



# WEST NORFOLK ECONOMIC VISION AND STRATEGY

NOVEMBER 2024

Borough Council of  
King's Lynn &  
West Norfolk



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## FOREWORD

Cllr Alistair Beales, Leader of the Borough Council

We are proud to present our new Economic Vision and Strategy for West Norfolk, a forward-looking and collaborative document that brings together the perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders, including local businesses, partners, community organisations, and residents.

The creation of a distinct economic strategy for West Norfolk marks a significant step forward for our area. At its core is a unifying vision that captures the borough's strengths, diverse economic base, and unique characteristics.

Our vision and strategy for West Norfolk are a shared expression of our ambition for the future and provide an agreed position on what we want to collectively achieve over the long-term. In developing this strategy, we have considered the key drivers of change that will shape the socio-economic prospects of the Borough as a whole and its towns and rural communities - the strength and opportunities which can be capitalised upon and the challenges and threats to be addressed and mitigated for the future.

West Norfolk's economy is diverse, with its rich natural assets, historic towns, expansive rural landscape, engaged communities and strengths in tourism, agri-food, advanced manufacturing, and engineering. Our vision for 2045 is to build an inclusive and sustainable economy that works for all and enhances the quality of life for residents across our town and villages.

### **A roadmap for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth**

The strategy provides a route forward to achieve this vision, providing a

roadmap for project decisions and investment that will help us stay focused on our long-term goal of sustainable growth. It outlines the strategic priorities for the next 20 years, including improving connectivity, supporting business growth, fostering entrepreneurship and technological adoption, raising skill levels, promoting healthier and more active communities, and building resilience to the impacts of climate change. At the heart of this strategy is our commitment to ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are shared widely, and that we preserve and celebrate our natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

### **Developed in collaboration with stakeholders**

Built on robust data and analysis, this strategy has been shaped by extensive engagement with stakeholders across the borough. A comprehensive programme of surveys, workshops with residents and community groups, discussions with businesses, borough visits, and officers calls has ensured that all perspectives have been captured.

### **And delivered in partnership**

However, this is not just a strategy for the council - it is a call to action for everyone who lives, works, learns, or invests in West Norfolk. We believe that by working together, we can unlock the full potential of our borough and create a thriving future for generations to come. We are excited to embark on this journey, confident that our collaborative efforts will drive sustainable growth and prosperity for all in West Norfolk.

## A WORD FROM OUR PARTNERS

**We believe that collaboration is essential to the success of our strategy for West Norfolk. As we embark on this journey to shape the future of our community and economy, the voices of our partners are invaluable. In this section, you will find endorsements from key stakeholders who share their thoughts and support for this vision. Their perspectives reflect a commitment to working together for the future benefit of our residents and businesses. We appreciate their involvement and look forward to fostering these relationships as we move forward.**

*“As one of the largest inward investment in the region over the last 15 years, Palm Paper welcomes this long-term economic vision, which recognises the importance of sustainable industrial growth and the role of businesses like ours in driving prosperity. The focus on skills development, creating high-quality employment opportunities and fostering technological adoption towards net zero is vital to ensuring West Norfolk remains competitive. We are pleased to support this strategy and look forward to continuing our work with the Council and other stakeholders to implement this vision”.*



**Simon Morris,**  
Managing director, Palm Paper

*“The West Norfolk Economic Vision and Strategy represents a pivotal step forward in creating opportunities for local people to thrive. At the College of West Anglia, we are committed to developing the skills needed to support the growth of key sectors across the region. A key focus of this strategy - raising aspirations among young people and ensuring they see a future for themselves within West Norfolk - is essential to retaining local talent. Equally important is ensuring that young people have access not only to high-quality education and employment opportunities but also to good*

*Sustainable transport options and access to a vibrant leisure offer that allows them to flourish both personally and professionally. By working in partnership with local businesses, partners and community organisations, this strategy will help ensure that our students are prepared to contribute to a growing economy, and we are proud to be part of this shared vision for the future of West Norfolk.”*



**David Pomfret,**  
Principal, College of West Anglia

*“This strategy sets out a bold and inclusive path for the future of King’s Lynn and the wider West Norfolk area. The emphasis on thriving towns, well connected to our wider area with increased leisure, cultural, residential and workspaces in town centres aligns with our vision for King’s Lynn as a place where businesses can flourish. We fully support this approach and are excited to continue working with our partners to support business growth and fostering entrepreneurship to create a thriving, dynamic, and attractive destination for both businesses and visitors”*



