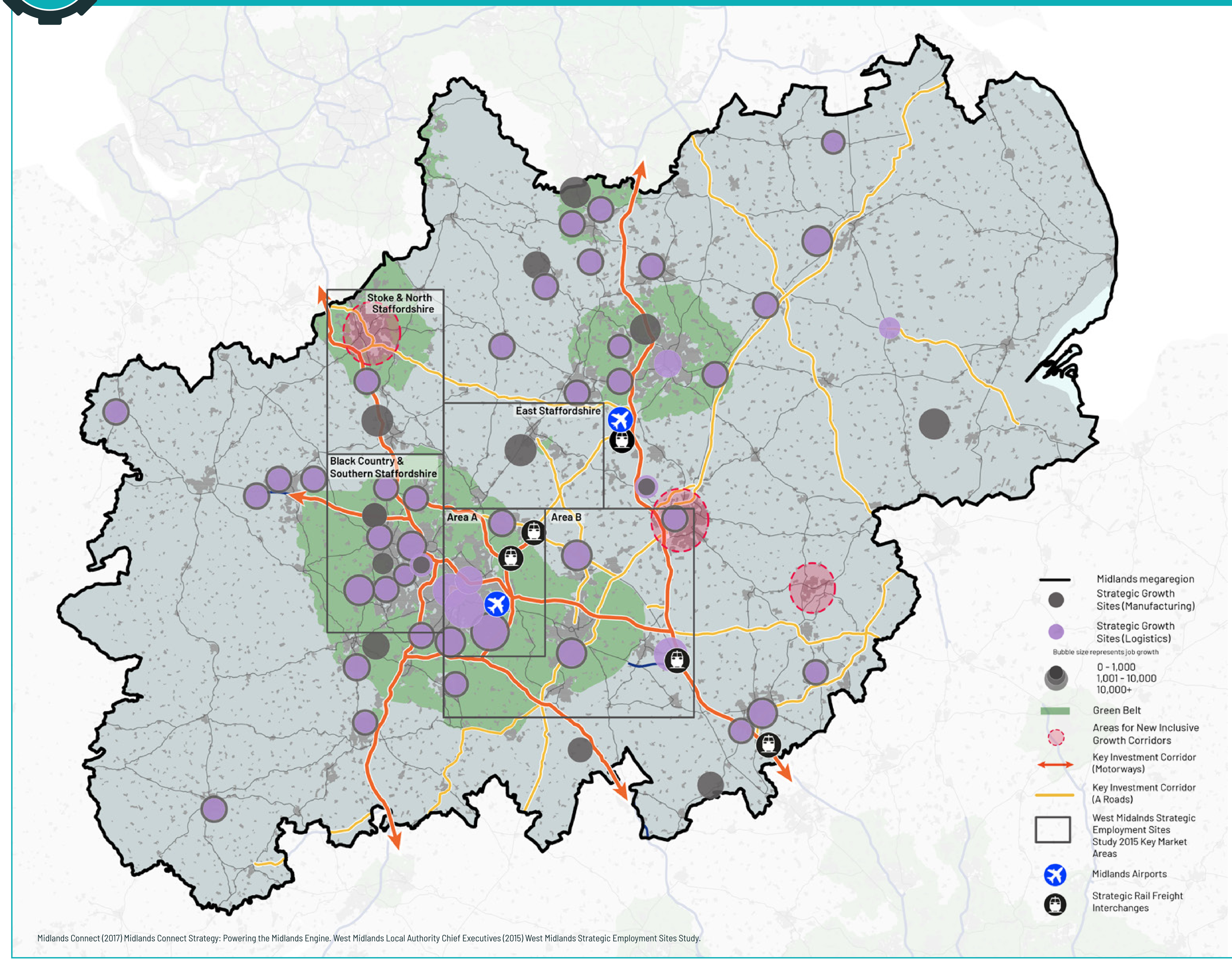
A Prosperous Midlands



1. Establish Sector-specific Centres of Excellence and Innovation Boards.
2. Strengthening Key Investment Corridors