

Aldershot and Farnborough Growth Partnership

Problem Statement and Action Plan

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Introduction

Aldershot and Farnborough already sit at the heart of a nationally significant aerospace, defence and advanced technology cluster. The area is home to world-class employers, critical defence and aviation infrastructure, globally recognised events and a deep concentration of skills and expertise that supports both national capability and economic growth. These strengths are long-established and actively in use today. However, despite their scale and strategic importance, they are not yet fully recognised or reflected within national industrial or defence strategies, nor consistently articulated as a coherent growth proposition.

The Farnborough and Aldershot Growth Partnership has been established to address this gap. It brings together local employers, education providers and public-sector partners to act collectively – not to reinvent what already exists, but to connect, amplify and better align activity so the area's economic value is clearly understood and more influence can be exercised at regional and national level. By operating as a single, credible voice, the Partnership aims to strengthen recognition, accelerate growth, improve career opportunities for local residents, attract greater government attention and inward investment.

This document provides an internal framework to focus action, coordinate effort and support delivery across business growth, skills and placemaking, ensuring existing assets are fully leveraged and future ambition is pursued with clarity and confidence.

Problem Statement

Farnborough and Aldershot sit at the heart of one of the UK's most important concentrations of aerospace, defence, advanced manufacturing and R&D activity. The area is home to world-class employers, the largest business aviation airport in the UK, the globally recognised Farnborough Airshow, and the birthplace of British aerospace, alongside Aldershot's role as the home of the British Army. Businesses have chosen to locate here because of these **inherent strengths** and continue to benefit from the talent, infrastructure and networks the area offers.

However, while these assets exist – and are already delivering value – they are not yet operating as a fully connected, visible, and self-reinforcing economic cluster. There is currently no single convening force, **shared vision** or framework drawing together business insight, skills demand, place ambition and promotion into a coherent, collective offer. As a result, much of the area's potential remains under-recognised, under-promoted and under-activated.

The absence of a **coordinated approach** means that the area's collective strengths, priority sectors and growth opportunities are not consistently articulated or understood – by businesses themselves, by education providers, residents, or by external audiences such as investors, talent and government. Promotion of the area is fragmented, limiting the ability to tell a compelling, future-focused story that reflects both heritage and innovation.

This challenge is not only external. There is also a need to rebuild confidence and belief among local residents by making the **impact of existing activity more visible**, particularly through the skills and place agendas. By better showcasing progress, success and opportunity, the borough can foster greater civic pride, strengthen confidence in the future

of Farnborough and Aldershot, and encourage residents to become advocates for their towns.

The lack of collective awareness and promotion reduces connectivity within the business community. Businesses are less able to **collaborate at scale**, learn from one another, or mobilise around shared calls to action – from innovation and growth to skills development and place-making. In turn, this weakens the feedback loop between employers and education providers. Skills needs are not always clearly signalled, understood or planned for, limiting collaboration with schools, colleges and training providers on what future roles look like and how young people can realistically access them.

The consequence is a growing challenge around **talent and investment**: young people are not consistently exposed to the breadth of local career opportunities; work-readiness gaps persist; and employers face increasing competition for skills in a tight labour market. These pressures are compounded by place-based factors – particularly the lack of compelling, deliverable town centre visions – which undermines talent attraction, business confidence and the wider perception of the area as a place to live, work and invest.

Put simply, Farnborough and Aldershot have the ingredients of a nationally significant growth cluster, but not yet the joined-up system needed to make those ingredients work harder together. Progress now depends on working as one: shared awareness, **building connectivity** between businesses and partners, aligning skills pipelines to real demand, and renewing the town centres as assets that supports economic growth rather than constrain it.

Key priorities and themes

In response to the challenges set out above, partners within the Farnborough and Aldershot Growth Partnership have coalesced around a clear and shared set of priorities. These priorities reflect where collective effort can have the greatest impact: strengthening the foundations that enable collaboration; accelerating business growth and investment; aligning jobs and skills to real employer demand; and renewing the town centre and wider place offer so it actively supports economic growth. Together, they provide a practical structure for coordinating action across partners while remaining focused on delivery and outcomes.

These priorities are underpinned by a set of cross-cutting themes that shape how activity is developed, coordinated and delivered, and which are translated into practical actions in the sections that follow.

