to promote productivity, economic growth and the levelling up agenda.

There are a number of major projects currently on site and planned that will contribute towards the achievement of the objectives described above. These include: **the Metro Extension; Dudley Transport Interchange; construction of the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC), the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology (IOTT) and the extension of the Black Country Living Museum** – all of which have secured funding from a range of sources including West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (BCLEP); Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), Dudley MBC, The Marches LEP and the National Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).



## TOWN DEAL FUNDING AND THE UNIVERSITY CENTRE

Following extensive consultation with key stakeholders and a review of the socio-economic context and the operational landscape, the Town Deal Board selected the University Centre Dudley project, as the main focus for the Towns Fund bid.

The University Centre project involves the construction of a new 4,250 m<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Institution at Castle Hill and a partnership between the University of Worcester and Dudley College of Technology, which has a strong and successful track record of delivering capital investments. It will complement existing and new learning opportunities within the area (for example The Marches Institute of Technology and the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre) and create a ‘University Park’ with collaboration among the key institutions. The Centre will focus on Health and Life Sciences, and the curriculum will be informed by local businesses to ensure that provision addresses skills shortages, and the upskilling needed locally. It will also build specialisms in a recognised growth sector which is a key strategic focus for the regional and national economy.

The new development will lead to a range of environmental improvements; improved pedestrian and cycle routes and connectivity between Castle Hill and the Town Centre; new public realm and green spaces; a new contemporary gateway building to Dudley; visual links between the University Park and Dudley Town Centre and views to and from Dudley Castle; and significant economic benefits arising from students attracted to the Town. It will provide the final and missing piece of the regeneration jigsaw within the Town Centre and the Board believe it has the potential to stimulate transformational change, drive longer term productivity growth through higher skills, and provide a central part of the development of Castle Hill.

**The scheduled opening date for the University Centre is September 2024 and £25 million Towns Funding is being requested towards the total project cost of £36 million.**

## COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Town Investment Plan has been informed by pro-active stakeholder and community engagement activities. The most recent consultation activities regarding the Castle Hill proposals received over 950 responses, with strong support for the University Centre. The Town Deal Board will retain oversight of the Town Investment Plan and continue to engage local communities in the design and development of the proposed University Centre and wider developments moving forward. This will ensure that they respond to the needs of the Town and its local communities, in bringing forward inclusive economic growth.

# 1.0

# Introducing Dudley

## 1.1 The Historic Capital of the Black Country

Dudley has a rich cultural and industrial heritage and is often referred to as the historic capital of the Black Country, a name derived from its industrial past of coal mines and blast furnaces used for iron and steelmaking. The area was one of the early centres of the Industrial Revolution due to its unique geology, generating wealth from coal and limestone mining, glassmaking, iron & steel. It was also formerly known for nail making, chain & anchor manufacturing and engineering works.



A range of high quality and varied attractions now contribute to its historic landscape and heritage value, including Dudley Castle which dates back to the 11th Century and was recorded in the 1086 Domesday book; the internationally renowned Zoological Gardens housing some of the world's rarest and most exotic animals; the open-air Black Country Living Museum; and Dudley Canal Trust which has a sixteen mile canal network.



The Dudley borough is predominantly urban in character, but also contains extensive green space and natural assets and reserves - 18% of the land belongs to the green belt; 14% is public green space; and the area is **home to ten sites of special scientific interest, two national nature reserves and seven local nature reserves**. The Black Country was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status in 2020, in recognition of its natural and cultural heritage.



Whilst Dudley was once a key industrial town with a reliance on the manufacturing industry, this has declined since the 1970s, resulting in a weakened local economy with an over-reliance on manufacturing that is structurally brittle and in need of diversification. The High Street has also struggled since the construction of the Merry Hill Regional Shopping Centre during the 1980s, which resulted in the loss of many of the High Street anchor retailers

Today Dudley is home to a diverse range of successful, national and internationally significant businesses.

# 1.2 Regenerating Dudley and the Town Investment Plan

A structured series of public sector-led interventions have been implemented since 2012. These include £11 million investment for the Castle Hill visitor attractions; construction of the new Dudley and Sandwell Archives building; £6 million of investment into connectivity and public realm within the Town Centre; and £5 million investment to improve historic buildings within the town centre Conservation Area. This rolling programme of investment led by Dudley Council and its partners has started an exciting new chapter in its history, with 'Regenerating Dudley' set to bring £1 billion investment into the borough.

Major projects currently on site include the Metro Extension; Dudley Transport Interchange; construction of the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC), the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology (IOTT) and the extension of the Black Country Living Museum – all of which have secured funding from a range of sources including West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (BCLEP); Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), Dudley MBC, The Marches LEP and the National Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).



The proposed Towns Fund Project will provide the final and missing piece of the regeneration jigsaw, as a new Higher Education (HE) facility will complete the range of learning provision within the Town. The establishment of a University Centre at the heart of the Learning Quarter has the potential to stimulate transformational change, drive longer term productivity growth through higher skills, and provide a central part of the redevelopment at Castle Hill, by delivering a key gateway into the Town Centre.

## THE PROJECTS ARE EXPECTED TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO:



**raising the profile of the Town** – by attracting new students, visitors and their associated expenditure and improving connectivity between Castle Hill and the Town Centre;



**increasing the vibrancy of the Town Centre and the night-time economy** – which will in turn contribute to increased jobs within retail, accommodation and food services, and leisure and entertainment;



**improving the skills, education and aspirations for young people and adults within the area**, through a diverse range of training provision and seamless pathways from school through to further and higher-level education; and continuous professional development;



**providing a higher skilled workforce**, with the potential to increase productivity and the competitiveness of the existing business base;



**attracting new businesses and enterprise into the Town** – as a result of a suitably skilled labour force;



**stimulating demand for new housing** (including student accommodation) within the Town Centre; and



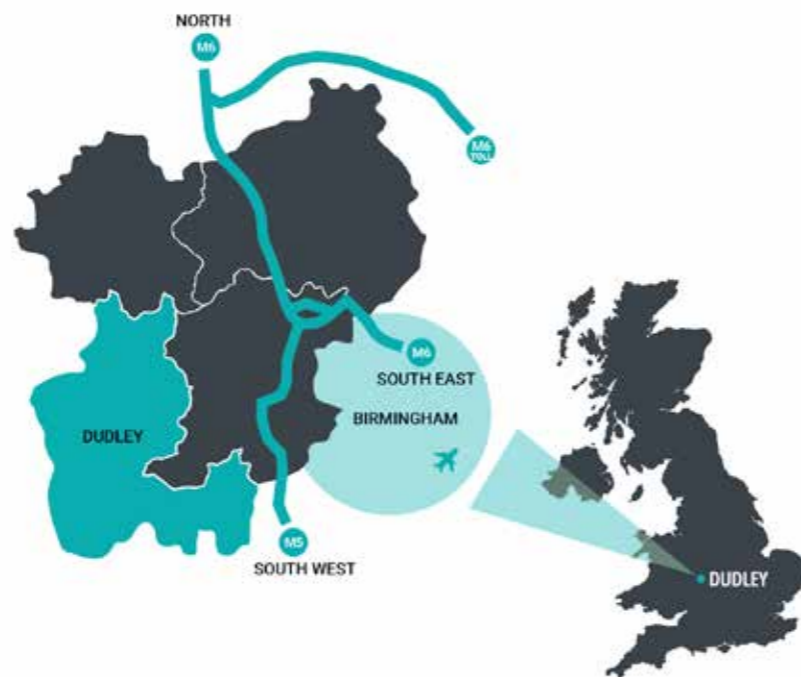
**the delivery of services within the Town** – including health and social care, given the focus provided through the higher education (HE) curriculum.



## 1.3 The Town Deal Area

**Dudley is located in the Black Country, in the heart of the West Midlands,** in the centre of the UK. It is close to the M5 and M6, just 9 miles from Birmingham City Centre and within easy reach of Birmingham International Airport.

The area, which is 38 square miles in total includes the townships of Dudley, Stourbridge, Brierley Hill and Halesowen. The Town is accessible by road and 30 minutes from Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Worcester by rail via Tipton, Dudley Port or Sandwell and Dudley stations.



**The planned Metro Line Extension is expected to make a significant improvement to the connectivity of Dudley Town Centre,** following the closure of the station many years ago as part of the 1960's Beeching cuts.

The Dudley Town Deal area incorporates the Town Centre and Castle Hill as shown in **Figure 1.3a**, which also presents the current regeneration projects planned or underway, that aim to deliver the comprehensive regeneration of the area.



Figure 1.3a Regional Location of Dudley



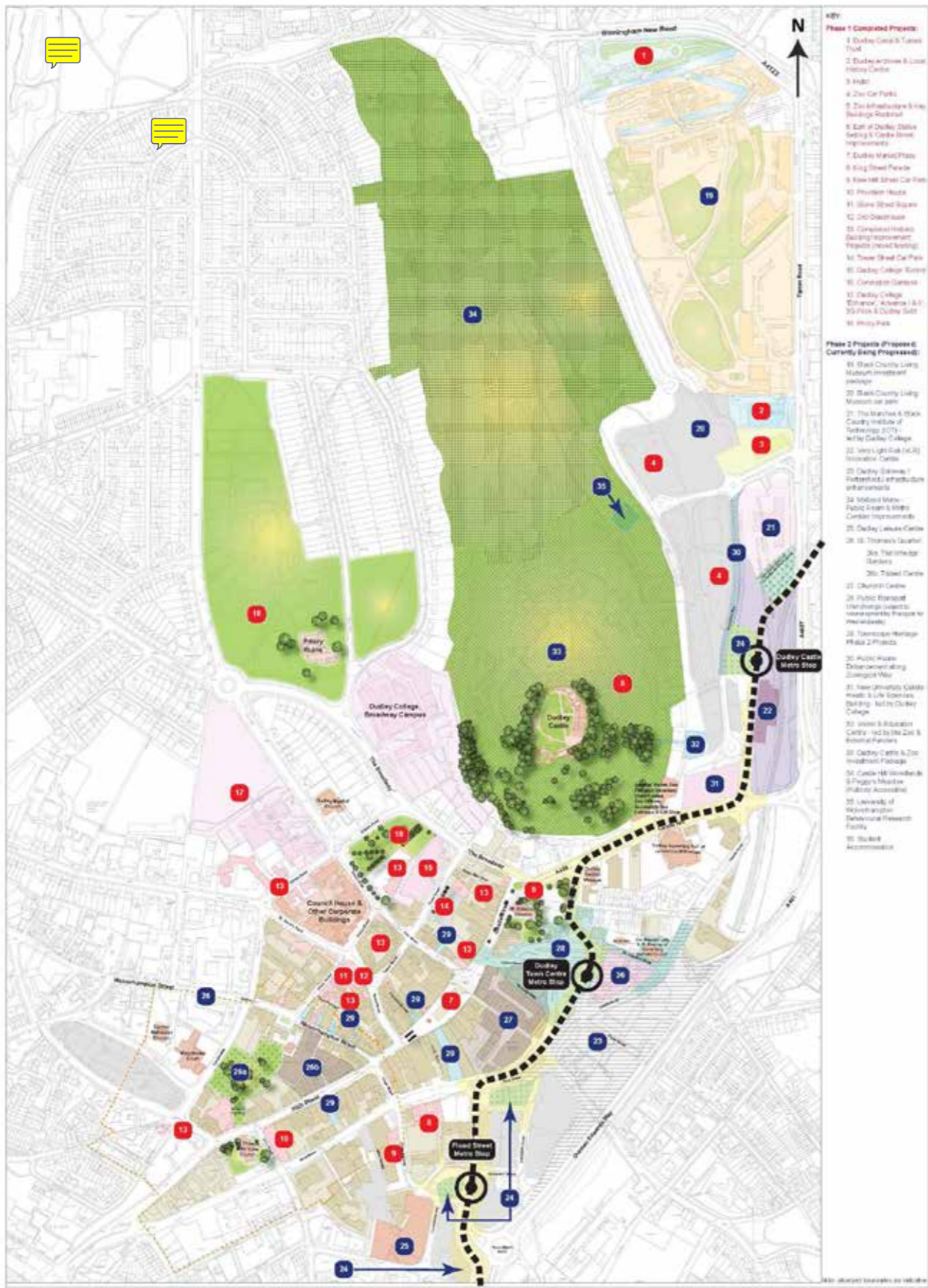


Figure 1.3b: Dudley Town Investment Plan area and proposed interventions

# 1.4 Dudley in numbers

## Population

The current population stands at **321,600** with steady growth set to continue up for the next 20 years.

By 2040, the population is expected to have grown to over

**350,000**

Number of young people aged **under 15** is **58,560**  
 Number of people aged **65 and over** is **65,602**

## Health

Average life expectancy for men **79.0** years

Average life expectancy for women **82.8** years

Life expectancy for men in the most deprived areas of Dudley is **9 years lower** than in the least deprived areas, **7.6 years lower** for women

## Safety

Dudley remains one of the safest borough within the West Midlands Police area for total recorded crime per 1000 population

## Environment

Area of **38 sq miles/ 98 sq km**, of which...

**14%** is publicly accessible open space (2019)

## Housing

**139,987** residential properties (DMBC 2018)  
**21,405** Council housing (DMBC Revenues 15.12.20)

the average house price is **£196,783** West Midlands average is **£211,960** (to year ending 30.06.20)

## Welfare & benefits

**27,889** claimants in receipt of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction

**18,476** Universal Credit claimants within the Dudley borough (DWP 12.9.19)

**£861k** awarded in Discretionary Housing Payments to date 2019/20

## Employment

Employment rate is **73.7%**, second highest employment rate in the Black Country (July 19 - June 20)

providing **117,000** employment opportunities for residents in the borough

TOP THREE EMPLOYMENT SECTORS ARE

Retail (13,000 staff) Median wage is **£30,742**, highest average full-time earnings in the Black Country in 2020  
 Education (11,000 staff)  
 Health (11,000 staff) (BRES 2019: open access)

## Business & investment

Dudley borough is home to **9,940** businesses in total, highest in the Black Country

**£1 Billion** INVESTMENT PIPELINE INCLUDING THE WEDNESBURY TO BRIERLEY HILL METRO EXTENSION **741 Jobs**

## Education

**59%** of Dudley pupils are meeting the expected standard at Key Stage 2 compared to 65% for England (2019) **78.2%** of Primary children  
**72.1%** of Secondary children attend a Good or Outstanding school (Nov 2020) **83.6%** of young people aged 16-18 are participating in education, employment or training compared to 85.3% for England (Oct 2020)

## Level of homelessness (DMBC 17/18)

Around **2,500** households presented as homeless, many just need housing advice.

**826 households** were prevented from becoming homeless in 2018

**Rough sleeping** reduced from **11** cases in 2017 to **5** in 2018

## Deprivation

**104th** most deprived of 317 local authorities in England (Index of Multiple Deprivation, Indices of Deprivation 2019) **28.1%** of the Dudley population live in areas amongst the 20% most deprived in England  
**17.3%** of the Dudley population live in areas amongst the 20% least deprived in England

## RECENT TRENDS SHOW:



the **population** growing, with over 100,000 residents since 1999. The demographic is changing following a decline in working age residents (16-64yr olds) and an increase in over 65s since 2010 (there was an increase of residents in both age groups regionally and nationally, albeit at a faster pace for over 65s). There is a higher proportion of economically inactive residents (23.8%) compared with the region and national averages; and census data indicates a higher prevalence of long-term health problems, with 20.3% residents having their daily activities somewhat limited (vs 17.6% nationally);



growth in the local **economy**, highlighted by an increase in GVA year-on-year since the last recession in 2009. Economic output (GVA) for 2018 stood at £5.4 billion (15% from its manufacturing base), an increase of 3% compared with the previous year which was a higher rate of growth than both the region and national average; however, GVA per capita in Dudley stood at £17,575 in 2018, substantially lower than the national average and contributing towards the regional GVA performance gap.



