



**Mayor of the
West Midlands**

Delivering Growth for Everyone

**Mayoral Guide to the
West Midlands Growth Plan**



1. Why we've written a Growth Plan

As Mayor of the West Midlands, I have written this guide to the West Midlands Combined Authority's new Growth Plan. This guide explains what the Growth Plan means for people in the West Midlands in clear, accessible, straightforward terms. Everything in this guide is consistent with the Growth Plan itself.



The West Midlands is full of potential. We've got brilliant people, proud communities and a long history of invention and industry. But not everyone is getting the same chance to succeed.

Too many people are stuck in low-paid or insecure work. Some parts of our region have been left behind, with empty high streets or underused land. They haven't had the type of support and investment that would truly improve lives. And too many young people are having to leave the region to build the future they want.

I want to change that.

This Growth Plan is our blueprint for a better West Midlands. A place where people can find a good job near where they live. Where housing is affordable, transport

is reliable and we can all feel excited about our future.

Why our Growth Plan aligns with the UK Industrial Strategy

Economic growth doesn't happen in isolation. It happens when national priorities and local strengths come together, and that's exactly what the West Midlands Growth Plan is built to do.

The West Midlands has not seen growth in over a decade. Local policies and national strategies have not aligned, and much of the work has been tactical, reactive and short-term.

The new UK Industrial Strategy set out a long-term vision for how Britain competes and prospers. Its success is ensured by

backing the key industries that Britain is best at. These aren't just national ambitions, they are industries already rooted - and thriving - in the West Midlands. That means we're not waiting for investment to trickle down, or for these industries to move here - they are already delivering in our region. We have the businesses, the leaders, the workforce and the skills pipeline. But there is no doubt that we can do better if we become more coordinated and ambitious.

This plan is now about how we connect the dots between all of these things - the national policy (UK Industrial Strategy) and regional delivery. This plan turns those national strategic aims into real outcomes in our region - jobs, skills, transport and regeneration in the places that need it most. That's why we've focused on sectors that matter to the West Midlands and to the UK economy.

But this isn't just about economic alignment. Our region has the potential to drive the UK's long-term recovery - if the Government backs us to do what we do best.

We're ready to lead on the national agenda. What we need is a deeper partnership and one that recognises that **when the West Midlands succeeds, Britain succeeds.**

Why does growth matter to the West Midlands?

- Because too many people in our region are being held back
- We earn less per worker, on average, than the UK as a whole
- Too many people are in low-paid or insecure work - or not working at all
- Some communities have been stuck in a cycle of underinvestment for decades
- Public services are under pressure

Growing our economy is how we turn that around - by building a future where more people can succeed, right here in the West Midlands.

2. What this means for you and where you live

This Growth Plan isn't about politics or paperwork. It's about people, and what it actually feels like to live, work and build a life here in the West Midlands.

Because growth isn't just about numbers. It's about how easy it is to get a job. What your street looks like. Whether your kids can afford to live nearby. How much is left in your wallet at the end of the week.

Growth shapes the things you notice every day and the things you don't always see, but feel. It affects whether your high street is thriving or empty. Whether there are cafes, pubs and restaurants in your town. Whether there are things you can do as a family, or with friends. Whether the bus turns up on time. Whether your heating bill goes through the roof in winter. Whether your children stay local - or feel they have to leave to find opportunity.

This is why this plan matters.

We must create the right conditions for growth in our region, so that communities can flourish, businesses can grow and people can build better futures.

Growth is about improving lives. Here's what that looks like in real life:

- **More good jobs close to home** - not just any job, but work with decent wages and progression
- **Better wages** - so families feel less pressure and more freedom
- **Training opportunities** - to help people move forward, retrain or return to work
- **Help for young people** - so they can see a future for themselves here
- **Lower energy bills** - through greener homes and new clean energy schemes
- **Faster, more reliable public transport** - so it's cheaper and easier to get around
- **Affordable homes** - so people can stay near family, not get priced out
- **Support for small businesses** - to grow, create jobs and serve their community
- **Better public services** - joined up and focused on what actually works for people

3. Our four big priorities

This plan isn't just about where we want to get to, it's about what we're doing now to get there.