Together, the themes provide a simple framework that brings a wide range of suggested actions into a coherent structure, articulating *why* particular actions matter and *how* they contribute to the Partnership's wider ambitions. The themes are:

- Improving **awareness** of collective business strengths and skills requirements
- Strengthening **growth and connectivity** between businesses and local partners to collaborate, share and learn
- Improving **collaboration** between businesses and schools and colleges on what skills businesses need and the varied career opportunities possible
- Developing a vision and action plan for town centre **regeneration** and business' role in that

- Developing and **promoting** the growth and skills opportunity
- Establishing and promoting the Farnborough and Aldershot Growth Partnership **brand**, creating a clear, credible and consistent identity for the Partnership to unify activity.

The action plans that follow translate these themes into practical activity, phased over time. As an internal working document, this plan is intended to steer collective effort and prioritisation and may be refined over time.

Priority Foundation Level Action Plan

Foundation Priority: Partnership Enablement

We will put in place the essential foundations that allow the partnership to operate as a confident, delivery-focused collective rather than a loose network of organisations.

This includes establishing a clear and engaging strategic narrative and brand, defining a shared journey for growth and renewal, and ensuring sufficient administrative capacity to support action. The partnership will develop a strong collective voice, with visible leadership and named leads for each priority area to drive activity across organisations.

By strengthening governance, coordination and leadership, the partnership will create the conditions in which business, skills and place priorities can move faster, connect more effectively, and deliver shared outcomes.

Short term priorities – to be achieved within the first 6 months, by March 2027

Activity description	Challenge theme	Partnership members involved (lead in bold)	Prioritisation First/Then/Last
Establish essential governance structure and agree key priorities including clearly defined roles for each partner	Growth and Connectivity – connect businesses and facilities to collaborate, learn and share		First – finalise the partners who want to be involved Then – understand what each partnership can commit to, through either time or resources Last – establish a board to drive the strategic direction of the partnership
Create a compelling and engaging brand and strategic journey mapped out and published	Awareness – improving collective awareness / brand		First – create an inward investment proposition document Then – use the basis of the proposition document to create an inward investment website highlighting the aims of the partnership. Develop a marketing strategy to ensure consistent comms

			Last – develop a strategy for how the aims of the partnership will be realised
Appoint a figurehead to lead each priority area	Growth and Connectivity - allow businesses to collaborate more easily		First – understand the capabilities of each partner and which of the priorities they would like to contribute to Then – elect a figurehead to lead the activity within each priority Last – create working groups to lead each priority
Create a channel for partners to be able to communicate with each other	Growth and Connectivity - connect businesses and facilities to collaborate, learn and share		First – create a Microsoft Teams Workstream for partners to use for collaboration. Map out current comms channels. Then – create a workstream for each priority group Last – use content provided by partners to promote the activity of the Partnership through public facing channels

Business Investment and Acceleration Action Plan

Priority 1: Business Investment and Acceleration

We will strengthen awareness and promotion of the area's priority sectors, including defence, aerospace, advanced manufacturing and associated technologies, and create stronger connectivity within the business community.

By supporting collaboration between firms, sharing knowledge and showcasing success, the partnership will help businesses grow, innovate and invest with confidence. This priority focuses on activating the existing business base as a collective force, improving visibility of opportunity and positioning the area as a distinctive and credible location for investment.

Short term priorities – to be achieved within the first 6 months, by March 2027

Activity description	Challenge theme	Partnership members involved (lead in bold)	Prioritisation First/Then/Last
Define businesses within target sectors – create a directory, capture their priorities, strengths and areas for growth (as aligned to industrial strategy) and skills requirements and also what they have to offer across each of the challenge themes	Awareness – improving collective awareness		First - create a directory of businesses and partnership members Then - capture priorities, strengths, needs, offers Last – keep up to date, refine, handover to secretariat to keep running. Use it to suggest working groups and partnership planning and promotion
Create business led working groups , sector specific if needed and including business park collaboration; and use current industry groups to do so	Growth and Connectivity – connect businesses and facilities to collaborate, learn and share		First – map out sector interest groups current and desired, map out business park routes in for collaboration Then – assess missing groups and ask partnership to consider creating. Last – promote current and new networking groups within the

			partnership and via council website
Better promote significant local meeting/event space – for partnership use and supply chain use	Growth and Connectivity		First – capture list of meeting spaces for hire, free use and whether just for partnership use or wider Last – promote via websites

