

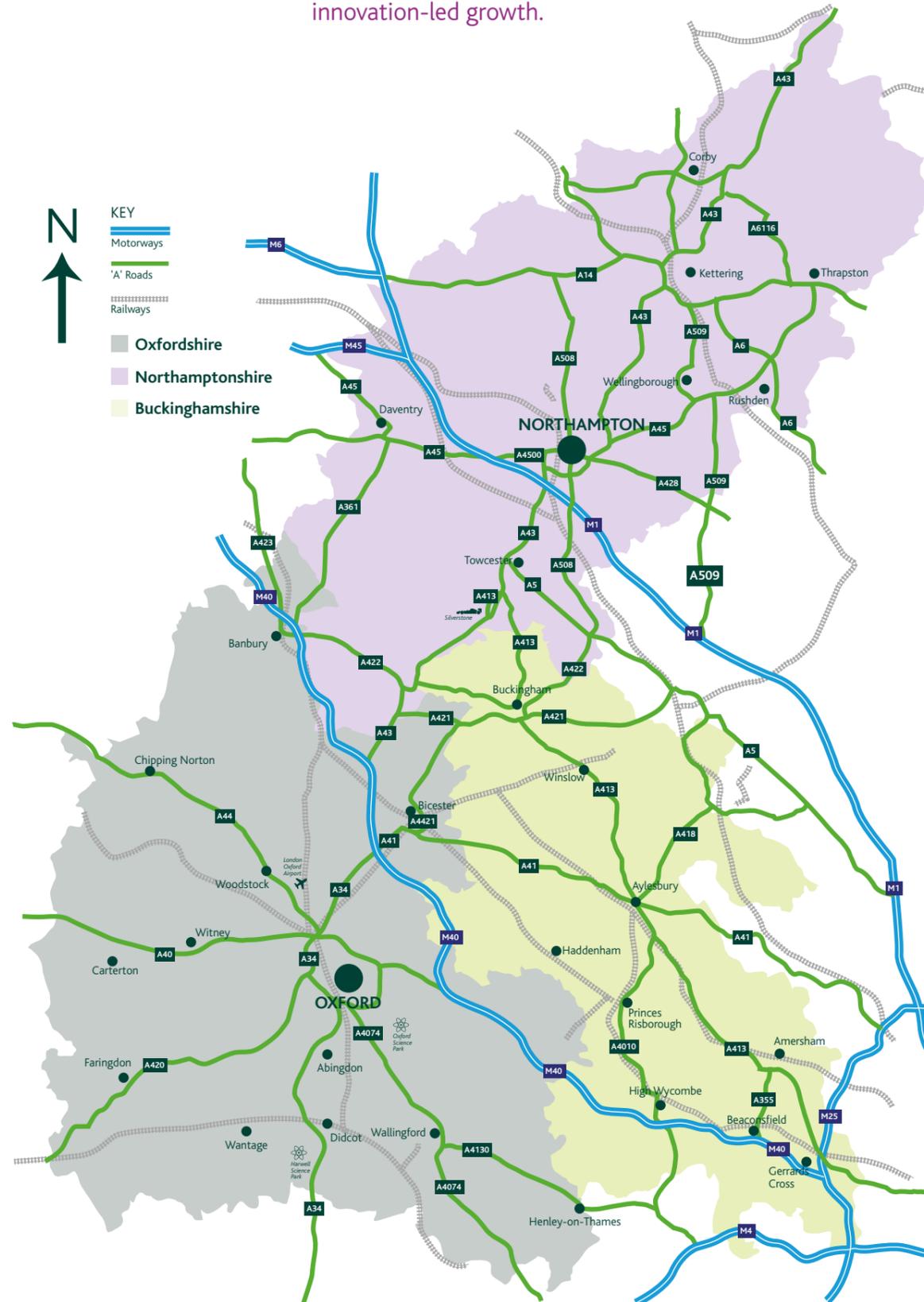
The Creative Counties – Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire & Northamptonshire  
A Shared Approach to Driving Prosperity



The Creative Counties, taken together, account for a GVA of around £45bn, which is roughly equivalent to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Area.

The total population across the three counties is just under two million, forming a strategic hinterland to the North-West of London, and a key part of the "Oxford-Cambridge Arc" of innovation-led growth.

Significant potential can be unlocked through a more strategic approach to this area. This proposal sets out how that could be achieved.



## THE LOCAL OFFER

The three counties offer a thriving group of local economies, with particular strengths in innovation, technology, and the creative industries, whose potential can be tapped through further investment and a strategic approach to the delivery of economic growth<sup>1</sup>.

The three County Councils of Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire already have a track record of joint working, most notably on the promotion of the East-West Rail Scheme and the Development of Silverstone Race Circuit. The three counties are already the home of a wide range of creative industries in the fields of education, science, technology, motor sport and high tech engineering. Oxfordshire is the home of a world class University with links into surrounding industries and there are a number of other leading universities in the area.