**business density** is comparatively low in Dudley. Since 2010, the number of enterprises per 10,000 of the population has been consistently lower than the region and national averages and the gap has been increasing. In 2019, business density of 300 compared with 360 for the West Midlands and 407 for the UK;

**productivity** has been significantly lower in the area over the last decade. GVA per worker in 2018 was £44,455 compared to £50,022 regionally and £56,387 nationally, attributable to a relatively lower-skilled workforce as well as factors such as R&D investment, infrastructure and support to existing businesses to scale-up;



**skills levels** among the workforce and educational attainment are both comparatively lower for Dudley. The proportion of working age residents with NVQ Level 4+ qualifications has been consistently lower than the West Midlands and UK since 2010 and currently stands at 24.7%. Residents with no qualifications has fluctuated over the last decade, however since 2015 the levels for Dudley have been higher - in 2019 the figure stood at 16.4% compared with 10.2% for the region and 7.9% for the UK;



there is an **increasing earnings gap** within Dudley, with wage rates higher for residents than the workplace, indicating a number commute out of the area for higher-skilled opportunities, contributing to a net loss of retail and consumer spend within the local area. Of the 117,908 Dudley residents who worked in the West Midlands region in 2011, 46% commuted out of Dudley for their workplace. While the difference in hourly wages decreased from 2014 to just under £13 in 2018, median weekly earnings for full-time workers in Dudley are currently at £530.40 compared with £563.30 for residents (2020);



**visitor numbers** are decreasing and footfall is shrinking within the Town Centre – the most recent three year rolling average number of day visitors to the area was 4.5 million (2017-2019), generating visitor expenditure of £117 million, however this was lower than the previous average of over 5 million visitors, and £169 million expenditure (2016-2018);



**occupational breakdown** – higher numbers of lower value-added occupations and lower numbers of higher value-added occupations. The percentage of the workforce employed in elementary occupations in the year to June 2020 was 11.8% - 2% higher than the national average, while the proportion of managers, directors and senior officials was lower in Dudley (8.9%) compared with the West Midlands (10.5%) and UK (11.6%); and

concentrations of **deprivation** in some areas – Dudley contains 20 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within the 10% most deprived nationally, increasing to 43 within the 20% most deprived. A number of these areas are within the proposed Town Investment Plan area and Dudley '006C' in Castle Hill is amongst the 20% most deprived nationally.);



# 2.0

# Dudley's assets and strengths

## 2.1 Summary

The following section describes Dudley's Key Strengths and Assets related to:

### I) PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

- Diverse, healthy and safe communities
- Thriving community and voluntary sector
- Strong civic pride and community resilience

### II) PLACE

- World renowned heritage
- Strategic transport investments
- Affordable homes
- A Growing Learning Quarter
- Excellent digital connectivity
- Promoting renewable energy and a clean environment

### III) BUSINESS

- Manufacturing, health, retail and education sectoral strengths
- Dudley's Enterprise Zone
- Dudley Business First – Locate, invest, succeed

## 2.2 People and Communities

### 2.2.1 DIVERSE, HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

Dudley has a growing and diverse population of over 320,000 residents, of which 19.4% are young people; 60.2% are working age and 20.4% are aged 65 and above. There are an equal mix of male and females and in 2016 it was estimated that 12.6% of residents were from Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

Established in 2012, the Dudley Health & Wellbeing Board (HWBB) is responsible for the health and wellbeing of all residents in the Borough. Using local evidence, **it works to help identify the needs of local residents, secure better care to improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities** across the borough. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-22 outlines how Dudley can become a place where everyone can live longer, safer and healthier lives, and **current life expectancy in Dudley is 79.0 years of age for males and 82.8 for females – higher than the WM regional average**. Three goals have been established which will have the biggest impact on people's health and wellbeing – related to promoting healthy weight, reducing the impact of poverty, and reducing loneliness and isolation. There are three alliances in place to ensure that everyone adopts the new ways of working set out in the strategy – the Children and Young People's Alliance, the Adult's Alliance and the Safe and Sound Partnership.

Alongside the Health and Wellbeing Board, Safe and Sound is a partnership made up of public and voluntary organisations, formed in 1998 to address community concerns around crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse. **Targeted action has ensured that the Borough has retained its reputation as one of the safest in the WM region**, with 70 recorded crimes per 1,000 population/households for headline offences compared with 86 for the region (year ending June 2020).



## 2.2.2 THRIVING COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Dudley has a thriving voluntary and community sector, with many volunteers and community groups across the borough and a strong history of people working together to improve their local communities. Community forum meetings providing an opportunity for local councillors, police, businesses and residents to come together on a regular basis to discuss and collectively address local issues and concerns, and connect people and groups on wider community issues. There are 10 community forums, each covering 2/3 wards and meeting four times each year in normal circumstances.

## 2.2.3 STRONG CIVIC PRIDE AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

**There is strong civic pride amongst residents in Dudley**, championed by organisations such as Dudley Civic Society which aims to promote and protect the identity of Dudley; encourage public interest in the town's heritage and history; foster a sense of pride and citizenship; promote high standards of development; and to provide an independent voice for the town.

During the recent lockdowns and ongoing pandemic, **communities within Dudley have collectively grown stronger together and become more innovative and resilient.** Residents are looking forward to a brighter future and many have signed up to become Covid-19 Community Champions, helping others remain up-to-date with the latest advice.



## 2.3 Place

### 2.3.1 WORLD RENOWNED HERITAGE

Dudley is home to a number of major cultural and heritage assets, including Dudley Castle, Dudley Zoo, Black Country Living Museum, and the Global Geopark - a site with UNESCO World Heritage Status.



#### (i) Natural capital

The geology of Dudley borough has played a significant role in shaping the area's heritage and ingenuity, with natural resources bringing wealth to the area. **Fossil remains such as ammonites, corals and trilobites have been found in the area and date to 420 million years ago**, with limestone also creating a unique heritage for the area. Dudley's geological collection is made up of approximately 15,000 fossil, rock and mineral specimens. Additionally, Wren's Nest was declared as the first National Nature Reserve in an urban area (1956) for its exceptional geology and palaeontological features, whilst Dudley's Barrow Hill volcano has preserved the oldest conifers in the world. **The Black Country became a UNESCO Global Geopark in July 2020**, in recognition of its natural and cultural heritage.

## (ii) Black Country Living Museum

The Black Country Living Museum is an award-winning open-air museum which makes a substantial contribution to the local visitor economy, recounting the history of one of the first industrialised landscapes in Britain and set across 26 acres. The museum focuses on how steam power, human ingenuity and an increasingly interconnected world transformed this region into a manufacturing powerhouse.



The museum was set up in the late 1960s/70s and has continued to grow and develop. In 2010, the Museum launched a **£10 million development**, creating a 1930s high street. In 2019, the Museum successfully received the final go ahead for its biggest capital development project yet, Forging Ahead. By 2022, the Museum plans to complete an entire 1940s-60s town centre to continue to tell the story of the region in a post-war world.

## (iii) Dudley Zoo and Castle

Following its opening in May 1937, Dudley Zoo has made a significant contribution to the Towns' visitor economy. The Zoo covers approximately 40 acres and features two scheduled monuments – **an 11th century castle and limestone caverns - and 12 Grade II listed Tecton Buildings (four Grade II\*)**. It has the world's largest single collection of Tectons, which received World Monument Status in 2009 and much of the animal collection is linked to international conservation and breeding programmes, with several of the zoo's global projects having won awards.

## (iv) Stourbridge Glass Quarter

The Stourbridge Glass Quarter has a number of heritage sites and holds the International Festival of Glass every two years. **Over 400 years ago, glassmakers from France were attracted to Stourbridge** by abundant supplies of coal as a fuel source and refractor fire clay used for building furnaces and melting pots. Between 1830 and WWI, factories in the area introduced different styles of glassware meaning Stourbridge became the leading glass centre in the UK, gaining international importance. Some of the original companies still exist for traditional crystal manufacturing, whilst new generations of glassmakers are setting up

### 2.3.2 STRATEGIC TRANSPORT INVESTMENTS

Dudley is located on the edge of the West Midlands conurbation, approximately 9 miles west of Birmingham and 6 miles south of Wolverhampton. While easily accessible by road, given its proximity to the M5 and M6 motorway networks, there are connectivity issues within the Town Centre, exacerbated by the lack of a railway station.

However, the area is set to benefit from two strategic transport infrastructure investments over the next couple of years, which include:

#### (i) The Midland Metro Extension from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill

This 11km metro line with up to 15 stops will be an integral part of the tram network across the West Midlands and play a significant role in the regeneration and growth of the local economy. **The development will reduce journey times** and facilitate movement between different centres, particularly Dudley town centre and Merry Hill, with frequent connections between Dudley Port Station, Dudley Interchange, the Waterfront and Merry Hill. These connections will also facilitate access to the Western Mainline, **providing direct connections to both London and Manchester.**

Additionally, there will be easier access for local attractions including the Zoo and Castle, the Black Country Living Museum and the Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust. In the wider area, travel times to Birmingham or Wolverhampton will be around 40 and 30 minutes respectively from Dudley, allowing journeys between Birmingham and Brierley Hill in under an hour and aiding commuting. The metro will drive forward new residential markets and a wider catchment area for people travelling to Dudley for education and training, with **passenger services expected to commence in 2024.**



#### (ii) Dudley Transport Interchange

Dudley Interchange is one of Transport for West Midlands' most outdated transport facilities, resulting from a lack of investment in 20 years. However, **the facility is now being modernised** to meet current safety standards and improved capacity inline with passenger demands. The £20 million multimodal facility will have improved waiting and interchange facilities and enhanced real-time passenger information which will improve safety for all users, whilst increasing patronage and passenger satisfaction. The project will also improve cycle parking facilities within the Town; retail and ticketing; segregate passenger and vehicular movements and **create a positive environmental impact.**



### 2.3.3 AFFORDABLE HOMES



There are currently 139,208 homes within Dudley, of which 80% are privately owned. The remainder are local authority-owned (16%) and housing association stock (4%).



Approximately one third were affordable, comprising a mix of home ownership (15.3%), affordable rent (55.1%), other rent (1.5%) and social rent (28.1%).

Between 2012/13 - 2019/20, the net supply of homes increased by 5,423.

The average house price in Dudley is currently £177,975 (June 2020), lower than both the regional and national figures of £197,000 and £240,000 respectively, and the area has a house price:median earnings ratio of 6.38 (2019), lower than the regional figure of 6.83 and national figure of 7.7. However, whilst housing is cheaper in Dudley due to poor skills levels impacting access to higher value jobs, and residents who cannot afford market prices, **there is latent demand for affordable and social housing**, evidenced by the Council's extended waiting lists. Additionally, poor values mean many brownfield sites cannot be delivered cost effectively due to the abnormal costs. Nonetheless, a growth in values around transport nodes may contribute a lift in values to make some schemes viable.



### 2.3.4 A GROWING LEARNING QUARTER



Dudley has a total of **112 schools** (2019/20) comprising over **48,000 pupils**. Five schools are independent, whilst 97 are state-funded (78 primary and 19 secondary).



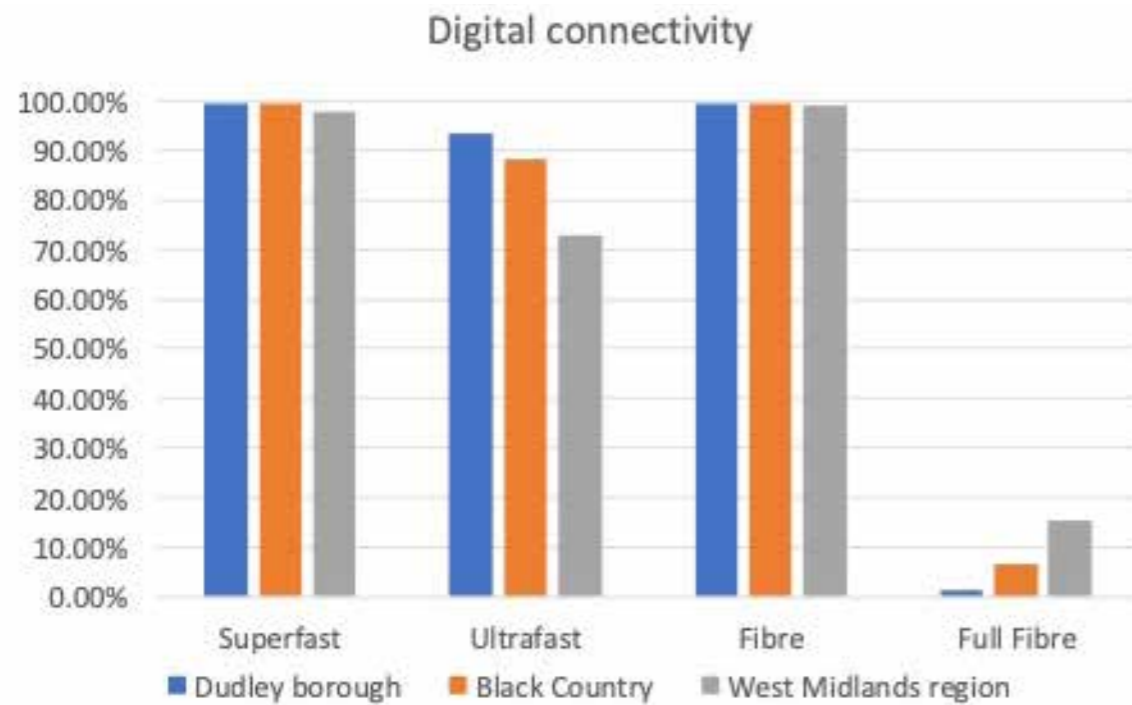
The education sector in Dudley **currently employs 11,000**, the greatest proportion comes from primary education (just under 50%), followed by secondary education at 34%, and higher education employment at 7.8%.



Over the last eight years Dudley College of Technology has developed a 'Learning Quarter' in the town centre close to the Cultural Quarter in Castle Hill, with over £60m spent on developing outstanding technical education facilities for residents. Most recently the college has **also attracted investment to create one of the country's first Institute's of Technology** (due to open in 2021) which will offer higher level learning opportunities linked to modern construction, manufacturing and engineering

### 2.3.5 EXCELLENT DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

With the exception of Full Fibre, Dudley benefits from strong digital connectivity, with higher levels superfast and ultrafast connectivity compared with the LEP area and the wider West Midlands Region.



Source: ThinkBroadband.com

### 2.3.6 PROMOTING RENEWABLE ENERGY AND A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT


The Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted by Dudley Council in October 2015 and has encouraged new developments to increase the amount of energy provided by renewable resources since. The SPD provides detailed information on how to conform with Black Country policy (Policy ENV7: Renewable Energy) which requires all major developments to provide 10% of their energy from renewable sources. **In 2019, there were 2,745 renewable energy installations in the Dudley, meaning there was renewable electricity capacity of 21.3 MW and a generation of 23,399 MWh.**

Air quality across Dudley continues to meet national air quality objectives with the exception of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), mainly generated from internal combustion engines in road vehicles. **Several projects are underway to improve air quality in the borough**, as well as road network improvements. For example, Dudley is participating in the DEFRA funded Low Emissions Towns & Cities Programme where various WM local authorities have worked together to reduce road transport emissions. Additionally, Dudley Council adopted the Black Country Air Quality SPD in September 2016, providing guidance on how to submit/determine planning applications where air quality needs to be addressed. After declaring a climate emergency in July 2020, a Climate Change working group has been established within the Council to develop and implement a carbon reduction plan.

## 2.4 Business

### 2.4.1 KEY SECTOR STRENGTHS

Building on its long-standing history of world-class manufacturing and engineering, Dudley has retained a strong manufacturing base, specifically fabricated metal products, which comprises **25% of total manufacturing employment, in 355 businesses**. The manufacturers of machinery equipment and furniture provide a further **30% of jobs**. In total, the **manufacturing industries provide 18,000 jobs** in the borough and contribute **15% of the area's total Economic Output (GVA)**. Other major employers include:




#### HEALTH

providing 18,000 jobs and forecast growth of 10,000 jobs by 2040 (Experian, March 2020);



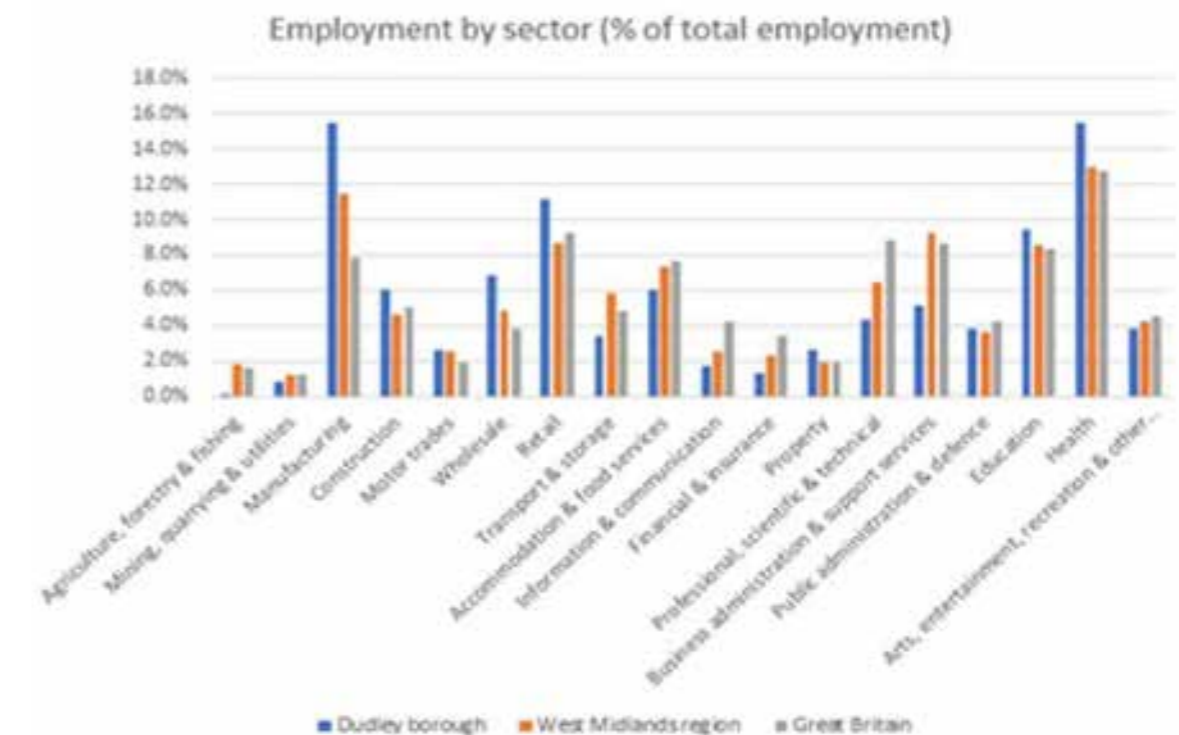
#### RETAIL

which accounts for over 10% of all jobs, although this sector will remain vulnerable as businesses adapt to changing consumer behaviour; and



#### EDUCATION

with strengths in early years provision, the sector employs 11,000 within Dudley.



