



We Are

# Staffordshire

## A FOCUS ON SKILLS FOR GROWTH IN STAFFORDSHIRE

AN INVESTMENT PROPOSAL TO ENHANCE 16 TO 18 YEARS  
PROVISION, REDUCE NEETS AND BOOST THE LOCAL ECONOMY.





# CONTENTS

- 1 FOREWORD
- 2 INTRODUCTION
- 3 WHAT WE NEED AND WHY
- 4 FORECAST
- 6 WHY ACTION IS NEEDED
- 8 OBJECTIVE AND VALUE PROPOSITION
- 9 THE OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS
- OUR INVESTMENT PROPOSALS:
- 10 Burton Upon Trent
- 12 Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stafford
- 14 Cannock, Lichfield, Rodbaston, and Tamworth
- 16 Stoke-on-Trent College
- 18 Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College
- 20 APPENDIX I

# FOREWORD

COUNTY COUNCILLOR MARTIN MURRAY, CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMY AND SKILLS, STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AND CRAIG HODGSON, PRINCIPAL OF NEWCASTLE AND STAFFORD COLLEGES GROUP: CHAIR, STAFFORDSHIRE COLLEGES NETWORK.



County Councillor Martin Murray

In Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, we are ambitious for our young people and want to ensure that our local economy has the skills to thrive. We are determined that those aged 16 to 18 have access to the high quality training they need and deserve to enable them to prosper throughout their careers.

Our current provision is well aligned with the needs of local employers. However, a challenge is fast approaching. This independent report – believed to be one of the first in the country to combine population growth with provider estate capacity – makes the situation clear; demand is already outpacing supply. Without action, we risk a serious shortfall in the skilled workforce our businesses rely on.

Further investment in training provision for young people is not just a moral imperative – it is an economic necessity.

It will enable more young people to access higher-skilled, better-paid jobs being created locally. Without it, we risk stalling economic growth and denying thousands the opportunity to build successful careers in our region.

This proposal is future-proof, built on the needs of business and shaped by contributions from employers, Chambers of Commerce, Staffordshire’s district and borough councils, Staffordshire County Council, further education colleges, and the training provider network.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further with stakeholders and parliamentarians.

**Together, we can ensure our region’s young people and economy are equipped for a thriving future.**



Craig Hodgson



## DELIVERING THE SKILLS STAFFORDSHIRE NEEDS FOR PROGRESSION NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Staffordshire has a thriving economy with many key sectors going from strength to strength. We have seen skills levels rapidly improve over recent years and skills gaps have been narrowed to support business and economic growth across the county. However, without further investment in education and training provision for our young people, we will struggle to deliver the skills needed for our economy to grow, both now and in the future.

By investing in our learning provision, more young people and other residents will have the skills to take advantage of the higher qualified, better-quality jobs being created by local businesses.



## WHAT WE NEED AND WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

**The post-16 education system in Staffordshire is at a tipping point. Demand for training places is surging, college sites are already full, and the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is rising fast.**

Without urgent investment, the system will be unable to meet the needs of our growing 16 to 18 population and demand for skills from our businesses – let alone deliver on national ambitions like the Youth Guarantee. But with the right funding, we can unlock thousands of new training places, reduce NEET levels, and generate millions in savings and economic growth.

The figures on the following page tell a compelling story – one of pressure, potential, and opportunity.



THROUGH THIS INVESTMENT WE CAN ENSURE WE HAVE THE SKILLS NEEDED, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE, TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INCREASE PROSPERITY FOR OUR RESIDENTS.

The Problem	Required Investment	Outputs	Outcomes
FE estate at capacity with future demand far outstripping supply	£103.6m capital investment	26,760m <sup>2</sup> more teaching space	£143m fiscal saving
Rapidly rising NEETs	Requirement for associated revenue funding	4,000 new training places	£290m economic gains





## WHY ACTION IS NEEDED



### A RISING POPULATION OUTSTRIPPING PROVISION

The 16 to 18 year old population of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent has risen in the last 5 years. This trend will peak in 2029 at **10%**, and will not return to current levels until 2035 at the earliest.



