



## A vibrant business economy

Solihull is one of the strongest performing economies in the UK and offers a world class, well-connected location to live, work and invest.

UK Central Solihull is a prime inward investment location, ranked in the top 10 UK destinations for business.

Solihull consistently out-performs the rest of the West Midlands and the UK average in terms of Gross Value Added and business survival rates.

The arrival of HS2 – Britain's new high speed, zero carbon railway, will bring exceptional connectivity, investment and jobs to the West Midlands.

## UK Central Solihull

UK Central (UKC) Solihull is one of the country's most strategically important development areas. It is a dynamic cluster of economic assets including Birmingham Airport, the National Exhibition Centre (NEC), Birmingham Business Park, Birmingham International Rail Station, and Jaguar Land Rover (JLR).

UKC offers exceptional opportunity, connectivity and lifestyle, the region is the chosen location for high levels of foreign direct investment. It has one of the most dynamic and fastest growing labour markets in the UK, with a job density 38% higher than the Great Britain average.

## HS2

Our UK Central Hub is home to HS2's interchange station, the first stop for high-speed trains arriving out of London, offering unrivalled connectivity to London in under 40 minutes, alongside national and international markets. It will be a vital new transport hub and one of the most environmentally sustainable stations in the world. Situated at the heart of a major development site, it brings investors significant opportunities for retail, leisure and community development alongside new jobs, new homes and new businesses.

Research shows that the future arrival of HS2 in the West Midlands is already driving huge investor confidence in the region, with data pointing to an economic uplift of £10 billion over the next 10 years.

## Strengths

The borough has strengths in high value manufacturing and a fast-growing expertise in low carbon, intelligent transportation systems, supported by thriving professional service and ICT sectors.

Solihull supports the development of local business and has an outstanding reputation for sustainable economic growth, investment and innovation. This is illustrated by the Council's

ambitious masterplan for the town centre creating exciting opportunities for new housing, leisure, business and culture.

Solihull consistently out-performs the rest of the West Midlands and the UK in terms of Gross Value Added and business survival rates.

In 2017 there were 980 business starts in Solihull and five years later in 2022 434 of these businesses were still operating. This is a five-year business survival rate of 44.4% compared to the England average of 39.4%.

The business survival rate in Solihull is also higher than neighbouring local authorities of Birmingham (32.1%), Coventry (37.3%) and Warwickshire (40.7%).

The Council is committed to regular and individual engagement with local businesses, through tailored support and specialist programmes, around sustainability, innovation, recruitment and skills, social enterprise and start up. This targeted account manager approach, helps attract investment and entrepreneurship in the region.

## Prime location

Solihull benefits from close connections to Birmingham, Coventry and Warwickshire, all of which have substantial assets that support Solihull's economy both commercially and through tourism. The borough is in easy reach of much of the UK through the motorway, air and rail networks. Birmingham Airport also connects Solihull to over 25 countries in Europe and over 150 destinations globally.

The National Exhibition Centre (NEC) and Resorts World Arena put Solihull on the map, regularly hosting world tours and national events and in turn boosting tourism.

A mix of urban and rural landscape and exceptional connectivity means the borough is the chosen location for global and national well-respected brands such as Rolls Royce (RR), Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) and Gymshark. Small to medium sized businesses also thrive in Solihull with 97.4% of the private sector made up of micro or small businesses.

The borough has a highly skilled local workforce with 77.9% of the Solihull working age population aged 16-64 years in employment. This represents a higher employment rate than both the England (75.9%) and West Midlands (74.8%) averages.

In 2022 there were 679.9 jobs per 1,000 population in Solihull which is significantly higher than the England (475.5) and West Midlands (443.4) averages.

Situated between some of the UK's leading academic institutions and highly regarded schools, the area also has a plentiful supply of young graduates and candidates for future workforce need.

## Great opportunities for everyone

Businesses investing in UK Central Solihull will benefit from a highly proactive approach by local and regional government and partners.

Arden Cross, a £3.2 billion regeneration, will create new opportunities for entrepreneurs and established businesses, residents and visitors.

Two major business parks, plus a wide range of urban and rural development sites, provide a mix of ready-to-occupy offices and land ripe for development.

Our aim of becoming a low carbon economy will offer huge opportunities for new technologies, jobs and green growth.

