

Investment Prospectus:
A strategic opportunity for growth.

Mildenhall+ A11 Corridor

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Introduction



Located in the East of England, Mildenhall is one of West Suffolk's historic market towns, a place where high-quality natural environment and manufacturing legacy meets opportunity. Mildenhall directly serves the surrounding villages of Barton Mills, Worlington, West Row and Beck Row.

Strategically positioned on the A11 Cambridge–Norwich Tech Corridor, and just 30-minutes from the globally renowned Cambridge Science Park, Mildenhall offers access to one of the UK's most powerful innovation ecosystems; with highway connections to Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk's world-class business clusters, talent and institutions.

Distinctively, Mildenhall lies directly adjacent to RAF Mildenhall, part of the US Air Force's 'Tri-Base' area, alongside RAF Lakenheath and RAF Feltwell, anchoring a growing defence cluster and its supporting supply chain.

Mildenhall's roots stretch back to Anglo-Saxon times, with history shaped by its rich agricultural foundations. Today, that legacy is evolving into a dynamic advanced manufacturing base.

As a gateway to the both the Brecks and Fens, the town combines environmental quality with a high standard of living and relative house price affordability, making it an attractive place for both residents and businesses.

Building on these strengths, Mildenhall has consistently punched above its weight in terms of employment growth and carving out economic specialisms. However, without further investment in supporting infrastructure, the town now risks becoming a victim of its own success.

This Investment Prospectus sets out a series of evidence-based strategic opportunities that could unlock up to 1,900 net additional jobs and £185m (2026 prices) in Gross Value Added (GVA) per year. Without sustained and targeted investment, Mildenhall risks missing this opportunity. To address this, a clear set of 'asks' has been identified which seek to:

- 01 Invest in strategic infrastructure to unlock economic growth;
- 02 Invest in local skills to unlock productivity growth and attract higher-value businesses;
- 03 Invest in the built and natural environment to maximise investment and opportunity;
- 04 Invest in a new strategic employment site on the A11 to unlock transformational growth in our opportunity sectors.

24

miles
from Cambridge

42

miles
from Norwich

<30

minutes from Cambridge
Science Park

2 mil.

people within 60-minute drive
of Mildenhall

3

located at the heart of the
United States Air Force 'Tri-base'

History

of

“Mildenhale” first recorded, with the name meaning a nook of land belonging to a woman called “Milde” or a man called “Milda”.

1050

Recorded in the **Domesday Book** as property of the Abbot of St Edmunds, home to 64 families.

1086

Mildenhall Market established.

1412



Ownership of the town was transferred to Edward North, 1st Baron North.

1536

Mildenhall



❶ **RAF Mildenhall** opened and served as a base for RAF Bomber Command during the Second World War.

❷ Mildenhall was the start point of the MacRobertson Air Race to Melbourne, Australia.

1934

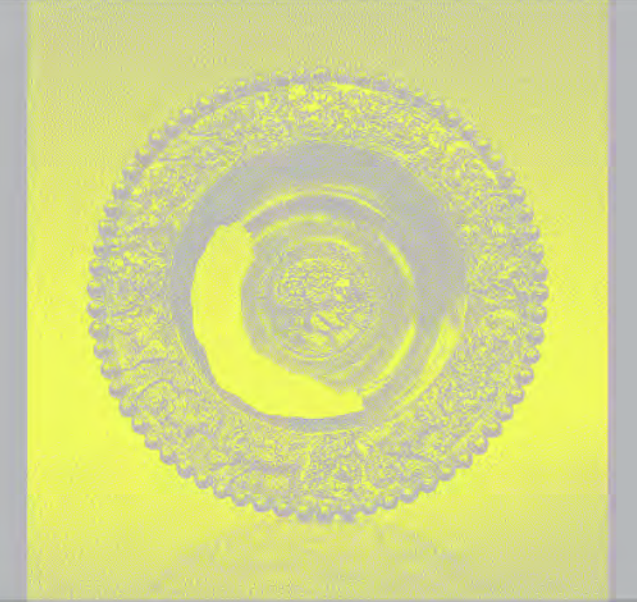
Mildenhall has a unique character and identity which has been shaped by a rich history. This timeline presents a sample of the key historical moments.

The **Mildenhall Treasure** discovered just outside of the town, in West Row.

1942

The **Mildenhall Treasure** acquired by the British Museum.

1946



US Air Force took over operations of **RAF Mildenhall**.

1950

❶ Agreement with the Greater London Councils to provide **accommodation for families** from London.

❷ **Mildenhall Industrial Estate** construction begins.

1960

The **Dome Sports Centre** built using an innovative construction system designed by Dante Bini.

1977

Mentioned in Pink Floyd’s “**Let There Be More Light**”, which speculates that humanity’s first contact with extraterrestrial life occurred at Mildenhall.

1968

Mildenhall Hub opens combining education, health, leisure, blue light, and community facilities. The Dome Sports Centre is grade II listed due to architectural and historic interest.

2021

Suffolk County Council’s cabinet votes in favour of creating a **new mayoral authority** for Norfolk and Suffolk.

2025

Vision Statement



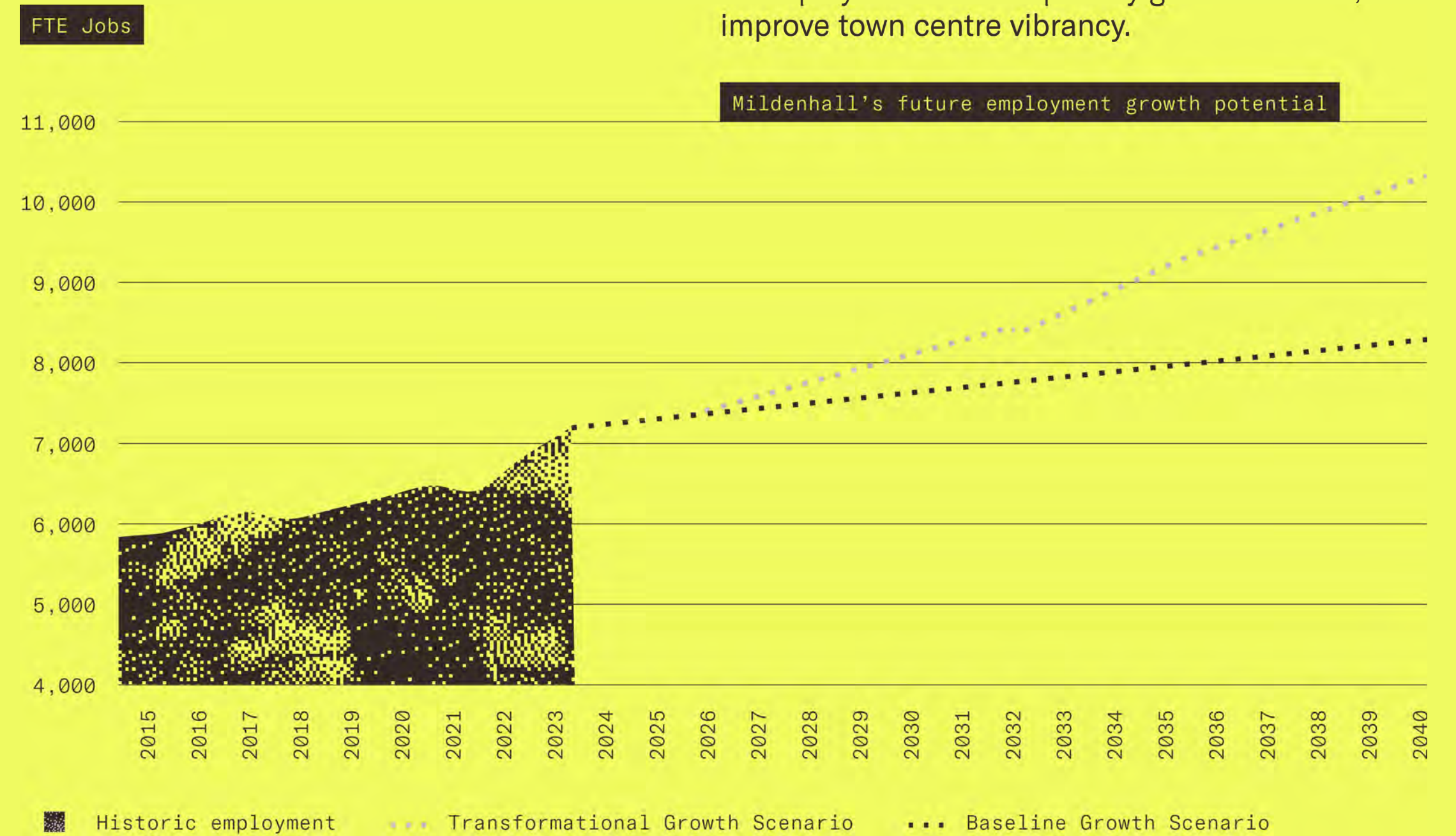
Mildenhall’s strategic location at the heart of the A11 corridor provides a unique opportunity to deliver sustainable growth through investment in transport infrastructure, skills and employment sites. With a high quality of life and access to nature, Mildenhall is poised to be a key economic contributor within the new Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk.

Data source: Prior + Partners analysis

Scale of Opportunity

Through securing investment across the identified priorities for Mildenhall, there is an opportunity to unlock significant economic benefits through both supporting existing local businesses and attracting new productive employment opportunities.

Unlocking this economic potential is dependent on securing investment in infrastructure to remove the existing constraints on the local economy which could bring forward new employment and housing sites; enhance access to skills and training aligned to employer needs and priority growth sectors; and improve town centre vibrancy.