and Identifying new Inclusive Growth Corridors.
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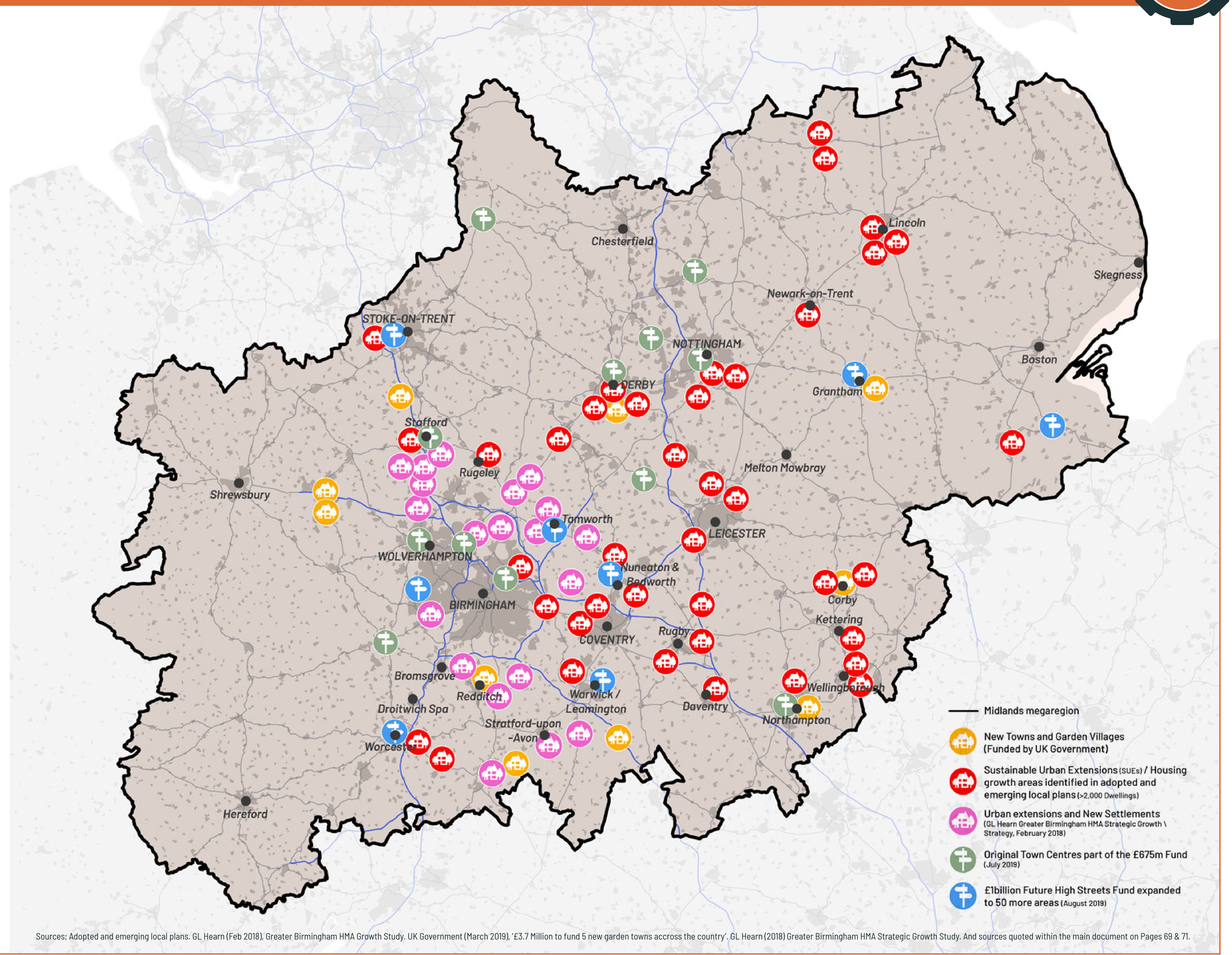
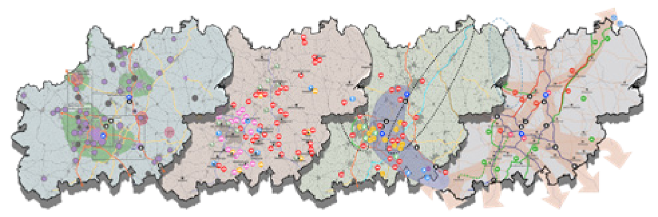


