



***A Greater Birmingham  
for a Greater Britain***

**STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN 2016 – 2030**

**CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

On 29 July 2016, the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) published its revised Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) – *A Greater Birmingham for a Greater Britain* – as a draft for consultation.

The Plan had been developed following analysis of an extensive evidence base and the input of key partners from the private, public and academic sectors who are members of the LEP's governance structure.

Given the nature of the SEP, it was important that we tested our thinking with residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders and ultimately secured their support for our strategy.

This – our response to the consultation – sets out the rationale behind the consultation and the approach we took; and the feedback received, our responses to the issues raised; and how your views influenced the final Plan.

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES AND THE CHANGES WE HAVE MADE

The consultation sought views on six lines of inquiry – five of which sought quantitative responses. Across each of those questions, there was a very high level of support for the proposals as set out in the draft SEP. The following represents the feedback from the online survey:

1. **Vision:** 86% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed
2. **Mission and Core Objectives:** 93% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.
3. **Targets:** 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed
4. **Strategic Priorities:** 89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed
5. **Key Areas of Focus:** 89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

In general, positive feedback was received from the stakeholder engagement meetings and through the written responses.

As well as endorsing our overall approach, the consultation has led to a number of changes to the SEP:

- We have sought to make the SEP more distinctive and uniquely ‘Greater Birmingham’
- We have recognised the need to be more explicit about economic inclusion and have made clearer references to this throughout the SEP, including amending one of the core priorities to address this specifically
- We have recognised that in order to achieve our ambitions, we need to bring forward the date by which we will achieve our skills target to 2025
- We have agreed the key performance indicator for quality of life, taking account your views on the measures on which it should be based
- We have strengthened the references to our key sectors in the relevant sections – and have added a new section on Industrial Strategy, which contextualises our approach and strategic priorities around our key sectors

Much of the feedback provided has very clear implications for our thinking on implementation. Accordingly, the LEP will be seeking to work with those with whom it has consulted as we develop our plans to implement the SEP, and to deliver specific aspects of it. This will include working more proactively with a broader range of stakeholders, with whom we have identified shared ambitions.

# CONSULTATION

## Why we consulted

The SEP 2016-30 is ultimately based on our Strategy for Growth (2013) and SEP (2014). It was originally intended that this iteration would be a light-touch refresh; however, in taking stock of progress and in looking much further to the future, we are presenting a bold revision and an ambitious set of proposals for Greater Birmingham & Solihull.

As a consequence the LEP Board initiated a consultation exercise to test our thinking with partners and stakeholders. The intention was to secure “market permission” for our strategy – and, in doing so, secure the buy-in of wider partners to work with us to achieve our shared goals.

## Who we consulted with

The consultation period – which ran from 29 July to 9 September 2016 – was open to all individuals, organisations and groups with a stake in the city region economy, including business, the public sector, voluntary and community sectors, universities, colleges, business organisations, and environmental groups. The LEP deliberately cast its net as wide as possible, to try and touch all of the key stakeholders across the LEP area – and beyond – who have stake in the economic future of the city region. We deliberately tried to touch both those who are traditionally engaged with issues at a regional or city level, but also groups who have historically found it difficult for their voices to be heard by regional policy makers.

To that end, we created an online survey and ran eight targeted stakeholder events by the conclusion of the consultation.

Through the Twitter campaign, GBSLEP reached nearly 50,000 people – almost 200 responses to the consultation were received as set out below.

## Channels

### Social media

A social media campaign, with Twitter activity making 47,372 impressions through the followers of the GBSLEP account and other influential accounts with whom GBSLEP is affiliated.

### Respondents to the online survey

- Residents (30)
- Start-ups (4)
- SMEs (24)
- Large/corporate businesses (4)
- Business representative bodies (3)

- Local Enterprise Partnerships (1)
- Local authorities (5)
- Government departments / agencies (4)
- Universities (3)
- Colleges (0)
- Private education providers (1)
- Social enterprise / third sector (6)
- 8 respondents chose not to answer.