### Arden Cross – Innovation led regeneration

Arden Cross is a key part of UK Central and a nationally significant regeneration opportunity. The 140-hectare site will leverage the connectivity of HS2, Birmingham International train station, Birmingham Airport, and the motorway network to curate a new community. It will deliver new homes, offices, an Innovation Quarter, alongside new public spaces.

Arden Cross will deliver an additional 0.5 million sqm of ultra-connected office space, up to 3,000 new homes and 27,000 new jobs – creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs and established businesses, residents and visitors.

A new Arden Cross Innovation District will foster an advanced medical technology cluster, anchored by a unique HealthTech Campus. The University of Warwick will be the lead academic partner and bring together the NHS, anchor industrial partners, SMEs, and innovative research as part of a public-private-academic ecosystem.

### Economic opportunities

Solihull's strong performance in regeneration activity and the borough's UK Central programme allows us to continue to invest in new economic opportunities across the borough.

Solihull Council is always looking out for and keen to explore new opportunities to attract investment, create new jobs and build homes for people. The recent West Midlands Investment Zone is a good example of the Council reacting quickly and promoting sites within Solihull that are part of the West Midlands bid. The West Midlands Investment Zone builds on the region's historic strengths in advanced manufacturing and will drive growth in battery, digital and sustainable construction technologies.

The borough has opportunities for businesses to join the likes of Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), Rolls Royce (RR) and Norton Motorcycles in driving forward advanced engineering and low carbon technologies.

A particular focus for the future is delivering work to tackle climate change. Becoming a low carbon economy offers huge opportunities for new technologies, jobs and green growth. We need to make sure people have the skills and training they need to make the most of these opportunities.

## Jobs and training

Solihull Council supports residents, students, employers, schools, and colleges to maximise opportunities from new investment and developments, ensuring our residents can access jobs and training.

In this way the Council will ensure that everyone can secure a decent job through raising aspirations, building accessible and supported pathways into employment and effectively engaging with our communities so that they take up the opportunities available.

## A sustainable economy

Sustainability is at the heart of our growth and development as we strive towards a low-carbon economy.

UK Central Solihull is proactively exploring and progressing a range of sustainable innovative schemes.

Solihull's Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP) provides a route map to achieving Net Zero as a borough by 2041.

### Low carbon economy

Solihull's exciting future is to shift towards a low-carbon economy and our robust plans to reach net zero emissions by 2041 as a borough were recently recognised as amongst the best in the country.

Solihull's [Net Zero Action Plan \(NZAP\)](#) provides a route map to achieving Net Zero as a borough by 2041. We are well underway with 70% of the 210 actions currently in progress. The NZAP seeks to reduce emissions in all sectors, including challenging and high emitting sectors such as transport along with homes and businesses.

The [Solihull Climate Change Prospectus](#) sets out how we will ensure the area is leading the way in tackling climate change, celebrating our successes and planning for a sustainable future by protecting the environment and by embracing a low carbon economy.

### Sustainable initiatives

UK Central Solihull is proactively exploring and progressing a range of sustainable innovative schemes. These include ambitious plans for a low carbon town centre heat network, which once online will provide town centre businesses with affordable, low carbon energy.

In addition, UKC's exciting low carbon future mobility project will trial innovative new technology to reduce emissions linked to travel, transport and goods deliveries.

Local business and development partners are advocates for our sustainability initiatives, recognised through various Green Apple Awards for our efforts to ensure Solihull maintains its position at the forefront of best practice and innovation in this area.

## Transport

Major improvements to public transport include the extension of the Midlands Metro tram, rapid Sprint bus network, and new walking and cycle routes, all helping to open up UK Central to greener, cheaper and faster travel.

Solihull's Electric Vehicle Strategy sets out a clear roadmap to expand charging infrastructure and puts electric vehicles at the centre of future planning, parking and public transport decisions.

## Thriving places

Solihull has a range of renowned cultural, leisure and sporting assets in and within close proximity to the borough.

Plans to revitalise the borough's town and local centres are key to economic growth.

We are working to increase the supply of environmentally sustainable, affordable, and social housing to meet the needs of local people.