The aim of the 'combined authority' would be to harness the economic potential of the area and to unlock growth to the benefit of local residents and the national economy. The 'combined authority' would build on the established good working relationships with the three county based Local Economic Partnerships to drive further economic growth.

In particular, the Combined Authority would provide the opportunity to take a strategic overview on the key issues of spatial planning, transport, skills, and business support to deliver an arc of economic growth which aligns to London's strategic transport corridors, growing and spreading the level of prosperity to a wider geography, through:

- a planned approach to the delivery of significant new housing, infrastructure, and commercial development, to maximise the benefit from that growth;
- an economic geography governed on a strategic scale sufficient to engage in meaningful dialogue with the Mayor of London around planning for economic and housing growth.
- a Combined Authority style governance model, subject to enabling legislation;
- an aligned process for developing future Local Growth Deal bids to highlight those proposals which have an impact across the growth area;
- improved links between the innovation campuses across the area, delivering agglomeration style effects in key sectors;
- greater access to high quality, well-paid, jobs for the residents in those areas where those jobs are currently harder to access; and
- long-term alignment of delivery mechanisms for infrastructure and maintenance, to maximise efficiency and value for money.

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix 1 for further information on the economic and spatial context

The Leaders of the three County Councils are calling for the creation of a Combined Authority and requesting Central Government to devolve to it additional powers and resources in the fields of transport, skills, economic development, and strategic planning.

To deliver a step-change in growth, we are looking for significant guarantees around funding and the ability to make decisions at a strategic scale, including:

- The power to develop a strategic plan for housing, transport, and other infrastructure across the whole growth area, and enhanced local powers to deliver this, such as those currently open to the HCA;
- Devolved employment and skills funding across the growth area to ensure qualifications, training, and employment support measures are targeted at the demand from growing businesses
- Support for a devolved approach to the trunk road network, and the delivery of a route-based solution for the A34 and the Western section of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, delivering rapid road connection between Science Vale, Oxford, Northampton, and Aylesbury;
- Consideration of an innovative gain-share mechanism for the participating authorities to share in the proceeds of net additional local growth
- Enhanced local powers over bus services, and to maximise public transport connectivity between the urban centres
- Maximising the economic benefits of East West Rail and the connectivity of Silverstone to the national road network