Source: ONS, 2019 Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)



## 2.4.2 DY5 – DUDLEY’S ENTERPRISE ZONE

Dudley’s Business and Innovation Enterprise Zone ‘DY5’ located in Brierley Hill, is rapidly becoming a location of choice for business offering low cost, high quality office and industrial space connected to the regional infrastructure. Covering 70 hectares, **the EZ is intended to stimulate demand and generate up to circa £23m in business rates over the next 25 years.** It offers business rate relief of up to £55k and after launching in April 2017, occupiers include Insurance Protector Group (IPG) and Prosperity Wealth. The current infrastructure investment being delivered through ‘Regenerating Dudley’ is expected to attract further high-profile inward investment opportunities to the Borough.

## 2.4.3 DUDLEY BUSINESS FIRST – LOCATE, INVEST, SUCCEED

Dudley Business First is the Council’s inward investment and business support service, offering services tailored to new and existing businesses wanting to locate, invest, and succeed in the borough. Services include:

# Dudley Business First

Locate, invest, succeed

### (i) BUSINESS ADVICE

Dudley Business First aims to increase productivity, create new jobs and secure funding through schemes such as ‘Aim for Gold’, which provides one-to-one support to complete a business review and action plan, the opportunity to attend a full-day masterclass on marketing and growth modelling, and networking opportunities. Another programme, ‘Start Up Dudley’, is delivered on behalf of DMBC by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce and helps businesses develop new ideas.

### (ii) ACCESS TO FINANCE

The service works closely with public and private funders to signpost businesses to a wide range of finance initiatives and products, including grants, loans, equity and capital allowances.

### (iii) LAND AND PROPERTY

Land and property solutions are offered for firms seeking start-up space, expanding their business or interested in re-locating to Dudley. The area has over 100 business parks accommodating businesses of varying sizes and sectors.

### (iv) SKILLS AND RECRUITMENT

The Council’s Employment and Skills team offer a range of support to guide businesses through the recruitment process, to identify current and future job opportunities and help fill vacancies sourced from the local labour market. In addition to signposting businesses to other relevant stakeholders, the team support businesses and residents to access apprenticeship and other local training opportunities, including the ‘Black Country Impact’ programme.

### (v) INVEST IN DUDLEY

Dudley Council is seeking investors to develop key housing, retail, leisure and employment sites in the Town Centre, with a view to developing the visitor economy, promoting new property uses within the town centre, and bringing about improvements of heritage assets and underutilised opportunity sites and building. The aim is to create the conditions that will enable further private sector investment in the town, to bring vacant premises back into use and improve accessibility that will generate increased levels of visitor spend.

# 3.0

# Key challenges and opportunities

## 3.1 Summary

There are five key challenges and opportunities growth of the Town Centre related to:

- RAISING PRODUCTIVITY AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH
- BUILDING A SKILLED WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE
- STRENGTHENING THE CULTURAL OFFER AND CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN CASTLE HILL AND THE TOWN CENTRE
- INCREASING THE VIBRANCY AND PROFILE OF THE TOWN CENTRE
- COVID-19

## 3.2 Raising productivity and inclusive growth

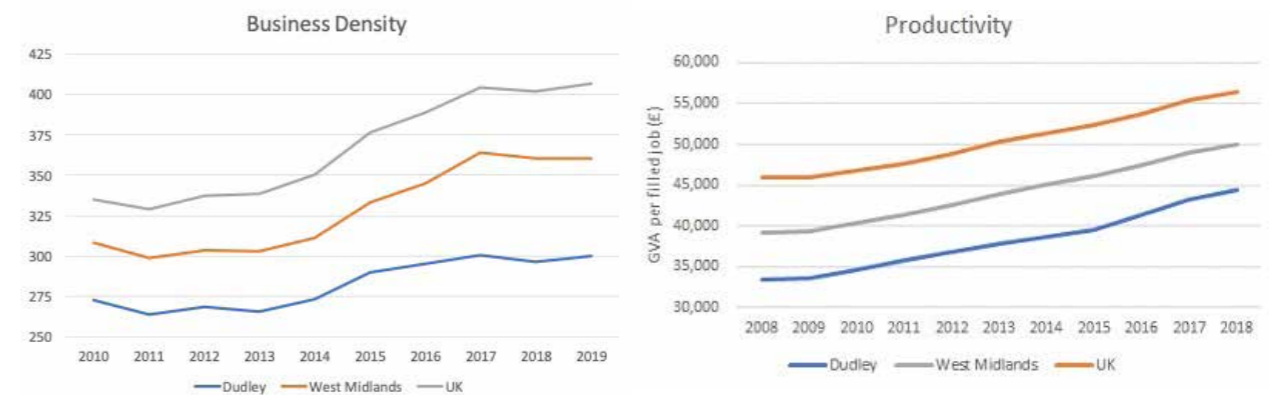
### 3.2.1 CHALLENGES

Dudley's economy has grown steadily in recent years, as highlighted by **an increase in GVA year-on-year since the last recession in 2009**. Economic output (GVA) for 2018 stood at £5.4 billion, an increase of 3% on the previous year, with manufacturing contributing 15%.

However, despite increased economic activity and growth in employment, productivity remains lower than comparator areas. In 2018 Dudley workers generated an average of £44,455 GVA while the West Midlands region achieved £50,022, and the UK figure stood at £56,387 – a differential of close to £12,000 per filled job.

Over the same period, business density (the number of enterprises per 10,000 adult population) also remained comparatively low, and the gap between Dudley and the regional and national averages has been increasing. In 2019, Dudley's business density was 300 businesses for every 10,000 adults, compared with 360 for the West Midlands and 407 for the UK.

Figure x: Widening business density gap and productivity differentials



Source: ONS Sub-regional Productivity; UK Business Counts; Population Estimates

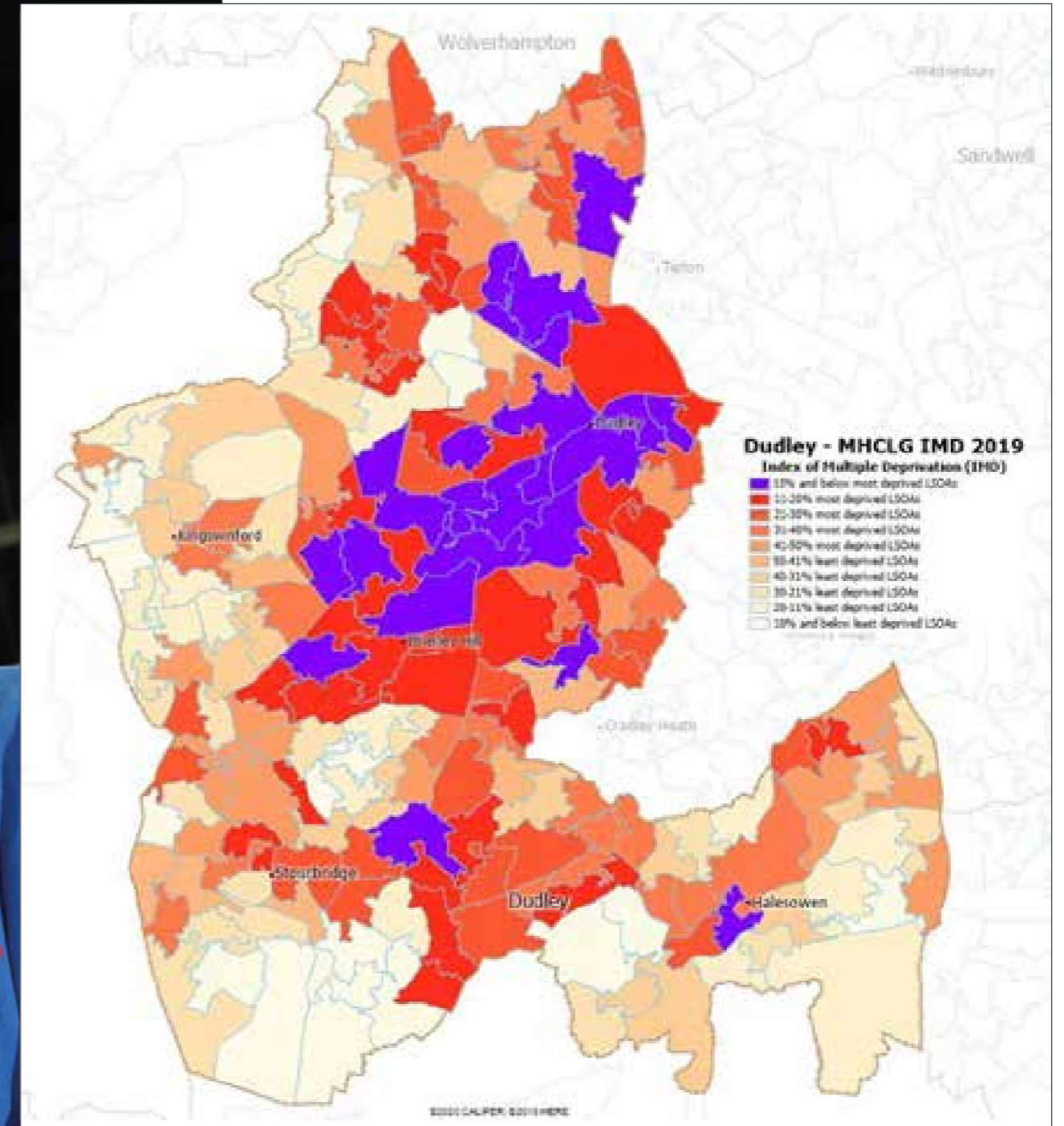
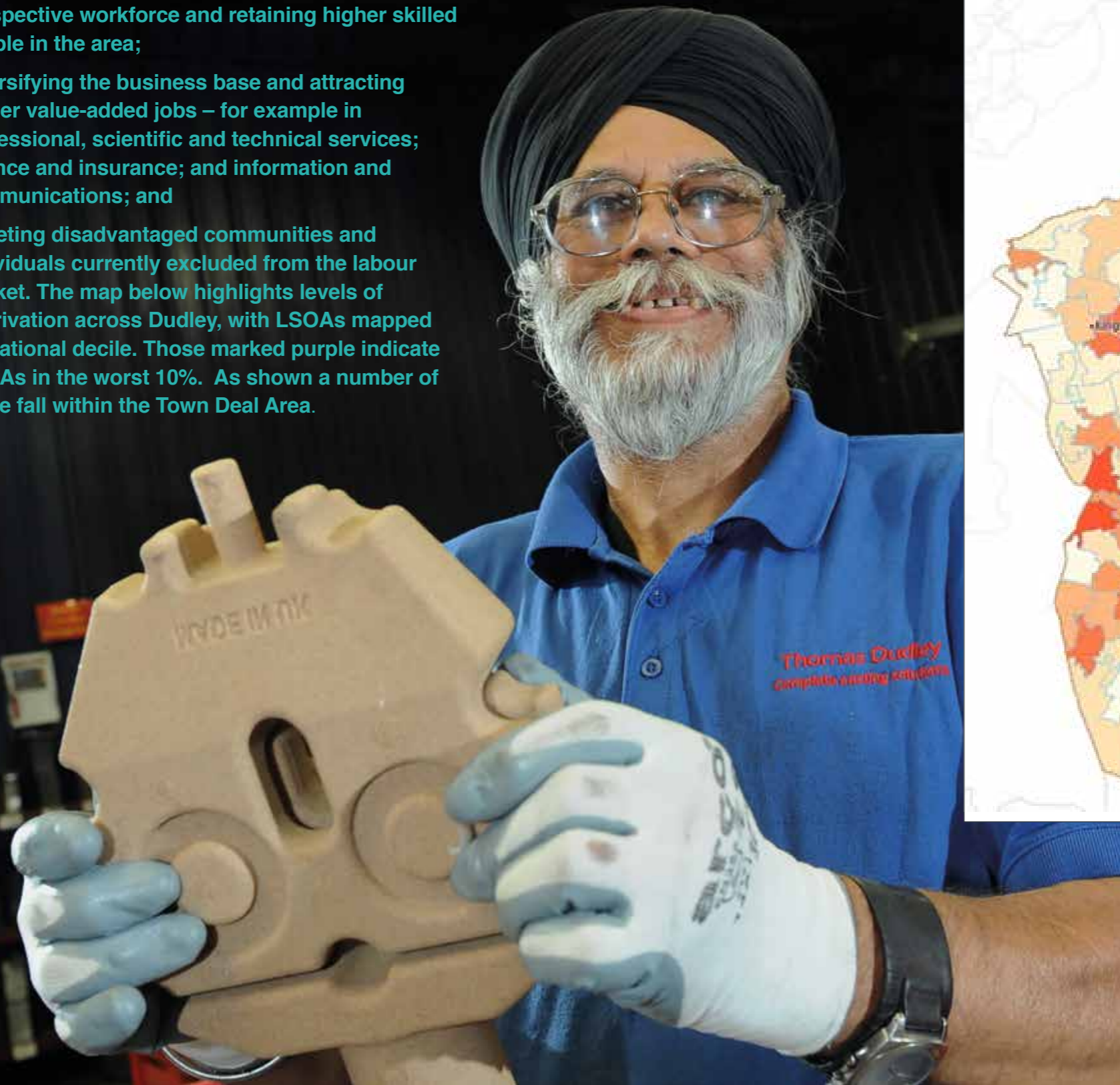


While there are a number of key factors impacting productivity, the availability of a skilled workforce and investment in training and upskilling are paramount. Other drivers include: investment in research, development and innovation; access to suitable premises to facilitate growth; the attraction of higher value added jobs; and support to assist existing businesses to scale-up.

Provision of employment and skills training as part of a wider package of support to overcome other barriers to participation will be critical to 'levelling up' within Dudley and ensuring equal access to job opportunities and incomes.

In order to close the productivity gap and raise workplace earnings within Dudley, there are a number of key challenges for partners in the area:

- raising aspirations and skills among the existing and prospective workforce and retaining higher skilled people in the area;
- diversifying the business base and attracting higher value-added jobs – for example in professional, scientific and technical services; finance and insurance; and information and communications; and
- targeting disadvantaged communities and individuals currently excluded from the labour market. The map below highlights levels of deprivation across Dudley, with LSOAs mapped by national decile. Those marked purple indicate LSOAs in the worst 10%. As shown a number of these fall within the Town Deal Area.



Source: 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation

### 3.2.2 OPPORTUNITIES

Within the Town Centre and Castle Hill, there are a number of key projects planned and underway that will assist in driving up productivity. These include a focus on investment in education and skills infrastructure; research and innovation projects that will seek to capitalise on existing expertise and infrastructure in the Town to test new technologies; and ongoing business support.

- **The Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology (IOTT)** – a new £26.8 million teaching facility designed to address regional Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) skills shortages. Teaching provision will range from Levels 4 to 7 and the Institute will bring together FE and HE providers with employers. The new facility, catering for 2,000 learners, is expected to be operational by September 2021;
- **The Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC)** – which will provide a research facility for the development of Very Light Railway (VLR) technologies and projects and will utilise a redundant stretch of railway to support the National Innovation Centre. The capital works will include a retaining wall, a 2.2km test track and a new 5,600 sq m building, costing a total of £27.8 million. The Warwick Manufacturing Group - a world leading research and education group at the University, is one of the key partners. The group facilitates successful collaboration between academia and the private and public sectors, driving innovation in applied science, technology and engineering by helping companies to utilise research-led tools and techniques. The VLRNIC project is due for completion in spring 2022;



- **Autonomous Vehicle Initiative** – this pilot scheme will test the viability of using autonomous vehicles to serve attractions and the colleges adjacent to the Metro in Dudley. The project will advance a unique autonomous vehicle demonstrator route which encompasses a range of integrated vehicles, technologies and an embedded research test bed; and
- **Dudley Business First** – works with businesses to increase productivity through the provision of recruitment support, finance, business advice and innovation support to develop new ideas or improve existing processes. DBF connects businesses with support from Innovate UK, the Knowledge Transfer Partnership scheme, the Manufacturing Technology Centre, The Patent Box and Research & Development tax reliefs.