A Levelling up Zone has been secured for North Solihull and East Birmingham to drive investment and co-ordinated intervention to improve residents' quality of life and their economic opportunities.

## Cultural, leisure and sporting assets

Solihull has a range of renowned cultural, leisure and sporting assets in and within close proximity to the borough including the National Exhibition Centre (NEC), Resorts World, Symphony Hall, Edgbaston cricket ground, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, along with various top-tier sport stadiums.

Almost two-thirds of the borough are designated as green belt, including 1,500 acres of parks spread across the borough. Solihull has 16 Green Flag Awards – an international quality mark - for its parks, cemeteries and green spaces. In addition, the borough has, for the third year in a row, been recognised as a Tree City of the World. Only 200 cities from 22 countries have been granted this prestigious status.

These assets are an attraction for tourists both locally and nationally and in 2022 tourists spent £839 million during their visit to the borough. In the same year, £70 million was spent on average in the local economy each month. (Source: Solihull STEAM).

## Plans for the future

Plans are in place to (re)generate distinctive and economically vibrant places across the borough. A key part of this will be to deliver the Levelling Up Zone ambitions within North Solihull to improve residents' quality of life and their economic opportunities, alongside development of our towns and local centres.

Muse has been identified as the preferred development partner for Mell Square marking a crucial milestone in the delivery of the Solihull Town Centre Masterplan. Plans are also progressing to deliver the Chelmsley Wood Town Centre Masterplan and construction work has started on the Kingshurst Village Centre site.

Solihull's approach to inclusive growth directly aligns with the government's levelling up agenda. The Council seeks to drive inclusive growth through its role as employer, procurer, service provider and system influencer.

As part of the West Midlands Combined Authority, Solihull is a key growth engine of the West Midlands and will benefit from the Government's Deeper Devolution Deal - a new long-term funding settlement for the region that will enable the Mayor and local councils to plan with certainty for the long term and unlock tangible benefits. The total value of the deal to the region is estimated at £1.5 billion, and will put more cash and power in the hands of local leaders to invest in the priorities that local communities care about, such as timely bus and train services, skills, and housing.

## Living in Solihull

Solihull is recognised as one of the most prosperous areas in the West Midlands. It has highly affluent areas with economic strength along with diverse areas with significant cultural and economic potential. The borough offers a range of location options including attractive rural villages such as Meriden and Dorridge which were recently voted as two of the best places to live in the UK (Muddy Stiletto's, Best Places to Live in 2024).

The borough is home to 216,236 people across over 89,500 households. Between 2011 and 2021, the number of people from different ethnic backgrounds increased by 16,000 people, rising from 12% of the population to 18%.

For further information please email [business@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:business@solihull.gov.uk)

Published in May 2024

## Appendix

### Commuting Patterns

<b>Commuting Patterns of People Who Work in Solihull 2021</b>		
	Number	% Total
<b>Live in Solihull (work from home)</b>	46,586	42%
<b>Live in Solihull (not working from home)</b>	21,193	19%
<b>Live Outside Borough</b>	43,149	39%
<b>Total Work in Solihull</b>	110,928	
<b>All live and work in Solihull</b>	67,779	61%
<i>Source: ONS Census 2021</i>		

<b>Commuting Patterns of People Who Work in Solihull but Live Elsewhere 2021</b>		
	Number	% Total in-Commute
<b>Birmingham</b>	23,181	54%
<b>Warwickshire</b>	4,711	11%
<b>Worcestershire</b>	3,329	8%
<b>Coventry</b>	2,842	7%
<b>Staffordshire</b>	1,974	5%
<b>Sandwell</b>	1,576	4%
<b>Rest of West Midlands</b>	2,843	7%
<b>Rest of UK</b>	2,693	6%
<b>All Commuting into Solihull for Work</b>	43,149	
<i>Source: ONS Census 2021</i>		

<b>Commuting Patterns of People Who Work in Solihull 2011</b>		
	Number	% Total
<b>Live in Solihull</b>	32,114	38%
<b>Live Outside Borough</b>	51,403	62%
<b>Total Work in Solihull</b>	83,517	
<i>Source: ONS Census 2021</i>		



