

The power of place and space



Creating a physical environment in which scaleups can thrive is not just about the provision of property. It's about fostering a campus mentality, in which many ingredients are mixed to create a vibrant scaleup culture.

Space to grow

All too often, scaling companies have had to adapt to the physical space available. At places such as Babraham and Alderley Park, the physical space flexes to the growth of the enterprise: companies can start at a single desk, gain access to laboratories and offices on short-term tenancies, with the opportunity to grow into larger space and specialist scientific facilities as the company evolves.

An energetic environment

Thriving hubs are super-busy places. Engine Shed, based in Brunel's historic building in Bristol, provided flexible accommodation for 300 companies and hosted around 29,000 visitors to events and meetings in the past year.

A learning environment

Education is a key role of a successful hub; activities can range from international conferences to specialist workshops, seminars and peer group meet-ups. Barclays Eagle Labs describes itself as "a skills factory for UK businesses."

End-to-end support

Structured programmes for scaleups are becoming a central part of the offer at life sciences parks. At Babraham, companies can access consultancy, specialist equipment, skills training, leadership capacity-building and mentoring through the Accelerate@Babraham programme. Alderley Park has developed a structured scaleup programme.

At Google Campus, globally-minded growth-stage startups can apply for a four-month Campus Residency that offers personalised support and access to Google resources. Campus Experts Summits bring an experienced group of Google mentors from across the world for two weeks of hands-on problem solving. Barclays Eagle Labs provide a venue – as well as a source of participants – for the bank's scaleup programme.

Numerous, committed, local mentors

The Expert Mentor Network at Alderley Park builds on its links with senior industry leaders who want to contribute to the site's future success. The mentors are not expected to invest, seek non-executive directorships

or consultancies with the businesses that they mentor, emphasising that this is a place in which successful individuals can give back.

Expertise on tap

The support service at Alderley Park – Accelerator, powered by BioCity – consists a team of eight with deep business and domain expertise (including M&A, capital raising, R&D leadership) who roll up their sleeves and work directly with companies on site.

Each Barclays Eagle Lab has an in-house engineer with the role and capability to support businesses develop physical and digital prototypes. They also use local specialist partners (e.g. Judge Business School in Cambridge and CodeBase in Edinburgh) to build capabilities.

Finance on the doorstep

Investor days and conferences, which bring companies and investors together, are regular fare for all hubs. More than £500m has been invested in Babraham's campus companies since 2015 – through equity and corporate deals.

Finance and advice can also be available on site. Alderley Park has two on-site venture funds and on-site financiers; Babraham also hosts a number of VC funds, such as Medicxi Ventures. Bristol's Engine Shed has Investors in Residence who help scaleups explore investment options and hosts an Angel Hub in partnership with UK Business Angels Association. Each Barclays Eagle Lab has a high-growth business manager to provide scaling businesses with access to financing options; members of the Cambridge Eagle Lab raised more than £108m in finance in 2017.

Strong peer networks

Successful hubs seek to support collaborative innovation by fostering peer-to-peer networks, workshops and seminars. Barclays Eagle Labs is building an online connector platform to enable easy, in-time access for all its resident companies.



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Direct market connections

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) Sandbox is located in its London headquarters and provides an environment for firms to test innovative products, services, business models and delivery mechanisms in the real market with real consumers. Support also includes the opportunity to test developed technologies, assess commercial viability and pricing strategy and develop their business models in response to the testing. Firms also have access to FCA regulatory expertise.

At Alderley Park, a former R&D site for AstraZeneca, dozens of companies have spun out of the pharmaceuticals giant and nearly every company on site has hired out of the corporation – demonstrating the value of a “leaky corporate.”

Close to academia....

Strong links to universities play a vital role. Babraham Research Campus is co-located with the world-leading life sciences research institute Babraham Institute. Engine Shed is a collaboration between Bristol City Council and the University of Bristol.

....and to schools

Alderley Park runs graduate events and provides sandwich student and work experience placements. As part of a wider programme of activity, the NatWest Entrepreneur Accelerator supports 12 all-girls state schools near to each of its Accelerator Hubs, providing access to its network of experienced mentors and entrepreneurs.

A key player in the local ecosystem...

Engine Shed and West of England LEP have created a full-time post of ‘Scale Up Enabler’ to develop the broader scaleup ecosystem. The hub has launched an Entrepreneurial Outreach service with local partners to bring the established business support ecosystem into under-represented communities.

...with a deep understanding of local environment

The Cambridge Cluster Map database now covers 14 local authorities, identifying 49,000 companies based in the wider Cambridge region with a combined employment of 458,000 and turnover at £77bn. Enhanced information showing the location of employment is being used to inform the modelling of local housing and transport infrastructure needs.

A window onto the world

The promotion of inward investment and developing opportunities for collaboration and access to international customers plays an important role. Places such as Alderley Park and Babraham exploit their growing international reputations by regularly hosting visits from biotech companies from Asia, Europe and North America.

Strong social connections

The campus mentality extends to services and benefits that are focused on individuals and their families. The site at Alderley Park has a full-service gym and a dedicated specialist company, ClubAZ, whose role is to run events and help build an on-site culture – from family fun days to film premieres to cycling weekends.