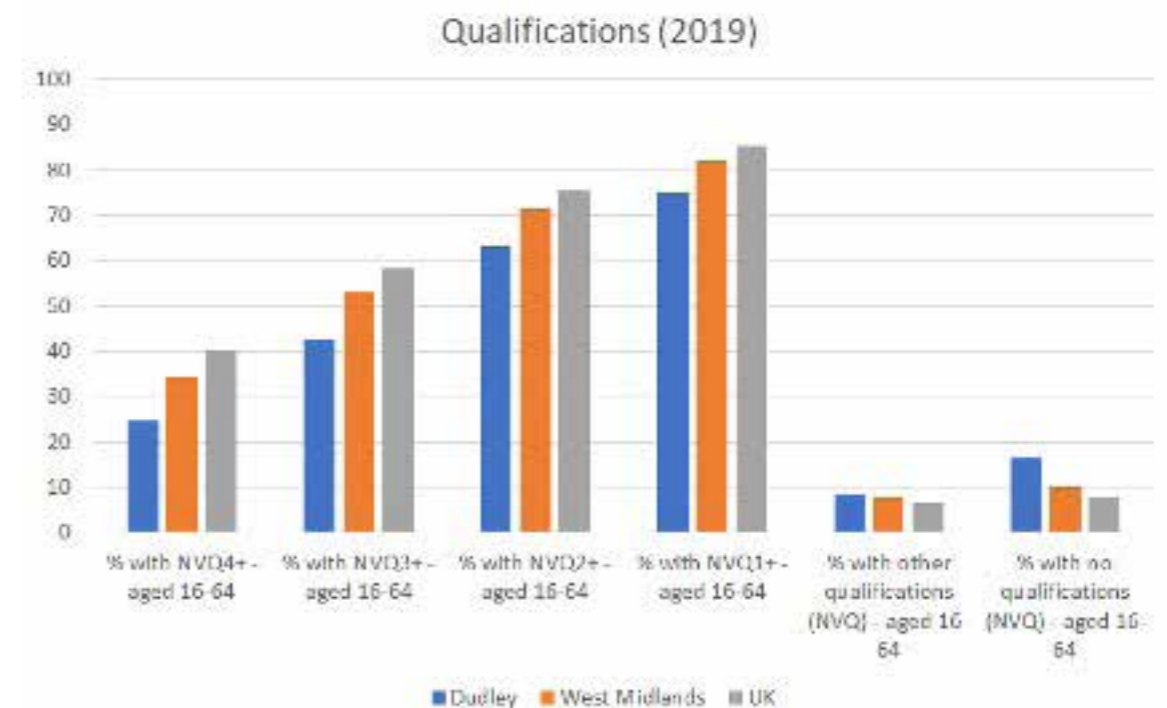
## 3.3 Building a skilled workforce for the future

### 3.3.1 CHALLENGES

Educational attainment in Dudley remains stubbornly low. In 2019, 59% of primary school children reached the expected standard at KS2 compared with 65% nationally and for KS4 pupils the area also had lower Progress 8 and Attainment 8 scores. Performance for 16-18 year olds was also lower, with an average A Level point value of 32.06 compared with 34.01 for England.

In August 2020, only 7% of state-funded education providers in Dudley were ranked as 'outstanding' according to Ofsted – significantly lower than both the West Midlands and England figures of 17% and 19%. Furthermore, while the majority of state-funded schools received a 'good' rating (71%), there is also a higher proportion which require improvement or are considered inadequate, 22% compared to 14% for England.

The qualifications data for working age residents in Dudley reveals a similar picture. The proportion with NVQ L4+ qualifications was 24.7%, lower than 34.1% and 40.2% for the WM and UK respectively. More worrying, is the significantly higher number of individuals with no qualifications at all, which currently stands at 16.4% compared with 10.2% for the region and 7.9% for the UK.

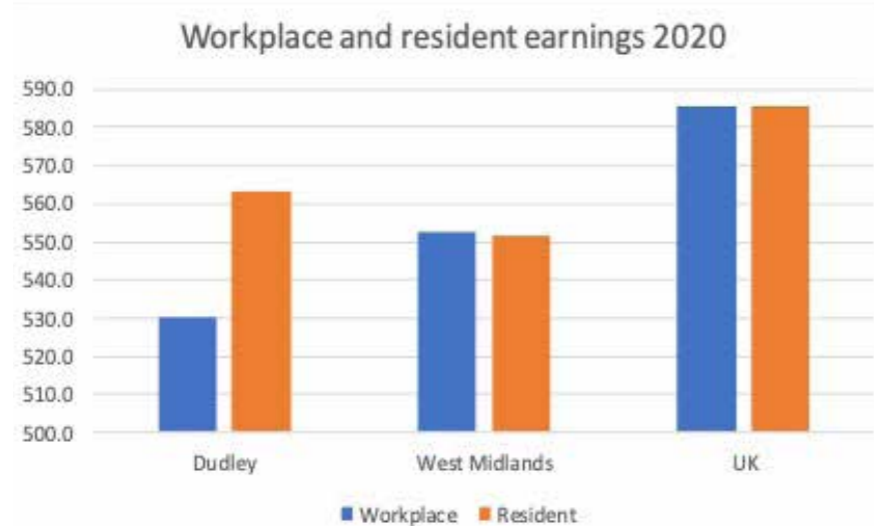
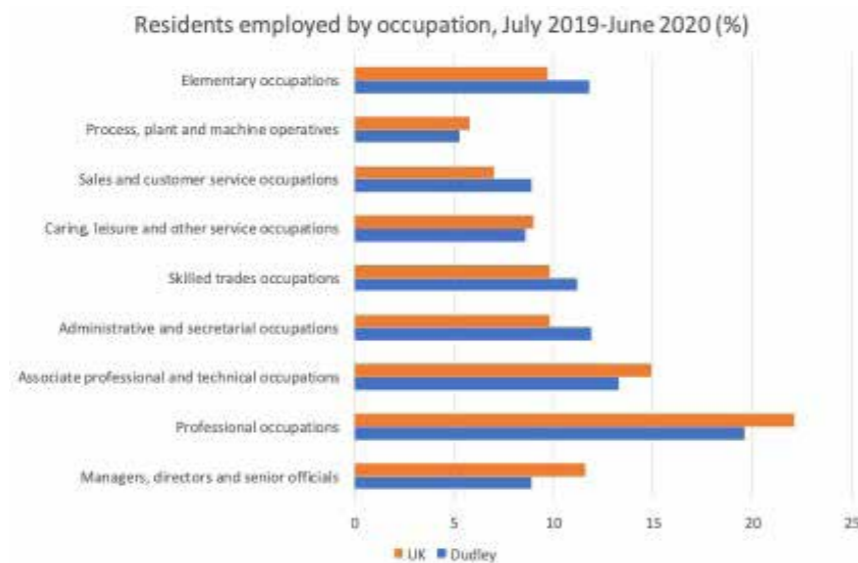


Source: ONS, Annual Population survey

The low level of skills is reflected in the occupational breakdown. There is a higher percentage of residents employed in elementary occupations (11.8%), some 2% higher than the national average, and lower proportion of managers, directors and senior officials - 8.9% compared with 10.5% for the West Midlands 11.6% for the UK.

The occupational structure also presents a further challenge, as a number of these elementary jobs are at a higher risk of becoming automated in the future, where tasks currently done by workers will be replaced with technology. In 2017, 8.9% of jobs in the local authority were at a high risk of automation, which was greater than the national average of 7.4%.

As resident earnings are higher than workplace earnings, it is evident that residents are commuting outside the area to find higher paid, higher skilled job opportunities, resulting in job vacancies and a shortage of appropriately skilled individuals to drive up productivity and wages within the borough. In 2020, median workplace earnings for full-time workers in Dudley were £530 (per week) compared with £563 for residents, both lower than the UK average of £585.



Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey; Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

### 3.3.2 OPPORTUNITIES

Despite these educational challenges, **learning opportunities for young people (16+) and adults have increased significantly over recent years.** All colleges within the borough are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. Dudley College of Technology, one of the largest providers of apprenticeship training in the country, received an Ofsted grade of Outstanding in the most recent inspection and was recently awarded the Queens Anniversary Prize for Education based on the impact of technical education on the region. The £60m investment by Dudley College and funding partners since 2010 into the Learning Quarter within Dudley Town Centre has **created outstanding technical training facilities for a number of key sectors.**



Partners have long understood the challenge of supporting more local residents to obtain higher level skills and to use those skills in local industries, despite Dudley being one of the largest conurbations in the country without a Higher Education Institution. The construction of the Black Country & Marches Institute of Technology (IOTT) and the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC) will start to address this by offering higher level training opportunities linked to local industries in construction, manufacturing and transport technologies. The opportunity to complete this with a HE facility for Health & Life Sciences is a key strategic focus for the region, given the predominance of local employers and skills needs within the sector locally. While the Covid-19 epidemic has also re-enforced this need, local employers, including the Dudley NHS Foundation Trust, are currently facing significant skills shortages in clinical and non-clinical roles, and have substantial upskilling challenges for the existing and future workforce. The proposed HE Centre, will therefore focus on acute care, healthcare in the community and medtech/digital healthcare technologies. The curriculum will also be designed to join up health and care services and support integrated care and reform (ICS).

The proposed Castle Hill Phase 2 redevelopment will also include an educational centre for visitors to the Zoological Gardens, providing an opportunity to enhance and extend the emerging educational cluster to Castle Hill.

As the availability of a higher skilled workforce will have a positive impact on the competitiveness of the business base within the Town Centre and the wider borough, DBF will continue to work with employers and partners to promote workforce development, re-skilling for employees affected by the recent pandemic and up-skilling for manufacturing and engineering companies adapting to technological changes within their industries.

- currently applying to be a **Kick Start Gateway** organisation to support local residents affected by the pandemic and is actively working with local employers to identify job placement opportunities;
- continuing to develop the **Care Gateway scheme** to match local residents to job opportunities provided by local Care Homes. This includes intensive work support and access to industry recognised qualifications; and
- working in collaboration with Dudley College and DWP to deliver the **Dudley Regeneration Academy** 'a one stop shop' to help employers with recruitment solutions by identifying candidates and offering training packages (and certification) to upskill people for vacancies linked to Dudley's Regeneration activity.



## 3.4

# Strengthening the cultural offer and connectivity between Castle Hill and the Town Centre

### 3.4.1 CHALLENGES

Dudley currently attracts in excess of 4.5m day visitors per annum and a further 125,000 overnight visitors, who stayed on average 1.9 nights over the 2017-2019 period. However, the total number of visits have declined in recent years and day visitor spend has similarly come down. In contrast, overnight expenditure has increased.

#### VISITORS AND SPEND BY TOURISTS IN DUDLEY

	2014-2016	2015-2017	2016-2018	2017-2019
<b>Number of visits to Dudley</b>				
Day visits	5,211,927	5,355,640	5,211,651	4,516,360
Overnight	280,000	253,667	272,667	236,667
<b>Average expenditure per day visit</b>				
Dudley	£34.00	£30.13	£32.41	£25.90
England	£33.76	£32.80	£32.04	£33.73
<b>Average expenditure per overnight visit</b>				
Dudley	£27.38	£35.48	£46.45	£54.93
England	£65.45	£64.58	£64.43	£65.32

Source: GBTDVS; International Passenger Survey; 3 year rolling averages provided

As visitor numbers were falling prior to the pandemic, it is envisaged that the cultural and heritage projects planned through the Phase 2 Castle Hill Redevelopment will remain key priorities for the Town, as the sector will continue to feel the effects of changing participation and consumer behaviour for some years to come.

A further key challenge for the area relates to restoring the setting of Dudley Castle as the dominant focus on main approaches into the Town and ensuring more effective connectivity and integration of the Castle Hill area with the wider Town Centre. At present visitors to Castle Hill, including those visiting the Black Country Living Museum, the Archive Centre and Castle and Zoological Gardens remain largely contained within the immediate vicinity of the Castle, leaving the Town's retail/food/hospitality offer relatively untouched. Attracting the Heritage visitors (including residents) into the Town Centre will therefore remain a key priority for partner agencies and local businesses.

Figure 3.4a: Restricted movement (and views) between Castle Hill and the Town Centre



### 3.4.1 OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of cultural and heritage developments continuing at Castle Hill and within the Town Centre to strengthen the visitor experience and promote the sustainability of the Tourism sector. These include:

- **Black Country Living Museum**

Forging Ahead is the largest capital development project in the Museum's history (costing £23m). It will expand the collections, deliver a new visitor welcome area and learning centre, and create an industrial quarter and town centre set in the 1940s-60s. The new visitor welcome area will be completed by spring 2021 and the total project by spring 2022;



- **Castle Hill Vision Phase Two**

This project encompasses improvements to Dudley Castle and Zoo and Castle Hill Woodland, with external funding bids currently progressing to meet the requirement for £13.4 million. The New Vision document outlines 8 strategic projects including the castle, a visitor and education facility, the stores cavern mine, the lodge, the giraffe house, Tecton buildings, woodlands and the southern gateway. Funding is being progressed on a priority basis starting with the castle based on urgency of need.

To improve the flow of visitors from Castle Hill into the Town Centre, Dudley Council have procured City ID to develop a legibility strategy and 'Way Finding' system. This will extend across the borough and link the town centres of Dudley, Stourbridge, Halesowen and Brierley Hill, to enhance the interface between users, the transport and movement networks and the borough's destinations and services. A legibility strategy will improve network legibility whilst increasing active travel; improving journey quality and the visitor experience; and promoting hidden leisure routes.

**Key outputs will include:**

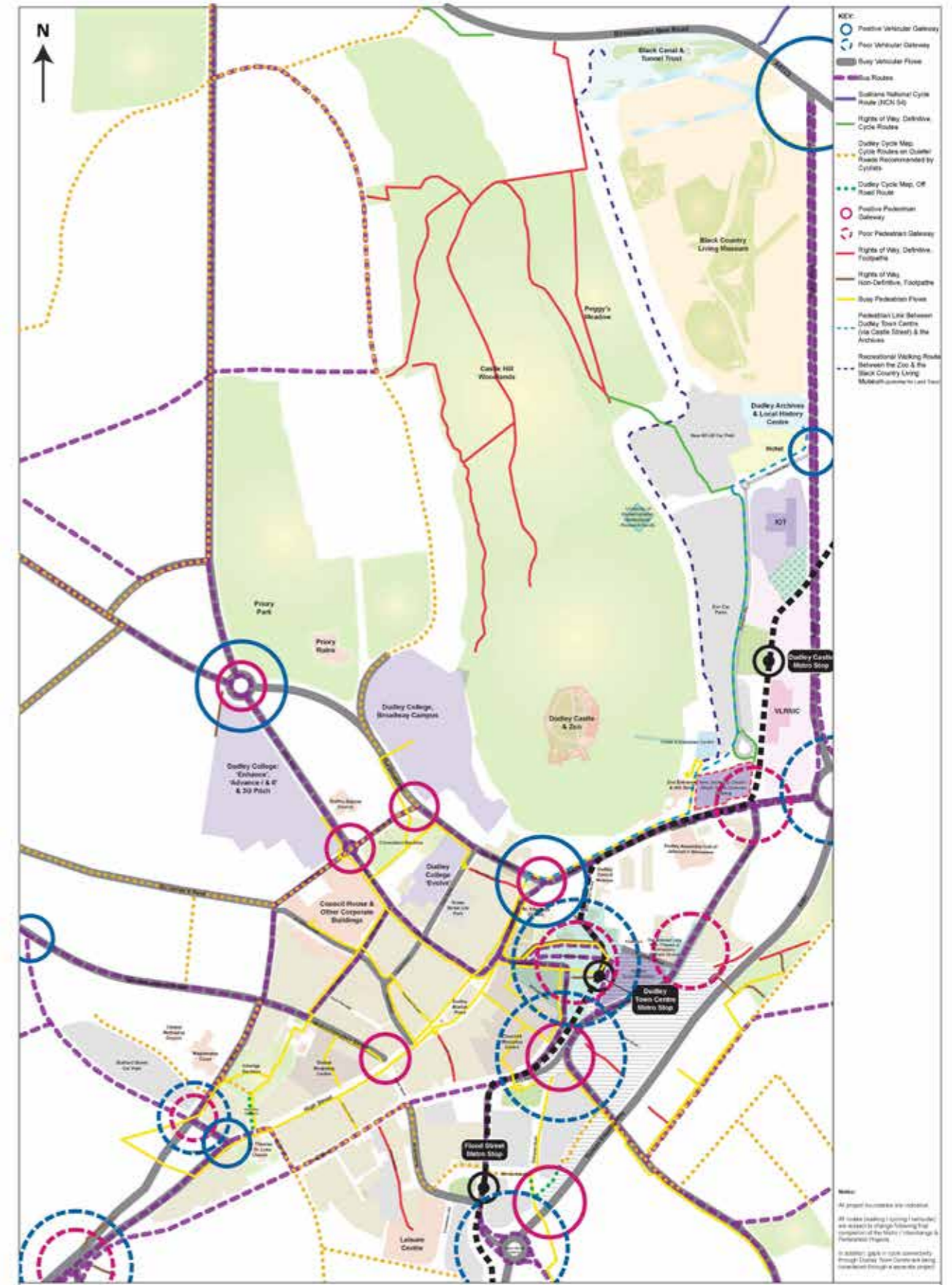
- the development of print maps for priority areas, content generation and detailed network and location planning;
- a transport information scoping study; and
- information and signage design, development, and monitoring and evaluation through regular feedback from users.