1,900

Net additional direct jobs created in Mildenhall

750

Potential **indirect** and **induced jobs** created across the East of England

20%

Of expected **employment growth** in West Suffolk by 2040 could be accommodated within the study area

£185m

Additional Gross Value Added unlocked per annum (2026 prices)

Note: Indicative employment potential estimated using assumptions from comparator benchmarks, HCA employment densities guidance and the HCA additionality guide. West Suffolk employment growth sourced from West Suffolk ELR Update.

Strategic Opportunity

Mildenhall is a highly successful location for growth, but infrastructure constraints are now limiting further expansion.

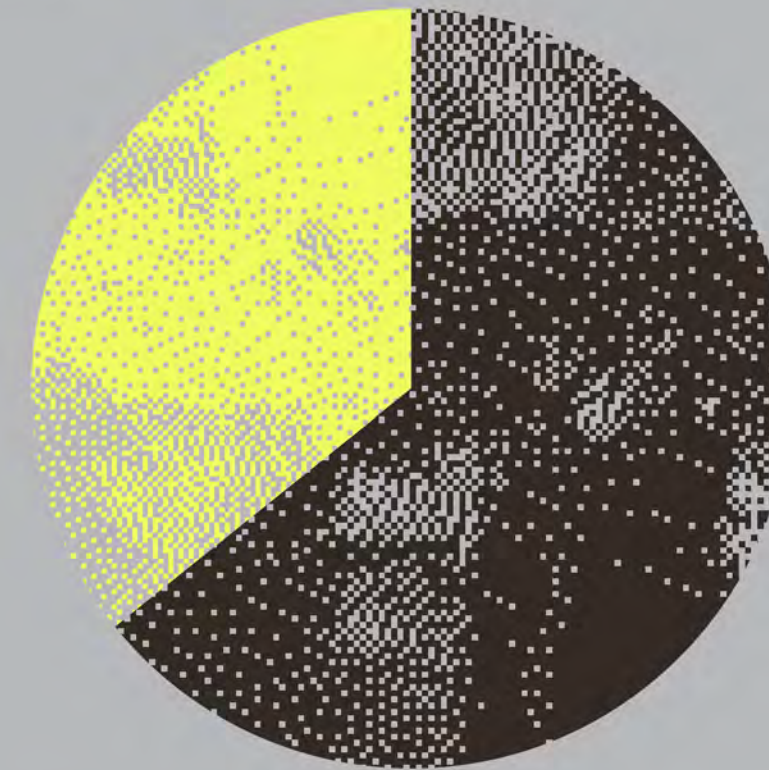
(1)

Mildenhall's strategic location is attracting more people to live and work in the area.

Mildenhall's location at the heart of the A11 Corridor, within close proximity to Cambridge and Norwich, is driving strong employment growth which has far exceeded the average growth rates both regionally and nationally.

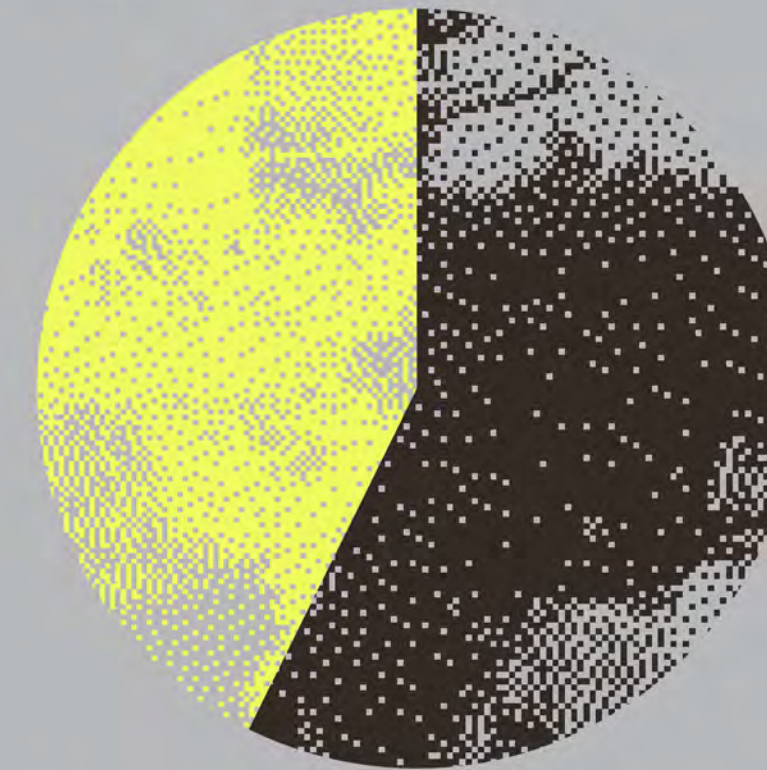
Despite good access to the Brecks and Fens, coupled with a strong presence of US Air Force personnel from the Tri-Bases, Mildenhall remains a more affordable location for homeowners with the average property price in parts of Mildenhall being significantly less than the average for the East of England. Mildenhall also demonstrates high economic activity with more residents in employment compared to the average across the East of England.

Mildenhall



Not in employment In employment

East of England



Not in employment In employment

-£145,000

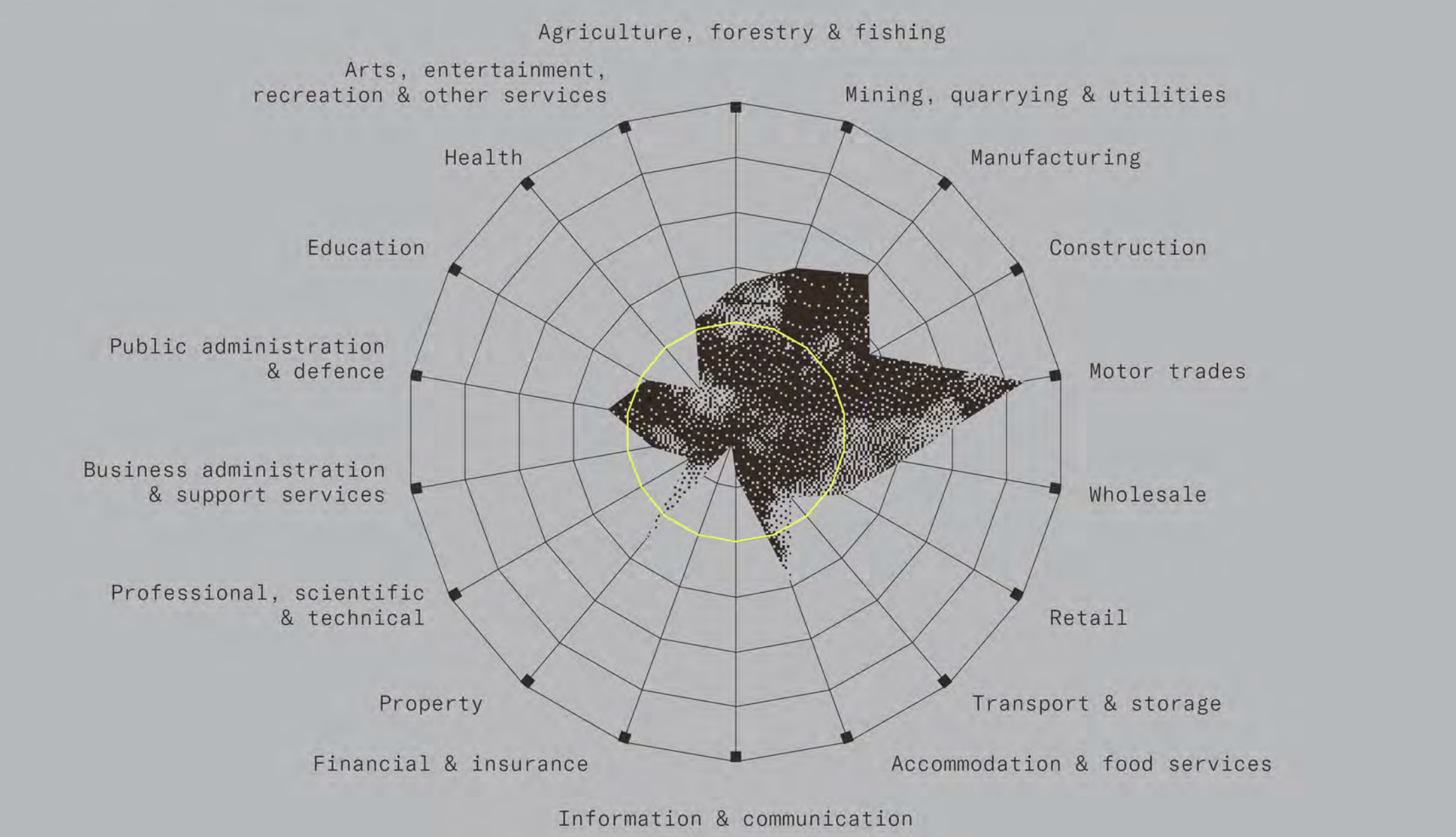
difference in the average property price in Mildenhall compared to the average for the East of England

Gross Value Added (GVA) per worker
Source: ONS UK Small Area Gross Value Added Estimates and ONS BRES

Mildenhall has a well-performing employment market and a particularly prominent manufacturing sector.