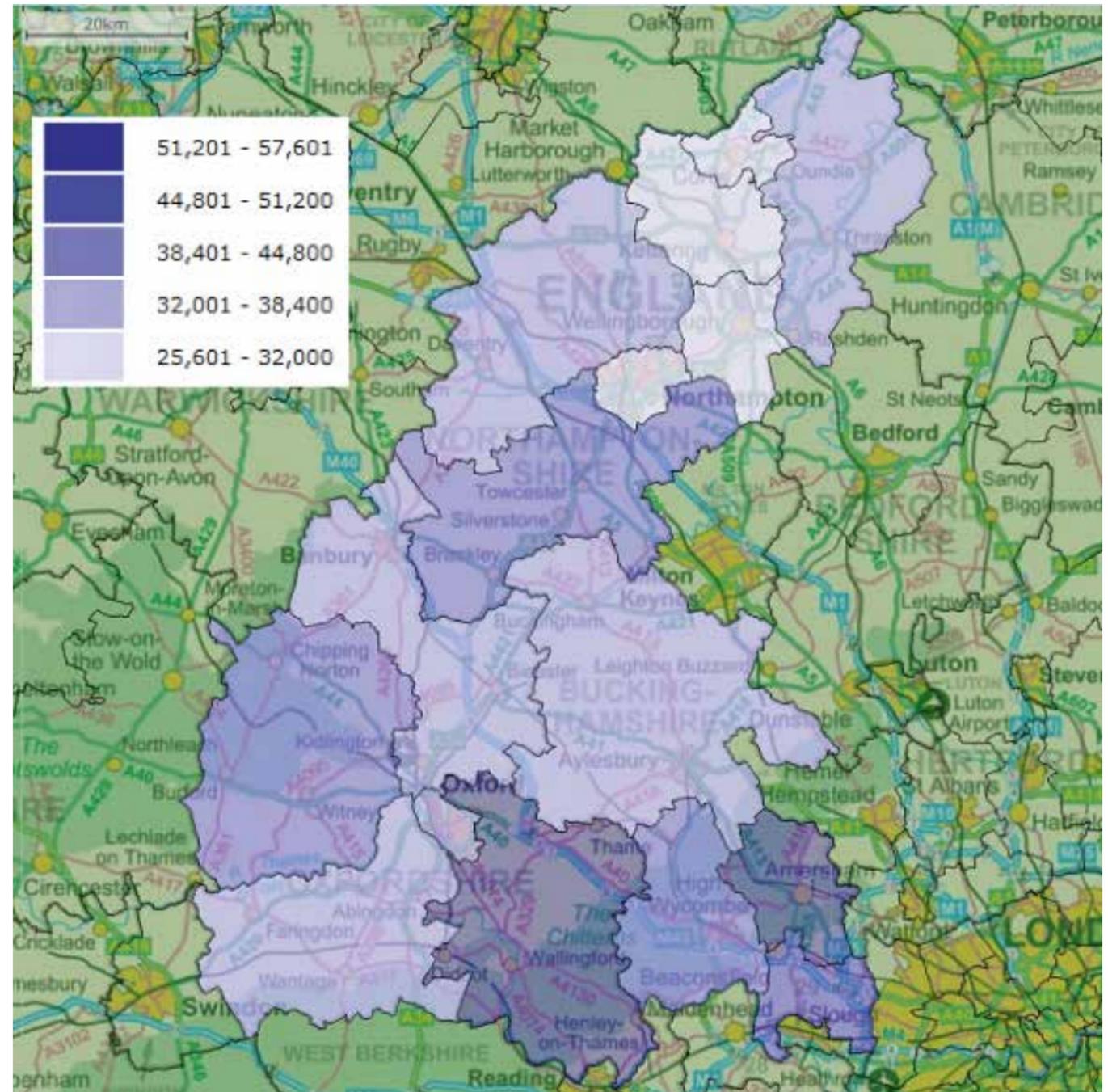
**The governance model**

The partners wish to pursue a Combined Authority style governance model, with executive powers vested in a board composed of the Leaders of participating local authorities.

Recognising that legislation is not currently sufficiently flexible to deliver this, the initial step would be to establish a statutory joint committee of the participating authorities, as a stepping stone to a more robust governance model.

**The initial partners**

This proposal is being brought forward by Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, and Oxfordshire County Councils. The new Combined Authority will seek to work with other neighbouring authorities as opportunities arise.



Gross mean annual pay, full-time workers by residence



House Price Heat Map

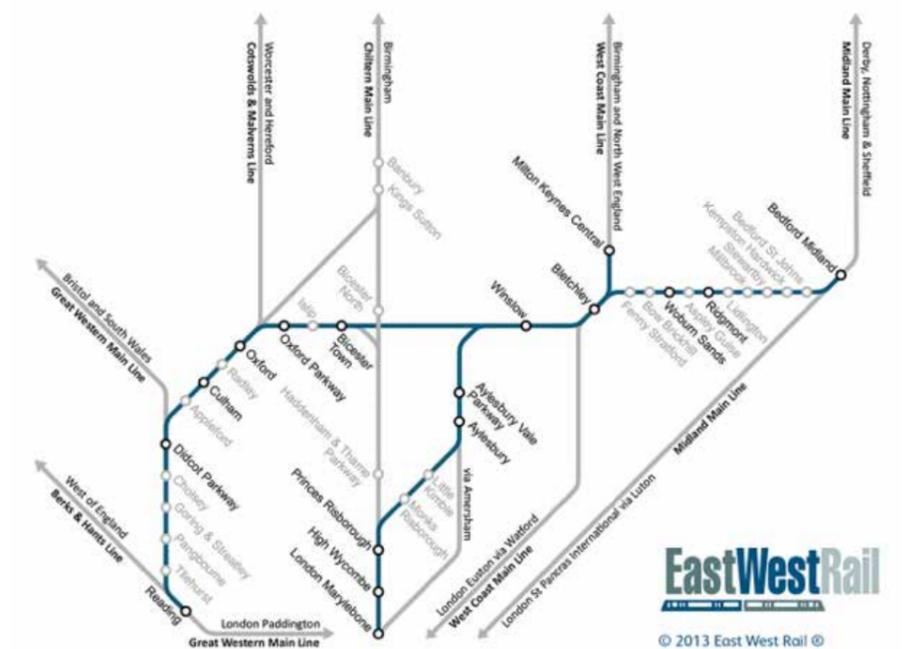
A significant step-change in growth could be delivered through

- Investment in improved road and public transport links between the key settlements;
- Devolved skills funding across the growth area to ensure qualifications and training are targeted at the demand from businesses
- A housing and infrastructure plan across the growth area, taking a strategic view of the opportunities to boost economic growth.



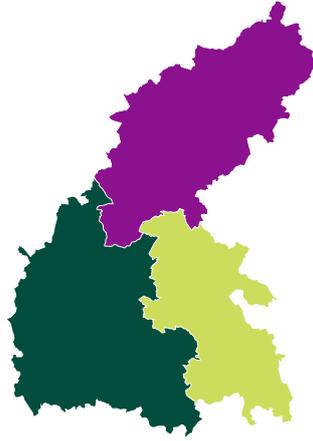
The Road Network

Proposed New Passenger Services on East West Rail Western Section



**EastWestRail**

© 2013 East West Rail



## A Shared Approach to Driving Prosperity

On Tuesday 16 December 2014 at Silverstone, the Leaders of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire County Councils called for the creation of a combined authority to promote economic growth in the region.

.....  
Councillor Ian Hudspeth, Oxfordshire County Council

.....  
Councillor Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council

.....  
Councillor Jim Harker OBE, Northamptonshire County Council