<b>Commuting Patterns of People Who Work in Solihull but Live Elsewhere 2011</b>		
	Number	% Total in-Commute
<b>Birmingham</b>	26,479	52%
<b>Warwickshire</b>	6,210	12%
<b>Worcestershire</b>	4,288	8%
<b>Coventry</b>	3,072	6%
<b>Staffordshire</b>	2,548	5%
<b>Rest of West Midlands</b>	4,398	9%
<b>Rest of UK</b>	4,408	9%
<b>All Commuting into Solihull for Work</b>	51,403	
<i>Source: ONS Census 2021</i>		

## Qualifications

<b>Qualifications in the Population Aged 16 and Over 2021</b>			
Highest level of qualification	Solihull Count	% 16+ population	
		Solihull	England
<b>NVQ level 4 and above</b>	61,847	35%	34%
<b>NVQ level 3</b>	28,266	16%	17%
<b>NVQ level 2</b>	24,691	14%	13%
<b>NVQ level 1 and entry level qualifications</b>	16,623	10%	10%
<b>No qualifications</b>	30,642	18%	18%
<b>Other qualifications (inc. apprenticeships)</b>	12,434	7%	8%
<b>Population aged 16 years and over</b>	174,503		
<i>Source: ONS Census 2021</i>			

## Business Survival Rates

<b>Business Started in 2017 Still Operating in 2022 – 5-Year Survival Rate</b>	
Area	5-Year Business Survival Rate
<b>Solihull</b>	44.4%
<b>England</b>	39.4%
<b>West Midlands</b>	35.2%
<b>Birmingham</b>	32.1%
<b>Coventry</b>	37.3%
<b>Warwickshire</b>	40.7%
<i>Source: ONS Business Demography 2022</i>	



## Employment Rates

<b>% of 16-64 Year Olds in Employment – September 2023</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>% Working Age Employment Rate</b>
<b>Solihull</b>	77.9%
<b>England</b>	75.9%
<b>West Midlands</b>	74.8%
<i>Source: Annual Population Survey</i>	

## Workplace Jobs

<b>Employee Jobs 2022</b>			
	<b>Jobs</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Jobs per 1,000</b>
<b>Solihull</b>	148,000	217,678	679.9
<b>England</b>	27,153,000	57,106,398	475.5
<b>London</b>	5,607,000	8,866,180	632.4
<b>South East</b>	4,281,000	9,379,833	456.4
<b>West Midlands</b>	2,670,000	6,021,653	443.4
<i>Source: ONS Business Register &amp; Employment Survey</i>			

## Number of Business by Size and Sector

<b>Businesses by Employment Size Band 2023</b>				
<b>Size of Business</b>	<b>Employment Size</b>	<b>Solihull Count</b>	<b>% Business Total</b>	
			<b>Solihull</b>	<b>England</b>
<b>Micro Businesses</b>	0 to 4	6,285	78.3%	77.9%
	5 to 9	825	10.3%	11.3%
<b>Small Businesses</b>	10 to 19	455	5.7%	5.7%
	20 to 49	250	3.1%	3.1%
<b>Medium Sized Businesses</b>	50 to 99	90	1.1%	1.0%
	100 to 249	60	0.7%	0.6%
<b>Large Businesses</b>	250 to 499	15	0.2%	0.2%
	500 to 999	25	0.3%	0.1%
	1000+	20	0.2%	0.1%
<b>All Businesses</b>		8,025		
<i>Source: UK Business Counts 2023</i>				

<b>Solihull Businesses by Sector 2023</b>			
<b>Sector</b>	<b>Businesses</b>	<b>% Businesses</b>	<b>Location Quotient</b>
<b>Manufacturing</b>	255	3.2%	0.65
<b>Other Production</b>	155	1.9%	0.44
<b>Construction</b>	1,220	15.2%	1.09
<b>Wholesale &amp; Retail</b>	1,005	12.5%	0.85
<b>Transport &amp; Storage</b>	295	3.7%	0.77
<b>Accommodation &amp; Food</b>	355	4.4%	0.72
<b>Information &amp; Communication</b>	685	8.5%	1.17
<b>Financial &amp; Business Services</b>	2,850	35.5%	1.15
<b>Public Sector</b>	675	8.4%	1.37
<b>Other Services</b>	515	6.4%	0.95
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,025</b>		
<i>Source: ONS UK Business Counts</i>			