Mildenhall and the surrounding area has become an attractive location for businesses. In terms of employment, Mildenhall has demonstrated growth across almost all sectors since 2015. In particular, Mildenhall’s industrial estate performs well and sees a vacancy rate of less than 5%, lower than the estimated regional average. Within the industrial estate, Mildenhall hosts a cluster of manufacturing businesses which are some of the largest employers in the town. Analysis of employment data shows that Mildenhall has almost twice the concentration of jobs in manufacturing compared to the average for England, with around 13.6% of all local jobs in this sector. The area has a particular specialism in the manufacturing of fabricated metal products, making up around 40% of manufacturing jobs.

Sector specialism, Mildenhall vs England



Made in Mildenhall: Employment in manufacturing well exceeds the national average.

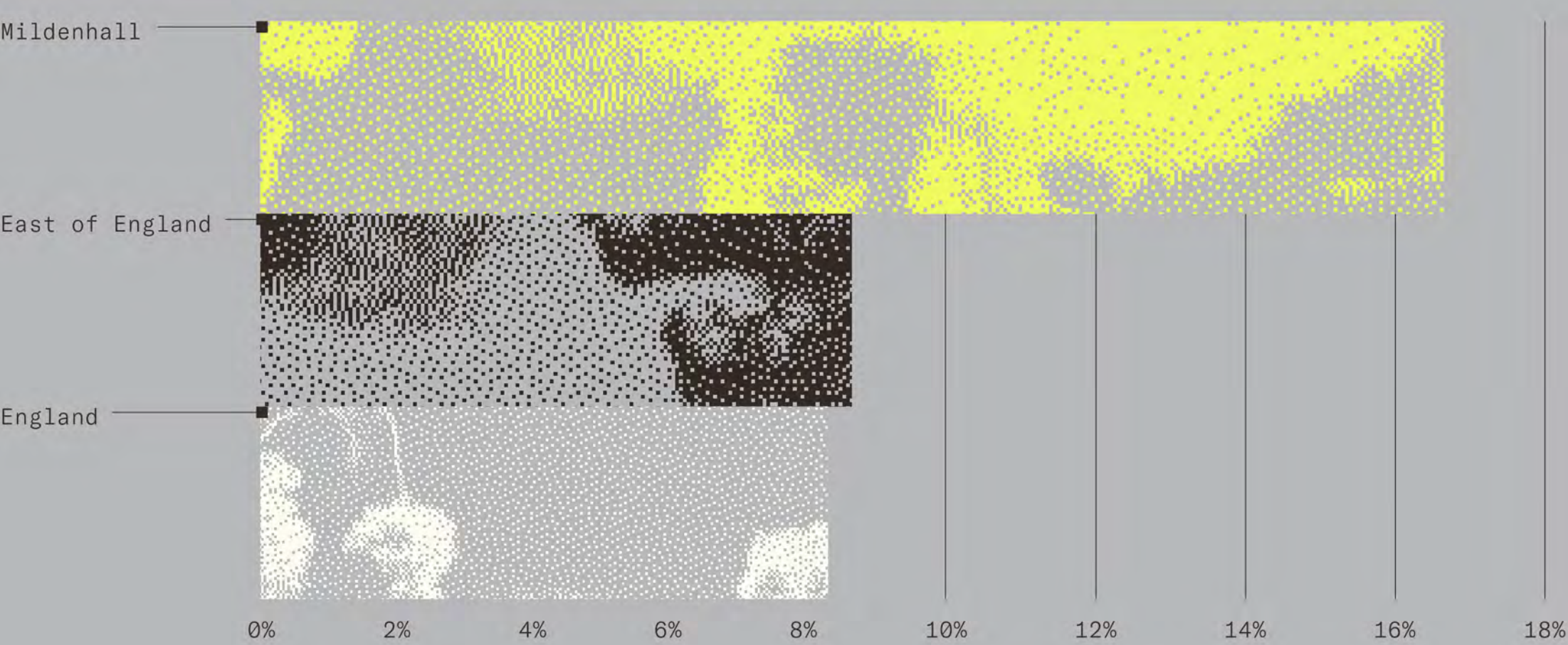
Source: ONS BRES / Note: The sectoral concentration of employment is shown above, with a score of greater than 1.0 denoting a higher concentration of employment in that sector compared to the England average.

Mildenhall’s employment growth is exceeding national and regional averages, putting increased pressure on infrastructure, employment space and skilled labour.

With the planned delivery of 1,000 additional homes at Land West of Mildenhall, the creation of any more jobs elsewhere in the town could place unprecedented pressure on infrastructure, with negative impacts for residents and businesses. Key pressure points in terms of highways include the A11 Fiveways Roundabout, Police Station Square, and rural routes increasingly used as rat runs. Fiveways Roundabout is currently in the Road Investment Strategy 4 Pipeline, with consideration for funding only expected post-2031 which will further constrain economic growth in the short- to medium-term.

While home ownership remains relatively affordable, the rental market faces acute pressure. Demand linked to US Air Force personnel boosts local spending but also distorts prices, with subsidised housing allowances significantly outpacing local rents, pricing many local residents out of the market.

Change in employment 2015–2023



Employment in Mildenhall is growing faster than national and regional averages.

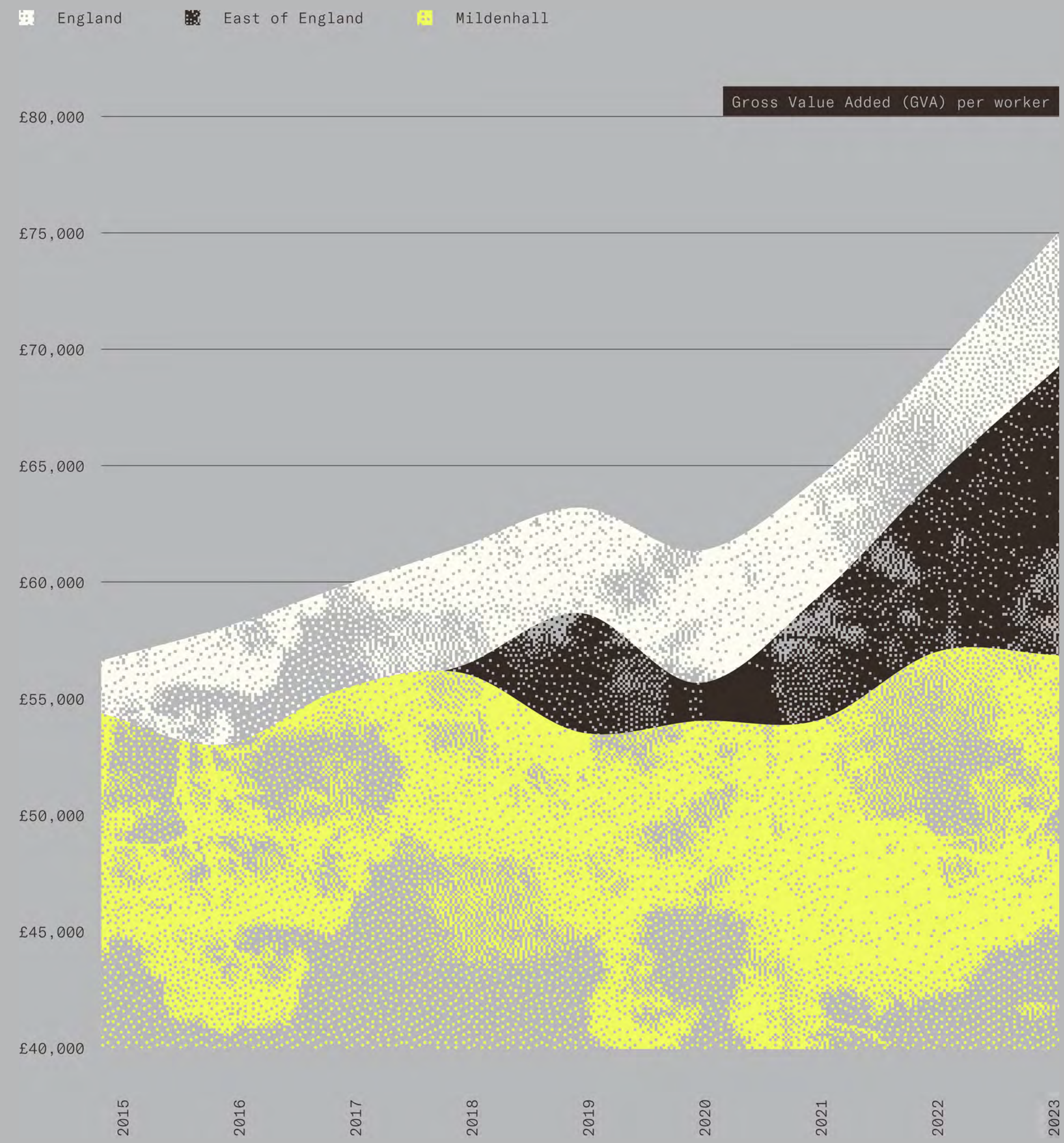
Source: ONS BRES

In addition to connectivity constraints, businesses within Mildenhall’s industrial estate are suffering from a severe lack of large and modern units which are required to accommodate business expansion.

The existing stock of units was delivered in the 1960s and are now not always fit for purpose as they lack suitable heights and yard space. Engagement with key employers in the manufacturing sector highlighted the extent of the issue.

There are allocated sites for employment within the Local Plan, including 5ha of employment land within the Land West of Mildenhall development. However, a national trend of viability challenges, linked partly to low commercial rents, are slowing market delivery. Commercial rents for new units in Mildenhall are approximately 50% lower than in Bury St Edmunds, meaning the town is struggling to compete.