**Vicky Etheridge,**  
Bid Manager

*“Micro and SME businesses in west Norfolk are the foundation of a successful and productive economy for the borough; through our strategic business support partnerships, the strategy provides the framework to ensure we target our resources and support to growth of the key sectors, promote entrepreneurship, maximise opportunities for expansion and investment and enable adoption of new technologies.”*

**Candy Richards**, Federation for Small Businesses

*“West Norfolk’s unique natural beauty and rich cultural heritage are key drivers of our local economy, and this strategy’s focus on sustainable tourism development is both timely and essential. By promoting year-round tourism and leveraging our assets, we can ensure long-term benefits for our communities.*

*We are eager to support the implementation of this strategy, which will help us to enhance the visitor experience while protecting the very landscapes and heritage that make our borough so special.”*

**Dominic Buscall**, Wild Ken Hill Estate

*“We are delighted that the health and wellbeing of our residents is at the forefront the economic strategy, recognising that the longer people are able to stay healthy and active, the longer they are able to stay in work to support the west Norfolk economy. We look forward to continuing working in partnership with the Council, to not only support the development of our own health sector workforce, a key sector of the local economy, but on a wider scale to address the health inequality challenges particularly through the Marmot place programme. Collectively, enabled by this strategy, we can achieve long term systemic change to enable people to remain economically active in happy, healthy and inclusive communities.”*

**Carly West-Burnham**, Director of Strategy & Integration,  
The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King’s Lynn NHS Foundation Trust

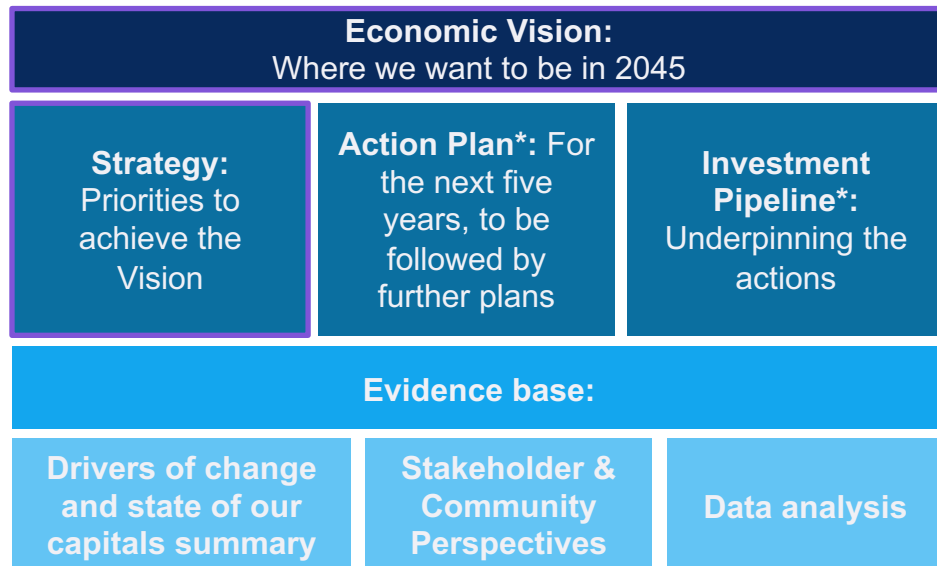


# ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document sets out the Economic Vision and Strategy for King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

It describes where we want to be in 2045 and our strategic priorities for achieving this vision, building on where we are today. It will be followed by a detailed Action Plan\*, which will have an associated Investment Plan\*, setting out specific actions to take to realise our vision.

These documents are supported by a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence, which provide detail on the rationale for the vision and strategy.



\* To be developed as part of the "call to action"



# INTEGRATED WITH OTHER STRATEGIES AND PLANS

As you read this strategy, consider it not in isolation but within the context of a range of existing strategies and plans at a Borough-wide level (some being developed), providing a central co-ordinating reference point. It will also feed into various regional strategies, which link to national strategy and policy.

