Appendix B – SWOT Summary of the Evidence Base for each Theme

Business and Enterprise SWOT:	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Dominance of larger, 'HQ' businesses UK's highest concentration of foreign owned enterprises Diversified economy, dominated by private companies (low reliance on public sector) Innovative economy (high employment in 'knowledge intensive businesses') Innovative financing of energy generation	Low number of businesses per head of population Volatile employment – high level of exposure to global recessions Low business birth rate Business survival rates poor (beyond year 3); made worse because of low business base Lack of co-ordination of inward investment and business support infrastructure
Opportunities	**Threats**
Recent growth in Swindon's business base - Fast growth sectors include: banking and professional services, business administration and HQs, scientific and technical (pharmaceuticals), digital economy Presence of Innovate UK, Research Councils UK, Hospital Trust with growth aspirations Recent investment in business start-up / incubator facilities Recognised international brands which provides a draw for other companies Council's property investment programme supporting business growth Capitalise on employment growth plans of existing businesses and provide recruitment solutions that could be targeted to address worklessness Hydrogen hub in Swindon seen as a hub for the early adoption of hydrogen technology	Employment in the manufacturing sector, nationally is in decline (due to automation and off-shoring) Shortage of high quality employment land and 'freehold' options Need for 'grow on' space for expanding businesses A high proportion of existing industrial stock needs investment / regeneration Businesses report difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff due to poor town centre offer, and wage inflation in Swindon (twice national average) suggests employers are having to increase salaries to attract high calibre staff Risks associated with Brexit significant (strong manufacturing base, high concentration of foreign owned businesses, high dependence on exports) Uncertainty of future funding for business support, both locally and nationally

Land and Infrastructure SWOT:	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Easy access to strategic road [M4 / A419] and rail networks Frequent rail services to London, Bristol and South Wales Good level of car parking within the town centre Strong commercial bus network within the town Compared to nearby authorities, Swindon has the largest stock of offices; factories and warehouses Council's innovative planning framework (e.g. use of LDOs) to encourage businesses to consider	North south links are weaker, with poorer connectivity and transport links. There is no direct rail connection to Oxford Peak period traffic congestion on major routes Poor connectivity on some corridors [North East to Oxford, South to Dorset / Hampshire] Employment areas (on 50 sites) around town makes public transport planning challenging The last significant office development was in 2009 A lower than average number of properties with superfast broadband access compared with the national average.
Opportunities	**Threats**
Electrification and new trains on GW mainline – quicker and more frequent rail services to London and South Wales Western Rail Link to Heathrow – improved access to international gateway Rail service options linked to CrossRail, East-West Rail, and Swindon – Gloucester Improved highway network capacity arising from current investment programme Better bus services – Rapid Transit and Bus Exchange Evolving technology in transport – vehicles, information and management systems Demand for office space is rising and rents have risen to £18psf (still significantly less than other southern cities) Industrial space has decreased during recent years BUT demand is strong Need to reallocate new strategic employment sites Council exploring options for heat networks on large new urban developments	Housing growth, combined with increased resident out-commuting; and in-commuting (for highest skilled jobs) are increasing congestion on road network Skills shortage to deliver new infrastructure [Hinkley C / HS2 / Heathrow demand] Capacity constraints on GW Mainline Lack of resource funding for sustainable travel initiatives, asset management or ITS systems Lack of funding to maintain the transport network Lack of funding to invest in car parks Lack of employment sites for larger inquiries (100,000 sq ft+), and freehold options in particular

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Trudy Godfrey, 01793 466416 , TGodfrey@swindon.gov.uk.

APPENDIX B

Education and Skills SWOT:	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Rapid population growth over past 4 decades– earns us a reputation as one of the UK's fast growth cities "Full Employment" rate and low unemployment levels Forecast suggests steady employment growth Diversified economy, strong private sector employment base with sector strengths in advanced engineering, financial services, science & technology, digital Apprenticeship volumes are increasing NEET/Participation outcomes for 16/17 year olds above national average and improved transition in 2016 Strong Skills and Employment Partnership with key stakeholders including employers	National concerns raised by OFSTED about Swindon schools (November 2016) Percentage of residents with higher level skills below average and they are less likely to be in professional and managerial roles Educational outcomes at 16 and by 19 are rising but are below average Low levels of progression to HE amongst young people and the percentage studying at level 3 (A level or equivalent) progressing is well below national average Swindon imports 4,000 graduates to meet business need Unemployment in our most deprived wards is high (Penhill, Parks, Walcot) Evidence of low aspirations and preference for work rather than education No University in the LEP area with a comprehensive HE offer.
Opportunities	**Threats**
Planned 'high quality' housing growth to attract residents with higher level skills Skills – number one priority in the LEP Strategic Economic Plan Skills focus for LGF3 Funding Post 16 Review – opportunities for LA/LEP to work strategically with providers. ESIF funding and Higher Futures Programme – to address workforce skills gaps and higher level skills Significant HE funding to raise aspirations and improve progression to HE HE Strategy – strong partnership and high levels of funding to work with 14-19 year olds on raising aspirations National Skills Plan and Apprenticeships levy – improve technical pathways. Work route to high level skills popular. Swindon Challenge – approach to improving educational attainment	Forecast strong demand for higher level (graduate) skills over the next ten years Impact on below average educational outcomes Perception of Swindon as a place to work and live to attract skilled workforce. Perception of Swindon's educational provision Impact of workforce skills on competitiveness and on inward investment Raising aspirations – require significant intervention over a long period.

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APPENDIX B

Town Centre SWOT:	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Affluent demographic catchment – Wiltshire, Cotswolds, Oxfordshire Large town centre with good representation from national multiples	Competition from out of town retail centres
Total expenditure in the town centre increased by 25% between 2009 and 2016, faster than the rate of inflation	Poor perception of Swindon town centre, particularly by employees of our larger business
Strong 'heritage' offer: railways engineering, Railway Village Outlet Centre, good health & leisure facilities	Need to improve the retail 'food and beverage' offer in the town centre and the evening economy, and particularly the cultural offer
Footfall has been increasing over the last two years, due partly to a strong events programme. INSWINDON BID Co. provide additional resources targeted at improvements to the town centre	Retail vacancy rate is higher than UK average, and concentrated level of vacancies in Fleet Street / Bridge Street area
Competitively priced office space compared with neighbouring areas along the M4 corridor (Bristol, Reading)	Loss of office stock in recent years due to permitted development rights resulting in urgent need to expand supply
Opportunities	**Threats**
Improve heritage and linkages to Old Town and Outlet Centre to encourage more spend through linked trips	Ongoing threats from internet shopping, out of town centre developments
Retail and leisure needs assessment identified scope to improve the retail offer through quantitative and qualitative measures e.g. increasing independent retail and leisure businesses	Road congestion and circulating traffic around town centre
Town centre masterplan 5-year delivery plan focuses investment in railway quarter and improvements to Bristol Street Tunnel to attract office occupiers to Kimmerfields. This will increase daytime population to the benefit of retail and leisure businesses in the Town Centre.	Diminished stock of high quality office space in town centre Image, perception safety/security – lack of attractive shops / cafés 'Clone' town

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