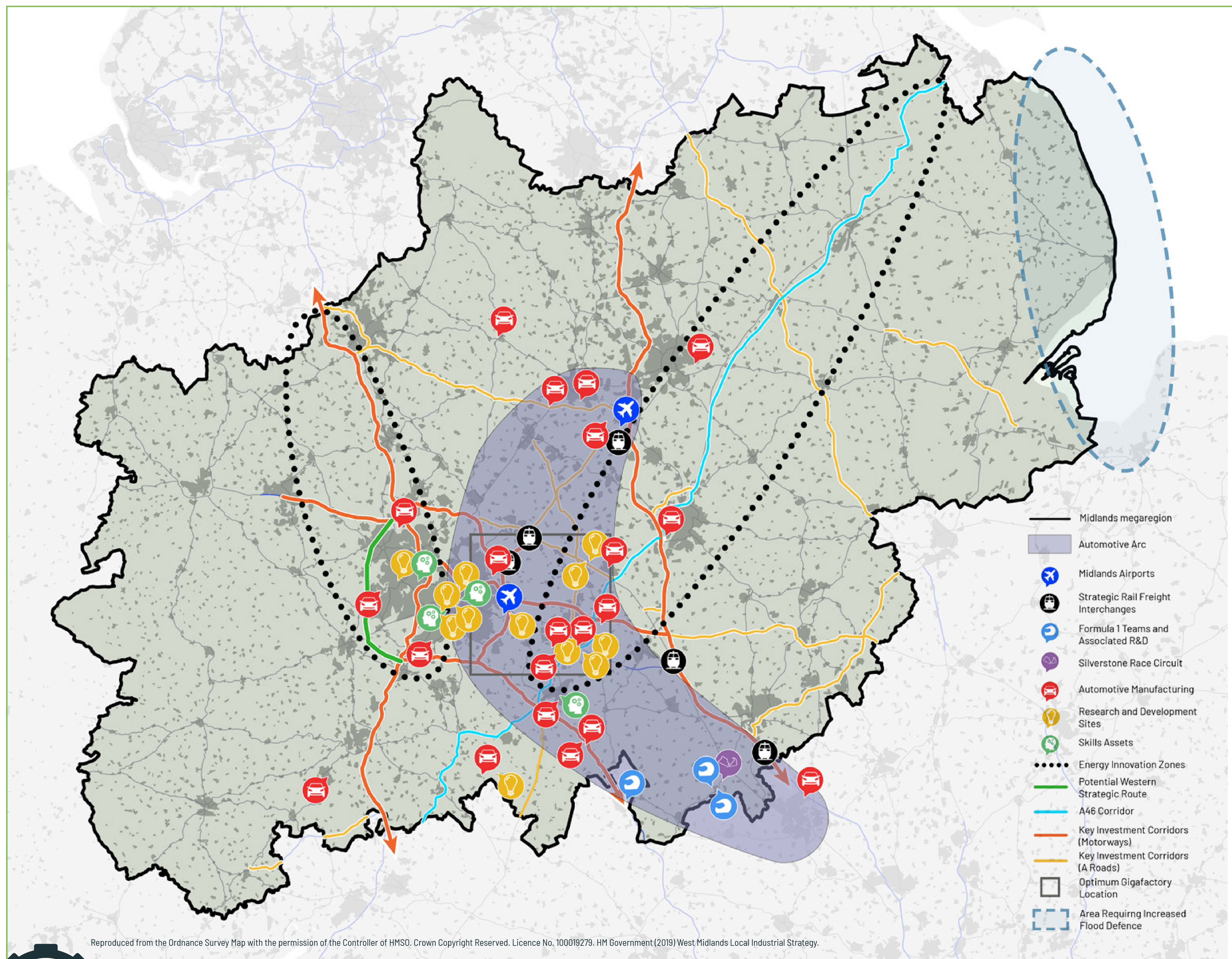


ONE POWERHOUSE

Midlands Spatial Blueprint

A vision for Britain. **Planned.**

ONE POWERHOUSE | RSA | BARTON WILLMORE



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7. A holistic approach to Flood Defence and Water Management to protect the UK's National Food Security.

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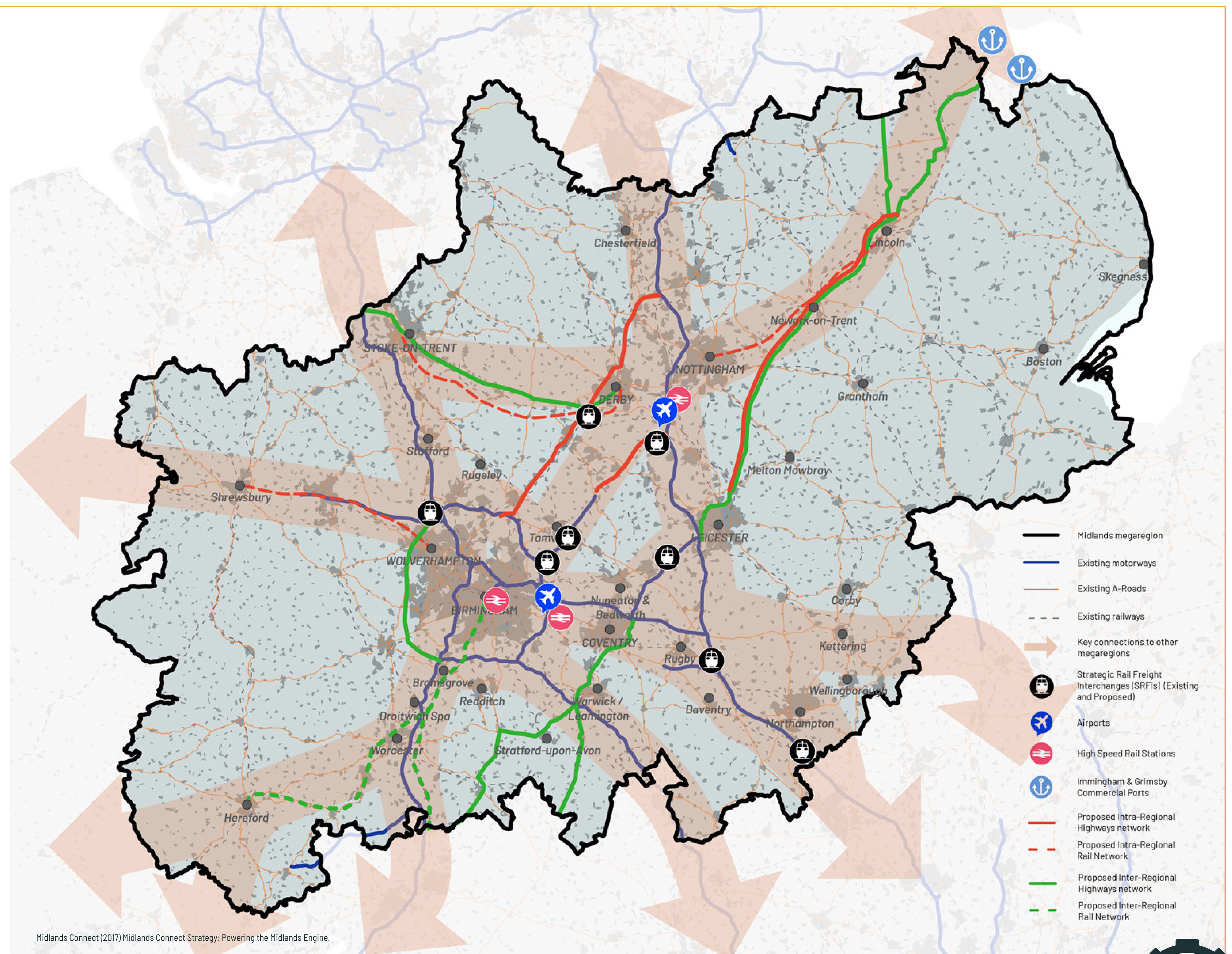