### A RISING RATE OF NEETs

The number of NEETs has more than doubled in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent since 2019, when it was below the national average.



## A FURTHER EDUCATION ESTATE THAT CAN'T MATCH FUTURE DEMAND...



The average capacity of the FE estate in 2024 was **96%**, with several sites over capacity.



The requirement of the FE estate is **119% or 4,185 additional places** by 2029/30 to meet population growth and NEET reduction objectives.



If nothing changes, all but one FE college site will be full beyond current capacity, to a peak of **175%**.

SEE APPENDIX 1 FOR MORE GRANULAR DETAIL ON THESE FIGURES.

# OBJECTIVE AND VALUE PROPOSITION

## OUR PROPOSAL

Our partnership is seeking £103.6 million in capital investment and associated revenue funding to address critical sufficiency pressures across its post-16 education system. This investment will enable:

- The delivery of **13 shovel-ready projects**, both new buildings and refurbishments **across five FE college groups** to accommodate additional learners and reduce operating costs.
- Additional capacity to support curriculum areas, focused on Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent LSIP sectors and Skills England priorities, including teaching spaces for construction, digital, STEM, and healthcare.
- The provision of high-quality technical education that aligns with local economic priorities.
- More learners accessing their **first-choice provision**, reducing the risk of NEET.
- High quality, accessible, sustainable learning facilities that meet the needs of learners, employers and the community.



# THE OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS FROM THIS INVESTMENT

The investment will deliver high quality, accessible, sustainable learning facilities that meet the needs of learners, employers and the community. It will also reduce operating costs and make more efficient use of available spaces.

## OUTPUTS IN NUMBERS:



**26,760 m<sup>2</sup>** - The amount of new or refurbished teaching space.



**4,000** - The number of new training places for 16 to 18 year olds annually by 2029/2030; the vast majority of whom will be from Staffordshire or Stoke-on-Trent.



A reduction in the category 'C' rating or below of most of the estate.

## OUTCOMES:



**1,135 / 63%** - Fewer 16 to 17 year old NEETs, every year, by 2029/2030.



A better-quality learning experience, enhancing progression to skilled jobs or further training.



More technical education provision that meets local and national skills priorities.



Delivery of the skills needed for our economy and key sectors to grow now and in the future.

## IMPACTS ON THE PUBLIC PURSE:

**£143 million** of fiscal savings, through reduced benefit claims and increased income tax and NI contributions, mostly from 2030.

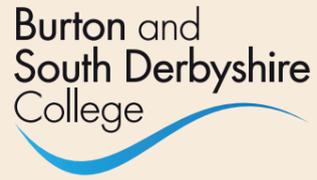
**£290 million** of economic gains, through higher wages earned from people who would have been NEET.



## FOCUS ON:

# BURTON UPON TRENT INVESTMENT PROPOSALS

Led by



### Focus

Expanding capacity for SEND, NEET and ESOL, students progressing into vocational programmes and hospitality learners.



### Projects

Two capital projects including a new multi-purpose teaching facility and a training hotel in Burton upon Trent town centre.



### Impact

345 new 16 to 18 training places and 175 NEETs supported.



## THE VISION

The multi-purpose facility will replace an ageing, single storey building on the Town Centre Campus with a modern, two storey facility with expanded capacity and multi-use rooms.

The modern training hotel will provide hands-on learning in a real-world setting, supporting NEETs, those at risk of NEET and those with SEND and ESOL needs with a more accessible route into vocational learning. It will also help to revitalise the growth of the local hospitality sector.