### **Focus Groups**

Meetings were held with the following stakeholder groups:

- Creative & cultural industries (20 attended)
- Social enterprises (7 attended)
- Trades unions (14 attended)
- Business Improvement Districts (10 attended)
- Business leaders in Birmingham (8 attended)
- Business leaders in Solihull (15 attended)
- Business leaders in southern Staffordshire (8 attended)
- A wider meeting of stakeholders from the public, private and education sectors (37 attended)

Planned events with young people, north Worcestershire business leaders and start-ups were postponed due to lack of attendance. The intention is that discussions with these stakeholders are progressed through the development of the implementation plan.

### **Written representations**

The following stakeholders submitted written representations:

- A5 Transport Partnership
- Afro-Caribbean businesses
- Arts Council England
- Birmingham City Council (Growth & Transportation)
- Cannock Chase District Council
- Energy Systems Catapult
- Highways England
- IM Properties

- Lichfield Garrick
- Medilink
- Nurton Developments
- NWEDR
- ReWyre
- Richborough Estates
- Sustainable Housing Action Partnership
- Staffordshire County Council
- Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Transport for the West Midlands
- University of Birmingham
- Woodland Trust

## Key questions

Whilst the LEP Board sought all views on the SEP, the consultation itself was based on six lines of inquiry – five of which sought quantitative responses:

- The vision for Greater Birmingham, and the extent to which it is appropriately ambitious
- The identified core objectives and strategic priorities, and the extent to which they are the key issues on which GBSLEP should focus in pursuit of our growth agenda
- Whether the metrics we have identified to measure our progress are the right ones
- The key opportunities and challenges we have identified, and the extent to which they are the ones on which we should focus

One of which was entirely qualitative:

- How we can work with you to deliver our SEP

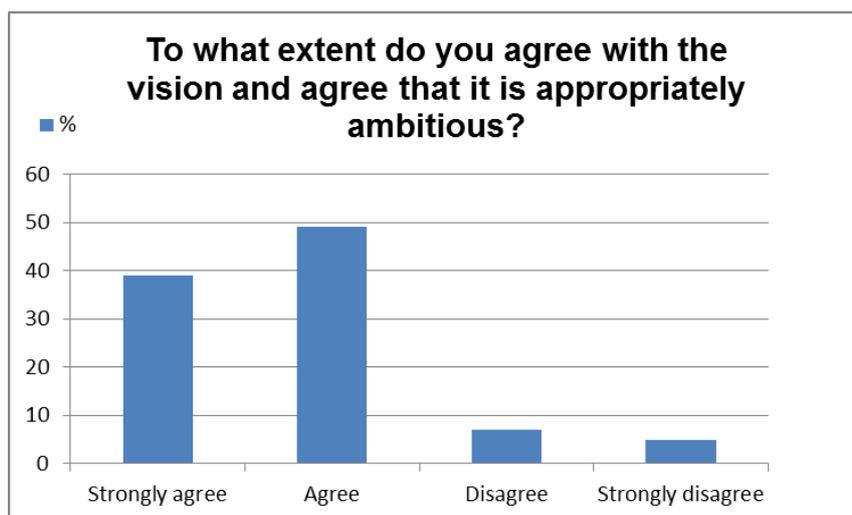
Further detail on each of these lines of inquiry is set out below.

## OUR VISION

### We asked:

*The vision for Greater Birmingham is to be the major driver of the UK economy outside of London and to become a top global city region in 2030 – one that harnesses its traditions of creativity, innovation and design; its diversity and youthfulness; its global connections, technology and sector leadership; and its world-class cultural assets and quality of life, to inspire, develop retain and attract talent for a smarter, more sustainable and more prosperous future. To what extent do you agree with this vision and agree that it is appropriately ambitious?*

### You said:



86% of survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the vision. Generally, you told us that whilst you agreed with the vision and the ambition in the SEP, the SEP lacked distinctiveness and that GBSLEP needed to do more to differentiate itself from other cities.

