

Time to think

**BIG**

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## FOREWORD

# Some of the biggest and best ideas are happy accidents

On a day in 1941, an entrepreneurial Swiss engineer with a passion for walking returned home from the Alps to investigate the tiny seeds stuck to his trousers. In 2018, his Velcro business was worth \$500m.

Many of the hundreds of science and technology businesses located in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc are springing from serendipity collaborations borne out of cutting-edge sectors being brought together in innovation clusters across the region.

The world's biggest tech firms are partnering with life science researchers in an effort to solve the human race's biggest problems. They know that breakthroughs and great new ideas emerge not from a single person or function, but at the intersection of functions or people.

This pioneering spirit has spurred us to partner with global architects Perkins and Will, and Blackstock Consulting, to bring together 25 built environment industry leaders with assets totalling over £50bn, to think big about the Arc and the future of UK regeneration.

We've canvassed the views of some of the UK's most thoughtful developers, investors and well informed science and tech businesses, giving them free reign to tackle policy areas they feel need radically transforming.

The ideas help inform a series of 16 policy recommendations which we are calling a Radical Regeneration Manifesto. We urge current and future governments and all other political parties to give serious consideration to these proposals, to step up delivery, spark knowledge-led sustainable regeneration, and serve as an engine for economic growth to the rest of the UK.

We've done their homework for them by looking at locational factors, mobility and access, planning and management policies, and how we can respond to the needs of the companies driving so much of the Arc's economic growth: its science and tech occupiers.

This region is home to world leading businesses and academics searching for the technological and scientific solutions to our global problems. A strong consensus is building for rapid action to decarbonise our economies and our leaders are being increasingly challenged to deliver Good Growth – health, housing affordability and a high quality environment – rather than simply jobs, skills, incomes and a rise in GDP. Places such as Oxford and Cambridge are leading the way on this.

The Arc's Industrial Strategies also set out a commitment to enhancing the region's natural resources and the recently announced Environment Bill will embed biodiversity net gain in the UK development process, with the already high-quality Arc environment having the potential to become the UK's exemplar biodiverse region.

But more must be done, and the UK economy transformed. The knowledge economy is not driven by a chase for gains in GDP or GVA but rather an academic push to combat the universal challenges that threaten our planet and humankind.

The Arc is now home to some of the world's most talented people; the scientists and researchers driving the world's knowledge economy. The region's world-leading academic institutions are now better collaborating with the fertile business ecosystems being established around them. Some global businesses of the future are being nurtured.

Universities can be powerhouses of regeneration in regional cities but the UK planning system is failing and the uncertainty and risk inherent to the planning process puts off institutional investors, who are keen to have certainty in whatever they do.

Some of the issues outlined in this manifesto can be remedied and the successes of our region's best universities can be emulated across the UK. These are all ideas that can help drive a new knowledge-based economy, spurring crucial technological collaboration between universities and industry, fostering healthier communities, and possibly even nurturing future UK regional powerhouses too. At least that's the dream.

If we want to secure a sustainable and prosperous future for the next generation, it is time to start thinking radically about how to do it. We are turning a political page in the UK what better time to be radical?



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