The signage strategy will be supported with online information and complement existing tourism signposting in the borough. Ultimately, this will result in better flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, improving first impressions for new visitors whilst encouraging repeat visits.

Alongside this, a programme of high-quality public realm improvements will be delivered within and around the Castle Hill/Town Centre area. These improvements will continue in conjunction with the construction of the new metro line and enhanced bus interchange which will also improve the flow of traffic into and around the Town Centre.



**Figure 3.4b: Improved movement strategy from Castle Hill to the Town Centre**





## 3.5

# Increasing the vibrancy and profile of the Town Centre

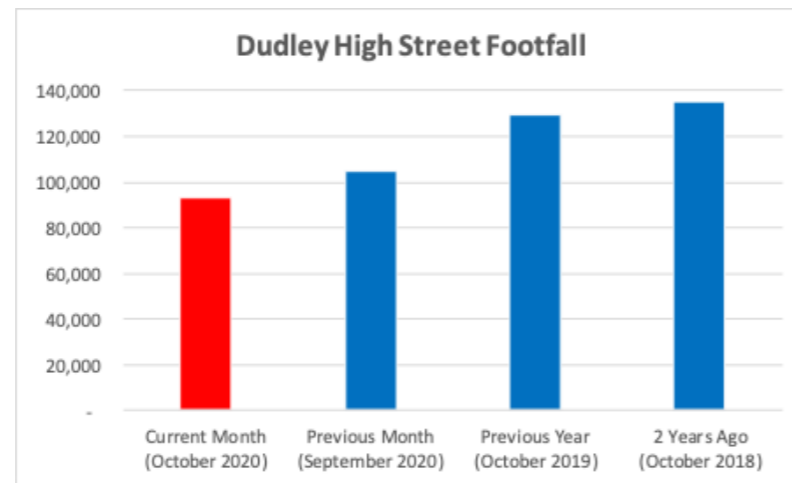
### 3.5.1 CHALLENGES

Like many other Towns across the country, footfall within Dudley has been decreasing – in October it was down by 27.7% compared with last year, and 30.1% down on two years ago. Although Dudley is following similar trends, comparator figures suggest that Dudley is performing marginally better than the regional and national picture.

For example, the difference for the West Midlands compared with last year is 27.9%, while the UK is down 39.8%.

Retail is one of the area's key employers, providing 13,000 job opportunities, and wholesale provides a further 8,000 opportunities. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that demand for new and refurbished retail premises remains high, despite recent lockdowns and the changing face of the high street more generally.

Within Dudley Town Centre there are a number of ongoing challenges related to shrinking the retail core; repurposing the High Street; increasing the night-time economy; and poor perceptions of the Town Centre related to the environment and community safety.



Source: Dudley MBC Springboard Report



### 3.5.1 OPPORTUNITIES

#### • THE DEVELOPMENT OF PORTERSFIELD

This major regeneration scheme in central Dudley, adjacent to the new Interchange and Metro stop, is expected to offer a mix of retail and residential opportunities creating up to 500 jobs and 450 apartments, which could include student accommodation. There is also potential to include restaurants, bars and offices as part of the mix. While the timeline has yet to be confirmed, the project has attracted funding from WMCA to fund demolition and highway works.

#### • TOWN CENTRE SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

The recent People's Panel consultations for Dudley identified the need for more funding for a visual police presence in the community, a new police station, brighter street lighting and CCTV to improve safety in the Town Centre. A major upgrade of CCTV across the borough has since been undertaken at a cost of £1.7m (March 2020) resulting in new cameras installed in all four town centres. A CCTV control room was built in Dudley town centre to monitor the network in partnership with West Midlands Police, which resulted in Dudley receiving the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's third-party certification mark. The Council are also consulting on the approval of Public Spaces Protection Order which will clamp down on ASB and give the Council and police enhanced powers for a 3-year period. Discussions are ongoing with regard to a new police station in Dudley, whilst DMBC have adopted a Shopfront and Advertisement SPD which advocates 'secure by design'.

#### • DUDLEY LEISURE CENTRE

The new centre on Flood Street in central Dudley will set the standard of build quality and public realm for neighbouring developments. The Council is working with Alliance Leisure to deliver the plans which also include the refurbishment of Crystal and Halesowen leisure centres. The new Flood Street Centre will include a 25-metre swimming pool and teaching facilities, a 4-court sports hall, a 100 - station gym and fitness suite, 2 exercise studios and a cycle studio, as well as other recreational facilities for families. The site will benefit from a new Metro stop and Interchange nearby and is expected to cost in the region of £18.2 million.

#### • ST THOMAS QUARTER

Dudley is one of five pilot towns included in WMCA's Town Centres Programme. WMCA and the Council are seeking to support projects and initiatives that will strengthen and regenerate the town centre with a specific focus on St Thomas Quarter. The programme will aim to support businesses, encourage private investment and help to coordinate the changes that are needed to collectively deliver sustainable change for Dudley, its communities and wider catchment.

## 3.2 Covid 19

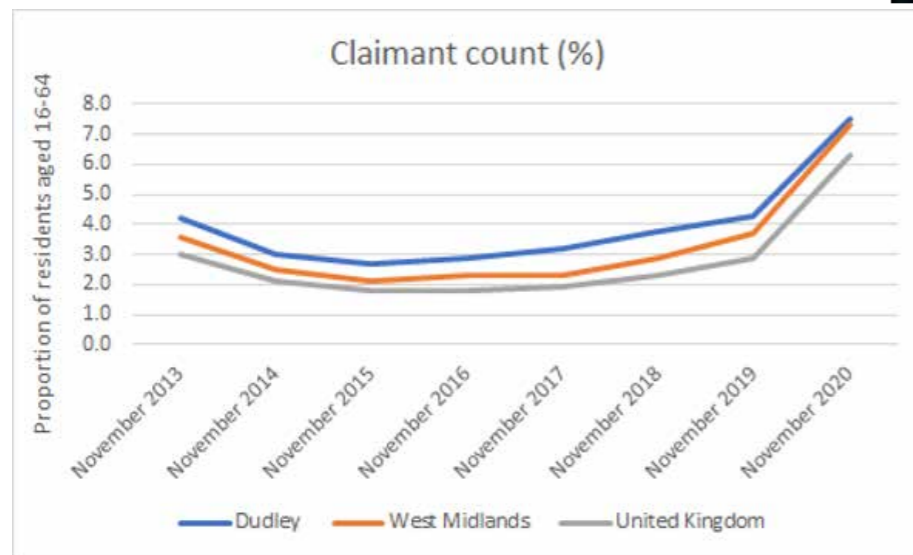
### 3.6.1 CHALLENGES

The Covid-19 pandemic had an immediate and significant impact on the UK economy in 2020, with the country entering a recession after the second consecutive quarterly decline of GDP in Q2 2020 and unemployment continuing to grow over the course of the year. The decline in GDP has been driven by the unprecedented nature of the government's lockdown measures and their impact on confidence, consumer spending and business investment. This has particularly affected the retail, tourism and hospitality sectors, which contain many businesses which were required to stop all forms of trading in the national lockdowns, as well as the manufacturing and construction sectors. Given the predominance of these sectors in Dudley, the pandemic is likely to have had a disproportionate adverse impact. Additionally, cultural assets have suffered from declining visitor numbers and related expenditure since restrictions were introduced.

The figure below shows the rapid increase in unemployment (claimant count) in Dudley during the last year. Whilst this has been mirrored regionally and nationally, Dudley's claimant count has been higher than comparators since 2013. In November 2020, unemployment stood at 7.5%, higher than West Midlands (7.3%) and UK figure of 6.3%.

A key challenge therefore relates to the recovery of jobs, reskilling individuals, restoring consumer and business confidence and encouraging expenditure and investment in the area.

Figure x: Unemployment trends within Dudley



Source: ONS Claimant Count (2020)



### 3.6.2 OPPORTUNITIES

#### (i) BUSINESS SUPPORT

Through DBF, the Council has and will continue to support businesses through:

- **access to government grant funding schemes – for example:**
  - Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF)
  - Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant scheme (RHLG)
  - Discretionary Business Grant Fund (DBGF)

**To date, £58.7 million business grants have been paid out to circa 5,270 businesses in Dudley.**

- the provision of specialist support to businesses via the Aim For Gold business support programme (a European Regional Development Fund project) which has been re-purposed due to the impact of Covid-19 with an emphasis on business resilience and recovery support for businesses; and
- the delivery of online general business support, including the council's Start-Up Dudley business support programme (led by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce), which has seen an increase in registrations to the programme during lockdown.

#### (ii) RE-OPENING THE HIGH STREETS

The Council's Regeneration and Enterprise, Public Realm and Communications teams have also led on the "Reopening the High Streets Safely" programme (ERDF) to

support the safe re-opening of the Town Centre's and High Streets across Dudley. Funding has been used for the Shop Local, Visit Local and Explore Local campaigns, which have included the development of posters, barrier covers, and bollard covers.

The Reopening High Streets team are also working with local community groups in Dudley and Stourbridge to develop more permanent public realm interventions to encourage social distancing including raised decking and parklets. This has complemented the work of the Public Realm team who led on the Emergency Active Travel Funding (EATF) to support the use of physical infrastructure (barriers, cones and signage) to enable the safe reopening of high streets within Dudley.

#### (iii) EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS SUPPORT

Following the closure of offices in March 2020 the Adult Community & Learning team (ACL) moved the majority of learning online, and where learners did not have access to technology or the internet (circa 150 learners) workbooks have been posted out to learners and work returned via the same route. Over 650 local residents have been supported to continue their learning with 171 qualifications completed and approved by various examination boards and 18 new online classes developed and delivered online. 130 new residents were recruited and registered for adult learning programmes during lockdown.

The Post 16 Skills team have been working closely with the Education Skills Funding Agency, WMCA, Colleges, Adult Education providers and private training providers to ensure that apprentices and employees who have been affected by Covid-19 on their employment status are supported back into appropriate job opportunities as soon as possible.

The team have also been working with partners including Dudley College and the WMCA in driving forward the Dudley Regeneration Academy which is seeking to ensure local residents benefit from employment and training opportunities resulting from the large-scale regeneration projects being delivered in Dudley.

#### (iv) SUPPORT MOVING FORWARD

Interventions to support businesses and employees/residents as part of the continued Covid-19 response include:

- the Covid-19 Small Business Grant Scheme which will offer grants of between £1,000 and £3,000 (£5,000 in exceptional circumstances) to help small and medium size businesses adapt and recover following the pandemic. The funding is being administered by the Black Country Growth Hub, with DBF helping to support Dudley businesses to apply for the funding, which will be available to pay for access to professional advice and/or purchase of minor equipment to adapt or adopt new technology;
- support from the Post 16 Skills team, which has recently submitted an expression of interest to become an intermediary organisation to DWP under the Government's Plan for Jobs scheme. Commencing in November 2020 and initially lasting until December 2021, the Kickstart scheme will enable the teams to work with groups of 30 employers who will offer a 6-month work placement to young people who are 16-24 claiming Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. There is £1500 per placement to help with the costs of training whilst the Government will pay 100% of the National Minimum Wage for up to 25 hours a week as well as employer National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions.

All jobs have to be new and not replace existing or planned vacancies or cause existing employees or contractors to lose or reduce their employment. Employers will be supported to help learners develop their skills and experience and be given support on gaining long-term work, including CV and interview preparation skills; careers advice and setting goals and basic skills such as attendance, timekeeping and teamwork;

- ongoing development of the care gateway scheme, linking residents who have an interest in the care sector with employers. Support also includes intensive work support and attendance at a short course developed by the ACL and Post 16 Skills Team to give industry recognised qualifications in Infection Control, Emergency First Aid and Food Safety before learners are matched to suitable vacancies in Care with transferable skills;
- the Post 16 Team are also continuing to support employers to secure Dudley MBC Apprenticeship Levy Transfer funding for existing employees aged 19+ and/or new apprentices aged 19+;
- the Black Country Impact partnership has recently applied to DWP to extend the programme beyond its current end date of 31 December 2021 to the end of 2023. The project supports 16-29 years olds across the Black Country back into employment through a range of interventions.

**Dudley Council is pro-actively responding to the challenges presented by Covid-19 and is shaping interventions in the town centre to address the impact of the pandemic. There are a number of activities that will continue to progress, unaffected by the lockdowns and market forces, while others are facing delayed timetables. Demand for local skills provision is increasing in order to upskill and reskill people leaving the labour market, while the impact on footfall reduction is only likely to be addressed once the lockdown restrictions are lifted and people feel safe to visit Dudley once more.**



# 4.0

# Dudley Town Investment Strategy



## 4.1 The Vision for the Town Centre

The Vision for Dudley Town Centre has been developed based on the aspirations for all Borough Towns set out in 'Forging a future for all' and the vision for the regeneration of Castle Hill (Phase II). The vision and strategic objectives have been informed by consultations with key stakeholders including local communities, businesses and partner agencies and a review of the socio-economic performance of the Town and its potential to generate economic growth for the benefit of communities living in the area.

**By 2030, there is a shared vision for Dudley Town Centre to be a vibrant, regenerated centre where people are proud to live, work, visit, shop and spend leisure time. There will be expanded opportunities for learning, a high quality living environment, improved connectivity, and increased footfall which will transform the night-time economy. It will have a diverse cultural offer and thriving faith communities working in partnership to bring forward social transformation.**

To support the achievement of this vision, partners have identified a number of key priorities that have the capacity to bring about the longer-term changes required within the Town Centre. Strategic interventions will build on existing assets to address the challenges identified.



## 4.2 Strategic objectives

### 4.2.1 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESS MEASURES

The Town Deal Board has identified five strategic objectives, that collectively have the potential to transform the Town Centre and establish a platform for growth, for future generations to come. These relate to:

**1. Increasing the vibrancy and attractiveness of the Town Centre** through the provision of affordable residential accommodation, including student accommodation; enhanced green, public spaces; and high-quality retail, food and leisure opportunities, which will in turn promote the night-time economy. Expansion of the learning quarter will increase the number and flow of young people and students between the cultural, learning and retail quarters.

Activities underway and proposed include	Key success measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Portersfield mixed use development</li> <li>Construction of the new Leisure Centre</li> <li>Redevelopment of Churchill shopping centre</li> <li>Refurbishment of Trident House</li> <li>Development of the Old Post Office</li> <li>IOTT; University Centre</li> <li>Improved public realm, connectivity and green space / environmental quality improvements</li> <li>Town Centre - community safety interventions (CCTV)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased footfall</li> <li>Affordable homes</li> <li>Student Accommodation</li> <li>Increased expenditure</li> <li>Reduced vacancy rates</li> <li>Increased diversity of shops</li> </ul>

**2. Building a skilled workforce** for the future through the creation of a new University Centre offering higher level skills and qualifications tailored to the needs of local Health and Life Science employers. The new centre will complement the further and higher education offers at the College and the new IOTT; and the Zoological Education Centre. The cluster of new facilities (including the VLRNIC) and partners will be referred to as the 'University Park'.

Activities underway and proposed include	Key success measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IOTT - (advanced manufacturing; MMC; engineering)</li> <li>University Centre – Health and Life Sciences Centre</li> <li>Zoological Education Centre</li> <li>VLRNIC</li> <li>Dudley College of Technology</li> <li>Dudley Business First</li> <li>Dudley Regeneration Academy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attraction of new learners</li> <li>Higher level skills</li> <li>Increased productivity</li> </ul>

**3. Promoting innovation and enterprise** among the business base, through the establishment of centres of excellence and attraction of higher skilled individuals to the Town – driving longer term productivity.

Activities underway and proposed include	Key success measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very Light Railway National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC)</li> <li>IOTT</li> <li>University Centre</li> <li>Portersfield and other proposed residential schemes</li> <li>Dudley Business First</li> <li>Dudley Regeneration Academy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New products/services</li> <li>Higher value-added jobs and businesses</li> <li>Higher skilled individuals</li> <li>Increased productivity</li> </ul>

**4. Strengthening Dudley's Heritage and Cultural offer**, building on existing key assets and delivering an enhanced offer that will attract increased visitors to the Town Centre. The proposed University Centre Project at the heart of the University Park, will sit on the former Hippodrome site. It will be designed, in keeping with some of the current Art Deco features, and will more importantly open up views of the Castle from the Town Centre, creating a new contemporary gateway that will link Castle Hill to the Town Centre.