We've focused our Growth Plan on four priorities that matter most to the future of our region: our people, our businesses, our places and our story. These are the building blocks of a stronger West Midlands and under each one, work is already underway.

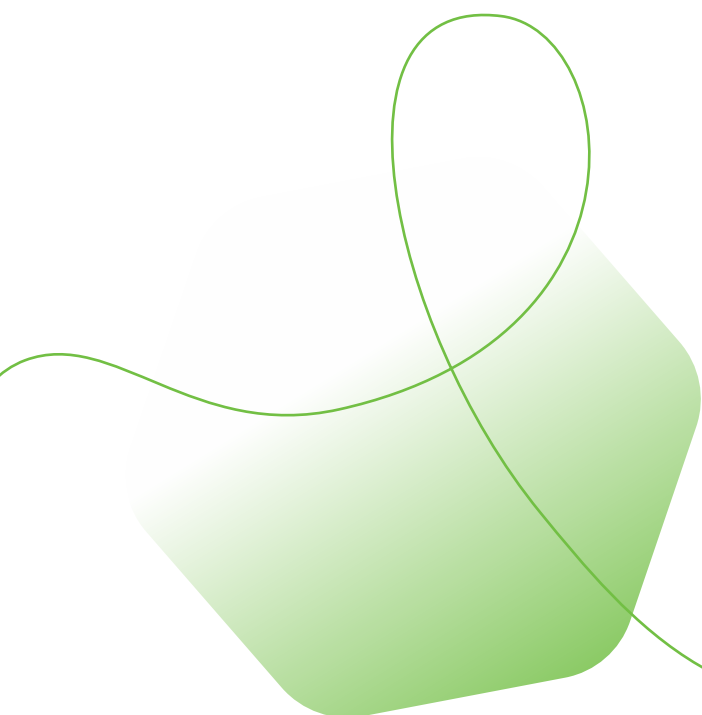
From rolling out new training programmes and backing growing businesses, to starting Metro extensions and reforming our bus network - we're getting on with the job. Because the sooner we act, the sooner our communities feel the benefit.

Our People: Backing residents to get on in life

We're fixing the broken skills and employment system, so people can get the training, support and jobs they need.

- **Guaranteeing training and work support for young people.** So no one is left behind when they leave school or college and every young person has a clear next step.
- **Creating a College Compact.** So that colleges offer the courses local employers actually need.
- **Launching a Green Skills Plan with new Retrofit Hubs.** So we can train thousands of people for clean, skilled jobs that cut bills and emissions.
- **Rolling out a new Integrated Employment and Skills System.** So jobseekers don't get bounced around, instead they get joined-up support across housing, health and work.

When people have the right skills, they can earn more, spend more and stay in work for longer. That means higher living standards, stronger families and a better local economy. If we don't act now, we risk leaving people behind and growth never happens when talent is wasted.



Our Businesses: Building strong, future-facing firms

Our economy is built on local and small businesses - from manufacturers in the Black Country to creative firms in Solihull. They need help now to grow, scale and innovate.

We will help provide:

- **High Growth Business Programmes.** So successful firms scale up - so they can hire more people, export more and boost local supply chains.
- **Expanding cluster development plans.** So businesses in clean tech, health tech and creative industries can grow in the places they already thrive.
- **Delivering an Access to Finance Action Plan.** So good businesses aren't held back by a lack of cash and have better access to loans, grants and investment.
- **Supporting Made Smarter and Create Growth programmes.** So firms can adopt new tech, reach new customers and stay competitive in fast-changing markets.