“

As a representative of local employers and the Chamber of Commerce, we fully support this innovative project, which will strengthen the region's technical and vocational skills base. The College plays a vital role in developing a highly skilled workforce that meets the evolving needs of local industry. The Chamber recognises the College as a key partner in driving inclusive economic growth across the region. We believe this investment will have a lasting impact on productivity, innovation, and prosperity within our local business community. ”

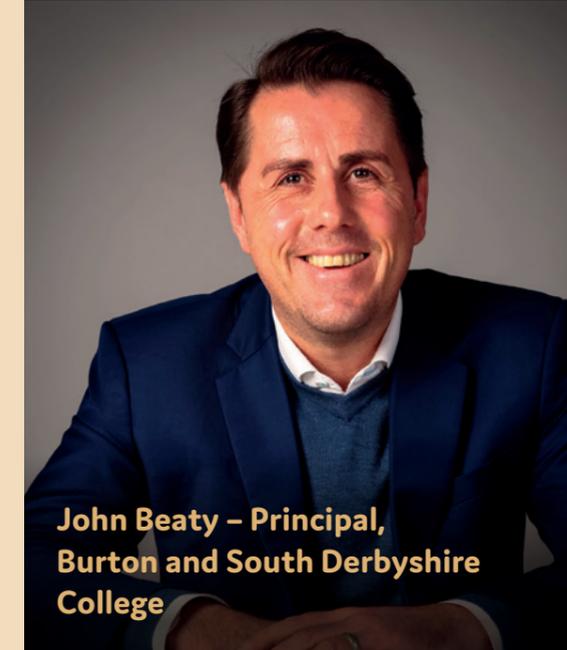
**Richard Wileman – Principal of Select Car Leasing and President of Burton and District, Chamber of Commerce**



**John Beaty – Principal, Burton and South Derbyshire College:**

“

This innovative project will allow us to deepen our local impact on the delivery of much sought after technical and vocational skills. Our College is central in ensuring that local businesses have the talent pipeline they need to remain competitive and this project will allow us to expand this agenda creating significant employment opportunities for local people. ”



**John Beaty – Principal, Burton and South Derbyshire College**

## SKILLS IMPACT

### Meeting Labour Market Needs and Increasing Economic Activity

BSDC's projects will substantially expand post-16 capacity within East Staffordshire, allowing more young people to access high-quality vocational, technical, and professional education. These two projects directly tackle the growing demand for a skills-based economy, aligned to local labour market needs and intelligence, to secure a talent pipeline. Such efforts will be instrumental in sustaining regional economic growth and prosperity in high demand sectors.

By increasing capacity, BSDC can significantly reduce the number of individuals who are currently NEET, or at risk of becoming. This will be achieved through increasing and sustaining re-engagement pathways, ultimately decreasing the financial burden associated with unemployment and economic inactivity across the region.

## FOCUS ON:

# NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME AND STAFFORD INVESTMENT PROPOSALS

Led by



### Focus

Major expansion in healthcare, construction, digital, and green skills.



### Projects

Two large-scale builds including a Healthcare Technical Excellence Centre in Newcastle-under-Lyme and a Young Person Expansion Project in Stafford.



### Impact

2,050 new 16 to 18 places and 405 NEETs supported.

“

As a local employer, we depend on NSCG to upskill our workforce and develop future talent. Closing the skills gap is critical for UK productivity, and partnerships like this are essential to meet our industry needs. Continued investment in NSCG will ensure businesses like ours—and the wider economy—have the skilled people required to thrive across all levels of our business. ”

**David Thomas – People and Business Support Manager, Siemens**

**SIEMENS**

“

Hitachi Energy has a long history of engineering electricity infrastructure across the UK, much of which is delivered out of our Staffordshire facilities. NSCG’s expansion of student education will help us and other local businesses meet customer needs while providing local economic growth. ”

**David Padfield – Operating Unit Manager, Hitachi Energy UK**

**HITACHI**

“

UHNM recognises that ensuring young people can access high-quality pathways into employment is essential for the long-term health, economic stability, and wellbeing of our communities. UHNM sees the proposal as vital to building a sustainable, skilled local workforce over the next 10 years. It directly supports our strategic priorities of developing talent, widening participation, and ensuring we have the workforce required to meet future healthcare demand. ”