The challenges that exist around highway infrastructure capacity, employment space and access to housing are contributing to lagging productivity which is constraining an otherwise successful local economy. Investment is needed to correct lagging productivity which has fallen to around 24% below the national average.



Mildenhall’s productivity has started to lag behind the region and nation.

Source: ONS UK Small Area Gross Value Added Estimates and ONS BRES

Our ask:

To allow Mildenhall to realise its full potential and better leverage its strategic location, investment in infrastructure is required. Moving forward there is a critical need for local government and the UK government to invest in the following to sustain and evolve the economic role of the town, preparing to capture Cambridge spillover and support adjacent growth corridors through:

01

Forward fund infrastructure and direct delivery of floorspace at the 5ha of employment land at Land West of Mildenhall.

Currently dependent on the prior delivery of housing, the employment allocation at Land West of Mildenhall is likely to come too late for businesses that are already seeking space for expansion. Currently operating across inadequate or fragmented sites, there is an imminent risk that Mildenhall will lose some of its largest employers without the provision and accelerated delivery of this site.

02

Investment in major junction capacity improvements at A11 Fiveways Roundabout and better integration of the A11 and A14.

Through making these improvements, people and businesses will have better access to, from and within Mildenhall, improving efficiency and productivity. Better access will also make Mildenhall a more attractive proposition to people and businesses looking to locate within close proximity to the Oxford-Cambridge Corridor, UK Innovation Corridor or within the A11 Corridor.

Improve access to the A11 to unlock future growth potential and better capture spillover from Cambridge. Constrained by RAF Mildenhall to the north and woodland to the east, the future growth of Mildenhall is expected to occur in the west of the town in an area heavily constrained by poor highway connections. To unlock future employment and housing sites in the long-term, a strategic transport option is needed to allow Mildenhall to deliver transformational economic growth for the A11 corridor. Better connectivity to the west provides improved journey times to Cambridge and better positions Mildenhall to capture spillover from Cambridge's overheating residential and commercial property market.

Invest in strategic infrastructure to unlock economic growth.

Strategic Opportunity



(2)

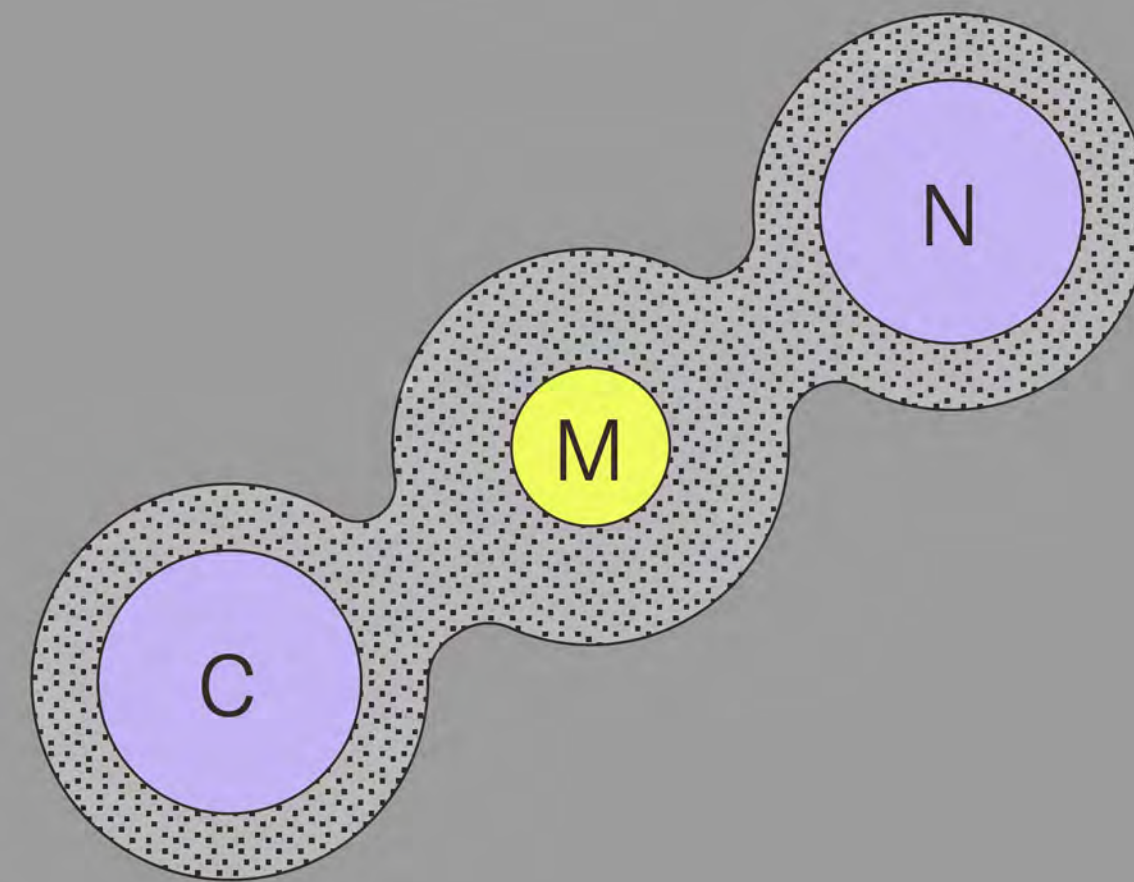
A strategic regional location, set within a rich natural environment and supported by an affordable offer, creates strong potential for investment and growth.

Photo credit: Courtesy of TBI Manufacturing Ltd

Mildenhall is strategically positioned at the heart of the Cambridge–Norwich Tech Corridor.

Mildenhall is well located to benefit from its position within one of the East of England's innovation corridors, with access to a concentration of economic and educational assets stretching between Cambridge and Norwich. The corridor links Cambridge's world-leading life sciences, MedTech and pharmaceutical ecosystem with Norwich's established agri-tech and bioscience cluster.

These knowledge-intensive hubs, anchored by University of Cambridge, Cambridge Science Park, and Norwich Research Park, drive high-value growth and present a major opportunity for Mildenhall to connect into and benefit from these sectors. Cambridge and Norwich are becoming increasingly constrained by their own success in terms of space and affordability. Mildenhall can provide proximity and relative affordability for business functions and housing, capturing spillover but also supporting the sub-regional economy.



C–Cambridge / M–Mildenhall / N–Norfolk

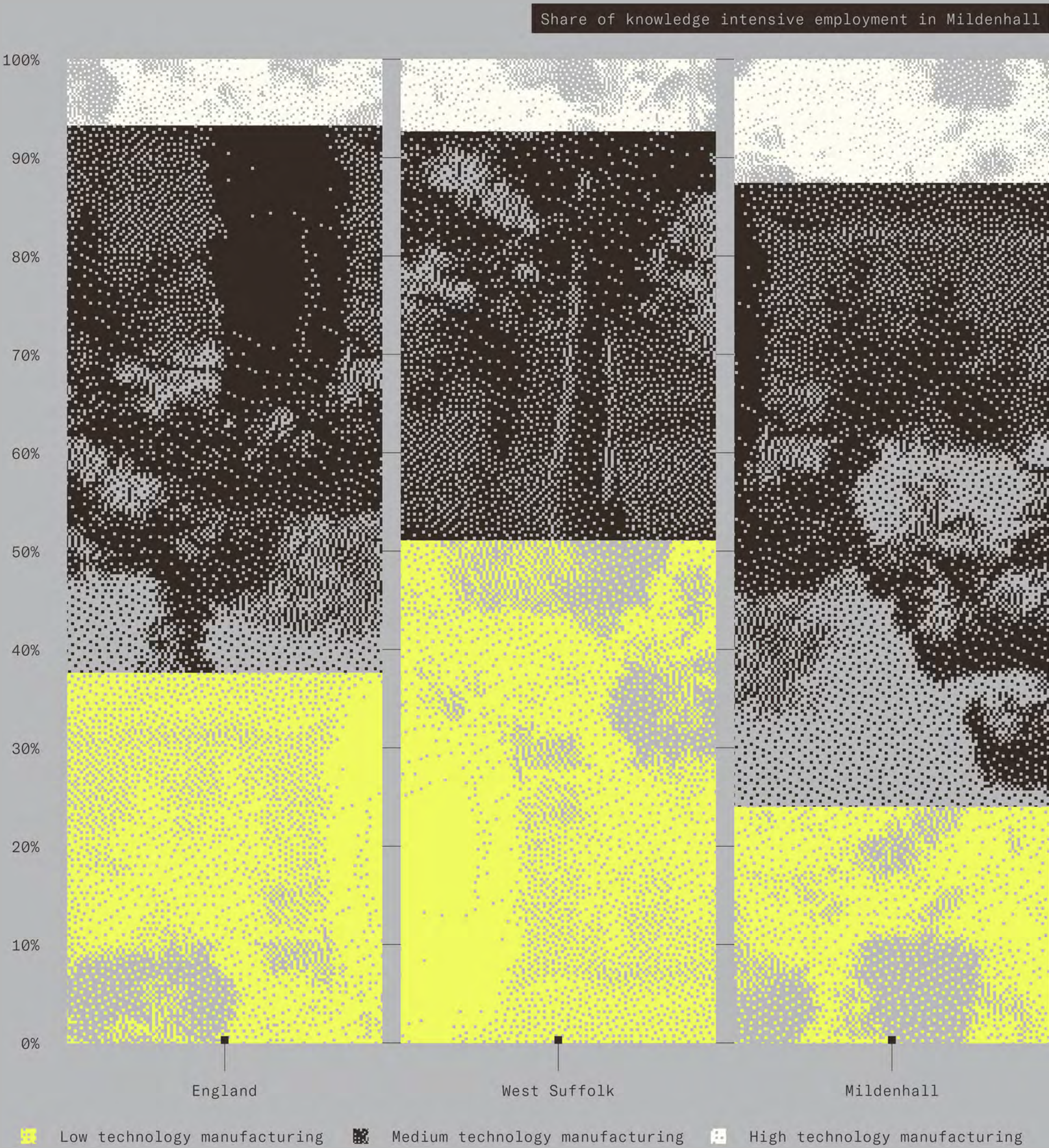
Mildenhall has an economically active workforce.