Medium Term priorities – to be achieved within the first 12 months and by September 2027

Activity description	Challenge theme	Partnership members involved (lead in bold)	Prioritisation First/Then/Last
Improve support for businesses through the planning process , by setting up a system of peer-to-peer support and targeted advice sessions from HCC on economic development and RBC on planning practicalities	Growth and Connectivity		First – run peer-to-peer session on navigating the RBC planning system Last – highlight success stories through outward facing comms
Develop and promote the area's existing innovation assets , using them as anchors for inward investment.	Awareness		First – map out the assets Then – highlight these through the inward investment prospectus and website Final – showcase activity and developments at each site through the website, specific marketing activities (such as tours, site visits etc.) and social channels
Support SMEs in applying for business support from HCC and seeking advice from HCC growth hub	Growth and Connectivity		First – add support mechanisms to the website Final – highlight support services through regular updates to website and social channels

Longer Term priorities – to be achieved within the first 18-24 months and by September 2028

Activity description	Challenge theme	Partnership members involved (lead in bold)	Prioritisation First/Then/Last
Investigate the possibility of establishing a local venture fund to support SMEs at every stage of their development	Growth and connectivity		First – understand what funds already exist and how they can be leveraged Then – identify gaps in the current provision Final – lobby appropriate organisations to provide support to close those funding gaps
Frame the town centre as part of the talent attraction offer, linking place improvement with business growth	Awareness		First – identify the current assets that are appealing to employees Then – what are the gaps and how we can fill these Final – create a coherent campaign to market those assets that are attractive to employees and examine how we can feed the gaps in the TC masterplan

Skills and Jobs Action Plan

Priority 2: Skills and Jobs

We will strengthen the connection between local people, employers and training providers to develop the skills needed for current and future economic opportunities. By promoting collaboration, improving access to learning and supporting pathways into employment, the partnership will help businesses access talent while enabling residents to progress into high-quality jobs. This priority focuses on building a skilled and adaptable workforce, reducing barriers to employment and ensuring that local people can benefit from the area's growth and investment ambitions.

Short term priorities – to be achieved within the first 6 months, by March 2027

Activity description	Challenge theme	Partnership members involved (lead in bold)	Prioritisation First/Then/Last
Create a coordinated education-industry skills partnership (schools, FCoT, Sixth Form, key employers) to align training with future career needs.	Collaboration- between businesses and schools and colleges on what skills business need and the varied career opportunities possible		First – identify the partners who wish to be involved Then – identify other organisations who could add value Final – appoint a leader to take this action forward
Support FCoT's bid to become a Defence Technical College and ensure local employers shape the curriculum.	Collaboration		First – confirm whether FCoT's bid was successful and understand feedback or next steps
Partner with ADS's programme of development and licensing of industry-validated apprenticeship and training curricula in aerospace, defence and security to Hampshire Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) institutions.	Collaboration		First – understand the progress of ADS's bid to the LEP Legacy Funds Then – understand what support the Partnership can provide to ADS Final – make part of the industry skills partnership workplan

Promote local apprenticeship opportunities and address business identified barriers to taking on apprentices.	Collaboration		First – identify which companies are recruiting apprentices and communicate this to FE institutions. Set a benchmark, against, which future progress can be monitored Then - identify those companies that would like to take on apprentices and understand current barriers Final – create a support mechanism that bridges the gap between businesses and FE to smooth the path for local businesses looking to hire apprentices
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Medium Term priorities – to be achieved within the first 12 months and by September 2027

Activity description	Challenge theme	Partnership members involved (lead in bold)	Prioritisation First/Then/Last
Build a shared talent attraction message linking skills, jobs, and improved place-making.	Promoting - the growth and skills opportunity and its brand		First – agree the core messages that define Farnborough and Aldershot as a place to build a career (priority sectors, quality jobs, innovation, lifestyle, town centres) Then – co-design a simple narrative and suite of assets (key messages, case studies, visuals) that partners can all use consistently Final – embed the shared message

			across inward investment, recruitment campaigns, education outreach and place marketing
Host a well-publicised aerospace and defence job fair to showcase high quality jobs and attract people of all ages nationwide.	Promoting		First – secure commitment from anchor employers and key sector partners to participate Then – work with FE/HE providers, schools and national networks (e.g. ADS) to shape content and promote widely Final – deliver the event and capture follow-up actions (vacancies filled, applicants engaged, repeat interest)
Launch an early inspiration programme in schools , especially focusing on engineering and STEM pathways.	Collaboration		First – map existing STEM and employer engagement activity already happening locally Then – coordinate businesses to offer talks, site visits and role-model sessions aligned to curriculum needs Final – create a repeatable annual programme with named employer champions and clear routes into apprenticeships and careers