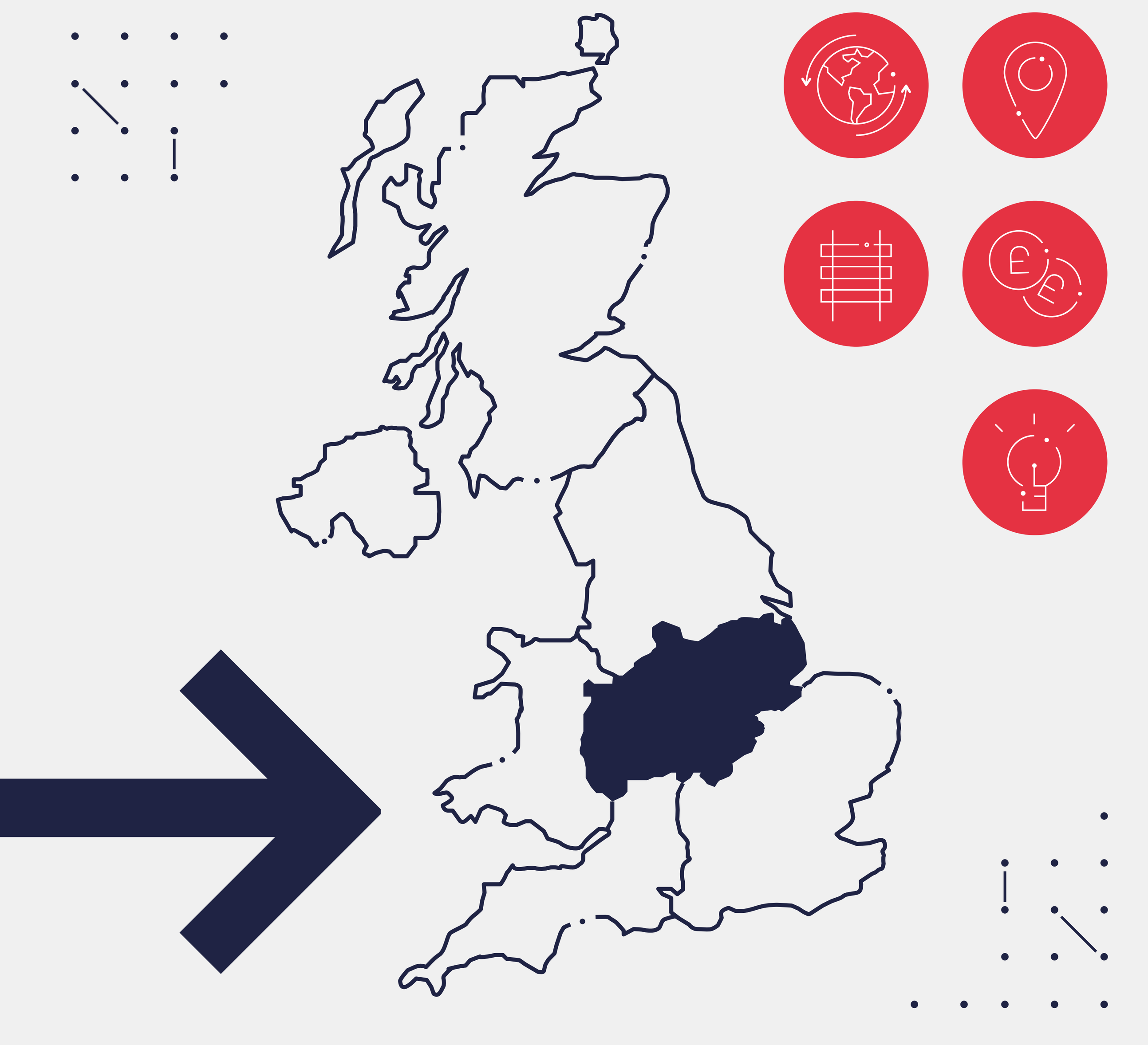
Infrastructure, the Enabler of Growth

In partnership

ONE POWERHOUSE + RSA

2020

One Powerhouse
Towards a spatial blueprint
Midlands



BARTON WILLMORE

A Vision for Britain. Planned.

The One Powerhouse Consortium, supported by The Sir Hugh and Lady Ruby Sykes Charitable Trust, believes that a substantial part of the problem of regional inequality in the UK can be solved not just by money, but by the transformative potential of spatial planning. Spatial planning is the 'where' of decisions. It looks at a defined geographical area and makes an assessment of everything contained in that area – towns, cities, housing, schools, universities, roads, rails, airports, offices, factories, hospitals, energy sources, museums, parks and leisure activities - and makes a plan to develop those assets for the benefit of the people who live in that region, now and for the future.

Regional inequality in the UK

Today, just under half of the UK population live in regions with a comparable productivity to the poorer parts of former East Germany – and comparable living standards are worse. According to the recent UK2070 Commission, the UK today is more intraregionally unequal than Germany was in 1995. Since reunification, Germany has since pulled itself together, through decisive investment programmes underpinned by visionary spatial planning. During a similar period the UK, on the other hand, has fragmented.

The nature and extent of the so-called 'North-South' divide can be presented in many forms. Maps showing economic productivity, educational attainment and poor health all present sharp disparities between regions and nations. Current forecasts suggest the situation will only get worse and that in fact the economy of London and the South East is 'decoupling' from the rest of the UK (McCann 2016). The repercussions are stark and grow more evident all the time.

Spatially-sensitive policy is not simply a matter of social justice and political prudence. Regional prosperity drives national prosperity and so regional imbalance constrains overall performance. Accommodating agglomeration in some places while servicing mounting welfare bills in others damages the UK's fiscal balance and exacerbates the underlying problem.

The value of place and scale

There is evidence that spatial planning has already begun to deliver results in the UK. We are not alone in recognising that the two 'regional economies' that have the highest levels of productivity are those where there are coherent regional economic plans: London and Scotland.

Indeed, in England, there is good work taking place through some Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Combined Authorities and Mayoralties but not all. In strategic planning and investment terms, these tend to be rather small and the outcome is rather patchwork.