Mildenhall benefits from a relatively young population, with 64.4% of residents of working age and an average age of 37.1 years, notably lower than the East of England average of 41.4 years. Combined with an above average proportion of economically active residents, this gives the town a strong workforce base to support local businesses.

Mildenhall is also a net importer of labour, with around 4,500 people commuting into the area compared to 3,700 commuting out. Whilst qualification levels in the town are relatively low, this has not translated into weak labour market participation. In fact, residents with no qualifications are significantly more likely to be economically active than the national average, suggesting that the local economy is able to draw effectively on a broad base of workers.

Mildenhall has established foundations to further grow a high-value advanced manufacturing cluster.

Against a backdrop of technological change and increasing reliance on innovation and automation in the workplace, the manufacturing sector is rapidly evolving. With 1-in-10 jobs in Mildenhall in the manufacturing sector, there is also a high concentration of employment in medium and high technology manufacturing. This demonstrates that Mildenhall is already moving towards more advanced manufacturing and has a strong foundation for future growth. However, investment in skills and infrastructure is required to further future-proof Mildenhall’s manufacturing sector, safeguarding and adding value to local employment opportunities.



Mildenhall is already moving ahead in terms of higher value advanced manufacturing

Note: Classifications determined using Eurostat definitions by sector | Source: ONS BRES, 2023

Educational attainment in Mildenhall is low but improving among younger residents.

Education levels in Mildenhall are lower than regional and national averages, with around 25% of residents holding no formal qualifications. This is most common among older people, with those aged 65+ accounting for nearly half (46.2%) of residents without qualifications.

However, there are positive signs. Younger adults are more highly qualified, with those aged 25–34 most likely to hold degree-level qualifications, suggesting education levels are improving over time.

The lack of formal education and training can also be seen in the types of jobs that are concentrated in Mildenhall. While there is an existing specialism in Mildenhall for high-technology manufacturing, overall, there are fewer people employed in high-tech and knowledge-intensive roles compared to national averages. Increasing access to higher skills and qualifications will be important, as these jobs tend to offer higher wages and greater resilience to economic and technological change.

Limited access to colleges and universities is holding back skills and opportunities in Mildenhall.

Mildenhall residents’ limited access to colleges and universities is restricting skills development and opportunities in Mildenhall. Residents have fewer local options for further and higher education, making it harder to gain new skills and for businesses to attract and develop talent.

This lack of provision also reduces opportunities to align training with the needs of local employers and key industries, and limits collaboration between businesses and education providers to address skills shortages.

Travel is an additional barrier. Limited and costly public transport to nearby towns makes it more difficult for residents to access education and training.

Local businesses in Mildenhall are struggling to find the skills they need.

Feedback from employers in Mildenhall shows that many workers gain their skills on the job, rather than through college or formal education. While this shows that the local workforce can adapt and learn in the workplace, it also creates challenges for businesses.

Many employers say they find it difficult to recruit people for specialist and technical roles. Some jobs remain unfilled for long periods, especially in certain industries. These skills shortages could slow down business growth, constrain productivity and make it harder for Mildenhall to build on its strengths, particularly in areas like manufacturing and other specialist sectors.

Mildenhall could make more of its position in a fast-growing innovation region.

Mildenhall is well placed within the Cambridge–Norwich Tech Corridor and already has strengths in key industries. However, it has not yet built strong links with the major organisations and institutions in the area. As technology continues to develop, local manufacturers have a good opportunity to work more closely with innovators across the region, learning from them and benefiting from new ideas. Mildenhall is in a strong position to take advantage of this, potentially more so than some other areas.

To make the most of these opportunities, having a skilled and flexible workforce will be essential. This means supporting local residents with better access to education and training, so they can benefit from changes and growth in local industries.

Our ask:

Invest in local skills to unlock productivity growth and attract higher-value businesses.

Improving access to skills and training will enable the workforce to support local industries and priority sectors, protecting existing jobs, creating new opportunities and boosting productivity. By investing in the following propositions, Mildenhall can also ensure its workforce is future-proofed and able to capitalise on new opportunities as the economy evolves:

01

Back local employers to build a future-ready workforce: Targeted investment in employer-led training will help Mildenhall's key industries stay competitive amid rapid technological change. Strengthening partnerships between businesses and education providers can support co-designed training, expanded apprenticeships, and flexible upskilling.

This can be delivered by linking businesses with employer groups under the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan and working with proven local education providers to develop tailored curricula and apprenticeships aligned to regional skills needs.

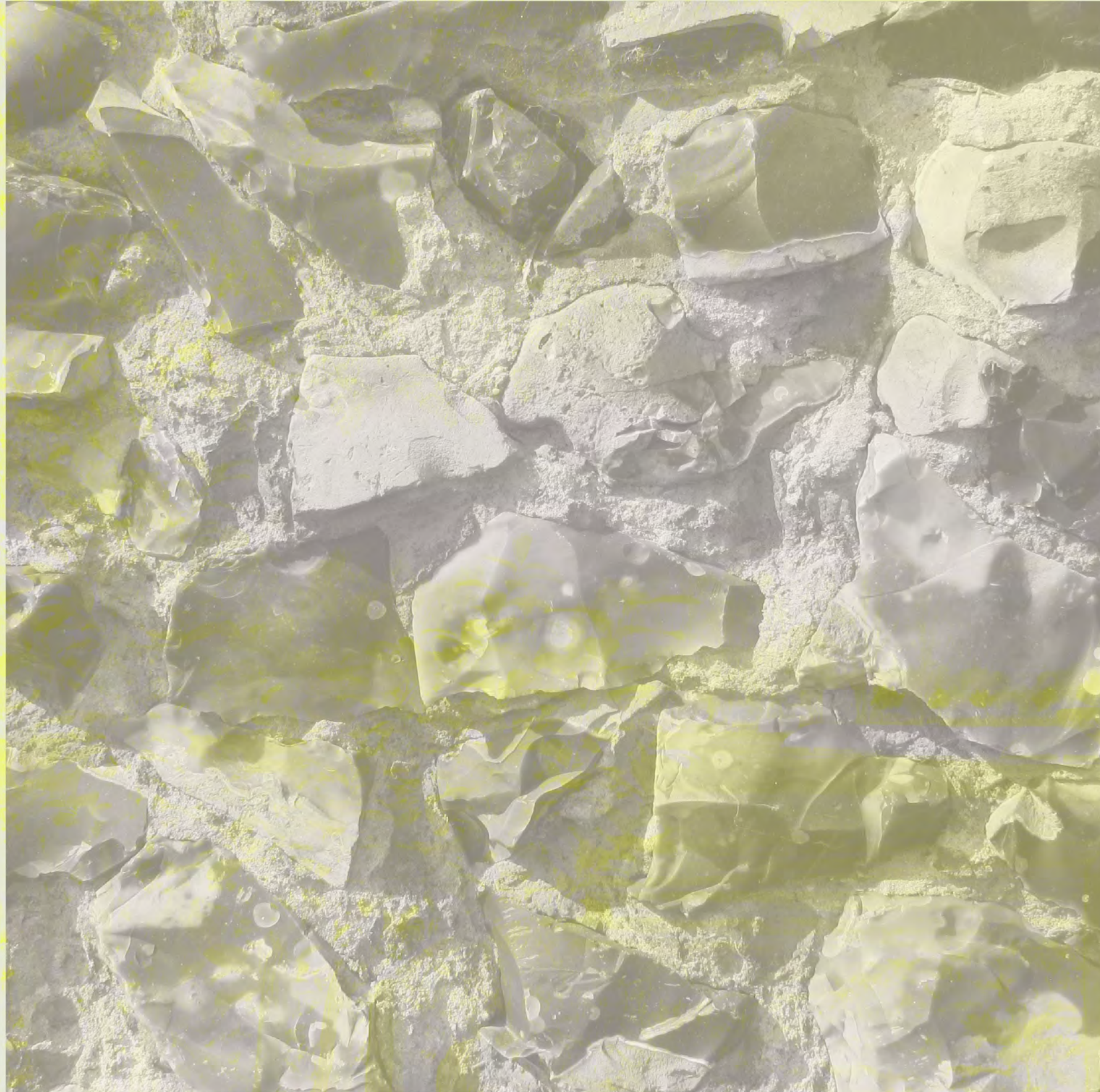
02

Improve transport links and affordability to unlock training access: Investment in better, more affordable transport options would open up education and training for Mildenhall residents and improve Transport Related Social Exclusion. Limited services and high costs currently restrict access, especially for young people and those without a car. Enhancing connectivity, for example through the adoption of the Tiger Bus Pass which provides a Mayor's Fare for under 25s in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, would unlock immediate access to established courses and facilities across West Suffolk. Improving public transport connections is a practical intervention to boost participation, and help residents gain in-demand skills, delivering a practical, scalable boost to opportunity, social mobility, and the local labour market.