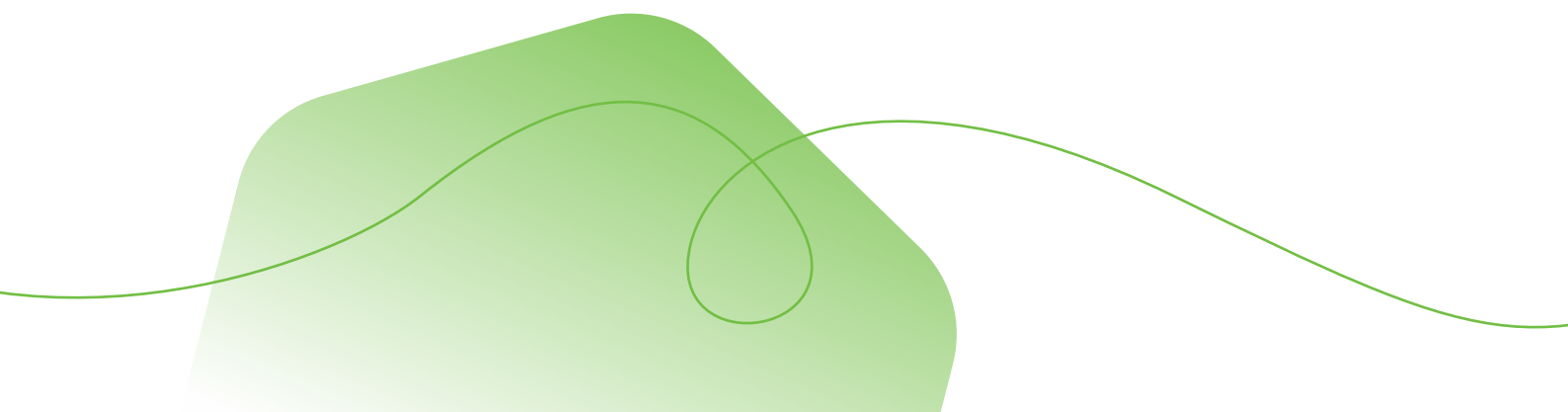
Growth doesn't come from Whitehall, it comes from a business that is able to hire more people, or a local supplier that wins a new contract. Supporting business now means more jobs, more investment and more chances for people to succeed close to home.

Our Places: Connecting homes, jobs and opportunity

You can't have a growing economy without connecting the places in our region. That means housing where people want to live, transport that works and high streets people want to go to.

- **Developing a Capital Investment Pipeline.** To unlock land for homes and businesses and give funders a clear view of where to invest.
- **Building tram extensions and new rail stations .** To connect communities to jobs and bring growth to areas that have been left behind for too long.
- **Rolling out bus franchising by 2027.** To set the routes, fares and standards, and give people more reliable, affordable public transport.
- **Publishing a Spatial Development Strategy.** To make housing, jobs and infrastructure happen in the right places with joined-up planning that benefits communities, removing pressure.

This is about connecting the dots. If we build housing where the jobs are and we link them by bus, tram or train, then we grow the economy and improve people's quality of life. The alternative is decline and disconnected communities, busy roads, long commutes, low footfall and wasted potential.



Our Story: Doing things differently, together

We're changing how the region works - and how we work with others. Because growth doesn't happen in silos. Growth happens when people, businesses and government pull together in one unified direction. And we see every day that our businesses, colleges, councils and communities want to work with us for the benefit of everyone.

As Mayor, it's my job to bring the region together – to make sure we're all pulling in the same direction and to be the voice of the West Midlands with government. And I use that voice to fight for the powers and funding we need to deliver for our communities. I work with our budgets, powers and partnerships to unlock investment, get projects moving and turn plans into action. And I use my convening powers to bring councils, businesses, colleges and communities together - focused on delivery, not delay.

- **Launching an annual West Midlands Growth Summit.** To stay accountable and keep partners, government and investors focused on results.
- **Global West Midlands Partnership.** To promote our sectors and places on the world stage and bring in jobs and investment.
- **Building up the West Midlands Brand** so it can tell a clearer story about what we offer and make it easier for investors to say yes.

To win investment, we need to tell a clear story and show that we can deliver. These partnerships give us visibility, credibility and the ability to get things done.

Growth means more than numbers on a spreadsheet

We believe growth should be:

- **Fair** - so everyone can benefit
- **Inclusive** - so your background doesn't hold you back
- **Place-based** - so towns, cities and neighbourhoods all get a chance to thrive
- **Green** - so we cut bills and carbon at the same time

This is about growing our businesses and the kind of economy that supports all our people - not just hitting economic targets.

4. What makes this the perfect region to lead growth

We're not starting from scratch. The West Midlands has real strengths that create the perfect environment for growth - an ecosystem that brings together talent, ideas, enterprise and opportunity like nowhere else.

For too long, these strengths weren't always linked up. That's what we're changing. We're connecting the dots so that our young people, our businesses, our communities and our places pull together to drive growth that benefits everyone.

