



Leader of the Council

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Mr Simon Clarke MP
Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

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Dear Simon

Buckinghamshire County Deal and Integration Plan

Welcome back to the wonderful world of local government and congratulations on your appointment to the role of Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. It will be good to be working with you again. As you know, all our Conservative MPs were strong supporters of Liz during the campaign.

We believe that as a large, strong and ambitious unitary council that is coterminous with all our key partners such as the LEP, Health, business support organisations and the V&C sector, we are uniquely placed to move quickly to deliver on the government's growth agenda. At the same time, we offer the opportunity to trial new ideas and approaches on issues such as skills that could be transferred to other parts of the UK as key elements of the Levelling Up agenda. Buckinghamshire Council has enjoyed a very close and productive working relationship with the department and we are keen to carry that forward with the Prime Minister's new Government. Our ambitions for Buckinghamshire have been shaped in collaboration with our local MPs and key partners, all of whom have played an integral role in previous discussions with your department.

We are already well aligned to the County Deal model and are now seeking your support to be at the forefront of the next wave of deal areas. We have a well-developed, ambitious proposal which we are eager to share with you. Both Andrew Smith, as Chair of our LEP, and I will be at party conference and it would be great if we could have five minutes with you to explain how Buckinghamshire can give the government an early win. I've attached some background on our proposal.

Yours sincerely

Martin Tett
Leader
Buckinghamshire Council

Andrew M Smith OBE DL
Chair
Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Cc: Jeremy Pocklington
Steve Baker MP
Rob Butler MP
Joy Morrissey MP
Greg Smith MP

Why Buckinghamshire?

Buckinghamshire Council is a uniquely integrated council, grounded in an established culture and practice of partnership working. We benefit from coterminous geography with many of our partners, including the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Healthcare Trust and our key business support organisation Buckinghamshire Business First. In line with government aims, the Buckinghamshire LEP is aligning with the Council and our plans for full integration are advancing positively. We already share a governance structure that empowers us to engage in effective decision-making and dynamic collaboration to unlock economic growth, level up at a local level, and generate income for government to reinvest nationally.

Our readiness to proceed with a County Deal is unique. The Buckinghamshire Growth Board embodies a vision to draw on our effective leadership, aligned geography and accountability, and forward-thinking approach. Indeed, [our vision for the future of Buckinghamshire shares many of the ambitions of the government's growth and levelling up agendas](#). Our plans to succeed as a place include:

- **Investing in our super growth sectors of the future**, namely space, creative and digital, high-performance tech, and MedTech to help boost local, and national, productivity as well as inspire health and social care innovation.
- **Repurposing our town centres** to create quality, low carbon, healthy and connected communities for people to live and work – we will invest in places to help support national recovery.
- **Creating employment opportunities and upskilling our workforce** by becoming a testbed for the development of rapid pathways into careers for the future.
- **Partnering with a Northeast authority for mutual benefit.**

As home to renowned economic clusters and as one of the strongest local economies in the UK, Buckinghamshire is already well positioned to pursue a County Deal. We have already transitioned to an optimum devolved state; a new “Level 2+ County Deal” is the next logical step for us to progress on our plans and to show to others the benefit of structural alignment. As such, we would like to enter discussions to agree a deal based on devolved powers and responsibilities.

We have already agreed to a comprehensive programme of work, including the establishment of a Joint Growth Partners Steering Group and an advisory Integration Working Group of officers from the LEP and Council, that will move us towards full integration, as it relates to supporting the agreement of a County Deal and laying the foundations for rapid progress upon agreement of a deal.

This work is already progressing well, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss our proposals in person either in Westminster or at the forthcoming party conference. Please contact Fáinne Smith, fainne.smith@buckinghamshire.gov.uk who would be more than happy to arrange a time for us to speak. We have also enclosed a summary outlining how working with Buckinghamshire will help to provide an immediate impact for both the local economy and for the whole country.

By giving Buckinghamshire the tools to accelerate economic growth, we can contribute significantly to the ambitions of your levelling up agenda, including adding £13bn to the UK economy by 2050, as well as offer a blueprint of locally led and empowered growth to other areas of the UK.

Buckinghamshire has one of the strongest local economies in the UK with high output per head. We are the micro capital of Britain and are home to global brands with strengths in critical growth sectors of the future. We are investing in our world-renowned assets – the centre of the film industry at Pinewood, the space sector at Westcott, and high-tech manufacturing at Silverstone – and are accelerating innovation through projects such as the Denham Hydrogen Innovation Hub. Through our Model Market Towns approach, we are looking at repurposing market towns for the post-Covid-19 economy and linking regeneration, jobs, and skills in Aylesbury.

Where others may be mired in governance discussions, we are aligned locally both in thought, commitment, and ambition through the existing Buckinghamshire Growth Board. In this respect size does matter, in our case we are large enough to make an impact but agile enough to adapt to changing needs and incorporate new government policy within our plans. Our proposals will have an immediate impact, can be swiftly delivered, and have clear local support from both the public and private sector.

We would like to demonstrate how Levelling Up can work for the whole nation, driving new national partnerships, linking expertise and opportunity across the land, and helping trial new ways of working to guarantee a better return on investment. As home of one of the newest Unitary Authorities in the country, there is an ambition to do things differently and to do it at pace. We already have a close alignment in strategy and delivery but have the desire to go further to streamline our operations and processes.

We are one of the architects of the County Deal concept and are ready to rapidly agree and deliver a 'Level 2 +' County Deal. We are developing a new model for economic governance by integrating the LEP into a strengthened Economic Prosperity Board, a partnership with strong business voice, democratically accountable governance, and Higher Education/Further Education and health representation. Unlike in other parts of the country, this is a straightforward integration and does not require reorganisation or the creation of a new County Combined Authority.

What our County Deal can deliver for Buckinghamshire and the UK

We are ambitious for what a combination of a County Deal and new integrated governance arrangements can deliver for Buckinghamshire and the UK. In addition to the core elements of a County Deal framework set out in the White Paper, we believe that with a Level 2+ Deal we can generate a bigger net contribution to the Exchequer, through growing our output by a further £13bn.

The freedoms and flexibilities we seek through a "Level 2 + Deal" will enable us to:

Catalyse investment to increase productivity growth – create an investment fund that combines new Council investment, with Enterprise Zone revenue, and investment flexibilities linked to future revenue growth. This will enable us to develop a recyclable and commercially orientated Buckinghamshire Investment Fund, leveraging additional private investment, to invest in key business sector and regeneration growth opportunities, that can generate increased productivity growth.