

Crawley 2040 Economic Vision & Growth Plan

Manor Royal BID Response

27 July 2026

This is the formal response of the Manor Royal BID (MRBD) as approved by the Manor Royal BID Board on 27 July 2026. This does not prejudice any response that may be submitted by any individual company based on Manor Royal.

Author: Steve Sawyer (Executive Director) as approved by the Manor Royal BID Board.

This is the formal response of the Manor Royal Business Improvement District (BID) Company to Crawley Borough Council as part of its consultation on its “Draft Crawley 2040 – Economic Vision and Growth Plan”.

The Manor Royal BID Company (MRBD) was formed in June 2013 following the successful outcome of the BID ballot conducted in accordance with the Business Improvement Districts (BID) Regulations (2004). The Manor Royal BID represents and promotes the interests of Manor Royal based companies and staff, with the sole responsibility for managing and delivering the BID Business Plan as voted for by businesses in Manor Royal.

Commentary and Manor Royal BID response

In providing this response, MRBD acknowledges the contribution the Council has made to supporting the growth of the local economy and its efforts through the publication of this vision and growth plan, to leave a legacy for the incoming Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority.

This feedback should be read in conjunction with the response MRBD made to the Local Plan Review (2024-2040) on 16 June 2023 as part of its Regulation 19 Response (attached separately), which is substantially still relevant both in terms of planning policy and the Economic Vision & Growth Plan.

Importance of partnership

In making its statement, the vision explicitly recognises the importance and value of partnership working. This collective approach is something MRBD very much endorses. Since its creation in 2013, the Manor Royal BID has become a champion for positive change in Manor Royal. That change has been achieved through a clear strategy, persistence and the forging of vital public-private partnerships, specifically between the BID and both West Sussex County and Crawley Borough Councils.

This approach has been instrumental in reversing the fortunes of Manor Royal, turning it into a place that people and businesses can be proud of and one that now enjoys good levels of occupancy and economic health. It is critically important that this approach is maintained, and built upon, as the new Combined Authority takes shape or else risk losing ground and reversing the progress that has made Manor Royal the place it is today.

Recognition of the role of Manor Royal

The positioning of Manor Royal Business District within the Vision & Growth Plan as a key economic hub and recognition of its role in the success of the town, and indeed the region, is welcome as are statements about future investment in Manor Royal. It is pertinent to remind partners that this wasn't always the case and has been hard

fought, where the major changes in the fortunes of Manor Royal have been achieved since 2013 and the creation of the BID, which has proven itself to be a key driver for change and a model for excellent delivery and partnership.

MRBD welcomes suggestions for further investment in infrastructure and digital connectivity. However, the document is “light” on creating easier conditions for investment in Manor Royal e.g. through updating Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) as the Council is doing in the town centre, or by considering the introduction of a Simplified Planning Zone (SPZ) for Manor Royal as they have in Slough Trading Estate to make it easier for businesses to benefit from deemed consent for simple minor building alterations.

Over-reliance on Manor Royal BID for maintenance and growth

Over the years MRBD has forged a powerful partnership with the public sector that has immeasurably transformed the public realm, presentation and facilities in Manor Royal. MRBD values the trust placed in it to both create the spatial vision for the business district via its Projects Pack and the financial contribution made by public partners to help realise that vision.

However, while the Crawley 2040 Economic Vision references further capital investment, mostly in infrastructure that MRBD supports, over the years the area has become over-reliant on the BID to maintain it. This has become an increasing burden on MRBD as costs rise and the number of maintainable assets increases. It is crucial to the future success of the business district that assets and standards are maintained or even improved. It should not and cannot be left to the BID alone to shoulder that burden and this should be recognised within the plan.

The Economic Vision states that “Crawley will be a place where people want to live, work, visit and invest” this will only be realised if there is a commitment to both investing in growth and in its continued upkeep and maintenance.

Sustainable growth

The Economic Vision is very strong on growth with specific reference made to Gatwick Green and expansion of Gatwick Airport through the Northern Runway project. The Council is also advocating the identification of the land to both support the expansion of the airport, presumably by providing space for the necessarily support services a bigger Gatwick will require, but also to help to provide space to allow the economy to diversify. In supporting this approach, MRBD would advocate review of the safeguarded land to the north of Manor Royal.