This region isn't just anywhere in the UK. The West Midlands is where the modern world was made. From the Lunar Men to the workshop of the world, we've always been a place where ideas meet industry - and where ambition gets things done.

That spirit is still here – in our brilliant colleges and world-class universities that train the next generation of makers, doers and creators. In our £77 billion economy. In our central location at the heart of Britain – connected to motorways, mainlines and

millions more people. And we're getting more connected every day as new transport links like HS2 and Midlands Rail Hub.

It's here in our nationally leading 5G, clean energy and low-carbon infrastructure. In the global firms already choosing to invest here. And most of all, it's here in our people – one of the youngest and most diverse populations anywhere in Europe.

This is what makes the West Midlands special. Not just our history – but what we're doing with it, together, now.



Here's what growth looks like in real life:



Growth isn't abstract. It's how we build a West Midlands that works for everyone.

5. The five sectors we're backing

This plan identifies five key industries to focus on - sectors where the West Midlands is already strong and where we can grow even more jobs.

These sectors are also central to the UK's Industrial Strategy, which identifies green tech, advanced manufacturing, health innovation, artificial intelligence and high-value services as the building blocks of national economic success.

That means that there is no route to national growth that doesn't run through the West Midlands. This lays out the clear strategic importance of the West Midlands to the government.

Each of these sectors is rooted in real businesses, universities and communities across our region - and each one offers skilled, secure and high-paid jobs that people can build a future around.

Green tech and clean energy

From smart homes to district heating, our region is leading the way on clean energy. It means lower bills, cleaner air and thousands of skilled jobs.

This sector is backed by the UK Industrial Strategy, which calls clean growth 'one of the greatest industrial opportunities of our time'.

We're home to major firms like E.ON and National Grid, and innovation hubs like Tyseley Energy Park, where cleaner fuels, battery storage and smart grid tech and the recycling of critical materials, are already being deployed.

Tyseley Energy Park is creating clean fuels, energy storage and green jobs right in the heart of Birmingham.

This is about turning old industrial land into new opportunity – creating jobs that cut carbon, lower bills and put the West Midlands at the heart of Britain's green economy.



Real example:

The West Midlands Investment Zone includes the Wolverhampton Green Innovation Corridor – designed to create the skilled, secure jobs of the future in clean energy, low-carbon manufacturing and green technologies.

Advanced manufacturing and electric vehicles

We've built cars, planes and machinery for generations. Now we're leading the move to electric - from battery industrialisation to very light rail.

The West Midlands produces 1 in 3 cars made in the UK, and our Green Power Park - part of the West Midlands Investment Zone - is a national site for battery and clean vehicle innovation.

This supports the Industrial Strategy's mission to make the UK a global leader in zero-emissions vehicle design and production.

Other opportunities can be won for the West Midlands through the government's intention to increase defence investment to 2.6% of GDP by 2027 alongside commitments to improve defence procurement and buy more from SMEs and non-traditional suppliers. We will develop a coordinated approach to winning as much of this government expenditure for the West Midlands as possible, drawing on our excellence in advanced manufacturing.

Real example:

The West Midlands Green Power Park and battery supply chain in Coventry is helping drive the UK's EV revolution and creating thousands of new jobs.



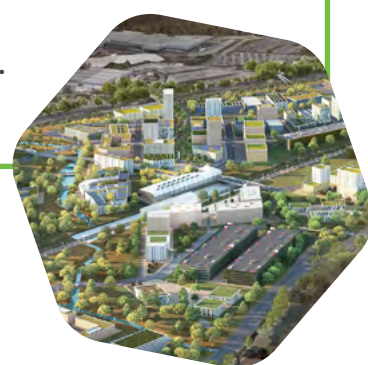
Health tech and medical innovation

From diagnostics to digital healthcare, the West Midlands is home to the UK's largest medical devices cluster - over 700 firms employing 14,000 people.

We're developing new campuses and training pathways so that local people can access careers in one of the fastest-growing industries in the world.

The UK Industrial Strategy identifies health innovation as vital to improving outcomes for an ageing population and creating exportable technologies.

Real example: Arden Cross HealthTech Campus (adjacent to the site of the HS2 station at Birmingham Interchange, in Solihull) - a public-private-academic partnership focused on accelerating innovation in healthcare and improving patient outcomes.