*I would strongly endorse the proposed guiding vision for the LEP to become a top global city region. I know first-hand as a business leader and resident what a great place Greater Birmingham is and it is my belief that we need to be more upfront about our message and not be afraid to shout about our assets and achievements*

*Distinctiveness... the LEP might wish to consider approaches to ensure that the SEP adopts a more distinctive positioning to further differentiate GBS from other metropolitan areas*

### Our response

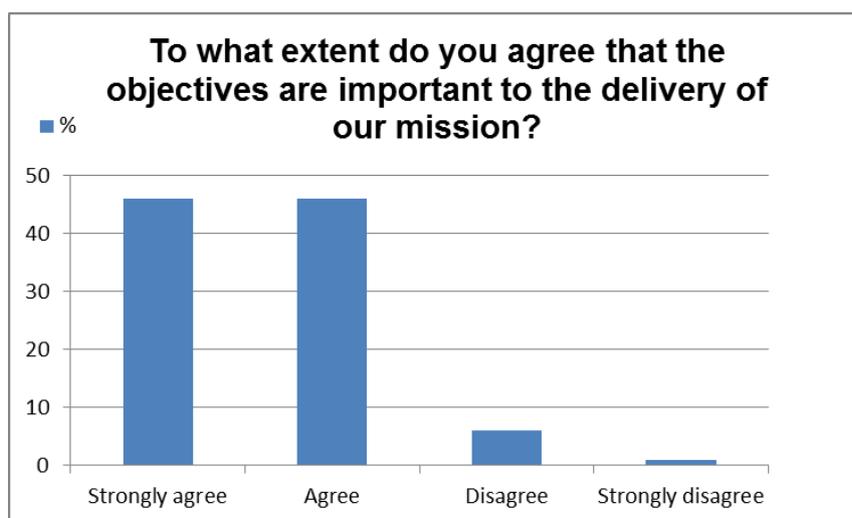
GBSLEP recognises this challenge. In the final version, we have responded by including stronger references to Greater Birmingham's history and heritage; a stronger focus on our key assets; and more emphasis on our achievements, track record and factors specific to our region. Quotes and images have also been used in the SEP to highlight the area's distinctiveness.

## MISSION AND CORE OBJECTIVES

### We asked:

*Our mission is to create jobs and grow the economy of Greater Birmingham & Solihull and in so doing raise the quality of life for all of the LEP's population. We believe the successful delivery of our mission relies on five core objectives. To what extent do you agree that these objectives are important to the delivery of our mission?*

### You said:



93% of respondents to the survey agreed or strongly agreed.

In written responses and discussions at meetings, some consultees felt strongly that the successful delivery of the mission will require greater consideration of the roles of other actors than is currently set out in the SEP. It was also clear that economic inclusion is a priority for many of our stakeholders.

*We strongly support the proposed core objectives set out in the consultation draft and in particular welcomes the unequivocal focus on the need to increase business and workforce productivity and competitiveness by raising skills levels and stimulating innovation.*

### Our response

The LEP Board is agreed that we will need to work more closely with a broader range of partners (such as social enterprises, Business Improvement Districts and trades unions) in order to achieve our ambitions. To that end, clearer references have been made in the final version, particularly in the last section, "Making it Happen" and will form a key part of our implementation plan.

In addition, we have amended our core objectives to specifically highlight "more inclusive growth" as a crucial part of the delivery of our mission.

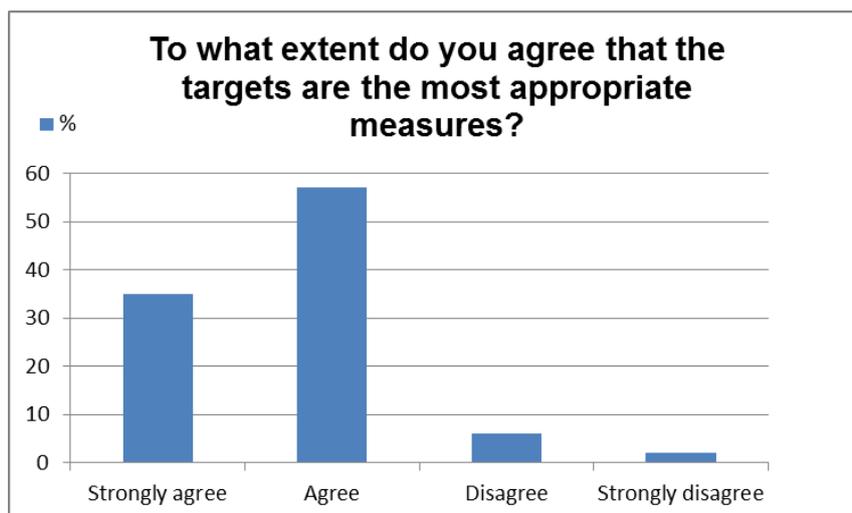
*Particularly post-Brexit, the area needs to tackle income inequalities*

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND TARGETS

### We asked:

*Given our mission, we have identified a number of indicators as those against which we will measure our performance. To what extent do you agree that these are the most appropriate measures?*

### You said:



92% of respondents to the survey either agreed or strongly agreed.