Our Plan

The clear 'gap' in terms of economic planning in the UK, therefore, is at the level of the English regions. Any spatial strategy needs to bring together the best local industrial strategies and plans within a wider regional strategy framework. The foundations of how this can be achieved are already present. The regions of England are already coming together: The Northern Powerhouse, The Midlands Engine, The Great South West and The Wider South East all exist as functional identities.

Our ambition has been to prepare a series of draft spatial blueprints that will better enable decision-making and prioritisation of investment across the country and thus help the UK as a whole develop over the long term – creating opportunity for all, jobs for all and prosperity for all.

Our definition of a blueprint is that of *'an early plan or design that explains how something might be achieved'* (Cambridge dictionary). While based on thorough analysis and evaluation, our draft blueprints are by no means the finished product but they point to what could be achieved with better resourcing, co-ordination and support.

The technical work has been led by planning consultancies linked to the regions: Atkins in the North, Barton Willmore in the Midlands and the South West and Aecom in the South East. The One Powerhouse Consortium has also worked hand-in-hand with the UK2070 Commission and drawn upon the support of the well-respected think tank the RSA.

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Challenges

10 Strategic Challenges have been identified that the Blueprint will seek to address:

Challenge 1:
Lack of a Strategic Planning Framework

The absence of a pan-Midlands strategic tier has resulted in complex political and administrative overlapping geographies that can result in un-coordinated, ad hoc and disjointed spatial outcomes.

Challenge 2:
Tackling Unprecedented Growth

Additional development land is required for the large-scale provision of homes, jobs and infrastructure.

Challenge 3:
Responding to an Ageing Population

As the ratio of the dependent population increases this will have a profound impact on the Midland's economy: the public purse, health industry, housing market and transport system.

Challenge 4:
Delivering Inter-Regional Connectivity

Transport and infrastructure planning also needs to recognise inter-regional connectivity and the functional economic relationships with areas outside the Midlands.

Challenge 5:
Increasing International Trade and Exports

The Midlands must maintain its strength associated with international trade and exports post-Brexit.