Activities underway and proposed include	Key success measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Castle Hill Phase II</li> <li>Black Country Living Museum – Forging ahead</li> <li>Leisure centre</li> <li>University Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased visitors and footfall</li> <li>Enhanced reputation and profile</li> </ul>

**5. Improving connectivity to, and within the Town Centre**, through the delivery of digital and transport infrastructure improvements and significantly enhanced public realm within the Town Centre to promote social and economic mobility – connecting communities to work, leisure and learning. The new metro extension, refurbished interchange and sustainable travel (cycling and pedestrian routes) around the University Park will all promote greater access to learning and work within the Town Centre, assisting employers to attract and retain higher skilled individuals into the Town.

Activities underway and proposed include	Key success measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metro Extension</li> <li>Dudley Interchange</li> <li>Public Realm Improvements - e.g. implementation of the new Way Finder system; new cycle and pedestrian walkways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased visitors and footfall</li> <li>Attraction of new businesses and investment in the Town</li> <li>Enhanced profile and identify for the Town</li> <li>Health and well-being improvements</li> </ul>

## 4.2.1 CROSS CUTTING THEMES

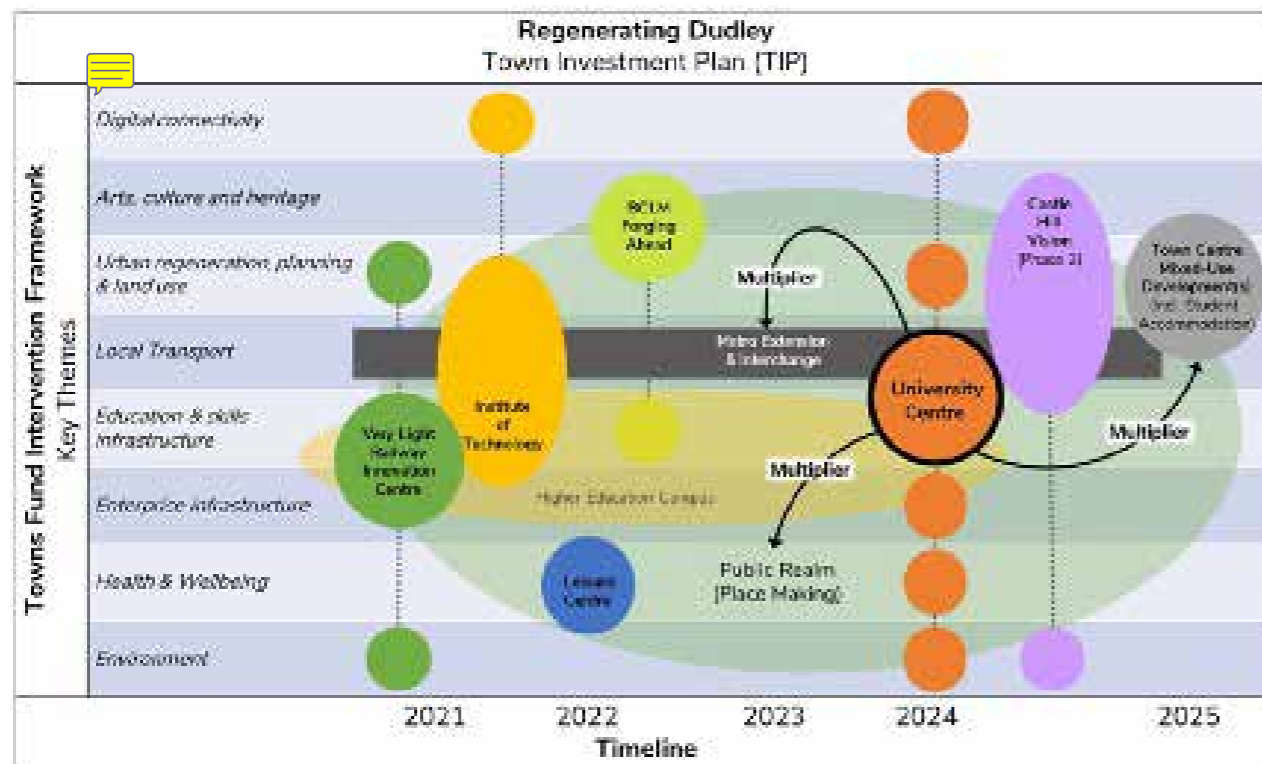
The strategic priorities are underpinned by two cross cutting or key principles that should inform the design of all project activity:

- Delivering clean, green, sustainable growth by embedding net zero carbon objectives and best practice into early-stage design and development of all projects; and enhancing the delivery and use of energy from renewable sources; and
- Promoting inclusive growth and ensuring excluded groups and communities have equal access to all opportunities arising within the Town. Promoting social and economic inclusion will also assist in safeguarding the health and wellbeing of all residents within the Town.

## 4.2.3 TOWN CENTRE PROJECTS - ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNS FUND OBJECTIVES

The key interventions planned and underway within the Town Centre are closely aligned with the overall objectives of the Towns Funding as shown below.

Figure x: Alignment of the Town Investment Plan with the Towns Fund Objectives



## 4.3 Project Prioritisation

### 4.3.1 SELECTING THE TOWNS FUND PROJECT

A series of structured public sector led regeneration interventions have been progressed in Dudley over the last 10 years, as described in the introduction to the plan. The interventions identified for the most recent phase of development were considered as part of the long list of potential projects eligible for Towns Funding. A number of these projects were discounted at an early stage, as they did not meet the sifting criteria and some of the projects had already secured funding or were in the process of bidding for resources from alternative, more appropriate sources. These include the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC); Black Country Living Museum; The Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology (IoTT); Leisure Centre; Metro Extension; and Dudley Interchange.

A shorter list of projects, including Castle Hill Phase II, the University Centre, Portersfield, the redevelopment of Churchill Shopping Centre and the development of the Old Post Office were taken through to a project selection and scoring process, carried out by officers from Dudley Council; New Heritage Regeneration; and independent economic appraisers. The criteria used to score the projects are shown in the table below, and broadly comprised a mixture of:

- **local criteria** – tailored to the strengths/opportunities/and challenges within Dudley Town Centre, including feedback from local consultations and engagement with key stakeholders from the business community; and
- **HMT Green Book criteria** – which is applied to all projects seeking public sector funding to ensure that viable, realistic projects are delivered that return good value for money.

Project Prioritisation Criteria	
Local Criteria	HM Treasury Green Book
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution to the Towns Fund objectives</li> <li>• Strategic Fit - Industrial Strategy and Inclusive Growth (Levelling-up)</li> <li>• Feedback from the local consultation</li> <li>• Improved skills and educational attainment</li> <li>• Potential to stimulate further investment/growth</li> <li>• Ability to contribute to creating a higher value-added economy</li> <li>• Improving connectivity and linkages between Castle Hill and the Town Centre</li> <li>• Contribution to raising the profile of the area and placemaking</li> <li>• Cross cutting themes - Covid-19 recovery; Green Growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value for Money (likelihood to deliver social value in terms of costs, benefits and risks)</li> <li>• Affordability (financing and affordability given existing budgets)</li> <li>• Achievability (deliverability given organisational capability and skills)</li> <li>• Commercial viability and feasibility of procurement</li> <li>• Stakeholder support</li> </ul>

## 4.2.1 CROSS CUTTING THEMES

A full breakdown of all scores for the projects assessed can be found in Appendix A. These demonstrate that the University Centre scored the highest out of all projects assessed, for a number of reasons:

- the project has the capacity to contribute to a number of the Towns Fund objectives – in particular the provision of skills infrastructure; urban regeneration, planning and land use; local transport; enterprise infrastructure over the longer term; and improved connectivity to promote existing cultural and heritage assets;
- the focus on higher level skills provision will enable the Town to transform the local labour market; meet employers' skills shortages in a regionally significant and growing industry (health and life sciences); and raise productivity leading to the longer-term economic growth of the Town;
- it will respond to feedback from major businesses in the healthcare sector, including the Dudley NHS Foundation Trust, and it has strong support from the local community, evidenced by the most recent consultation exercise which found that:
  - **77% of respondents were in favour of expanding the learning quarter;**
  - **78% agreed with the aims of the centre and encouraging local people to study at home; and**
  - **86% of respondents strongly agreed with improving the physical link between Castle Hill and the Town Centre more attractive – which will be achieved through University Centre project.**
- the University Centre project has the greatest ability to stimulate further investment and growth, as the attraction of students to the Town Centre will increase footfall and demand for new services - including student accommodation, an improved night-time offer (e.g. increased food and entertainment venues) and demand for local transport – all of which will create new jobs and prosperity for local residents;



- the proposed University Centre project will be delivered by a strong partnership including the Council, Dudley College and the University of Worcester – all of whom have an excellent track record of securing funding for strategic projects and delivering infrastructure projects on time and to budget – thereby reducing risks considerably; and
- the project is expected to deliver significant additional economic benefits to the Town, which will in turn ensure that the intervention and public funding delivers good value for money. It will enable local residents to study and work locally; and attract and retain new students into the Town by provide a suitably qualified workforce that will enable local employers to create higher value jobs. As there is limited higher level skills provision at present, the new University Centre will not displace any existing activity, and collaboration with the other University partners in the learning quarter is likely to drive further economies of scale over the longer term (e.g. through shared student services).

The Town Deal Board believe that the University Centre will provide the missing piece of the jigsaw and complement the full suite of interventions planned and underway in the Town Centre. As a result, the University Centre and complementary public realm improvements is the only project being submitted for Towns Funding. Furthermore, failure to develop a high-quality development at the proposed location could have a detrimental impact on the new and adjacent investment activities underway, as the current building has fallen out of use, due to a lack of demand and currently has significant viability issues.

The proposed University Centre will complete the range of educational provision available within Dudley, from school through to Higher Education and Continuous Professional Development and provide the focal point for creation of a University Park. Increased student numbers will stimulate demand for accommodation, services and leisure provision – all of which will have a positive impact on the regeneration of the Town Centre.



### 4.3.2 THE UNIVERSITY CENTRE – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The UCD will involve the construction of a new 4,250 m<sup>2</sup> HE centre at Castle Hill focused on Health and Life Sciences. Dudley College of Technology will work in partnership with the University of Worcester to deliver Level 4 and 5, degree and post-graduate programmes from September 2024 onwards. It is anticipated that the College will build, develop and retain ownership of the facility, while the University of Worcester will benefit from a fixed-term licence to operate the facility.

The project aims to attract new students to Dudley, provide new technical skills and degree programmes which align with local employment opportunities, and to improve progression rates for local people into higher-skilled employment opportunities. The University Centre has a vision to become ‘a Place of Excellence that contributes to the wellbeing of individuals and the broader communities’. It will promote skills for the future alongside innovation, R&D and enterprise development. The proposed centre will also include space to deliver community activities and an events arena, in line with feedback from the local consultations.



The proposed curriculum has been designed to establish and grow a strong and comprehensive provision of HE to serve the Health and Life Sciences Sector. The Dudley NHS Foundation Trust is an anchor partner in the project, with the new centre helping to meet local need and latent demand for trainees. There will be a specific focus on acute care, healthcare in the community and med-tech/digital healthcare technologies, and every course will offer the opportunity for students to access work experience, internships or placements which will be sourced from local employers.

The Centre will in particular aim to expand the teaching provision within the Learning Quarter and raise the level of qualifications among the workforce. It will address the need for up-skilling in one of the area’s key sectors, which currently employs over 15% of the total workforce (18,000 jobs). The University will deliver a combination of full-time and part-time programmes and the centre is anticipated to generate a turnover of some £7 million by the end of year 5, based on 1,500 FTE learners using the facilities annually.

The UCD will provide a new contemporary gateway building to Dudley on the site of the former Hippodrome and complement adjacent facilities including the IOTT, the VLRNIC and the development of a new Zoological Education Centre. This will become known as ‘University Park Dudley’ and there will be improved pedestrian and cycle routes and enhanced public realm to facilitate the movement of students between the campus and Town Centre. The new building will be designed to ensure that the setting of Dudley Castle as the dominant focus on the main approaches into the Town are restored. Proposed options are currently being discussed with English Heritage.



The development of the ‘University Park’ will include the following key partners in the first instance:

- **University of Warwick** – a key partner in the delivery of the VLRNIC;
- **University of Wolverhampton** – who will be responsible for delivery within the Behavioural Research Facility; and also responsible for the delivery of L5+ qualifications being delivered by the new Institute of Transformative Technology (IOTT) in conjunction with Dudley College;
- **Resonance (Music Institute)** – who have recently established a new HE development in the Brierley Hill Learning Quarter. Solent University are responsible for awarding the higher level music qualifications delivered by the Institute; and
- **University of Worcester** – who will play a key role in the delivery of the Health and Life Sciences provision at the new University Centre.

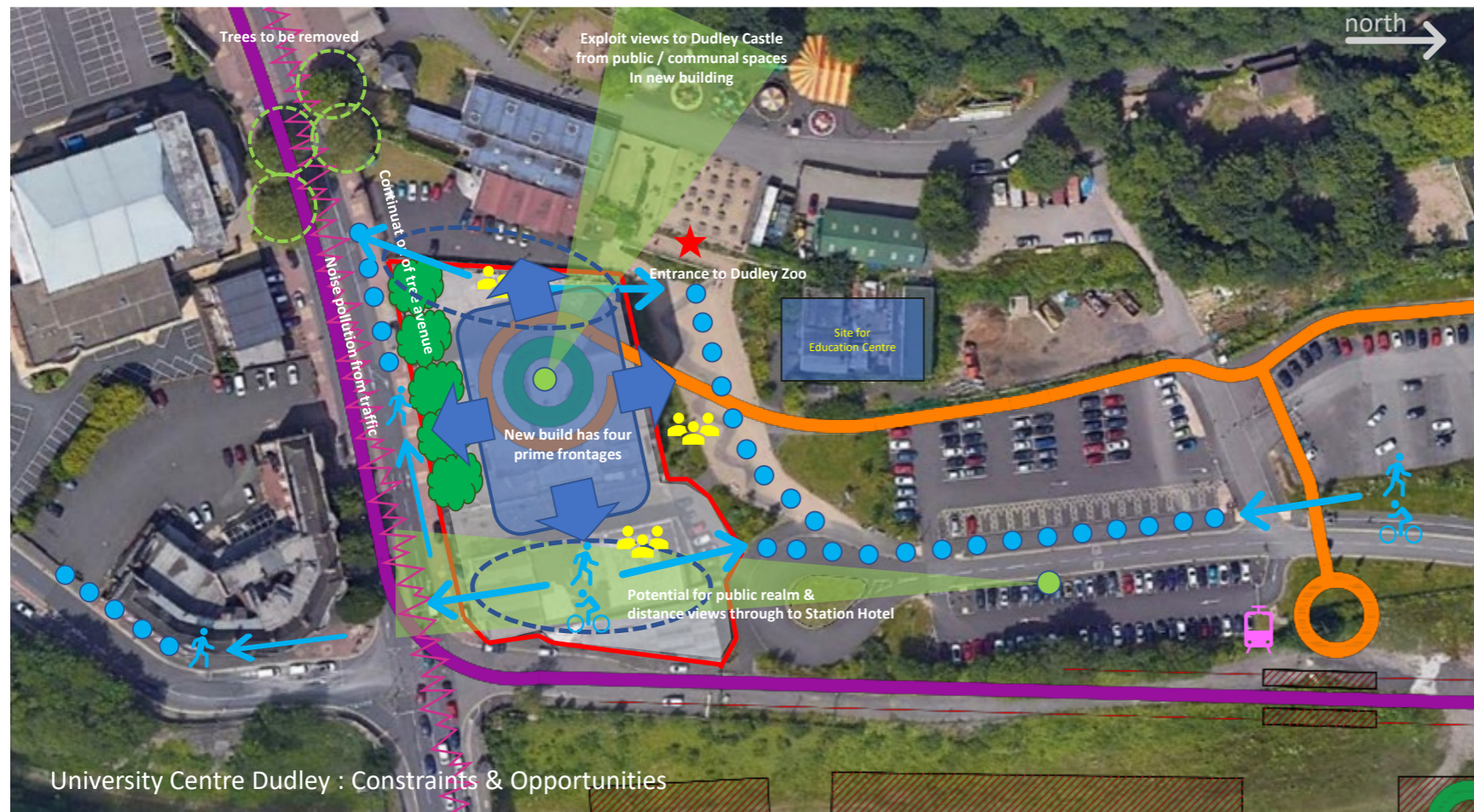


As the VLRNIC is adopting a hub and spoke model there is the expectation that this list will grow in the future. For example, discussions are ongoing with several universities which will cover areas such as civil engineering, the rail/wheel interface, and digital rail.

The Park will aim to provide a diverse range of learning opportunities and ‘pathways’ for local residents and students attracted to the area. This will include progression from school and college through to HE and continuous professional learning. Furthermore, these learning opportunities will be tailored to the needs of local employers, generating jobs for local graduates and facilitating retention of educational benefits within the Town. Local employers will also have a crucial role in the Campus by providing apprenticeship training, sponsorship, student and graduate placements and full time employment opportunities.