Longer Term priorities – to be achieved within the first 18-24 months and by September 2028

Activity description	Challenge theme	Partnership members involved (lead in bold)	Prioritisation First/Then/Last
Develop a coherent, borough-wide work experience and early careers programme, supported by businesses.	Collaboration		First – audit current work experience provision and identify gaps by sector and age group Then – agree a shared framework for placements, quality standards and safeguarding Final – launch a single, visible offer promoted through schools, colleges and employers as part of the Partnership brand

Renewing the Place Action Plan

Priority 3: Renewing the Place

We will develop a shared vision and coordinated action plan for Aldershot and Farnborough town centres, recognising that quality of place underpins economic success.

By clarifying the role of businesses in town centre renewal, aligning investment and activity, and promoting a stronger sense of identity and purpose, this priority will help create more vibrant, attractive environments. Improved town centres will reinforce talent attraction, business confidence and civic pride, amplifying the impact of the other priorities.

Short term priorities – to be achieved within the first 6 months, by March 2027

Activity description	Challenge theme	Partnership members involved (lead in bold)	Prioritisation First/Then/Last
Use new investment (e.g., Loungers in The Meads) as a catalyst to attract further reputable operators.	Awareness		First – document recent and committed investments and understand why they chose Rushmoor Then – use those examples as proof points in conversations with agents, operators and investors Final – actively promote success stories through the Partnership's channels and inward investment narrative
Create mechanisms for wider business involvement in the regeneration of Rushmoor, including a business fund or consortium model.	Regeneration - vision and action plan for town centre and business' role in that		First – explore models for business involvement (fund, sponsorship, consortium, meanwhile use) Then – test appetite and capacity among local employers and landowners

			Final - pilot one mechanism linked to a visible town centre project or intervention
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Medium Term priorities – to be achieved within the first 12 months and by September 2027

Activity description	Challenge theme	Partnership members involved (lead in bold)	Prioritisation First/Then/Last
Agree a shared vision for 2035 for Aldershot and Farnborough , reflecting the new LGR realities post RBC and Blackwater Valley R&D corridor identity.	Awareness		First – bring partners together to agree key economic and place-based ambitions post-LGR Then – align this vision with the Blackwater Valley R&D corridor and national growth narratives Final – publish and use the vision consistently to guide lobbying, funding bids and investment discussions
Design interventions to activate the town centre , ensuring there are more “things to do” and get support from the business community.	Regeneration		First – identify priority locations and gaps in activity (“what’s missing now?”) Then – co-design temporary and permanent interventions with businesses (events, uses, meanwhile activity) Final – deliver early wins that demonstrate momentum and encourage further private investment
Engage the local community to build empathy with growth	Awareness		First – identify key audiences and concerns linked to growth and regeneration Then – create accessible

			engagement routes (events, storytelling, local champions) to explain benefits Final – feed community insight into regeneration plans and communications to build long-term support
Make the case for increasing power supply to employment sites – and also explore the scope to match those generating surplus energy with other businesses that require it.	Regeneration		First – gather evidence of current and future power constraints from local businesses Then – work with network operators and partners to explore solutions, including energy sharing opportunities Final – jointly lobby for investment and inclusion of power upgrades in wider infrastructure plans

Longer Term priorities – to be achieved within the first 18-24 months and by September 2028

Activity description	Challenge theme	Partnership members involved (lead in bold)	Prioritisation First/Then/Last
Develop a new, evidence based Town Centre Masterplan with a clear delivery pathway and visible early wins.	Regeneration		First – assemble the economic, market and community evidence base Then – co-design the masterplan with businesses, investors and delivery partners Final – publish a clear delivery roadmap with phased projects, funding routes and early confidence-building wins