Challenge 6:
Addressing Poor East-West Connectivity

Nottingham, Derby and Leicester, whilst inter-connected, are poorly connected to the West Midlands.

Challenge 7:
Adapting to Technological Change (Increasing Automation and Robotisation)

The Midlands has a heavy reliance on sectors that are highly susceptible to rapid technological change (e.g. robotics, automation, Artificial Intelligence (AI), data analytics and 3D Printing).

Challenge 8:
'The Employment Land Crisis'

The megaregion's good track record of securing inward investment is in danger of being constrained by an impending shortage of strategic employment sites. The West Midlands Green Belt is a significant constraint in this regard.

Challenge 9:
Protecting Valuable Agricultural Land

More extreme weather events present a significant risk to prime agricultural land in Lincolnshire.

Challenge 10:
Producing Adequate Amounts of 'Clean' and 'Green' Energy

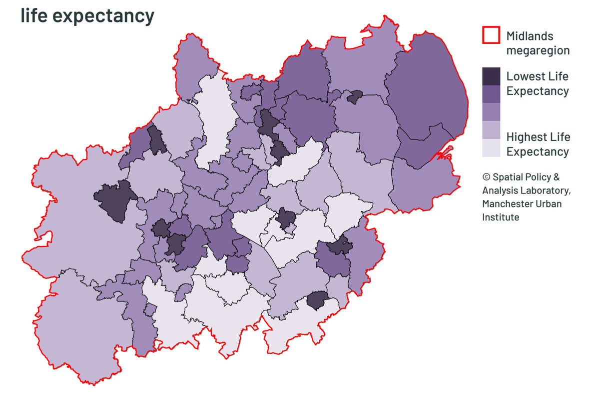
Electricity capacity is constrained in parts of the Midlands and can stymie strategic residential and commercial development. Given the growth ambitions across the megaregion, these network capacity constraints are becoming increasingly problematic.

Midlands Demography

» Telford and Wrekin, Stoke, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Northampton, Corby, Leicester, Ashfield, Nottingham and Lincoln have some of the lowest life expectancy figures in the UK. Derbyshire Dales and Stratford-on-Avon are in the highest quintile in terms of life expectancy.

» The Midland's core cities have a relatively young population whilst the suburban and rural counties are ageing rapidly. For example, by 2036, 1 in 3 people in Lincolnshire will be over the age of 65.

Years, quintiles of Local Authorities ranked by life expectancy



» Coventry and Corby are expected to have the highest rates of population growth in the UK. Other authorities will experience much lower growth, with Tamworth experiencing population decline.

» The Midlands suffers from low levels of productivity relative to the rest of the UK. This is largely due to the demise of manufacturing industries in certain areas and a lack of follow-up strategic intervention.

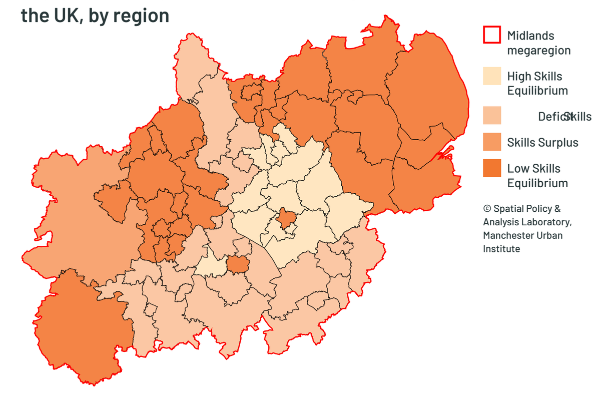
» The West Midlands has the lowest employment rate of any mayoral authority (71%) and an above average unemployment rate of 5.7%.

» Greater Lincolnshire and Staffordshire are suffering from a lack of access to skilled, well-paid jobs.

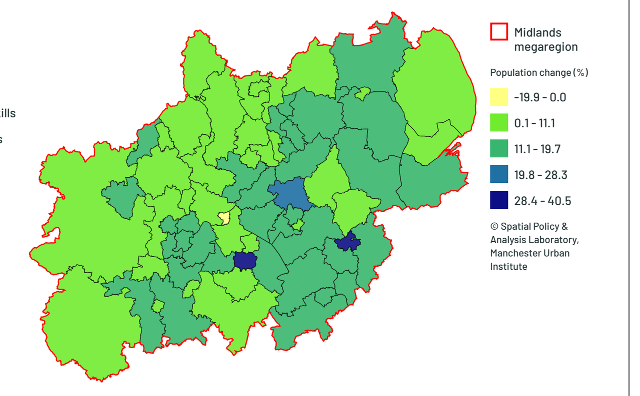
» The Midlands has no authority in the highest quartile for academic qualification attainment. Greater Lincolnshire contains authorities with the lowest attainment for working adults.

» Some areas spend more as a percentage of their GDP on R&D than others with the eastern part of the megaregion spending a relatively small amount compared to Derby, Nottingham and the Cyber Valley Cluster in the south west.