Digital, tech and creative

Games, apps, AI, music, films - this is one of the fastest growing parts of our economy.

The Midlands tech sector is worth £14 billion, and Digbeth is now home to Digbeth Loc. Studios, bringing global screen production to our region.

The UK Industrial Strategy makes AI and data one of its four Grand Challenges, and creative industries a core growth sector. We've already invested in a Production Services Office and are working closely with the BBC to bring more investment to the West Midlands, building on the BBC's new HQ at Typhoo Wharf and the Masterchef studios. We will go further and faster to bring big budget productions to our region.

Real example:
Digbeth Loc Studios is creating hundreds of jobs and putting the West Midlands on the global film and TV map.



Professional and financial services

From law and finance to consulting and design, this is a high-value part of our economy with great careers.

The West Midlands already supports over 178,000 jobs in this sector, with growing specialisms in FinTech, LegalTech and PropTech.

The UK Industrial Strategy recognises 'next generation services' as a key UK export sector and area for innovation and productivity growth.



Real example:
Goldman Sachs now employs over 450 people in Birmingham - and supports apprenticeships for local young people.

6. Helping local businesses grow

Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of our economy - both regionally and nationally. They're often referred to as SMEs, and we're backing them to grow, create jobs and strengthen local communities. The Combined Authority does a lot to support businesses, but we know that more can be done. So as part of this new plan we'll be:

- Simplifying business support through Business Growth West Midlands
- Launching High Growth Programmes to help scale-ups expand
- Improving access to finance through new co-investment funds

Creating new business spaces and support networks. We want to make sure the West Midlands is the best place in the UK to start a business, grow and expand.




Real example: Luciana, owner of Perubien in Coventry, used Business Growth West Midlands support to grow her healthy food business from a market stall to a national supplier.



7. Investing in your place

We're backing real projects in real places that will make the sort of difference that people can see and feel in their communities. Too many parts of our region haven't felt the benefits of growth, that has to change.

- **Affordable and social homes:** we're tackling the housing crisis by building the right homes in the right places, and pushing for control of more national funding, so that we can build even more homes at pace.
- **Better transport:** we're improving bus, rail and tram routes - starting with local control of buses by 2027.
- **Thriving high streets:** bringing new life to high streets with better public spaces, local business support and cultural venues.
- **Green, connected neighbourhoods:** investing in smart local energy systems, better broadband and green infrastructure to make every neighbourhood future-ready.



Real example:
The Metro extension in Dudley will help connect 50,000 people to jobs, shops and services.

8. Skills and jobs for local people

Making sure people have the skills they need to get on in life and earn a good wage is at the heart of our plan for growth. Because a growing economy means nothing if local people are left behind.

That's why this Growth Plan focuses on skilling up the people who already live and work here – so we reduce unemployment, help people progress in their careers and make sure opportunity isn't something you have to move away for.

Our region is home to some of the best universities and colleges anywhere in the country. From world-class R&D in clean energy and health tech to outstanding further education colleges delivering practical skills, we've got the building blocks for a talent pipeline that works for both learners and employers. But for too long, these opportunities haven't always been linked up to the needs of local people or businesses. That's what we're changing.

We're creating a system where universities, FE colleges, training providers and employers work together – so people can move from education into skilled, secure jobs in the sectors that are growing here. And we're using our powers to push for more local control over skills funding – so we can do what works for our region, not just what fits a national template.

- Guaranteeing support for every young person to access work, training or education
- Helping people with health issues, caring responsibilities or long-term unemployment back into work
- Supporting green skills, digital training and apprenticeships - so that those already in work can reskill, retrain or move up in their chosen career
- Pushing for control over skills funding so we can do even more

Real example:
Kundai Nazare, aged 25, now an apprentice commis chef at Compass Group UK & Ireland, after completing a WMCA funded Path 2 Apprenticeship programme.





The Everyday Economy

Not everyone works in tech or finance - and we're not forgetting the jobs that keep our region running. Often called the everyday economy, it's the jobs that we rely on - many of those who were described as 'essential workers' during the Covid pandemic. We simply can't grow without these jobs, and we need to do more to ensure they're protected, well-paid and valued.