In written responses and discussions at meetings, consultees recognised the challenge of driving significant jobs growth and additional GVA in tandem, alongside reducing levels of unemployment. In setting a target of creating 250,000 private sector jobs to 2030 and of reducing unemployment to the national average by 2020, it is not clear how many of these jobs and employment opportunities will be high value added and, if insufficient of them are, it may have a negative impact on GVA growth.

Some consultees questioned whether a target of private sector job creation was too narrow; whether GBSLEP should be seeking absolute jobs growth, and should therefore include public sector jobs and jobs in social enterprises and charities.

In addition, a significant number of consultees recognised the need to resolve the skills challenge, but felt that NVQ3 was not a sufficiently aspirational standard given the vision of Greater Birmingham; nor was meeting the national average for NVQ3 by 2030.

Whilst GBSLEP had not at the time identified an appropriate measure for quality of life, consultees welcomed the recognition of the importance of quality of life and made a number of suggestions for measures that should be included.

Finally, there was a wide variety of suggestions from consultees for additional measures, including for inward investment; businesses attracted; business tourism; and sustainability.

Quality of life is referred to throughout the document with no measures or substance. It is the quality of life that will attract investment and the right people for the jobs you wish to create. Quality of life must have measures that include health (mental and physical), work/life balance, quality housing and good quality public open space.

New businesses attracted to the region? Increasing inward investment? Increasing business tourism?

We strongly support the proposed core objectives set out in the consultation draft and in particular welcomes the unequivocal focus on the need to increase business and workforce productivity and competitiveness by raising skills levels and stimulating innovation.

## Our response

GBSLEP recognises this tension between growing employment and GVA growth, and has therefore referenced in the SEP the need for a combined approach to achieve both aims. We have also been clear that the key to success is in driving greater innovation, and recognise that the precise points of balance on this will vary across sectors.

The LEP Board considered the challenge regarding NVQ level 4. Whilst the Board recognises the points that were made during the consultation, given the number of people across Greater Birmingham with no or low level qualifications, Directors agreed that the priority must be achieving a significantly more solid foundation on which to build.

However, the LEP Board agrees with the challenge posed regarding the target date for meeting the national average for NVQ level 3. The Board has therefore decided to bring the target date forward to 2025. In doing so, the Board recognises that achieving this revised target is extremely challenging given the baseline and will require the concerted efforts of all key partners.

The LEP has noted the points raised regarding quality of life and has decided to use the *Good Growth for Cities Index* as its main indicator. The *Good Growth for Cities Index*, produced by Pricewaterhouse Cooper and Demos, is comprised of the following measures:

- Security of jobs
- Adequacy of income levels
- Good health
- Work/life balance
- Affordability of housing
- Sectoral balance of the economy
- Quality of transport systems
- The potential to be in employment and earn a living
- Protection of the environment
- Fair distribution of income and wealth

The Board felt that this measure, in contrast with some others, was sufficiently broad and holistic as to respond to many of the points raised during the consultation. The Board recognises that this is a relatively new indicator (having only been available since 2012), and comes with a fairly long time lag on production. The Board also recognises that Greater Birmingham & Solihull is currently regarded as being “below average” amongst the other LEPs. It is therefore anticipated that whilst there is considerable scope for improvement (and the Board has accordingly set the target to be the leading Core City LEP against this measure), progress against it may be slow.