**Aysha Kent – Education & Future Workforce Manager, University Hospitals of North Midlands**



**Craig Hodgson – Principal and CEO, NSCG:**

“

Investment is urgently required due to the critical need for capacity to meet soaring demand from learners and employers across the region. Without it, places on courses for learners aged 16-18 cannot be guaranteed and NEET figures will continue to rise. By forging ahead with state-of-the-art facilities like the Healthcare Technical Excellence Centre, (H-TEC), and the Young Person Expansion Project, we are directly addressing this challenge. We are creating necessary capacity in high-priority sectors – from healthcare, engineering, digital skills, AI, and cyber security to construction and green skills. Investment will ensure NSCG can expand its vital role, guaranteeing that local businesses have the robust talent pipeline they need to thrive, fostering significant employment opportunities and driving long-term economic prosperity for our communities. ”

**Craig Hodgson – Principal of Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group; Chair, Staffordshire Colleges Network**



## SKILLS IMPACT

- **Health and Social Care**  
Expands specialist training through a new Technical Excellence Centre, meeting rising demand for NHS and care sector roles.
- **Construction, Green Skills and Young Person Expansion Project**  
Establishes a dedicated expansion in Stafford to engage young people, creating clear pathways into construction careers to boost the local workforce and meet demand.
- **Closing Critical Skills Gaps**  
Strengthens advanced technical pathways, closing critical skills gaps and ensuring employers like Hitachi, Siemens, MOOG and UHNM have the talent pipeline they desperately need.

## THE VISION

### NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME

The proposed Healthcare Technical Excellence Centre, (H-TEC), will be a state-of-the-art 5,500 sqm purpose-built facility designed to meet both growing learner demand and critical NHS workforce needs. Providing specialist training in healthcare, science, engineering, digitalisation, AI, and cyber security. The centre will have capacity to support more T-levels, apprenticeships, Level 2 and 3 study programmes, and dedicated NEET re-engagement pathways.

### STAFFORD

The proposed Young Person Expansion Project will focus on construction, green skills, and modern methods of construction through T-levels, apprenticeships, and Level 2/3 vocational programmes, as well as bespoke re-engagement provision for NEETs.

## FOCUS ON:

# CANNOCK, LICHFIELD, RODBASTON, AND TAMWORTH INVESTMENT PROPOSALS

Led by



South Staffordshire College



### Focus

Construction, digital, land-based and rural skills.



### Projects

Four capital projects to expand Construction at Cannock and Tamworth, Creative/Digital at Lichfield and Land-based/Agri-tech at Rodbaston to boost capacity, skills and sector-specific training.



### Impact

412 new 16 to 18 places and 37 NEETs supported.



### Claire Boliver – Chief Executive and Principal, South Staffordshire College:

“

The investment will allow us to expand our capacity in order to meet the projected demographic and increasing ‘first choice’ demands from students, apprentices and employers. Without investment the 16 to 18 guarantee cannot be successfully realised, and we risk NEET figures increasing rapidly. South Staffordshire College is committed to working closely with partners to deliver the skills our region needs now and in the years ahead and is proud to support this investment proposal to enhance 16 to 18 provision. ”



Claire Boliver – Chief Executive and Principal, South Staffordshire College

## SKILLS IMPACT

- **Unlocking Economic Growth**  
Our Cannock, Lichfield, Rodbaston, and Tamworth campuses deliver vital skills for local and national employers in construction, digital, engineering, land-based industries, and health.
- **Transforming Skills Investment**  
Recent projects like the Net Zero Energy Training Centre and the new Tamworth campus, show how we turn funding into cutting-edge facilities and future-ready learners.
- **Boosting Opportunity and Reducing NEETs**  
By aligning courses with employer needs, we help more young people into work, raise aspirations, and deliver real value for our communities and economy.