03

Invest in a local education and training hub to drive skills and growth: Funding a local flexible training hub would close gaps in provision and expand opportunity for residents and businesses. A local base for further, higher, and adult education - delivered with established providers - would bring learning closer to the community. It would support employer-led courses in priority sectors like advanced manufacturing and create space for workplace training, helping to tackle skills shortages, improve access to good jobs, and support Mildenhall's role in the wider Cambridge-Norwich Tech Corridor.

Strategic Opportunity



(3)

A strategic regional location, set within a rich natural environment and supported by an affordable offer, creates strong potential for investment and growth.

Mildenhall's natural environment is one of its greatest strengths and plays a key role in making it an attractive place to live.

Traffic and congestion are key challenges affecting quality of life and business productivity in Mildenhall.

Local people highly value the town's access to nature, and the lifestyle benefits it provides. In a recent survey carried out for the Mildenhall Neighbourhood Plan, 114 residents were asked what they liked most about the area. Nearly two-thirds mentioned the natural environment as one of Mildenhall's best features.

The town is located in close proximity to a range of natural spaces, including the River Lark, Mildenhall Woods, and Thetford Forest. These areas offer plenty of opportunities for outdoor activities such as walking, cycling, and enjoying wildlife.

Together with its relative affordability compared to Cambridge and surrounds, these natural assets make Mildenhall an attractive and liveable place, strengthening its appeal as a place to call home.

While Mildenhall's natural environment is widely seen as a strength, traffic and congestion are major concerns for both residents and businesses.

In a recent Neighbourhood Plan survey, over 70% of respondents said traffic and congestion are a problem in the town. Certain areas are particularly affected, including Fiveways, the Hub, Queensway, and Police Station Square, where delays and poor traffic flow are common.

These issues constrain business productivity, particularly for firms that rely on efficient access to the A11 for labour, customers, deliveries, and services.

Poor connectivity, wayfinding and public space are reducing the attractiveness of Mildenhall town centre.

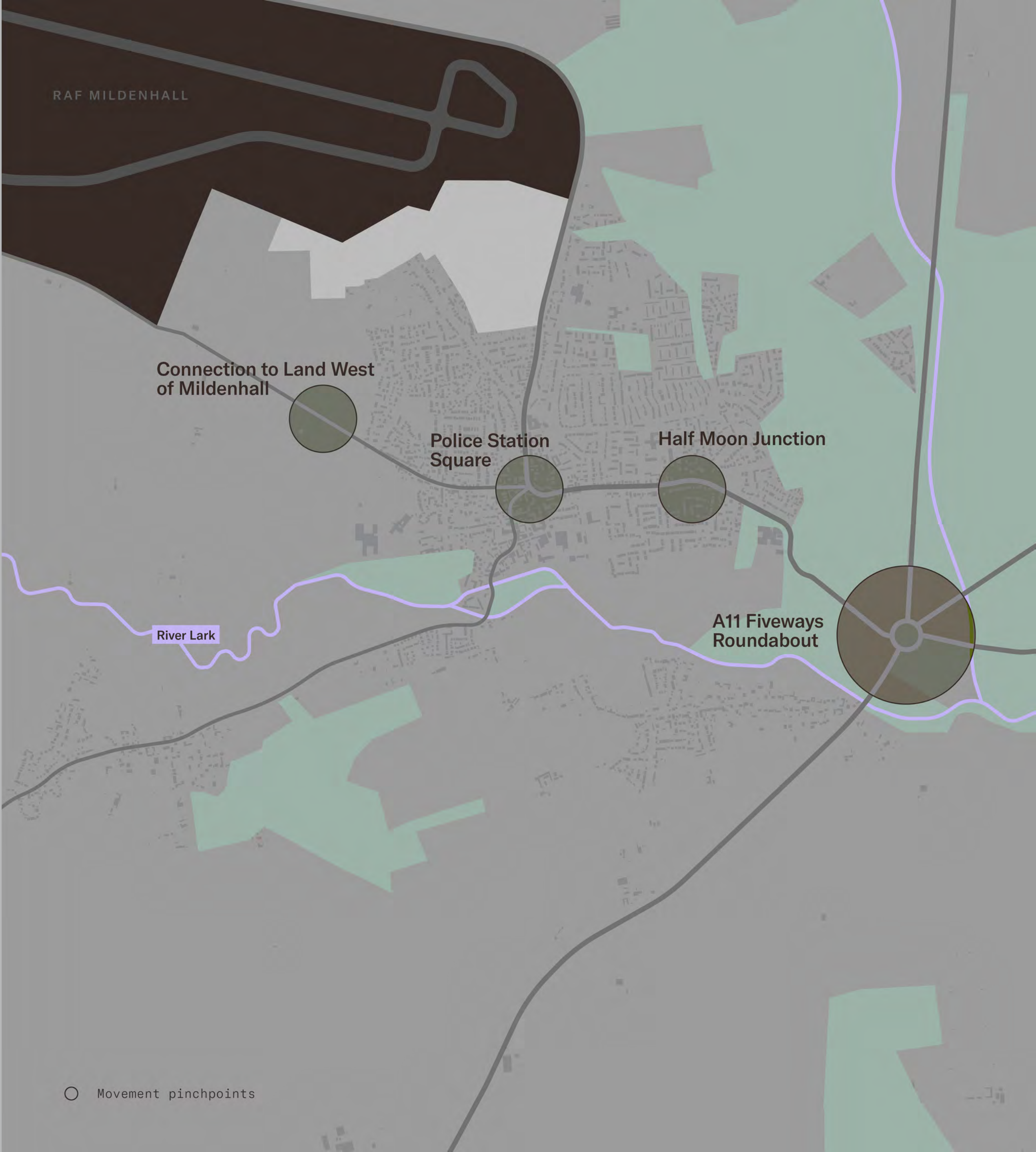
Mildenhall town centre remains functional but requires investment and better circulation to strengthen its economic role.

Walking and cycling in Mildenhall are not well supported, making it harder for people to access and move around the town centre. In the Neighbourhood Plan survey, 36% of respondents rated walking and cycling provision as bad or very bad. Poor routes, combined with high traffic levels, discourage active travel and contribute to a continued reliance on cars.

Key issues include the condition of footways, a lack of safe crossing points, and limited wayfinding. Connections between the town centre and The Hub are also disjointed, reducing ease of movement between key destinations.

The quality of public space is another concern. Areas such as Market Place are dominated by traffic and parking, with limited seating or features that encourage people to spend time there. This limits the town centre's appeal as a place to meet, relax, and socialise.

The Precinct is one of the town centre's defining buildings, making its contribution to the amenity, character and attractiveness of the centre particularly important to maintain for residents and visitors. While the layout, including the connection between the bus station and Market Place, provides a solid foundation, investment in shopfronts, public spaces, and pedestrian-friendly features is needed to create a more inviting environment. Key natural assets such as Jubilee Fields and the River Lark are currently underutilised, with weak connections and physical barriers between the town centre. Better integration would enhance user experience, reinforce Mildenhall's identity, and strengthen its appeal as a place to live, work, and visit.



Our ask:

Mildenhall's town centre would benefit from investment to improve its overall appearance and how the urban area connects with its natural surroundings. The following improvements, both functional and aesthetic, would enhance the quality of life for residents, improve the attractiveness of the town centre for businesses and investors, and help ensure that Mildenhall remains a desirable place where people are proud to live:

01

Continue to work with owners of The Precinct to ensure it remains an asset for the town: While Mildenhall functions well as a local service centre, it must evolve to meet changing needs. Shopfronts and surrounding public realm are dated and in need of renewal, particularly at The Precinct on Market Place. Targeted investment here can drive wider regeneration while retaining flexibility for future uses. Converting The Precinct to residential would permanently remove a key adaptable asset; instead, it should be safeguarded for community, service, and commercial uses. Upper-floor spaces should be protected for future town centre functions to support long-term vitality.

02

Improve traffic management to enhance accessibility and safety: Congestion, particularly in the town centre, limits movement and accessibility. A targeted traffic management scheme would ease peak-time pressure, improve journey reliability, and enhance safety for all users. Reducing conflict between vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists would create a more attractive, accessible environment, support local businesses, and encourage active travel. Market Place is a priority, where better public realm, wayfinding, and pedestrian links could strengthen connections to key destinations such as The Hub.

Invest in the built and natural environment to maximise investment and opportunity.

Opportunity Sectors

To better leverage the strategic location of Mildenhall and unlock economic benefits for local people, three opportunity sectors have been identified that support the ambitions of both the Suffolk Economic Strategy and the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy.