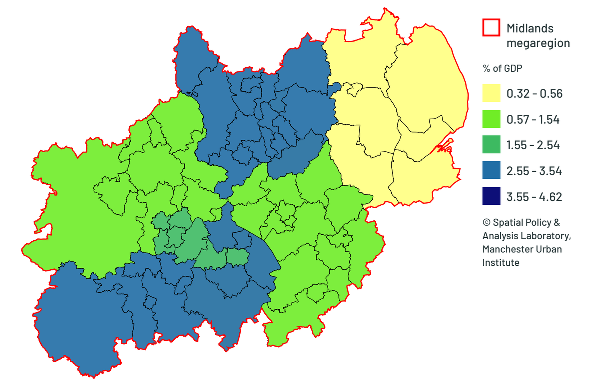
Pay, productivity, skill levels and occupational make-up in the UK, by region



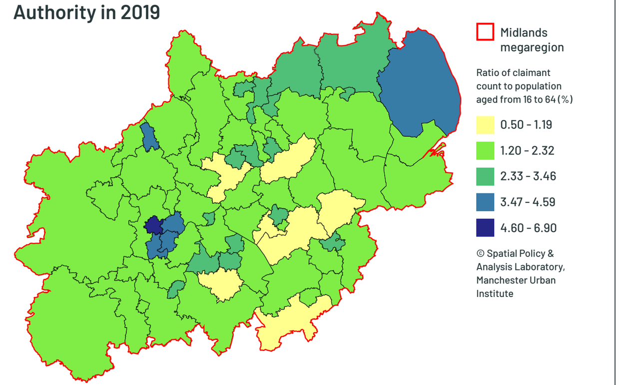
Population change from 2014-2039 by Local Authority



Estimated % of local GDP on R&D expenditure in 2016



Unemployment rate (claimant count) by Local Authority in 2019



The Midlands Context

The Midlands is home to over 10 million people and its population is more dispersed compared to other megaregions. It comprises of a series of core cities, smaller cities, rural centres and villages, commuter towns, new towns and de-industrialised areas.

The greatest concentration of people reside in its centre with Birmingham followed by Coventry. Leicester is technically the largest city in the East Midlands, however this is a result of tight Green Belt boundaries restricting the outward expansion of Nottingham. Urban centres and transport corridors are separated by large stretches of agricultural and Green Belt land.

The megaregion is, to some extent, partitioned by the A5. The East and West Midlands have notably different economies and east-west connectivity problems have long undermined intra-regional economic collaboration. Consequently, strong functional relationships exist between the Midlands and surrounding regions.

The West Midlands economy is dominated by a large urban conurbation which encompasses Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton and accounts for approximately half of the West Midlands' population. It is home to a number of manufacturing facilities, including a world-class automotive cluster around Coventry. Growth initiatives are generally urban-centric and pipeline infrastructure projects, predominantly HS2, look set to reinforce this trend.

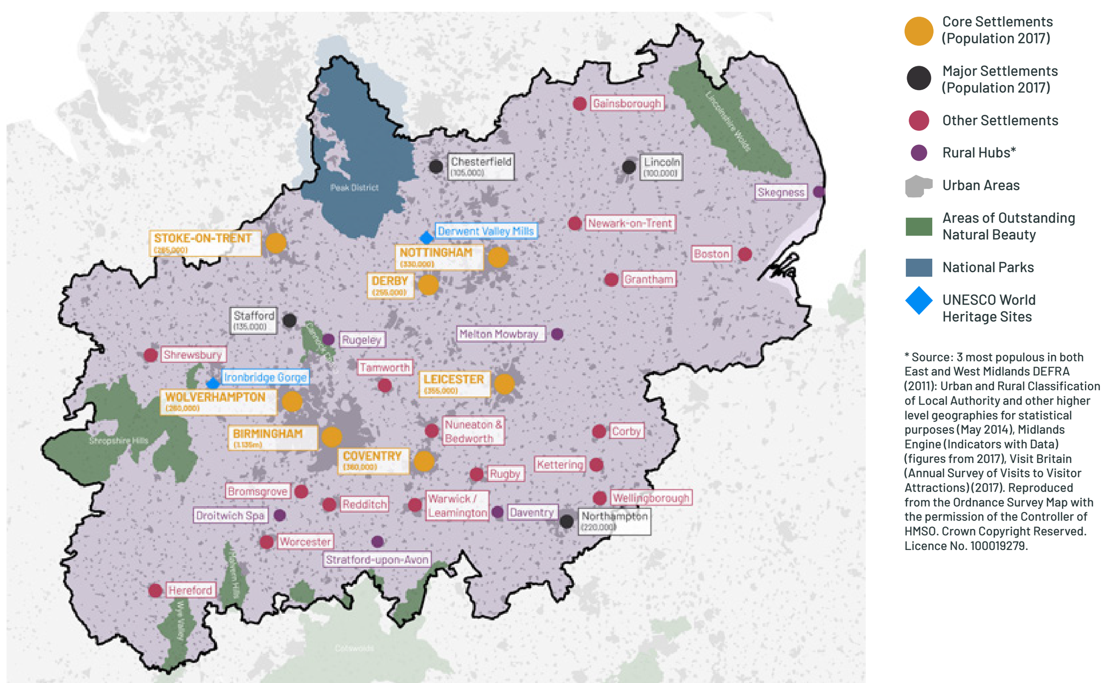
By contrast, the East Midlands is polycentric in character: Derby, Leicester and Nottingham – the main urban centres - are separated by more rural swathes of land. Nottingham has a service sector focus, Derby has a rich manufacturing base and – alongside a historic textiles industry - Leicester contains a relatively high proportion of SMEs. The A46 and A1 connect Lincoln, Newark, Gainsborough and Grantham to the rest of the region and are an important route for freight coming from the ports of Grimsby and Immingham, as well as for the energy and food industries in the East Midlands.