The critical mass and collaboration amongst the University Park partners (e.g. shared services) will also assist in driving excellence and delivering learning opportunities in the most cost efficient manner. At present, the new IOTT is expected to deliver approximately 550 L4/5/6 qualifications p.a. for the next five years, while the UCD will deliver courses for 1,500 FTE learners from 2024 onwards. Additional short courses will also be provided for community learning.

**Figure x:** Location of the University Centre within Castle Hill and proposed pedestrian flows



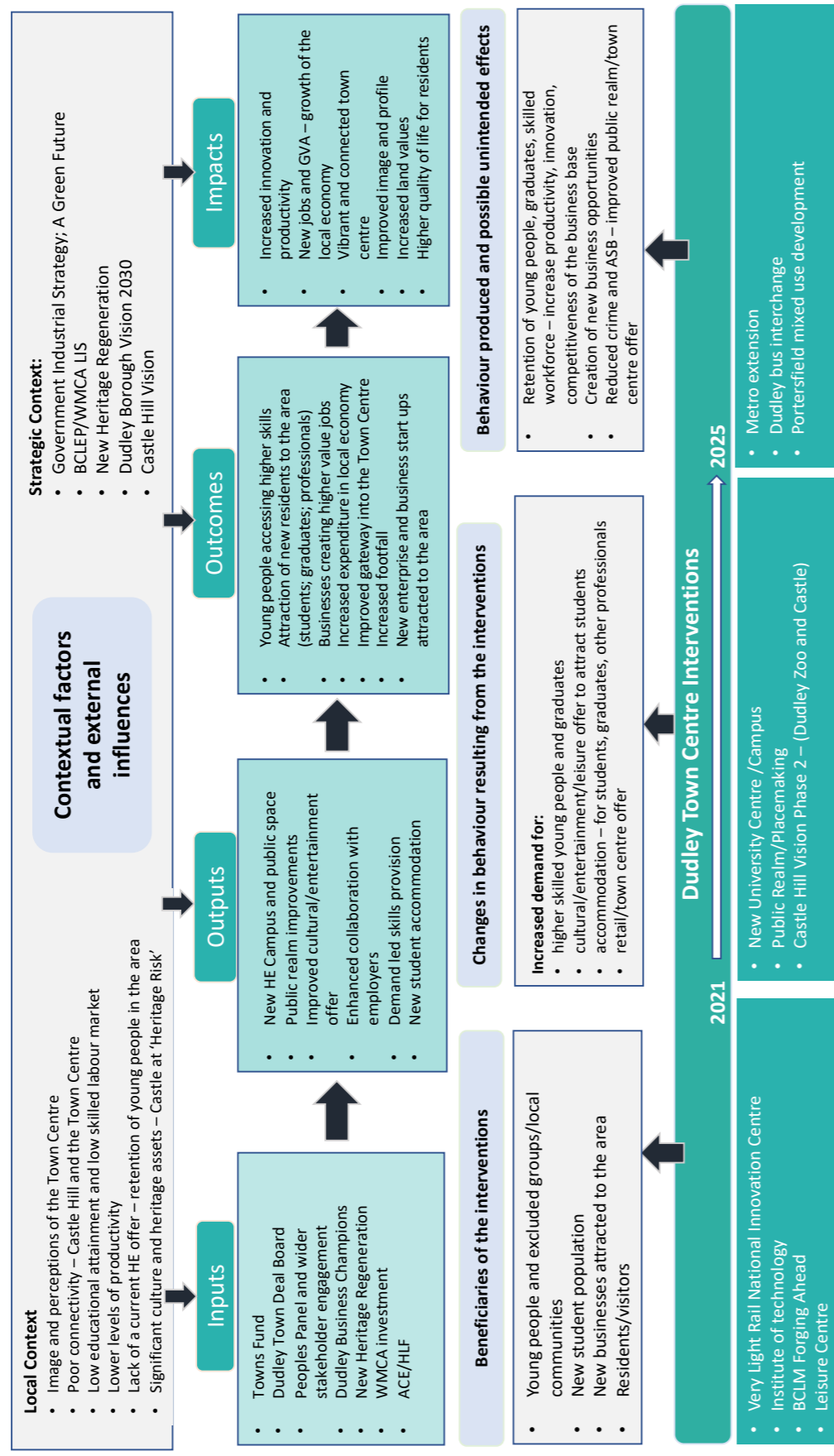
### Promoting Connectivity and Public Realm improvements

Increasing the flow of students between Castle Hill and the Town Centre will increase expenditure in the town centre businesses (shops, restaurants, bars and leisure activities). It will also support the Council’s strategic approach to diversify activities, as the retail core shrinks and residential /town centre living increases. A series of public realm improvements are planned around the University Centre and within the Town Centre, which include new and enhanced public/ green spaces; new cycling and pedestrian routes; and improved streetscape within Dudley Town Centre to attract visitors to the area. They will complement the wider way finding initiative which has been procured by Dudley Council.



## 4.4 Dudley Town Investment Plan

The following theory of change diagram describes the projected outputs, outcomes and impacts that will be achieved through the delivery of the Dudley Town Investment Plan. This includes both activity underway and the proposed/planned interventions that will be funded through the Towns Fund and other sources.



### 4.3.2 THE UNIVERSITY CENTRE – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project	Rationale	Towns Fund Objectives	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
University Centre – including public realm and place-making improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Below average levels of educational attainment; low levels of higher skills; high levels of residents with no qualifications</li> <li>Lower levels of productivity and lower business density</li> <li>Attraction of students; spending power; increased footfall</li> <li>Enhanced gateway into the Town; improved public realm; improved image/profile; attraction of visitors to the Town Centre</li> <li>Lack of a current HE offer and student expenditure</li> <li>Failure to redevelop the hippodrome site has the potential to undermine recent investments</li> <li>Lack of awareness of Town Centre</li> <li>Connectivity Castle Hill /Town Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skills infrastructure</li> <li>Urban regeneration, planning and land use</li> <li>Arts, Culture and Heritage</li> <li>Local Transport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New HE Campus and public space – 4,250 sqm</li> <li>Public realm improvements (0.5 km)</li> <li>Improved cultural/ entertainment offer</li> <li>Community projects</li> <li>Enhanced collaboration with employers</li> <li>Demand led skills provision</li> <li>New public space</li> <li>Improved pedestrian/ cycle routes</li> <li>Enhanced signage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people accessing higher skills – 1,500 students p.a.</li> <li>45-50 jobs within the new HE Centre</li> <li>Attraction of new residents to the area (students; graduates; professionals)</li> <li>Businesses creating higher value jobs</li> <li>Increased expenditure in local economy</li> <li>Improved gateway to the Town</li> <li>New enterprise and business start ups attracted to the area</li> <li>Improved connectivity between Castle Hill/ Town Centre</li> <li>Increased visitors/footfall in the Town Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased productivity (£70m GVA – learners during first 5 years of operation)</li> <li>New jobs and GVA – growth of the local economy (inc night-time)</li> <li>Vibrant and connected town centre</li> <li>Improved image and profile</li> <li>Increased land values</li> <li>Higher quality of life for residents</li> </ul>

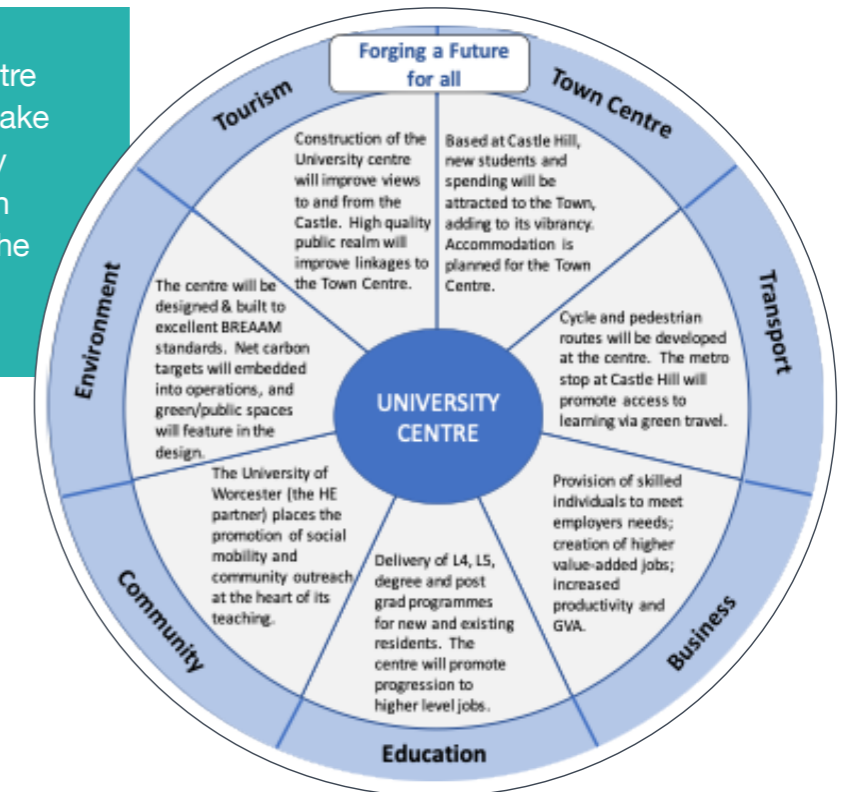
## 4.5 Strategic Fit

### 4.5.1 DUDLEY BOROUGH'S VISION

'Forging a future for all' is a shared vision for Dudley borough, developed in 2018, following extensive consultation with key partners and stakeholders. It is built around seven aspirations and goals to be reached by 2030:

- **Towns** - Dudley will have thriving, regenerated Town Centres where people are proud to live, work, shop and spend leisure time, with footfall projected to increase. It will have a diverse cultural offer and thriving faith communities working in partnership to bring forward social transformation;
- **Education** – By the close of the decade outstanding local schools, colleges and universities will secure excellent results for their learners. They will perform above the national standard, allowing all young people to reach their potential and to have high aspirations and prospects of a fulfilling career with the opportunity to continually develop new skills. Businesses will invest in the skills levels of their staff meaning adults can upskill throughout their careers;
- **Business** – Dudley will contain a portfolio of quality industrial, retail and commercial premises as well as a range of appropriately located new sites for mixed use development. There will be an ecosystem that fosters innovation and provides access to a diverse range of funding for new and existing businesses, with attractive job and career prospects for the new workforce;
- **Tourism** – Dudley will have internationally renowned attractions which give a clear identity, as well as protected heritage which is affordable. Overall, there will be an attractive tourism offer with a rich industrial, historical and geological focus;
- **Transport** – there will be a dramatically improved public transport system linking Dudley borough to the other Black Country strategic centres, the wider region and the national rail network. More people will use active travel modes for work, studying and leisure, whilst there will be reduced levels of congestion. There will be improved access to the national motorway network to support the growth of major employment sites across the borough;
- **Environment** – Dudley will be an affordable and attractive place to live, with a green network of high-quality parks, waterways and nature reserves that are valued by local people and visitors. There will be connected green spaces linking parks, nature reserves and waterways to high quality local spaces which are accessible for all. There will be a strong affinity to local centres, supporting health, wellbeing and prosperity; and
- **Community** – Dudley will be a place with healthy, resilient, safe communities with high aspirations and the ability to shape their own future. Dudley will have improved health outcomes and higher wellbeing whilst maintaining low levels of crime and disorder.

The proposed University Centre project has the capacity to make a contribution to all of the key themes and aspirations within the overarching strategy for the borough, as shown below:



### 4.5.2 CONTRIBUTION TO WIDER NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY PRIORITIES

The University Centre is also well aligned with national, regional and local policy priorities, particularly those relating to the following, details of which can be found in Appendix B:

- **NATIONAL:**
  - National Industrial Strategy
  - Levelling up
  - Clean Growth
  - Covid-19 recovery
  - Post -16 Skills Plan
  - The Culture White Paper and Arts Council England's 'Let's Create'
- **REGIONAL**
  - West Midlands Industrial Strategy
  - Midlands Engine
  - WMCA Regional Skills Plan / West Midlands Skills Agreement
- **LOCAL**
  - Dudley Council Plan 2019/22
  - Dudley Employment and Skills
  - Dudley Area Action Plan
  - Castle Hill Vision

# 5.0

## Engagement and Delivery

### 5.1 Stakeholder engagement and support

#### 5.1.1 BOARD MEMBERSHIP AND CIVIC PRIDE

The Town Deal Board reflects the diversity of Dudley. The chair is from the private sector and as well as national and local level politicians, members of the Board represent the Local Enterprise Partnership, local tourist attractions, businesses and investors, the community sector and organisations including Dudley college, Dudley CCG and Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust. All members of the Board are passionate about the regeneration of the town and the importance of engaging the local community in what is delivered.

Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands has also shown his support in recent weeks, commenting: **“Dudley borough will see £1 billion of regeneration activity over the next few years, and the Towns Fund Bid will complement the revitalisation of the Town Centre. We’re working with Dudley Council to build a future for the Black Country that is as bright as its heritage.”**

There is a strong sense of community pride across the Dudley borough and the vision established by the Forging a Future Board – which captured the passion of Dudley people in the new strategy for the area, outlines seven aspirations including ‘vibrant towns and neighbourhoods’.

The People’s Panel citizen’s assembly also provides an example of the strong civic pride in the area. In 2019, 50 randomly selected and committed members of the public were invited to spend four days considering issues and making recommendations. The council continues to engage with this panel and their feedback has already informed a number of changes across the borough.



## 5.1.2 ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

Extensive stakeholder and community engagement activities have been conducted as part of the development of the Dudley TIP proposals, including those identified above. This followed a comprehensive planning stage to confirm budgets, determine the scope of distribution, engagement requirements, production of a stakeholder map, and questionnaire design. The key consultation activity took place over a four-week period from 18 November to 16 December 2020, and comprised the following activities to reach stakeholders:

### Engagement activities included:

- Hard copy questionnaires and supporting documents were hand delivered to properties within a ¼ mile radius of Dudley town centre.
- Campaign roll out included advertisements were placed in local newspapers, online and across social media.
- The consultation was promoted via our organic social media accounts (audience of approximately 47,000 people) and e-bulletins (audience of approximately 28,000 people).
- A stakeholder map was developed and all were provided with the electronic questionnaire and supporting documents.
- Virtual engagement sessions were organised with community groups, businesses, ward members, internal council staff and faith groups. Mentimeter was used to gauge live feedback.
- A virtual engagement session was held for representatives from the deaf community with signers.
- Alternative formats of the consultation and supporting documents were created and made available online including audio versions, and they were translated to several community languages. Members of the disabled community were also emailed directly and large print versions were posted out.
- Ward members were provided with the electronic questionnaire and supporting documents to share with their constituents.

As residents of Dudley were consulted about proposals for increasing the vibrancy of the Town Centre through the People Panel in November/December 2019, and work has already started to address a number of key issues identified within the Town Centre, the consultation and engagement activity for the Town Investment Plan focused primarily on the next stage of development for the Castle Hill area.

Respondents were asked whether they supported the proposals related to:

- **the developments at Dudley Zoo & Castle;**
- **the new University Centre; and**
- **improved public open spaces and footpaths from Castle Hill to Dudley town centre**

In designing the approach to the consultation activity, a stakeholder mapping exercise was undertaken, with organisations split into three tiers - based on the extent to which they needed to be informed and consulted. An overview of the stakeholder mapping is provided below.

Stakeholder mapping	
<b>TIER 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town centre/Castle Hill/Tipton Road/Castle Gate businesses</li> <li>• Dudley Business Champions</li> <li>• Regenerating Dudley distribution list</li> <li>• Town centre residents</li> <li>• Friends of the Hippodrome</li> <li>• Dudley Mosque and Dudley Hall of Jehovah Witnesses</li> <li>• Internal senior management, councillors, MPs, Leadership Forum, staff</li> <li>• Dudley Zoo board, Black Country Living Museum board, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust Board</li> <li>• Transport for West Midlands/WMCA, taxi companies, National Express</li> <li>• Dudley College and University of Worcester</li> </ul>
<b>TIER 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dudley Business First members and subscribers</li> <li>• All borough residents</li> <li>• Dudley Regeneration Disability Forum, People's Panel, Disabled community, Centre Dudley Community Forum, DCVS and voluntary sector</li> <li>• Top and Bottom church</li> <li>• Dudley Archives and Local History Centre, Dudley Youth Forum and Libraries</li> <li>• All borough schools</li> <li>• Cornbow and Rye Market centre managers</li> <li>• All emergency services staff</li> </ul>
<b>TIER 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borough wide businesses</li> <li>• Mayoral Business Club members</li> <li>• Borough wide residents</li> <li>• Care homes and sheltered housing</li> <li>• Dudley Regeneration Group, Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Association, all community forums and all friends groups</li> <li>• Coach companies, Ring and Ride, Road Haulage Association</li> <li>• All college settings</li> <li>• Black Country LEP and Chambers</li> <li>• Russells Hall Hospital</li> </ul>

## 5.1.3 CONSULTATION RESULTS

### (i) HEADLINE FINDINGS

#### A total of 957 responses were received via:

- 924 questionnaires completed online
- Consultations with 26 people via virtual meetings using Mentimeter
- Seven hard copy questionnaires completed documents to share with their constituents.

