

**Sustainable Growth Board
21st October 2020
Meeting Notes**

Guest – Will Davis – Economic Strategies, Cities & Local Growth Unit

National update

- Comprehensive spending review delayed until next year;
- Step back from day to day and consider medium term challenges
- Economic recovery – Labour Market, Skills and Rural issues

Three areas Economic Strategies, Cities & Local Growth Unit want to explore

1. Medium to long term implications of COVID for cities.
 - a. Short-term as and when restrictions lift what measures to implement
 - b. Longer-term – implications for geography of economic development
2. Investors and Second wave impacts. Where will investment to support regeneration come from?
3. Ongoing rising unemployment. Pockets where this may be challenging.

Cities Dilemma

- Small towns growing – Google Analytics data
- How to reinvent cities and how they operate?
- How far to go against the grain of what's happening as businesses are embracing flexible working and shopping habits are shifting more to online?
- Government should stand firm and not have a knee jerk reaction.
- Data showing sustainable transport users spend more in towns/cities.
- Need to consider environmental and air quality benefits of reduced traffic in cities.
- How far to go forward with Pre-COVID mix of uses in towns as they may no longer fit?
- Impact on Concerns over how the permitted change of use from office to residential may play out due to recent poor-quality examples.
- How to create healthy places? Housing in centres hasn't always been best quality – access to open spaces etc.
- Impact on Town/City Centres accelerated by COVID. Will we be actively masterplanning centres or will new PD rights create a free for all?

- Seemingly an increase in demand for rural properties from people wishing to move out of city. Does this fit with densification of urban and peri-urban areas?

Economy

- Need to find a way for business to flourish as much as possible alongside COVID.
- Helping Business to survive in short term
- Digital critical – full fibre investment.
- Plan sensibly
- Changes in cities affect smaller towns
- Transformation fund for businesses to adapt
- Market mixed – some going forward others more cautious
- Unemployment may double – furlough helped but what next?
- Younger workforce in hospitality hit harder.
- LGF ends in 2021 what happens after? Need more time to plan properly to support growth.

Economic impact of COVID different around the country; national interventions supported by local measures required.

Role for government to capitalise on positives. Determine what changes are temporary or structural.