National	Regional	County	King's Lynn & West Norfolk	King's Lynn
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	<b>East of England</b>	<b>Norfolk</b>	Corporate Strategy 2023 - 27 (Annual Plan 2024-25)	Long Term Plans for Towns
Levelling Up White Paper	Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP	Norfolk Economic Strategy	Local Plan 2001-26 (Core Strategy 2011 & Site Allocations Development Management Policies 2016)	KL Town Investment Plan
Enterprise Zones	Transport East Transport Strategy	Better together for Norfolk	Local Plan 2019-2040	KL Transport Strategy
High Streets Task Force	Local Nature Recovery Strategy	Norfolk Devolution Deal	West Norfolk Investment Plan	Sport England Place Expansion
National Infrastructure Strategy	Health Inequalities Strategic Framework for	Strategic Skills Plan (AEB)	Tourism Development Plan	Cultural and Heritage Strategy
National bus strategy: 2024 bus service improvement plans (BSIP)	Joint Local Visitor Economic Partnership (LVEP) for Norfolk and Suffolk	Local Growth Plan*	QEH Anchor Institution Plan	Public Realm Action Plan
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	Norfolk and Suffolk Destination Management Plan	Norfolk LEAP (superseded by the Norfolk Energy Plan)	Marmot Place Programme	King's Lynn Enterprise Park Site Development Plan 2021-2026
Build Back Better High Streets	Culture Drives Impact	Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan	Health & Wellbeing Partnership	<b>Hunstanton</b>
National Industrial Strategy – Green paper, white paper		Climate Strategy	King's Lynn & Hunstanton Car Parking Strategy	Hunstanton Neighbourhood Development Plan
National Planning Policy Framework		Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme	Alive West Norfolk Capital Investment Strategy	Hunstanton Prosperity, Town Centre and Seafront Masterplan
		Norfolk Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	<b>Downham Market</b>
		Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	Housing Needs Assessment	Town Tourism Plan
		Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan Review	Climate Change Strategy 2024-2028	
		2024-2029 Norfolk County Energy Conservation and Demand Management Plan		

**Key:**

- Current strategy
- Strategy forthcoming or in development

\*Government has announced their intention for everywhere to have a Local Growth Plan on a functional economic geography