Finally, the Board has considered the desire of consultees for a broader set of targets. Given the need to monitor a small number of key performance indicators and to demonstrate how GBSLEP will contribute to the WMCA targets, the Board has agreed to keep the current suite of headline indicators. However, the Board will develop a broader set of sub-indicators that will be used to monitor the ongoing implementation of the SEP and the delivery of key aspects of it. This will include a consideration of public sector jobs growth (social enterprise jobs are included within the definition of private sector jobs used by GBSLEP). Given the remit of LEPs, the Board was keen that the focus

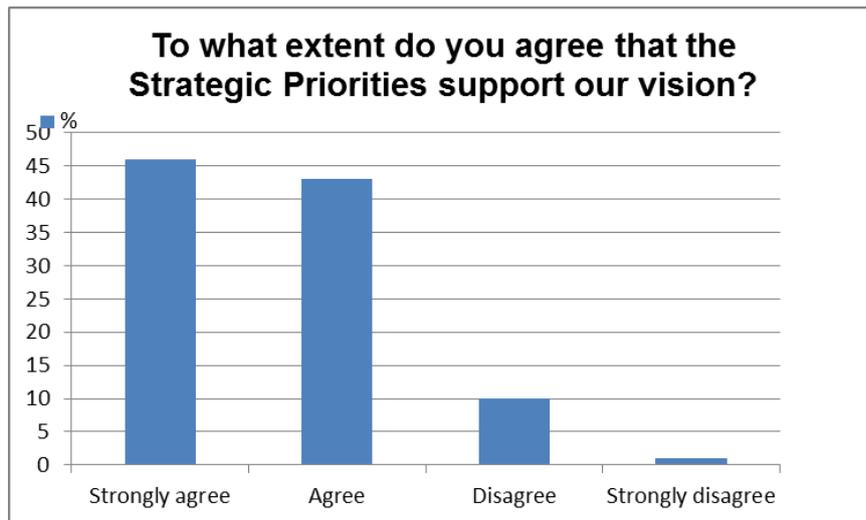
remained on private sector job creation; however, the Board also recognises the critical role that the public sector plays and the opportunities to grow the economy that could come from public sector relocations, for example. The Board has therefore agreed to measure public sector job growth as one of those sub-indicators.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

## We asked:

We have identified three strategic priorities that underpin our vision to become a top global city region in 2030. To what extent do you agree that these priorities support our vision?

## You said:



89% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the priorities.

As well as the broad support expressed, some of the key challenges raised were regarding inclusivity and sustainability.

In addition, specific feedback was received from certain sectors as to how best to capture and ultimately address their key opportunities and challenges.

*We have great assets and infrastructure with the Airport and the HS2 potential which should ensure greater global connectivity. This will be essential for the region if we are to support international business growth.*

*How will these three strategic priorities deliver on our climate change, resource use and betterment of nature obligations?*

*The region should again become internationally synonymous with being a smart play zone where innovation and creativity are embraced as a way of being; with the facilities and passion for translation into product and services for the world across a diverse range of new and existing market sectors*

## Our response:

Whilst the mission – and therefore the scope – of GBSLEP is clearly focussed on creating jobs and growing the economy, the Board recognises that there is a need for greater economic inclusion (particularly in parts of Birmingham and north Solihull). This is a key theme that runs through the document and is an agenda that the LEP Board has recognised as underpinning the whole SEP. As

mentioned earlier, the Board has agreed to amend our core objectives to have specific regard to this agenda.

In addition, whilst the focus is on improving economic outcomes, the Board recognises that growth must be sustainable and must be managed in such a way as to be sensitive to our communities and the environment. The Board has responded by choosing an indicator for quality of life that considers both of these factors.

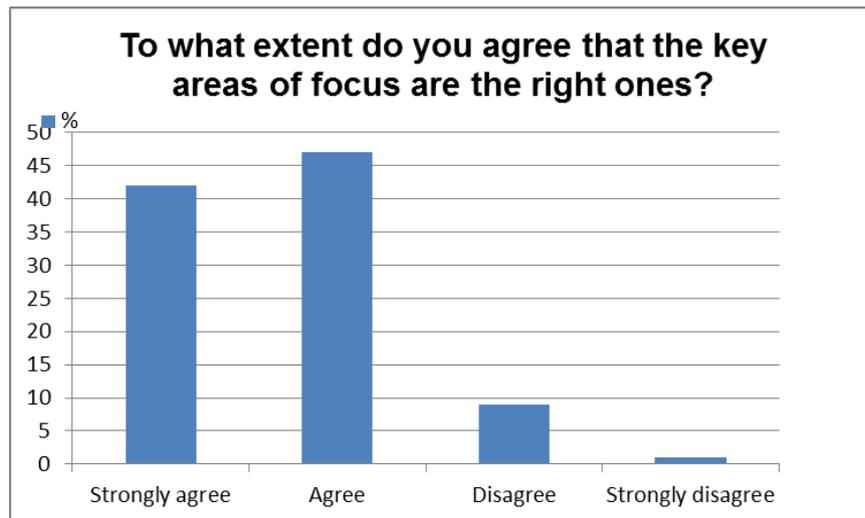
Finally, in recognition of the importance of our key sectors to driving economic growth, we have added a section on Industrial Strategy which contextualises our three strategic priorities around our key sectors.

## KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

### We asked:

*To deliver on our vision, we propose to focus our activity on 11 key opportunities and challenges. To what extent do you agree that they are the right areas on which to focus?*

### You said:



89% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the key areas of focus.

Specific feedback was received from certain sectors as to how best to capture and ultimately address their key opportunities and challenges. As well as the broad support expressed, the majority of consultees were keen to focus on how best to deliver the areas of focus.

*11 key challenges seem a lot but the framework proposed in the SEP is useful in structuring how these are connected towards achieving GVA and quality of life improvements.*

*Many will find it hard to disagree with the key areas of focus. More challenging is to develop a set of interventions that will deliver this.*

### Our response:

A number of changes have been made throughout the document to make stronger references to our key sectors. Stakeholder feedback has been particularly influential in shaping the “Enhance and Harness the Potential of Cultural and Creative Assets” section. As mentioned above, we have also added a section on Industrial Strategy.

Having secured “market permission” from our residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders, the LEP Board recognises the importance of moving quickly to develop an implementation plan that will set out how GBSLEP will work with key partners to develop and deliver the interventions required to achieve our shared ambitions.

# IMPLEMENTATION

## **We asked:**

*Looking ahead to the implementation of our SEP, how can we work with you to deliver our mission and vision?*

## **You said:**

Across the consultation, a key theme has been the desire of consultees and stakeholders to work more closely with GBSLEP on areas of mutual benefit.

A considerable amount of the feedback received has been to agree with the proposals set out in the SEP – but also to provide suggestions as to how we should deliver.

## **Our response:**

The GBSLEP Board has been overwhelmed by the strength of the desire of existing and potential new partners to work together to achieve these ambitions.

In particular, the LEP Board recognises that there is significant potential to work a number of stakeholder groups including (but not limited to) Business Improvement Districts, social enterprises and trades unions. A key part of the forthcoming implementation plan will be to determine precisely where and how we can work together.

The LEP will also use the suggestions that have been provided by consultees to inform the development of our plans for delivery. GBSLEP will engage with those who responded as those plans are shaped.

## OTHER COMMENTS

*The draft SEP 2016-30 did not give sufficient weight to the strong partnerships forged with the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP and Worcestershire LEP.*

The LEP Board recognised this as an oversight and has corrected this in the final version.

*As well as a great deal of positivity, some stakeholders expressed concern about local identity being subsumed within "Greater Birmingham" and a potentially negative impact on communities, their amenities and the local economy.*

The Board is committed to working together across sectors and across administrative boundaries to improve economic outcomes and, ultimately, the quality of life of those that live and work here – which is why considerable emphasis has been placed on a new performance measure for quality of life, and on a commitment to developing thriving towns and local centres. The Board recognises that our city region is successful because of its varied geography and its diversity and, through the SEP, is keen to see these strengths continue to flourish.

However, the LEP Board also recognises that this is a legitimate concern. To that end, the Board is committed to continuously engaging with our communities, and to working through key partners such as local authorities to do so, as we look to put in place the interventions to achieve our ambitions.

## **CONCLUSION**

The outcome of the consultation exercise has been an incredibly important part of the SEP's development. It has demonstrated that there is broad support for our approach to growing the region's economy and has provided us with valuable feedback that has been used to strengthen the final document.

Our shared challenge now with the residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders of Greater Birmingham is to deliver and to work together in pursuit of our shared ambitions.

We look forward to working with you to making it happen.