In doing so, MRBD is mindful of the increased pressure significant development could place on infrastructure, services and demand for staff. If this growth is to be accommodated and if the town is to avoid the effect of “over-heating” it is critical that investment is made in the necessary supporting infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure and housing supply.

Gatwick Green – strategic employment location

Given the limited land supply to support the demands of a growing airport and thriving economy, the strategic employment land allocation for Gatwick Green makes sense – particularly while other land within the current Borough boundary is otherwise constrained by the requirement to be safeguarded for a possible wide-spaced additional third runway at Gatwick.

Requirements for Gatwick Green to meet high sustainability standards are supported by MRBD. It is also important that the intent for Gatwick Green to meet demand that cannot otherwise be met elsewhere, specifically Manor Royal, is important so that it provides additional net gain in terms of the town’s offer and to avoid it challenging and cannibalising existing areas like Manor Royal by creating business drift without creating intended net value gain from new occupiers, new businesses and new jobs.

Land south of Gatwick Airport (currently safeguarded)

MRBD supports a review of the requirement to safeguard this land for another third runway, particularly given the recent consent obtained by Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) to bring forward the Northern Runway Project. It is MRBD's view that this level of expansion at Gatwick Airport is sufficient to allow Gatwick to increase passenger numbers and cement its position as a competitive airport alongside planned development of other airports in London and the South East.

This land has long been blighted by this safeguarding policy, acting both as a constraint on growth and a potential threat to the Manor Royal Business District. It seems sensible to review this position and to consider removing the safeguarding policies so that the land can be developed for other commercial uses thereby allowing the business district to, potentially, almost double in size. Notwithstanding the need for improved infrastructure and housing supply, this would represent the most significant opportunity for growth in Crawley and the wider sub-region alongside a competitive Gatwick Airport with two runways.

Delivery and governance

While this is almost exclusively focussed on public partnerships, this section under plays the role of public-private partnerships, although it is alluded to. Given the significant role of the Manor Royal BID in realising the ambitions of the Manor Royal Masterplan (2010) and the management of the business district, more emphasis should be placed on the partnership with the Manor Royal Business Improvement District.

Map of key opportunity zones

The presentation of this map would benefit from being in the more usual north-south orientation. Nor is the curtilage of the Manor Royal Business District area consistent with that of the BID that also includes the County Oak area. At the moment County Oak (Zone 1), where MRBD also has its office, is not shown as a commercial area within the defined the Manor Royal Business District opportunity zone. It should be.

MRBD responses to specific consultation questions.

Strategic Objective 1 – A diverse, productive and resilient economy

- Unlock the new land needed for Crawley to harness the economic growth opportunities arising from airport expansion to 2040 and beyond
- Reduce over-reliance on aviation and boost productivity and job opportunities for residents by fostering growth, particularly in advanced manufacturing, life sciences, clean energy, professional/business services, green technologies, logistics, digital and creative industries
- Support innovation, enterprise and high-value job creation through business growth hubs, incubation and inward investment

Q1: Do you have any concerns about the proposed approach or is there anything missing from this objective?

MRBD is supportive of this position subject to sensible considerations about investment in the necessary infrastructure and housing supply to ensure this growth can be accommodated to avoid economic "over-heating". Within and alongside this, allowances must be made for the upkeep and maintenance of existing places, particularly Manor Royal that has arguably become over-reliant on MRBD.

Strategic Objective 2 – Green Transformation and Net Zero

- Establish Crawley as the South East's leading hub for sustainable growth, making Gatwick Green a flagship destination for clean industries, green tech innovation and good quality jobs for residents
- Embed net zero principles across infrastructure, transport, housing, commercial space and business practice ensuring all development supports a low-carbon future
- Drive biodiversity net gain and climate resilience in every project, and establish a habitat bank in Crawley, creating a greener, more adaptable urban environment
- Secure investment in modern grid infrastructure to future-proof energy capacity for business growth and accelerate the adoption of low carbon technologies

Q2: Do you have any concerns about the proposed approach or is there anything missing from this objective?