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# INTRODUCTION

NOVEMBER 2024





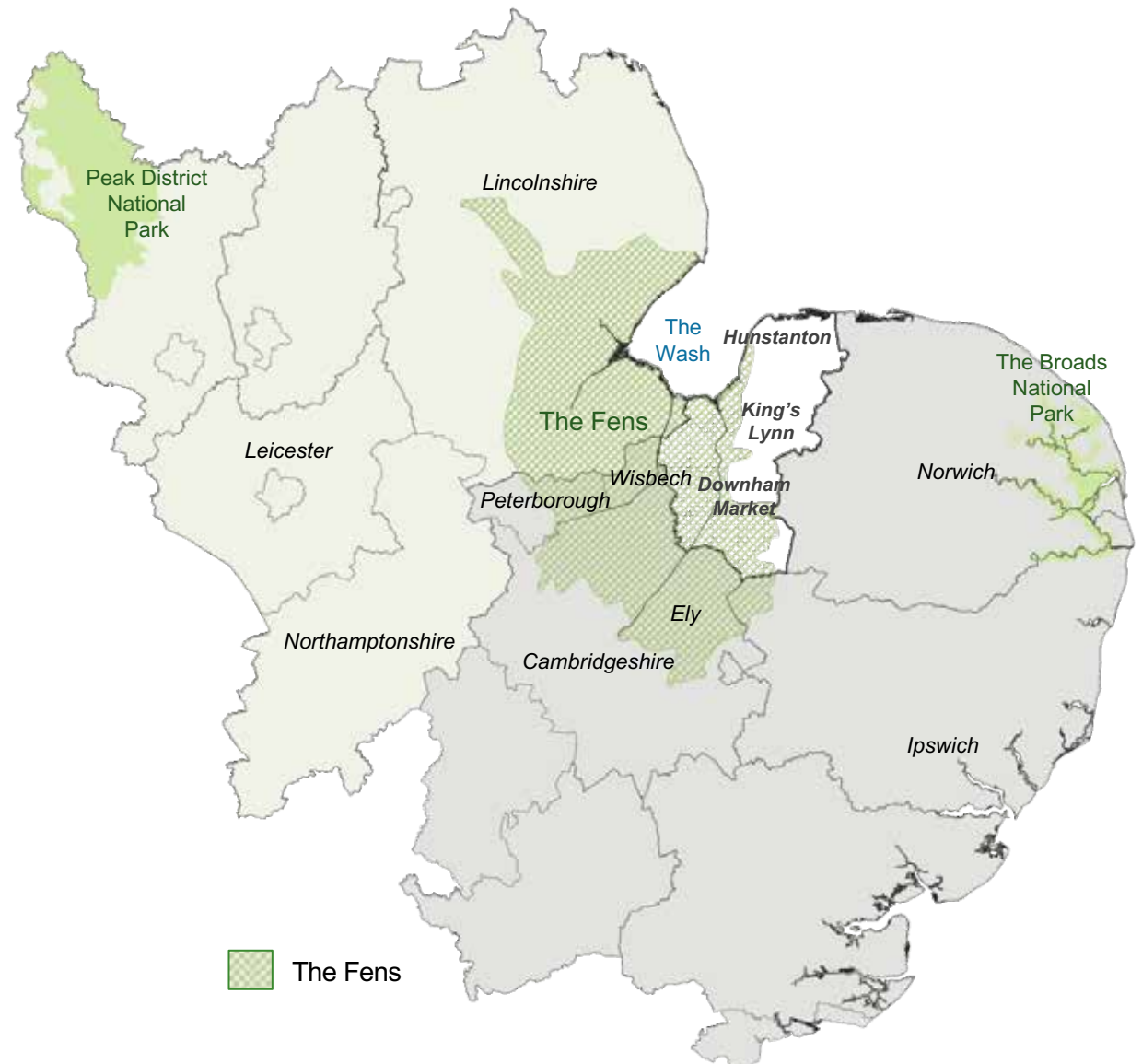
# INTRODUCTION

## Natural Beauty, History, and Cultural Heritage: foundations of our Economy

King's Lynn and West Norfolk is the second largest local authority area in terms of land in England. Famous for big skies and open space, we have a wealth of beautiful natural assets, such as the Fens, rural countryside, and designated National Landscape across the coast. The Wash, the largest estuary system in the UK, stretches along the coastline from Snettisham and its RSPB reserve in the south west, through villages such as Heacham, Holme-next-the-sea and Thornham, and the Victorian seaside town of Hunstanton with its strong tourism offer and famous cliffs, all the way to the National Trust Brancaster Estate with its sandy beaches in North Norfolk.

The Borough is also renowned for its ancient history and traditions, with urban and rural heritage attractions from the ancient towns of Downham Market, one of Norfolk's oldest market towns, and King's Lynn, known for its Hanseatic and maritime history, through to heritage sites including castles, stately homes, ancient churches and museums.

Our natural environment and cultural heritage have forged an economy that is rich in expertise across agriculture and food sectors, with fertile farmland and a climate that lends itself to arable farming, along with a prominent livestock industry and significant employment in associated processing and manufacturing. Our manufacturing and engineering capabilities are reflected in a wider manufacturing and engineering business base which locates here to access those specialisms.





## Local Identity and Regional Influence

West Norfolk is home to the largest population in Norfolk County, and as the host to the most businesses, we serve as a critical economic centre for the County. However, along with North Norfolk, we are also one of the most sparsely populated areas in Norfolk, and challenging connectivity means that we have a more self-contained labour market compared to other areas in the County.

The borough is unique in sharing borders with multiple other counties and combined authority areas: Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and Lincolnshire. This geographic feature drives close connectivity with places outside of Norfolk, in a way that is not necessarily the same for other parts of the County.”

This connectivity to both Norfolk and surrounding areas drives a diverse character, where parts may feel distinctly different to one another; Downham Market may feel more connected to Fenland and Cambridgeshire, for instance, while Hunstanton may feel more like North Norfolk.

Looking to the future, our borough aspires to be part of a devolved area bordering other devolved areas, sharing a cultural geography which lends itself to partnership working. In this context, West Norfolk must have a compelling economic story, which draws together the opportunities that are clearly present to drive our economic growth and position the Borough’s important economic role within Norfolk and the broader region.