#### The following quantitative results have been recorded:

- **Q1:** 85.62% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the proposals for the four Tecton structures.
- **Q2:** When asked what the new mixed-use facility should be used for:
  - 83.7% agreed with it being used for interpretation and archaeology
  - 83.4% agreed with it being used for activities
  - 85.3% agreed with it being used for training and education
  - 70.3% agreed with it being used for meetings and conferences.
- **Q5:** 76.8% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with expanding the town's learning quarter.
- **Q6:** 77.9% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the centre's aim of encouraging local people to study at home.
- **Q9:** 86.1% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with improving and making the physical link between Castle Hill and the

As residents of Dudley were consulted about proposals for increasing the vibrancy of the Town Centre through the People Panel in November/December 2019, and work has already started to address a number of key issues identified within the Town Centre, the consultation and engagement activity for the Town Investment Plan focused primarily on the next stage of development for the Castle Hill area.

### (i) VIRTUAL SESSIONS

The virtual consultation sessions have enabled the Council to engage with key stakeholders and provide an accessible format for completing the questionnaire via Mentimeter software.

Feedback from members of the business community has been positive and included suggestions for the mixed-use facility at the University Centre – for example, Geopark displays, theatre performances or community events. They have also expressed a desire for architectural considerations to be fitting with the local area and for links to be made between geology and current wildlife.

Members of the deaf community asked if deaf accessible fire alarms could be installed in the new buildings and would like to see the mixed-use facility used for bringing the community together or as a hub for career and skills development.

**In addition to feedback on the specific proposals, consultations with the business community have also identified support for the broader regeneration plans underway. For example, MDA Consulting Ltd recently commented:**

“MDA has been working in the Dudley area for a number of years - most recently project managing the exciting £23 million ‘Forging Ahead’ development at the historic Black Country Living Museum. This will see a major development of a historic 1940s-1960s town, new learning spaces and a brand new visitor centre, that will expand this significant Black Country visitor attraction by up to a third.

“Forging Ahead will play a really important part in Dudley’s whole regeneration story, bringing the strong heritage of its manufacturing industries – which still remains today, to the forefront.

“This is just one project amongst a much wider regeneration plan that is either underway or in the planning in Dudley right now – which makes it a really exciting place above all others in which to do business. I have no doubt the Council’s extensive £1 billion programme will not only put Dudley on the map, but will provide significant opportunities for the businesses, the inward investment prospects and importantly, the people that live and work in Dudley - bringing jobs and improved accessibility. It is great that MDA is playing even a small part in the radical and exciting transformation of this area.”





### (iii) MY TOWN

The comments added to [mytown.communities.gov.uk/town/dudley](https://mytown.communities.gov.uk/town/dudley) have also been reviewed by the communications team within the council. The responses were varied and included a range of desired improvements related to the following themes - leisure and entertainment, skills and jobs and environmental/public realm improvements.

### (iv) PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The results of the consultation will be posted online via the Regenerating Dudley website and across the council and partners' channels including through e-bulletins, social media and a news release. Alternative formats will also be made available in community languages and large print.

## 5.1.2

### FUTURE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

The vision for Dudley Town Centre and Castle Hill will be integrated into the overall Regenerating Dudley communications and marketing plan and has been added as a project in its own right to the website [regeneratingdudley.org.uk](https://regeneratingdudley.org.uk).

Over the next 12 months, engagement with the stakeholders identified above will continue both virtually and in time, physically, where it is safe to do so. The Town Deal Board will retain oversight of all future engagement work and will continue to ensure plans are shaped and informed by residents and businesses.

While most people are supportive of the plans to date, there is still a small minority - largely associated with the Friends of the Hippodrome group - who believe that the Hippodrome should be saved and have set up a petition to garner support. As one of the objectives of the Regenerating Dudley communications and marketing plan is to seek to 'win the hearts and minds of local people',

specific activities will be developed to engage with this audience and to demonstrate the benefits of the project to the local community as a whole.

Another theme will be focus on retaining local history. The improvements to Dudley Zoo and Castle will see the refurbishment of the rare and architecturally significant Tecton structures, while the preliminary designs for the University Centre are being inspired by buildings which existed on the site in the early 1930s including Dudley Opera House. Engagement with the Healthcare and education partners who have been instrumental to the design of the bid since the outset, will continue as the plans develop. These partners were also part of the panel who selected the University of Worcester as the preferred curriculum provider. Engagement with healthcare providers will continue to increase as they work to restore services post Covid-19.

The plans for the future communications and engagement activity are also in the process of being developed with Worcester University. A Public Engagement Participation Plan (PEP) has been drafted which outlines how Dudley Council, The University of Worcester and Dudley College of Technology intend to involve the public in the planning and delivery of the new facility. Activity will include online surveys and public workshops before the facility is opened, and the formation of a steering group, annual general meeting, and regular monitoring and evaluation plans once the facility is opened.

In addition to close linkages with Worcester University (demonstrated through their contribution to the design of the early stage consultation), it is proposed that future engagement activity will be required with key employers and other training (outreach) providers in the area to ensure that the curriculum and delivery methods are responsive to the needs of businesses and the local communities.



## 5.2 Investment

The proposed University Centre Project is seeking £25m funding from the Towns Investment Fund towards the total cost of £36m. The Towns Fund accelerator funding is included within the total funding to deliver public realm and connectivity improvements to the Town Centre.

The remainder of the match funding for the project is being assembled from other public sector sources including WMCA, BCLEP and emerging funding programmes following Brexit, including the Shared Prosperity Fund for example. Private sector match funding will be sought from local employers as a contribution towards specialist equipment within the new University Centre, building on the College's track record in delivering similar projects, and established linkages with businesses in the Town. The NHS Foundation Trust for example will be an anchor partner in the project and instrumental in shaping the design of the curriculum and resources required.

While student accommodation will not form part of the Towns Fund bid, the new University Centre will drive demand for student provision, and discussions with private sector developers are underway. Given recent changes regarding online learning, it is too early to predict the scale of provision required at this stage.

Once operational, the new University Centre will generate revenues from student tuition fees. A fixed term licence agreement will be negotiated with the University of Worcester, who will be responsible for the operation of the new University Centre. High level, early stage estimates suggest that the Centre will generate £7m revenue by year 5, based on the attraction of 1,500 FTE students.



The University Centre is being pursued as part of a wider package of investment within the Town Centre, as shown below. Funding secured is shown in the table after the source.

Project	Towns Fund Intervention Framework	Total funding	Sources
<b>Metro Extension</b>	Transport and connectivity	£449 million	WMCA (£103m); BCLEP (£0.4m); DfT (£207m); DMBC prudential borrowing (£139m)
<b>Dudley Interchange</b>	Transport and connectivity	£24.3 million	BCLEP (£7m); Transforming Cities fund (£10m); DMBC (£3m)
<b>Portersfield</b>	Urban regeneration, planning and land use	£88 million	WMCA (£6m); private (£82m)
<b>Dudley Leisure Centre</b>	Arts, Culture and Heritage	£18.17 million	DMBC (£18.17m)
<b>Black Country Living Museum – Forging Ahead</b>	Arts, Culture and Heritage	£23.7 million	ACE (£1.28m); NLHF (£9.8m); BCLEP (£8.6m); Private (£4m)
<b>Castle Hill Phase II</b>	Arts, Culture and Heritage; Skills Infrastructure	£13.39 million	Getty Foundation (£120k; Historic England (£50k); ERDF (£200k); DMBC (£200k)
<b>Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VL-RNIC) &amp; Autonomous technologies</b>	Enterprise infrastructure	£29.75 million	ERDF (£5.55m); BCLEP/GBF (£13.0m); CLEP/GBF (£5.2m); BCLEP (£6.0m);
<b>Institute of Technology (IoT)</b>	Skills Infrastructure	£26.8 million	DfE (£16.8m); WMCA (£10m)
<b>University Centre</b>	Skills Infrastructure; Urban regeneration, planning and land use	£36million	Towns Fund; WMCA; DMBC; Private



## 5.3 Business case development and appraisal

### 5.3.1 BUSINESS CASE DEVELOPMENT

Dudley College in conjunction with Dudley MBC will be responsible for overseeing the development and delivery of the business case for the University Centre and the Town Deal Board will ensure that it is appraised independently in line with HMT Green Book guidance. To support the business case development process it is envisaged that the College will need to procure a range of professionals and technical assistance where this is not available in house. The College has a strong track record of working with multi-disciplinary teams to deliver capital projects of this nature and is currently responsible for the delivery of the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology.

The Business Case will confirm the strategic context; set out a robust case for change; consider alternative options; and present the deliverability and viability of the options explored. In doing so, it will identify the preferred option that optimises value for money; the financial requirement and project's affordability; the supporting procurement strategy, and the management arrangements for the successful delivery of the project.

### 5.3.2 BUSINESS CASE APPRAISAL

To support the Business Case Appraisal process, Dudley MBC as the accountable body for the Towns Fund will draw on expertise within the BCLEP and/or the WMCA (e.g. with regard to the adoption of practices and standards outlined in their Assurance Framework) to ensure that decisions regarding the allocation of Town Deal funding are proper, transparent and deliver value for money.

The LEP and WMCA have established investment panels, with suitably skilled individuals drawn from relevant partner agencies (e.g. with representatives from the public, private, and community and voluntary sectors) and government, to ensure there is sufficient oversight and scrutiny of the business case proposals brought forward. A report from the panel will be delivered to the Town Deal Board, regarding the allocation of funding and best use of public sector funding.

## 5.4 Delivery Plan

### 5.4.1 GOVERNANCE

The development of the Town Investment Plan and proposed University Centre project has been steered by the Town Deal Board and an HEI project strategy group jointly steered by the Council and the College. Design, build and operation of the new facility will be discharged to Dudley College of Technology and overseen in a consultative capacity by the Town Deal Board. Dudley MBC will be the accountable body and will have overall responsibility for the delivery of the project.

A detailed risk register has been drawn up by Enterprise Workplace Partners (EWP) who were engaged as part of the Towns Fund bid process by Dudley MBC to provide programme and project management operations (PMO) and support services. The register details risks related to commercial; technical; operational; governance; reputational and political domains; their likelihood and impact, and mitigation measures to manage them moving forward, including:

- Market Demand
- Financial viability and funding strategy
- Operational expertise and capacity
- Partnership and Governance arrangements
- Local, sub-regional and political support
- Capacity and capability
- Supporting infrastructure (e.g. student accommodation)
- Lack of co-operational support from third party property owners

Risk, issue and change management are fundamental to the control of any project and the College has a range of detailed processes in place for each. The College has an excellent track record of delivery within the Town Centre, and since 2010 they have successfully delivered around £60m of new Educational Investment. The College will report to the Town Deal Board on a regular basis to provide updates on progress, including the management and mitigation of risk.

The College will be seeking to maximise Social Value in the build of the new University Centre, using the Towns Funding, and contractors will be required to engage with Dudley Regeneration Academy to source local labour and students/apprentices enrolled on skills training programmes delivered by the new IOTT.

## 5.4.2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The University Centre will be delivered and managed by Dudley College of Technology on behalf of the Towns Fund Board. The College will oversee the procurement and construction of the new HE centre and will manage the relationship with the University of Worcester, which was chosen as the higher education partner. Their track record will help to ensure that the project is managed on time and to budget.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is due to be agreed between the College and Dudley Council as the Accountable Body for the Towns Funding. Other project partners include the Dudley NHS Foundation Trust, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC), the Black Country Living Museum, the Chamber of Commerce and other key public institutions within the Dudley Learning Quarter. The University Centre will deliver demand led training underpinned by local intelligence from employers, including the Trust.

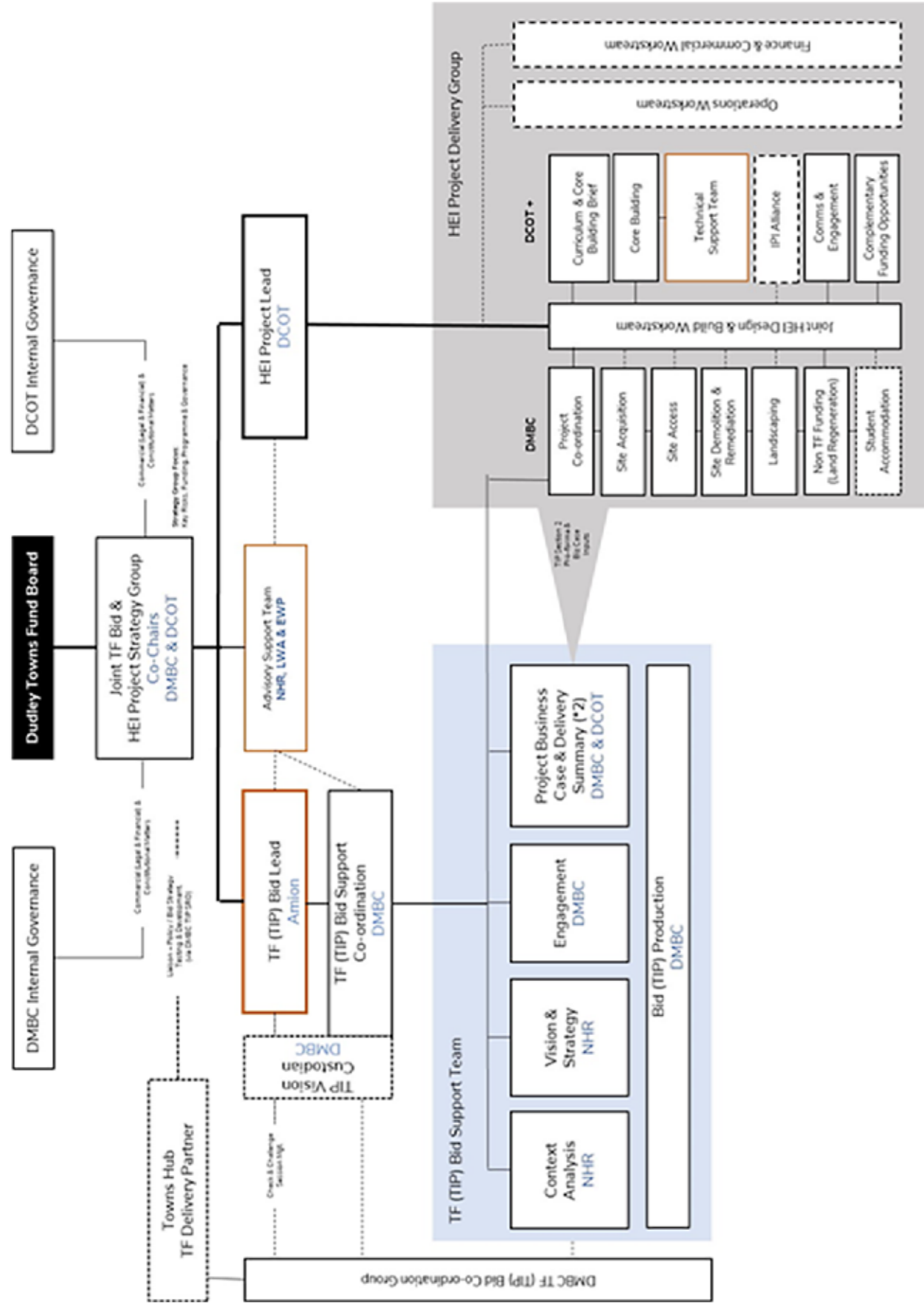
The University of Worcester will work closely with the newly established University Centre Dudley to develop a business plan for the Centre. This will include a detailed curriculum and operational plan; a marketing and recruitment strategy; financial plan; risk register and monitoring and evaluation framework. Additionally, the University Centre Dudley will embed Worcester's approach for technology-based learning. This includes the use of a Virtual Learning Environment and an electronic reflective portfolio. UCD will be supported in delivering flexible learning by the University of Worcester's Directors of Learning and Teaching and the Technology Enhanced Learning Unit (TELU).



## 5.4.3 DELIVERY MILESTONES

The proposed delivery timeline for the construction of the new University Centre project is shown below. The timeline for the wider Town Investment Plan was set out in Figure x within the vision section.

Target Timeline		Milestone and/or Key Event
2021	January	Establish Delivery Partnership MoU Launch advanced TF Stage 2 bid tasks
	April	Secure 'in-principle' external funding decision(s) incl. Heads of Terms )
	August	Grant initial scheme planning incl. conditions & Historic England
	September	Establish Delivery Partnership Collaboration Agreement Submit TF Stage 2 Full Business Case (FBC) & wider funding applications
	December	Secure 'full' external funding award(s) and approval(s)
2022	July	Discharge outstanding planning conditions Complete site acquisition
2023	February	Complete site preparation
2024	August	Complete construction and fit-out
	September	Open University Centre



TIMELINE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW UNIVERSITY CENTRE PROJECT