## THE VISION

### CANNOCK

The proposed Construction Training Centre will provide expanded workshop space to significantly increase capacity in carpentry and brickwork; two very in-demand trades.

### RODBASTON

The proposed Land-based and Rural Training Centre will expand capacity for high-demand programmes, provide a learner resource, and support Staffordshire’s ambition to lead in sustainable agriculture and food security.

### TAMWORTH

The new Construction Training Centre will expand training capacity in key trades including bricklaying, carpentry, and property maintenance. It will serve a wide range of learners including 16 to 19s, adults, NEETs, and those reskilling or upskilling.

“

South Staffordshire College serves as a key strategic partner in the delivery of high-quality skills training across the STEM and Construction sectors. By expanding its training capacity, the College will enable employers such as ourselves to further invest in the training, retraining, and upskilling of our workforce and supply chain. This development not only supports the continued growth and productivity of our business and supply chain but also makes a significant contribution to the wider local and regional economy. ”

Rowenna Valintine – Customer Care and Community Investment Manager, Wates Construction



FOCUS ON:

# STOKE-ON-TRENT INVESTMENT PROPOSALS

## STOKE-ON-TRENT COLLEGE

Led by



**Focus**

STEM, construction, motor vehicle, and provision for SEND learners.



**Projects**

Four major capital projects including new builds and replacements at Burslem and Caudon campuses.



**Impact**

854 new 16 to 18 places and 304 NEETs supported.

“

Stoke-on-Trent College is our key partner in delivering skills training in the STEM and Construction sector. Increasing capacity will enable employers like ourselves to further train, re-train and upskill the workforce to benefit our business alongside contributing towards the local and regional economy.”

**Victoria Warren – Learning and Development Lead, Lucideon**



## SKILLS IMPACT

### Shaping Talent to Meet Demand

There is a pressing need to enhance capacity at Stoke-on-Trent College, a key anchor institution within the community for technical and vocational qualifications.

Investment in targeted expansion and skills development, in line with the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), is pivotal in building the local workforce, addressing industry demand, and supporting sustainable economic growth across the local and wider region.

## THE VISION

Through Stoke-on-Trent College, existing blocks will be replaced to support STEM, construction and motor vehicle training. Additionally, new buildings will provide extra capacity for construction programmes and support learners with SEND, English, Maths and ESOL.



**Hassan Rizvi – Principal and CEO, Stoke-on-Trent College:**

“

The project will enhance Stoke-on-Trent College’s capacity to deliver the much needed technical and vocational skills training in key skill needs areas, including Construction and Engineering. The College being ‘Skills Ready, Future Ready’ already serves the demand within the local and wider region in line with its mission and vision. The forecasted demographic growth of 16 to 18s in Stoke-on-Trent illustrates the need for this investment.”



**Hassan Rizvi – Principal and CEO, Stoke-on-Trent College**

FOCUS ON:  
**STOKE-ON-TRENT  
 INVESTMENT PROPOSALS**  
**SIXTH FORM COLLEGE**

Led by



**Focus**  
 STEM and digital expansion.



**Projects**  
 Creation of a new STEM and Digital Hub.



**Impact**  
 330 new 16 to 18 places and 284 NEETs supported.

**THE VISION**

Through the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College, the new dedicated STEM and Digital Hub will expand capacity for science, computing and digital programmes, supporting STEM pathways and foundation programmes.

**Lesley Morrey – Principal, City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College:**

“  
 The “STEM and Digital Hub” project addresses skills priorities such as engineering, digital skills, health and social care, and advanced manufacturing. It also aligns with broader national and local priorities for economic growth and social mobility. The focus on STEM subjects and digital literacy will develop a highly skilled workforce, crucial for the UK’s future competitiveness. By increasing the sixth form capacity, the project supports the wider government agenda of raising participation in higher-value education and training, whilst supporting students who have not yet achieved English and Maths qualifications.”