- Launching a Good Work Charter - so more employers sign up to fair pay, decent conditions and good standards in everyday jobs.
- Expanding training and apprenticeships in construction, engineering, logistics, health, social care and hospitality - so more local people can train for jobs that are in demand, close to home, and vital to the West Midlands economy
- Setting up retrofit hubs and low-carbon construction training centres - to help thousands of people move into green jobs – upgrading homes, schools and workplaces across our region.
- Expanding our Social Economy Programme to support community businesses and co-ops - so more of the wealth we create stays in local hands, strengthening communities and building a fairer economy.
- Creating clearer career pathways in health and care - so people can see how to move up, earn more and gain qualifications while working.

9. A new chapter for our region

We're not just writing a strategy, we're writing the next chapter in the story of the West Midlands.

This is a Growth Plan built on pride - in who we are and what we can become. Our heritage and history, guiding us into our future. It's powered by ambition and driven by belief. Belief that our region can lead again. Not just within the UK, but on the world stage.

We see a future where every community feels connected and where people move easily from home to work to college on a transport network that works for them. Where homes are not just built, but built where they're needed and wanted - creating places that feel safe, stable and full of life.

We see neighbourhoods that are green and future-ready, powered by clean energy and full of local pride. A region where creativity thrives, culture is celebrated and the industries of tomorrow are shaped by the talent growing up here today.

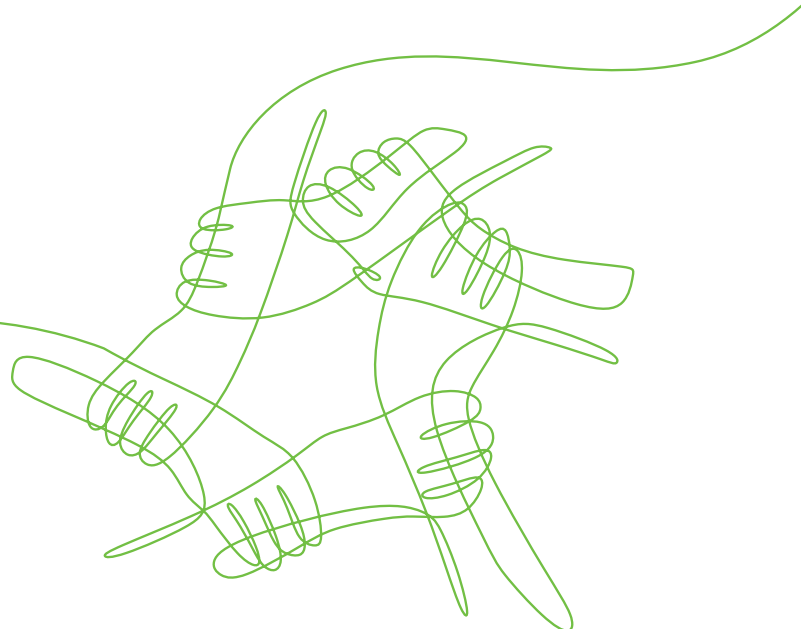
We see young people choosing to stay because they can see a future here - a future of purpose, opportunity and of good work. A place where businesses grow because they're part of something bigger - a region that backs them, connects them and believes in them.

And behind it all, we see a plan that brings this vision to life. A plan shaped by local leadership, which is powered by partnership and driven by the people who call this place home.

The West Midlands has always had a lot of potential. Now we're turning it into something more.

We are not just a region that's part of the UK's success story, we won't settle for that. We are a region that helps write the UK's success story.

Often quiet and undersold, we now stand proud and, again, change the world.



10. What happens next & how you can be part of it

We're not waiting.

- Projects are being funded and delivered now
- New services and infrastructure are already in motion
- A new Growth Summit will be held each year to track progress
- This plan will be updated regularly to stay focused and flexible

This is your region. Your community. Your future.

- If you're a resident, we want you to see real change near you – it needs to be focused and always relevant
- If you're a business, we want to back your growth
- If you're a young person, we want you to build your future here



“The West Midlands is full of untapped talent and potential. This plan is about unlocking opportunity - for everyone, in every place.”

**Richard Parker,
Mayor of the West Midlands**

growth.wmca.org.uk

**Mayor of the
West Midlands**