



West London Economic Prosperity Board

17 February 2021

Title	West London Innovation District concept
Report of	David Francis – Director, West London Alliance
Status	Public
Sponsor	Cllr Stephen Cowan, Leader, LB Hammersmith & Fulham and Chair, West London Economic Prosperity Board
Urgent	No
Enclosures	Annex One: Catalysing a Silicon Valley for aviation and logistics
Officer Contact Details	David Pack, Head of Economy & Skills (interim), WLA (packd@ealing.gov.uk) Fin Kelly, Strategic Lead – Digital & Smart Cities, WLA (fin.kelly@ealing.gov.uk)

Summary

The concept of West London Innovation Districts is central to the Growth Sectors strand of the agreed Build & Recover economic recovery strategy for West London.

This report sets out a proposed way forward to establish a shared definition of the innovation district concept for West London, including established activity at White City.

Members will also receive by way of example a presentation outlining the specific work underway around Heathrow to develop an innovation district focused on the aviation and logistics sectors.

Recommendations

Leaders are asked to:

1. **Note** work underway to establish a shared definition for West London Innovation Districts and identify places best suited to roll out the concept

2. Comment on the proposed approach set out and suggested next steps.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 The West London Build & Recover strategy for economic recovery contains a focus on growth sectors as one its seven themes. A central part of that strand of work is the development of a ‘West London Innovation District’ focused on growth sectors, spanning the sub-region and branching out across the country. The Build & Recover plan describes the district as having at its heart a series of sector-specific clusters that collaborate to provide government, academia and industry with a testbed for cross-sector research and innovation.
- 1.2 The growth sectors theme of the Build & Recover plan is led by the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, that borough being home to Imperial College and the established and developing cluster of innovation at White City. There is an opportunity to consider how best to define and identify clusters of innovation across West London more widely to enable us to shape and develop an innovation district approach spanning the sub-region. We are working with key sectors, academic institutions and others to adopt a collaborative plan for West London.
- 1.3 This report sets out a proposed working definition for a West London Innovation District and suggested next steps to take the development of the concept further. It also presents to the Board (detailed at Annex One) work underway around Heathrow focusing on the aviation and logistics sectors.

2. HOW TO DEFINE A WEST LONDON INNOVATION DISTRICT

- 2.1 As set out in work undertaken by Arup for the UK Innovation Districts Group¹, Innovation districts are typically urban areas with networks of knowledge-producing organisations such as universities, research bodies, teaching hospitals, cultural institutions, and knowledge-intensive businesses. They bring together innovators, entrepreneurs, researchers, creatives, knowledge workers and investors to work together, to collaborate, compare and compete, creating the conditions for business growth.
- 2.2 Examples of innovation districts in London can be found at the Knowledge Quarter developing at King’s Cross and at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, both building on strong engagement from academic institutions and knowledge intensive businesses. A motivated anchor institution(s) facing challenges innovation can help solve is critical element of an innovation district.

¹ [Innovation Districts: How can we drive growth in major UK cities - Arup](#)

- 2.3 These and other innovation districts in UK cities are becoming the locations of choice for spin-out, start-up, and scale-up science and technology driven firms, as well as for larger businesses undertaking research and development. They are attracting new, high-quality jobs in accessible locations and provide a focus for knowledge organisations and employers to engage with people and communities in new ways; increasing awareness of and access to the range of learning and career opportunities available in the knowledge economy.
- 2.4 A 2016 report by the Centre for London² also provides a steer on how best to develop and promote innovation districts, which include:
- Local Authorities should understand local innovation assets and build skills for the long term;
 - There is a role for planning and scope for sectoral and spatially focused inward investment plans aligned with innovation districts;
 - Universities and other 'knowledge producers' should develop their role at the civic level to promote economic growth
 - Developers should take an active role in place-shaping with a focus on creating spaces and places that promote collaboration and entrepreneurship, and are attractive to skilled people and knowledge-intensive firms.
- 2.5 Drawing on the broad definition and suggested criteria above there are a number of existing West London clusters which fit the Innovation District concept, including:
- White City in Hammersmith and Fulham where Imperial College London and Blenheim Chalcot have opened Scale Space, a 200,000 sq. ft innovation hub for high growth businesses looking to scale. Work has commenced on a further 1m sq. ft of office space in White City for the growth sectors.
 - Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation are developing a 5G testbed strategy looking at how 5G can be tested and commercially deployed in range of sectors represented in the Park Royal area to solve business problems and drive up productivity.
 - West London Business are developing the concept of a Heathrow / 'London West' Innovation District. Two strategic drivers have been identified that will shape the future of transport and the economy surrounding Heathrow – green growth and the impact of digital and virtual technologies. The district proposes a hub and spoke model, leveraging the expertise of the CRL accelerator in Hayes as a base for its initial development.

3. PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

² Spaces to Think: Innovation Districts and the Changing Geography of London's Knowledge Economy, Centre for London, April 2016

- 3.1 Subject to discussion at this Board meeting it is proposed that officers refine a definition of a West London Innovation District, to establish a clear approach for building the concept across the sub-region. This work will draw on existing activity as outlined in point 2.5 above.
- 3.2 As a first step, a workshop of potential anchor institutions will be convened to establish a shared definition and identify priority sectors, places and the needs of local businesses and residents to focus activity.

In tandem with the above, officers will also work with partners to generate a map of potential 'nodes' of a West London Innovation District, presenting potential sectors, clusters and academic partners to engage.

- 3.3 Officers will also explore with West London Business and other partners how best to support and engage in development of the specific plans for an aviation and logistics focused innovation district centred on Heathrow.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The proposal to develop a West London Innovation District is at the heart of the Growth Sectors strand of the agreed Build & Recover economic recovery strategy. The work proposed above to define and shape this will support the delivery of the plan and complement other strands of work within it, including the focus on skills/employment and green recovery.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 5.1 The growth sectors theme of the Build & Recover plan contains various discrete strands of work which could continue independently of an overarching West London Innovation District concept e.g. work to develop digital connectivity and opening access to borough assets, services, data and supply chains for innovators to test, trial and develop emerging technologies and business models at scale. However, bringing together these discrete strands into a coherent wider concept under a West London Innovation District will ensure a joined-up approach to innovation development and allow good practice to be shared across the sub-region.

6. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1 Subject to input from Members at this meeting officers will proceed to scope the approach to developing a West London Innovation District and return to this Board with firm proposals at its next meeting.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

7.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- This report relates directly to the delivery of the agreed West London Build & Recover economic recovery strategy.

7.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- It is anticipated that development work for the West London Innovation District will be undertaken by existing, funded officer time, both within the core West London Alliance team and with relevant officers in West London authorities.

7.3 Social Value

- There is scope to link development of a West London Innovation District to other elements of the Build & Recover plan addressing social and economic inclusion more directly, including work to support reskilling and upskilling among those communities most affected by the economic impact of the pandemic.

7.4 Legal and Constitutional References

- This work falls within the following sections of the WLEPB's Functions and Procedure Rules:
 - Representing the participating local authorities in discussions and negotiations with regional bodies, national bodies and central government on matters relating to economic prosperity for the benefit of the local government areas of the participating authorities.
 - Representing the participating authorities in connection with the Greater London Authority, London Councils and the London Enterprise Panel, for the benefit of the local government areas of the participating authorities, in matters relating to the economic prosperity agenda.
 - Representing the participating local authorities in discussions and negotiations in relation to pan-London matters relating to economic prosperity.
- The Joint Committee's role and purpose on behalf of the Participating Boroughs relates to ensuring appropriate, effective and formal governance is in place for the purposes of delivering the West London Vision for Growth and advancing Participating Boroughs' aspirations for greater economic prosperity in West London, including promoting "the Economic Prosperity Agenda", in partnership with employers, representatives from regional and central government, and education and skills providers.
- The purpose of the Joint Committee will be collaboration and mutual cooperation and the fact that some functions will be discharged jointly by way of the Joint Committee does not prohibit any of the Participating Boroughs from promoting economic wellbeing in their own areas independently from the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee is not a self-standing legal entity but is part of its constituent authorities. Any legal commitment entered into pursuant of a decision of the Joint Committee must be made by all of the Participating Boroughs.

7.5 Risk Management

- This report will support the West London Economic Prosperity Board to understand proposed approaches to supporting growth sectors and longer term job creation across West London as part of our vision to deliver economic recovery.

7.6 Equalities and Diversity

- Work to develop an innovation district framework for West London provides an important opportunity for long term job creation and, with that, the potential to ensure routes into those jobs for diverse communities, and accompanying skills provision to enable that.

7.7 Consultation and Engagement

- 7.8 While there have been elements of engagement with key external stakeholders in developing the initial thinking on a West London Innovation District, extensive engagement is planned as part of the proposed next steps.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Annex One: Catalysing a Silicon Valley for aviation and logistics.