**Lesley Morrey – Principal,  
 City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College**



“  
 Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College has been a valued partner of Carse & Waterman for many years. We regularly work together to provide students insight into creative careers. Innovation in STEM is crucial as technology evolves at pace. With all business sectors pushing for efficiency and productivity, Stoke-on-Trent needs a strong STEM focus to stay competitive and support technical innovation that drives growth. Expanding capacity in these areas isn’t just good for young people – it’s essential for the future of local industry. This partnership is key to building a resilient, home-grown creative and digital talent pipeline.”

**Daniel Waterman – Company Director,  
 Carse and Waterman Animation Studio**



**SKILLS IMPACT**

- **Driving Growth in Key Sectors**  
 Supporting skills priorities both locally and nationally in engineering, digital skills, health and social care, and advanced manufacturing to boost innovation and productivity.
- **Building a Future-Ready Workforce**  
 Emphasising STEM education and digital literacy to equip learners with the skills vital for the UK’s long-term competitiveness.
- **Advancing Opportunity and Mobility**  
 Aligning with local and national goals for economic growth and social mobility, ensuring everyone, regardless of their starting point, can benefit from new opportunities in high-value industries.

# APPENDIX I: COMPARING FUTURE AND CURRENT ESTATE REQUIREMENTS

The existing estate requirement is based on enrolment and travel to learn data, with assumed guided learning hour requirements (validated by colleges). Existing space benchmarks from RIBA and AoC guidance were then applied.

The table below summarises the future estate requirements, which are modelled on demographic growth, NEET reduction, and the anticipated Youth Guarantee.

College site (and district)	2024 actual GIFA (m <sup>2</sup> )	2024 estate requirement as % of 2024 actual	2029 deficit relative to 2024 actual (m <sup>2</sup> )	2029 estate requirement as % of 2024 actual	2029 (no YG) estate requirement as % of 2024 actual
<b>Burton and South Derbyshire</b> (East Staffordshire)	17,768	89%	2,650	115%	110%
<b>NSCG</b> (Newcastle-under-Lyme)	26,983	108%	9,176	134%	123%
<b>NSCG</b> (Stafford)	22,034	89%	3,486	116%	108%
<b>South Staffordshire College</b> (Cannock Chase)	4,977	104%	1,680	134%	125%
<b>South Staffordshire College</b> (Lichfield)	4,487	147%	3,358	175%	168%
<b>South Staffordshire College</b> (South Staffordshire)	11,535	85%	116	101%	98%
<b>South Staffordshire College</b> (Tamworth)	9,737	120%	4,406	145%	136%
<b>Stoke-on-Trent College</b> (Stoke-on-Trent)	28,720	92%	1,413	105%	99%
<b>Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College</b> (Stoke-on-Trent)	13,341	92%	3,690	128%	119%
<b>University of Derby</b> (Leek)	6,646	51%	-2,680	60%	56%
<b>Total</b>	<b>146,228</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>27,295</b>	<b>119%</b>	<b>111%</b>

Outcomes of investment including additional learner places and new training space with associated capital funding requirement.

Additional 16-18 FT learners 2029/30	Anticipated 16-17 NEET reduction 2029/30	New / refurbished training space (m <sup>2</sup> )	Capital funding requirement £m
345	175	3,100	4.1
1,100	205	5,500	20.0
950	200	4,250	18.0
60	6	600	2.7
120	12	965	5.7
160	12	1,145	6.0
72	7	700	3.2
854	304	6,300	30.8
330	284	4,200	13.2
0	0	0	0.0
<b>3,991</b>	<b>1,205</b>	<b>26,760</b>	<b>103.6</b>



# DELIVERING THE SKILLS STAFFORDSHIRE NEEDS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

We're united in our ambition to deliver the skills Staffordshire needs. By working together, we'll develop the skills to access higher value, better-paid jobs and deliver a stronger, diverse, inclusive, and sustainable economy across the county.

We remain as one in our ambition to put the whole of Staffordshire on the UK and world map, contributing even more to our national GDP and wellbeing.



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