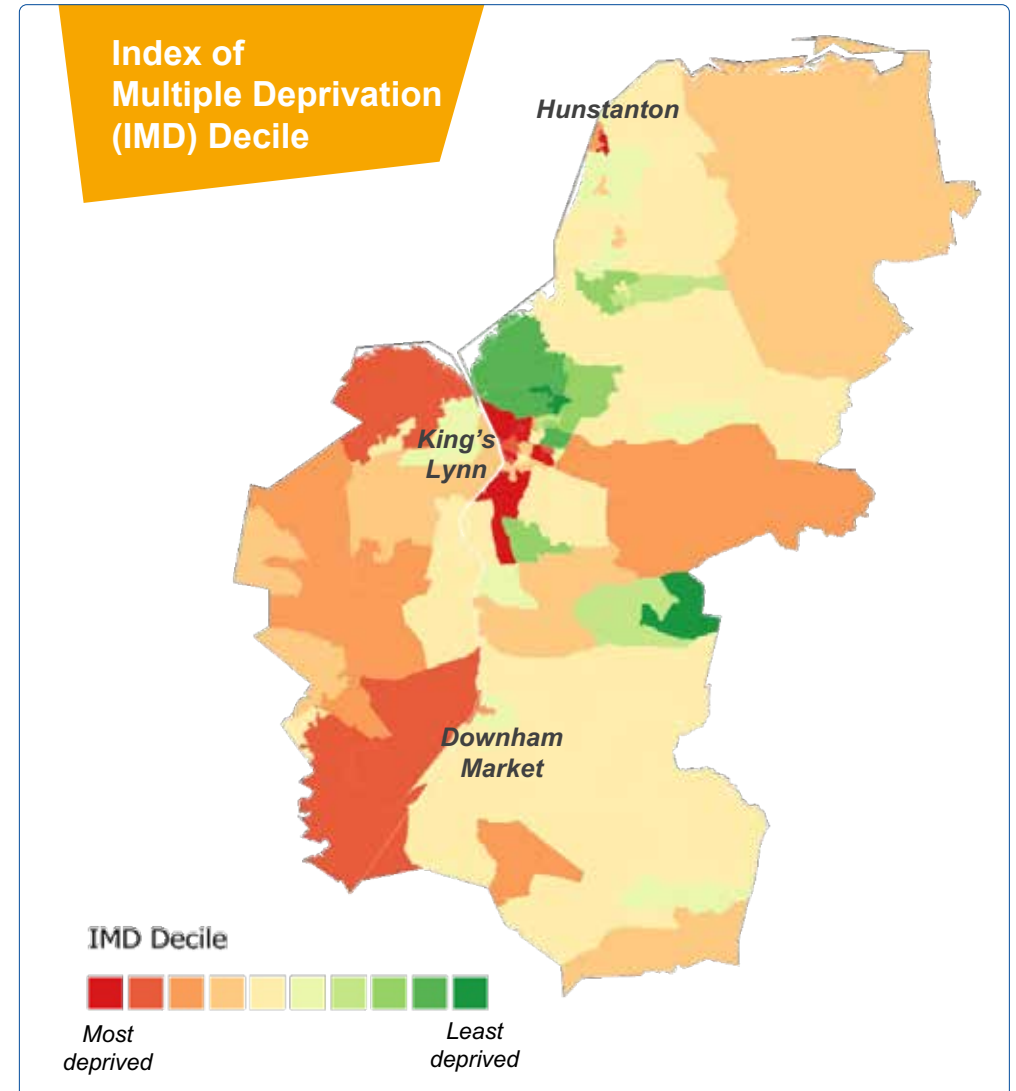
## A Strong Foundational Economy Facing Modern Challenges

We have a place people want to visit, and our tourism offer generates direct jobs as well as supporting significant employment in local retail and hospitality businesses. The Borough has a strong foundational economy, including significant employment in manufacturing, engineering, and health and care, which is expected to increase to support an aging population with more complex needs in the years to come, many of whom live in rural and coastal areas where public transport options are limited.

However, as a rural community with a predominantly production, consumer, and public service based economy, we have been more exposed than most to the economic shifts the UK has experienced over recent decades; from Brexit-induced labour shortages and trade difficulties affecting our businesses, to residents still feeling the impact of the 2008 financial crash and subsequent austerity, further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis that has typified the 2020s so far.

Our population is ageing rapidly, accelerated by young people moving outside of the area at early career stages and fewer people choosing to be here mid-career. Our people also face significant challenges associated with poor physical and mental health, which reinforces the continued need to address isolation; even in an age where digital connectivity can provide some alleviation, a rural community is by nature more dispersed, which makes facilitating active lives and in-person connectivity all the more important.

The disparities of a beautiful place with challenging circumstances are most acutely evident in the stark disparities in deprivation in West Norfolk. Ensuring the natural benefits of our place feed through to our communities benefiting from a strong economic life is vital.



## OUR APPROACH TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

Growth is critical, but we believe that inclusive, sustainable economic growth, which enhances the wellbeing of our residents and the sustainability of our environment, needs to consider the impact and potential across various aspects of economic life.