Midlands population growth Modelling to 2070

2011	2031	2051	2071
10.1m	10.3m	12.3m	14.7m

Midlands job growth modelling to 2070

2011	2031	2051	2071
4.6m	4.7m	5.7m	6.8m



A Unity of Purpose

Implementing a pan-Midlands spatial strategy is challenging due to its complex and convoluted institutional structure. It comprises numerous national, regional, sub-regional and localised institutions that have different (sometimes competing and contradictory) interests. This has resulted in a piecemeal and disjointed approach to planning that is exacerbated by the East Midlands/West Midlands dichotomy.

There is a need for a more joined-up, collegiate and transparent approach to governance and implementation if the Midlands' growth ambitions are to be realised.

To achieve this, there is an opportunity to re-ignite strategic spatial planning to plug this gap through a unified institutional body, such as an ME9 'super-LEP' that brings together the constituent LEPs, or even a Midlands Engine Economic Growth Board. It is our view that this would achieve the following:

1) Inclusive Growth

Ensure growth occurs in a manner that delivers economic prosperity, quality of place and reduces growth inequality across the megaregion.

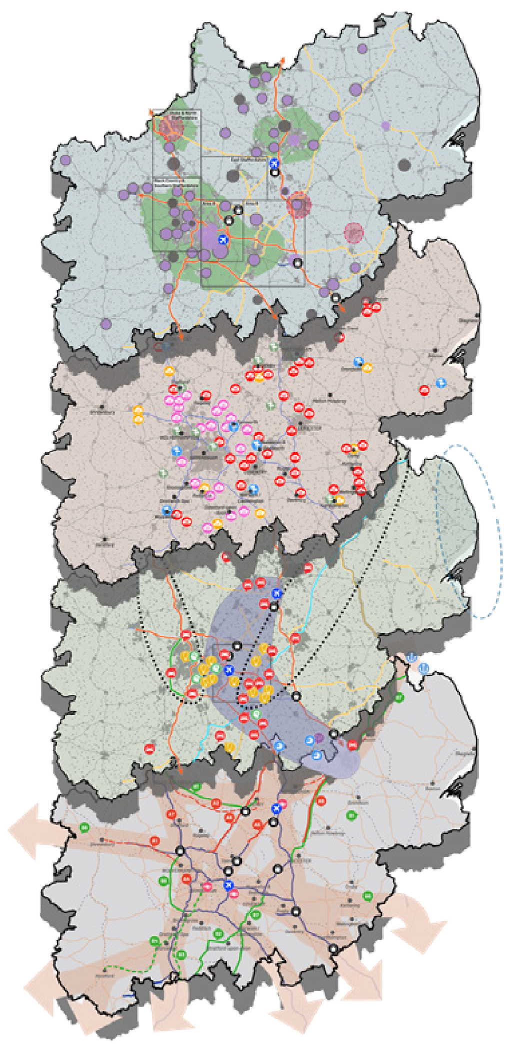
2) Expedient Delivery

Coordinates delivery of infrastructure that drives growth across the megaregion and uses a plethora of planning powers and instruments in its rapid, co-ordinated implementation.

3) Deepening Collaboration

Build on expertise to enable a range of collaborative delivery models comprising public and private sector partners and developing relationships with other UK megaregions to drive national growth objectives.

A unified institutional body would be responsible for reconciling the megaregion's industrial and spatial strategies to deliver the ambitions of a pan-Midlands Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). Whilst local authorities would continue to produce local plans, decisions would be made within a broader strategic framework.



Our Midlands Manifesto for Prosperity

This document sets out a Manifesto for Prosperity comprising of 10 Strategic Priorities, that serve as a starting point for engagement between the Government, local authorities, infrastructure providers, investors, developers and communities in ensuring the Midlands' ongoing success in the 50 years ahead.

A Prosperous Midlands

1. Establish Sector-specific Centres of Excellence and Innovation Boards.
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Place-making for Tomorrow

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