MRBD is supportive of sustainable growth and this objective broadly aligns with MRBD's own "Sustain and Renew" objective in its Business Plan (2023-28). However, consideration needs to be given to:

- *Understanding the current value of Manor Royal's green infrastructure and the potential for increasing both baseline measures of biodiversity and urban greening factor (See Manor Royal Green Infrastructure Framework).*
- *Support for the expansion and development of ReEnergise Manor Royal.*
- *Assessing and removing those barriers to achieving modal shift in Manor Royal as identified by the Crawley Growth Programme funded Move It programme by undertaking a Healthy Streets Audit throughout the business district to inform future investment plans.*
- *For public partners to better understand the potential for enhancing biodiversity at the micro-level (e.g. in Manor Royal) instead of relying entirely on large plots of land that would serve as habitat banks for development in the town. An over-reliance on this approach would, in effect, accept the continued urbanisation of existing areas through intensive development that is not offset by on-site measures and would be to the detriment of the business district and not consistent with aspirations for existing economic areas and opportunity zones to reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to sustainability goals.*

Strategic Objective 3 – A Vibrant, Future-Ready Town Centre

- Transform Crawley town centre into a thriving neighbourhood; liveable, walkable and culturally rich and to be enjoyed by residents, visitors and workers alike
- Rebalance retail uses with new housing, destination leisure, creative and cultural activities and re-establish a dynamic business growth hub comprising a new Grade A office commercial quarter alongside modern flexible workspace
- Deliver an attractive, welcoming and safe public realm, which residents can have pride in and that serves to boost both the daytime and evening economies

Q3: Do you have any concerns about the proposed approach or is there anything missing from this objective?

MRBD is supportive of a more impressive and successful town centre and recognises the efforts the Council is making to invest in developing masterplans and commissioning other research in support of this. MRBD would also advocate for a refresh and review of policies that support Manor Royal's development, including; refreshing

Supplementary Planning Guidance, the introduction of a Simplified Planning Zone for Manor Royal and investing in a Manor Royal Healthy Streets Audit.

Strategic Objective 4 – Skills for the Future and Inclusive Growth

- Create skills training pathways that connect Crawley residents to high-value, sustainable local jobs through partnerships with education providers, employers and the new Sussex & Surrey Institute of Technology
- Improve social mobility and reduce inequalities amongst residents by supporting access to lifelong learning, apprenticeships and training opportunities
- Ensure that every resident has real choices about the work they do, supported by a responsive skills system and by access to employment support services

Q4: Do you have any concerns about the proposed approach or is there anything missing from this objective?

MRBD is supportive of any scheme or initiative that improves the supply of skilled people and helps to support people into rewarding work. Beyond skills, MRBD also recognises there is a need to improve employer linkages to make it easier for local employers to engage in work experience and work-related challenges, to participate in meaningful skills-based volunteering and to support young people in helping them to raise their aspirations and gain confidence to fully participate in and benefit from our successful local economy, possibly through structured mentoring schemes.

Strategic Objective 5 – Connected Crawley

- Deliver a step-change in sustainable transport and active travel infrastructure, significantly reducing journey times between the town centre, Manor Royal, London Gatwick and existing and new neighbourhoods
- Enhance rail capacity and bus rapid transit to underpin sustainable growth, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions
- Make Crawley a hyper-connected digital town, boosting business productivity, access to employment by residents and community inclusion

Q5: Do you have any concerns about the proposed approach or is there anything missing from this objective?

MRBD is supportive of improving the connectivity throughout and into the town. As well as looking at the potential for rapid transit systems, there is a pressing need to consider the upkeep and improvement of the existing infrastructure for walking, wheeling and buses, to assess and remove the barriers to modal shift by undertaking the suggested Manor Royal Healthy Streets Audit, work to support schemes that promote the use of active travel and existing public transport services, consider the importance of investing in the improvement and maintenance of the public realm for its role in promoting feelings of safety, wellbeing and active travel, and urgently review the current arrangements for managing the public highway and parking in Manor Royal particularly in view of the planned expansion of Gatwick Airport (the current arrangements and inadequate).

END