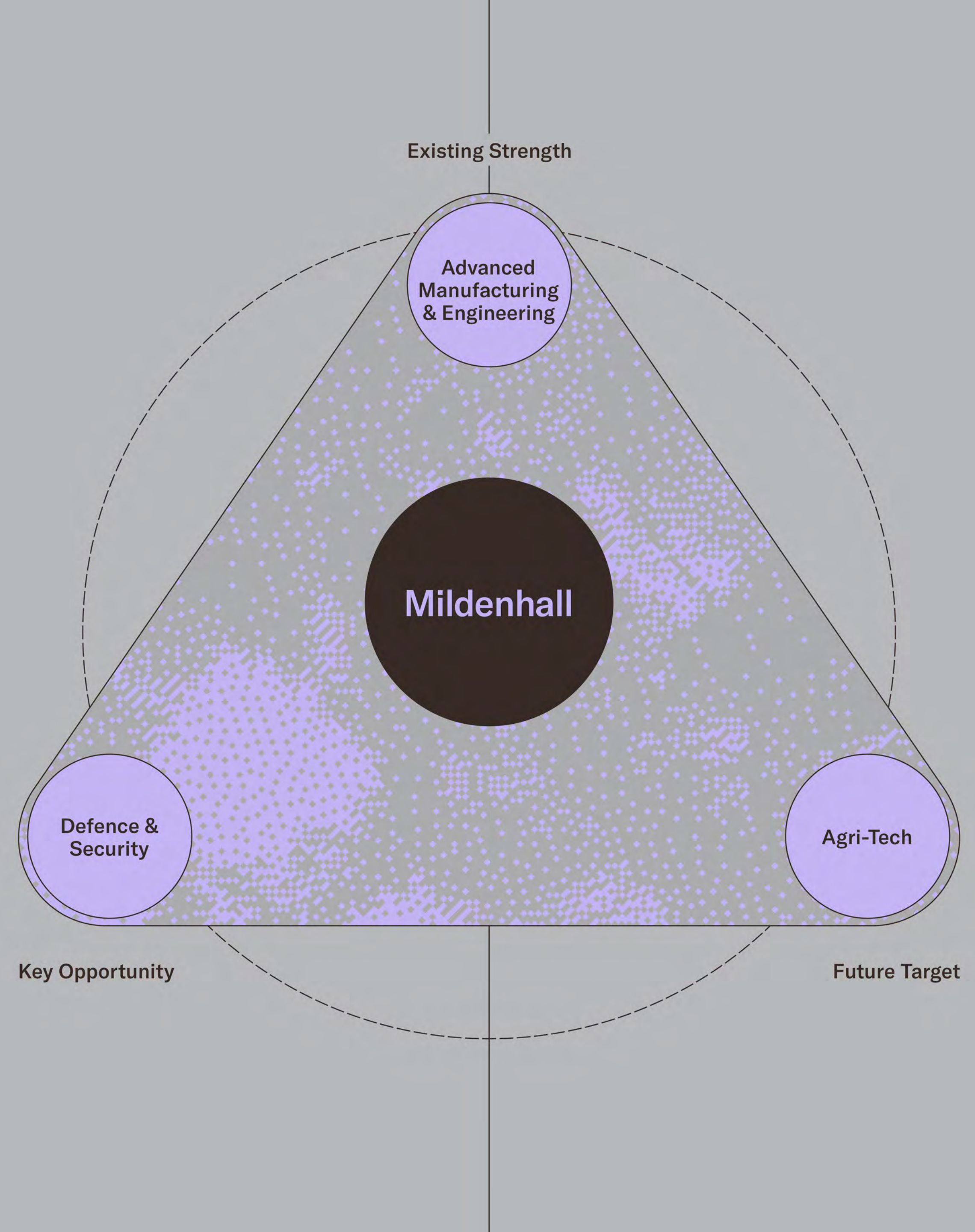
Building upon Mildenhall's established and well-performing cluster of manufacturing businesses, through the provision of infrastructure and skills there is the potential to unlock growth and investment to support a transition to higher-value and future-proof advanced manufacturing. Providing the conditions to grow the advanced manufacturing sector also provides synergies with supporting emerging defence and agri-tech clusters which taps into existing economic, environmental and educational assets across the East of England.

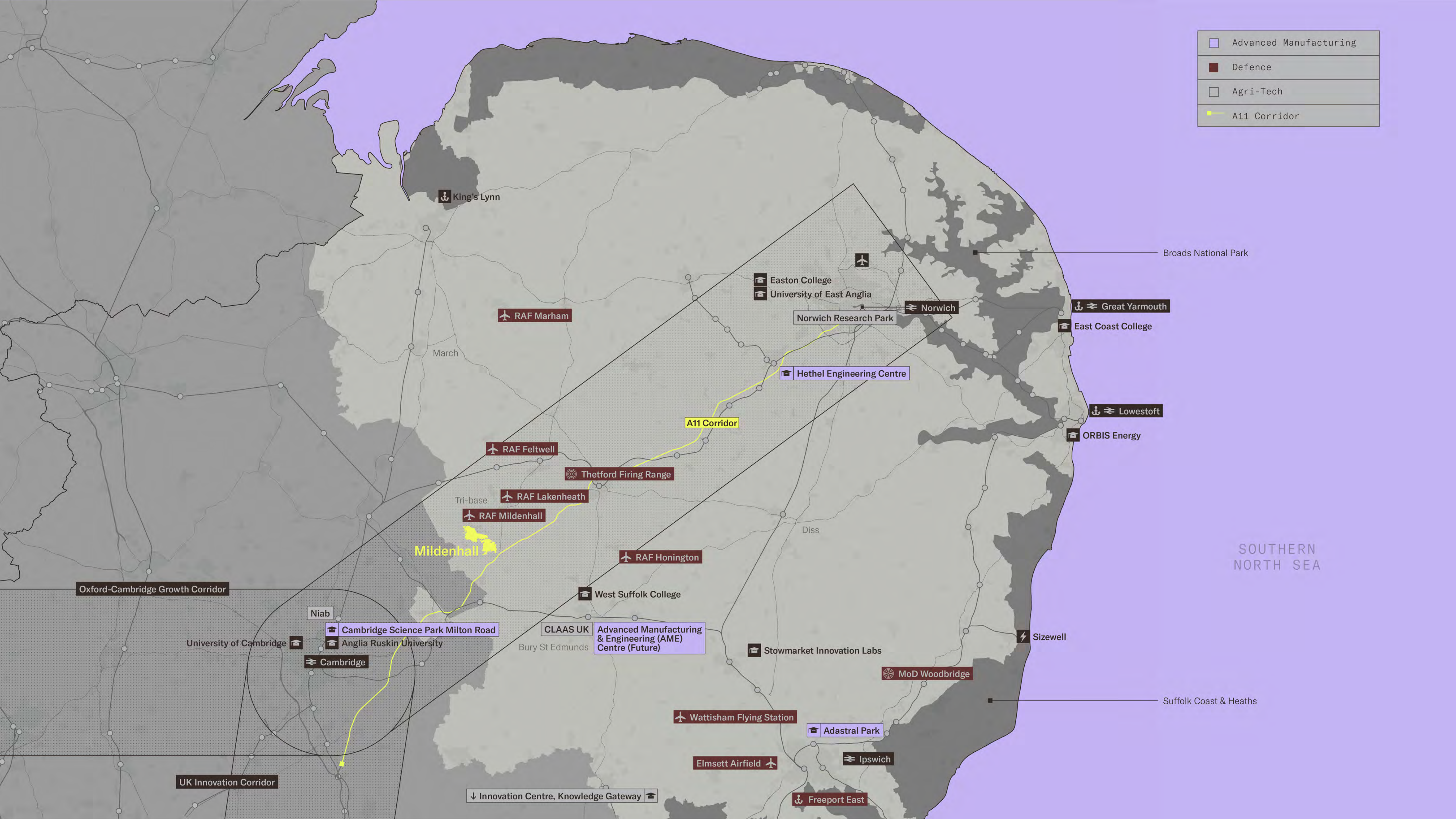
13.6%

of all jobs in Mildenhall are in the manufacturing sector

41.4%

of all manufacturing jobs in Mildenhall specialise in fabricated metal products, providing the technical foundations to support both defence and agri-tech opportunities





Our ask:

Catalysing growth in our opportunity sectors through the provision of a strategic employment site.

01

Mildenhall's opportunity to grow a cluster of advanced manufacturing and defence industries at scale is dependent on the provision of a significant employment site close to the A11. This will provide modern and high-quality industrial units, aligned with the physical needs, security provisions and access requirements that employers desire. It will seek to capture spillover growth from Cambridge and Norwich, whilst taking pressure off the existing Mildenhall Industrial Estate which is running at almost full capacity. A future strategic employment site should also consider space for housing to support population and workforce growth in these sectors.

Invest in a new strategic employment site on the A11 to unlock transformational growth in our opportunity sectors.

1

Advanced Manufacturing

Nationally, advanced manufacturing is a priority sector supported in the UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy, driven by the need to improve productivity, strengthen supply chains, and support innovation-led growth. Mildenhall is well positioned to capitalise on this national priority, particularly given its location within the Cambridge–Norwich Tech Corridor, where research, innovation, and industry are closely linked and provide opportunities for agglomeration.

Also supported in the Suffolk Economic Strategy, advanced manufacturing is already a defining feature of Mildenhall’s economy and provides a strong platform for future growth. The sector accounts for 13.6% of local employment, nearly double the national average, with around 200 people working in advanced manufacturing industries (BRES 2024). This existing base reflects both a concentration of activity and an established workforce that can be built upon to protect employment in Mildenhall that may come under pressure from technological advancements.

Local and Regional Context

Mildenhall’s manufacturing sector is prominent within the town’s economy and characterises the industrial estate. The town has a higher share of both high-technology and medium-technology manufacturing, and overall advanced manufacturing employment exceeds regional and national benchmarks.

This strength is particularly evident in sub-sectors such as the manufacture of electronic, optical, and electrical equipment, which are typically associated with higher productivity and innovation. These specialisms position Mildenhall to capture growth in high-value manufacturing.

The town also benefits from proximity to a network of innovation assets along the Cambridge–Norwich Tech Corridor and the forthcoming Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Centre in Bury St Edmunds. These connections offer access to research, skills, and collaboration opportunities that can support business growth and sector development.

Opportunity for Mildenhall and the A11 Corridor

Looking ahead, there is a clear opportunity to build on these strengths to support both business expansion and job creation. In moving the town’s manufacturing industry towards advanced manufacturing, Mildenhall can also capture higher productivity activity, with the average worker in advanced manufacturing contributing £58 output per hour compared to £48 for manufacturing generally (ONS calculated in Advanced Manufacturing Industrial Sector Strategy).

Mildenhall has the opportunity to play an important role in the A11 corridor, offering space for growth alongside access to a skilled workforce and regional innovation assets if a large-scale opportunity for additional strategic employment can be progressed. These characteristics lay the foundation for existing firms to grow, while SMEs can scale within a supportive local ecosystem. Strengthening connections between businesses, supply chains, and research institutions will help anchor more economic activity locally and support the transition to higher-value manufacturing.

Sectoral Enablers

Linking back to the investment priorities, the following will be key to unlocking this potential:

- 01 Improving infrastructure and employment space** will help relieve existing constraints on business growth, particularly with the high occupancy rate in the industrial estate where additional demand is already evident. Strategic highway improvements are likely required to facilitate these uses on the A11.
- 02 Developing a local skills and training hub** will address a critical gap in provision. Currently, the lack of local training opportunities limits access to jobs in the sector. A dedicated facility would not only support entry into advanced manufacturing careers but also help future-proof the local economy by aligning skills with industry needs.
- 03 Partnering with local businesses to provide training and apprenticeships** will enable firms to access accredited training, develop their workforce, and keep pace with technological change, ensuring that both employers and residents can benefit from the sector’s growth.



JKH Ltd has been based in Mildenhall for over 50 years, and the A11 corridor is central to how we operate - connecting us to suppliers, customers, and markets across the region. Continued investment in infrastructure, particularly the A11 Fiveways junction, is essential to unlocking that potential further.

As a growing manufacturer, we need modern, fit-for-purpose space to expand, and access to a skilled local workforce to fill it. Accelerating the delivery of allocated employment sites, alongside investment in training, would allow businesses like ours to grow here rather than look elsewhere. Mildenhall is well-placed to become a genuine hub for advanced manufacturing, but it needs the right foundations to facilitate growth.

JKH Ltd.

2

Defence

The defence sector represents a significant and growing opportunity, shaped by an increasingly uncertain global geopolitical environment and a strong national policy focus. The UK Government’s Defence Industrial Strategy sets out a clear ambition for the UK to become a defence industrial leader by 2035, supported by a sustained increase in defence spending to 2.6% of GDP by 2027, with further growth expected over the longer term.

Alongside rising investment, there is a clear emphasis on strengthening UK-based businesses and supply chains, ensuring resilience while supporting innovation. This creates a favourable environment for locations like Mildenhall to play a greater role in the sector.

Local and Regional Context

Mildenhall’s strategic location at the very heart of the East of England Regional Defence & Security Cluster is underpinned by the presence of the Tri-bases, which provide a strong anchor for defence-related activity. Around this, a growing network of businesses and assets is beginning to emerge.

This includes defence companies that are already operating in Mildenhall. The area is also supported by proximity to Freeport East, which strengthens opportunities for trade and investment, and by networks such as the New Anglia Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering (NAAME) group, which are actively fostering collaboration and supply chain development.

Together, these assets provide the foundations of a locally embedded defence cluster.

Opportunity for Mildenhall and the A11 Corridor

There is a clear opportunity to align local growth with national defence priorities, particularly in supporting innovation and increasing SME participation in defence supply chains. Programmes such as the MOD’s Defence Office for Small Business Growth are already working to increase spending with smaller firms, while organisations such as UK Defence Innovation and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory are driving forward new technologies, recognising the importance of innovation in the UK’s supply chain.

For Mildenhall, this creates an opportunity to position itself as a location for defence-related innovation, testing, and business growth within the A11 Corridor, given proximity to existing defence business and infrastructure. Mildenhall can cement its role in the corridor as a leader in the defence sector by strengthening local supply chains and supporting business participation in national programmes.

Sectoral Enablers

Linking back to the investment priorities, the following will be key to unlocking this potential:

- 01 Provision of suitable space and infrastructure** can unlock the potential for greater collaboration between the tri-bases and local businesses. Additional space could include the longer-term development of a defence-focused industrial hub as part employment land delivery to accommodate innovation, co-location, and supply chain activity;
- 02 Improving connectivity** can address constraints for industrial size operators. Enhancements to local access, particularly unlocking routes to the west and relieving pressure at Fiveways roundabout, would strengthen links to testing facilities and other defence assets within the East of England’s Regional Defence and Security Cluster;
- 03 Access to appropriate skills** will be equally critical. The Defence Industrial Strategy highlights ongoing shortages in STEM and technical capabilities, which are already constraining growth. Addressing this locally through targeted upskilling and aligned training provision will ensure that Mildenhall’s workforce is able to access and support opportunities in this high-value sector, while developing a priority sector that can future proof economic activity in the town.



Mildenhall was a natural choice for Ukrspecsystems' first UK production facility. Establishing our manufacturing and head office here in West Suffolk allows us to draw on a strong cluster of advanced manufacturing companies, proximity to RAF Mildenhall, and a resilient, assured supply chain.

It also gives us access to a skilled local workforce and the opportunity to work closely with education providers to develop the training pathways needed to support our long-term growth.

**Rory Chamberlain,
Managing Director
Ukrspecsystems**

Agri-Tech

Agri-tech is an emerging priority sector, identified both within the UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy and Suffolk Economic Strategy as a priority area due to its role in improving agricultural productivity and sustainability. The strategies highlight the importance of new technologies in meeting growing global demand for food, while supporting climate resilience and reducing emissions.

The sector has seen rapid growth in recent years, with agri-tech start-ups increasing 40-fold in the UK over the past decade. This reflects rising demand for innovation to address key challenges around food security, sustainability, and affordability, all of which are expected to intensify.

Mildenhall is well placed to engage with these national drivers, particularly given its proximity to established centres of excellence and its access to rural and agricultural environments.

Local and Regional Context

Mildenhall benefits from its location within reach of the Norwich agri-tech cluster, one of the UK’s leading hubs for agricultural research and innovation. This includes institutions such as the John Innes Centre, The Sainsbury Laboratory and Earlham Institute. These organisations provide a strong foundation in research, data, and life sciences, supporting the development of new technologies and applications across the agri-tech sector.

In addition, Mildenhall has the potential to provide available agricultural land space that can support model farms, crop trials, glasshouses, testbeds and pilot activity, an important requirement for agri-tech innovation where technologies often need to be trialled in real-world environments.

Opportunity for Mildenhall and the A11 Corridor

There is a clear opportunity to support the growth of agri-tech within the A11 Corridor by combining access to research with space for testing and deployment. There are existing opportunities to leverage national investment in this growing sector, including £299 million through the Farming Innovation Programme to 2030.

Extending the existing regional agri-tech industry to Mildenhall, with potential access to public sector owned agricultural land, can support job creation in high-value, innovation-led roles while positioning the town as a location for testing, piloting, and scaling new technologies linked to agriculture and food systems. By complementing established research hubs with delivery space, Mildenhall can play a distinct role within the wider agri-tech ecosystem of the Cambridge-Norwich Tech Corridor.

Sectoral Enablers

Linking back to the investment priorities, the following will be key to unlocking this potential:

- 01 Investment in skills** will be important to enable local participation in the sector. Nearby provision, such as courses in laboratory and science manufacturing in Bury St Edmunds, provides a foundation that can be built upon;
- 02 Improving access to existing courses** offered in the wider region in areas such as digital technology and automation, which are increasingly central to agri-tech, will improve skills uptake for local residents in a relevant industry of the future;
- 03 Infrastructure investment** can enable a new, flexible type of space in Mildenhall for testbeds and pilot projects, enabling innovation to move from concept to application. This can be achieved by resolving infrastructure constraints to bring forward employment land for new uses.



Call for Action

This Investment Prospectus sets out the key priorities for Mildenhall and the A11 Corridor to address local challenges, capitalise on opportunities and play an increasingly important role in supporting economic growth across the sub-region.

Investing in these opportunities could unlock a net additional **1,900 jobs within the study area** across the priority sectors and beyond. This could add a net additional **£185 million** in GVA to the economy each year.

In the context of devolution and the formation of the new Norfolk and Suffolk Combined County Authority, the following immediate priorities for Mildenhall that could be progressed across the identified themes and timescales:

	2028–2030	2031–2036	2036 onwards
Delivering infrastructure to unlock a balanced range of new employment and good quality housing.	Accelerating the delivery of the 5ha of employment land at Land West of Mildenhall.	Investing in major junction capacity improvements at Fiveways Roundabout and better integration of the A11 and 14.	Improved western access to unlock future growth potential and better capture spillover from Cambridge.
Supporting local business and workers by providing access to skills and training that aligns with local demand.	Support employers to build appropriately skilled workforce.		Establish a local education hub facility that provides further, higher and adult education.
Enhancing town centre amenity and movement to reconnect Mildenhall with the natural environment.	Investing in The Precinct façade enhancements to revitalise the tired town centre. Accelerate the delivery of 3ha of employment land at former Mildenhall Academy.	Implementing an improved town centre traffic management scheme.	

The strategic opportunities set out in the Investment Prospectus do not set a policy direction and do not have material weight in a planning context. Any future development decisions will need to be taken forward in line with national, regional and local planning policies, legislation and guidance.

For further information on the opportunities in Mildenhall and the A11 Corridor, please contact the Economic Development and Growth Team at West Suffolk Council.

economic.development@westsuffolk.gov.uk

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