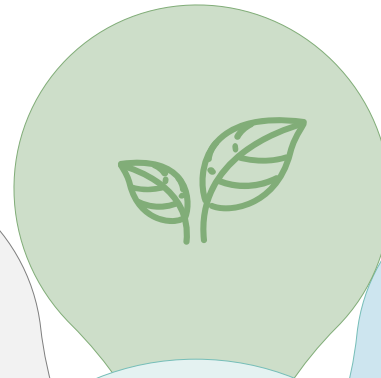
By **inclusive**, we mean growth that ensures all residents, regardless of background or circumstance, can access opportunities and benefit from economic progress. Sustainable growth refers to development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs - ensuring economic activity does not deplete natural resources, but instead balances environmental, social, and economic factors for long-term resilience.

Our strategy is underpinned by a **capitals approach**, seeking to identify and leverage strong concentrations of capital within the Borough, which should be further increased and used responsibly, while also uncovering capitals that are depleted and in need of investment.

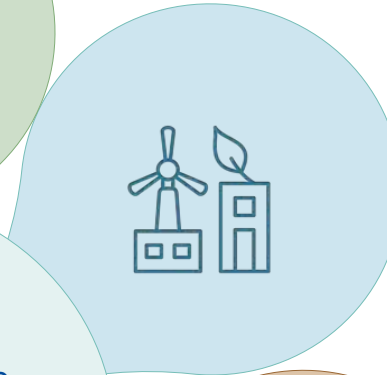
Ultimately, this approach seeks to add value across all areas, recognising that the various aspects of economic life are interlinked and that we cannot focus solely on economic capital.



**Natural Capital**  
*The materials, land, and services we rely on from the environment*



**Physical Capital**  
*Our Built (Transport, Housing, Energy, Leisure, Health Infrastructure) and Digital Environment*

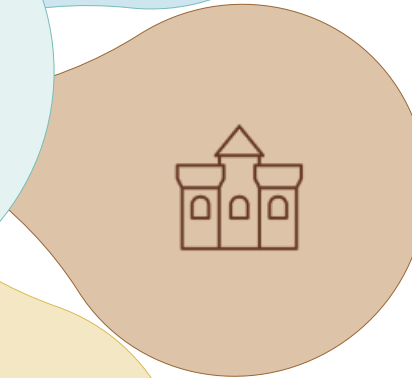


**Institutional Capital**  
*Our public institutions and decision makers*



Adding value to capitals to influence how we **LIVE, LEARN, WORK, VISIT AND INVEST** in King's Lynn and West Norfolk

**Cultural Capital**  
*Our heritage offer and assets*



**Enterprise Capital**  
*Our entrepreneurial asset and investment power*



**Skills and Knowledge**  
*Our workforce capabilities and talents*



**People and Community Capital**  
*Our people's health and wellbeing, our relationships and interactions*

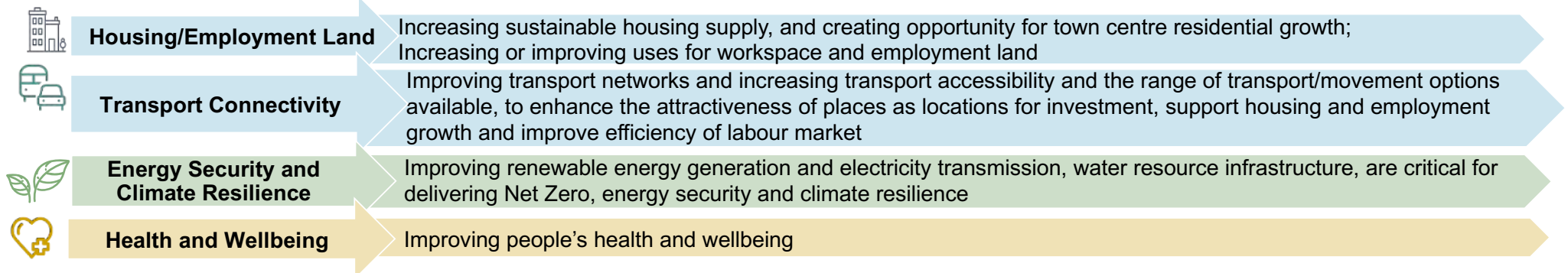


Underpinning the strategy is a set of growth levers that describe the ways in which growth can be achieved. It is through the co-ordinated application of these levers, guided by the vision and strategy, that economic growth in the Borough will be achieved.

*Economic levers:*



*Cross-cutting levers/ growth enablers:*



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WHERE WE  
ARE TODAY

NOVEMBER 2024



# THE STATUS OF OUR CAPITALS AT A GLANCE



## Skills and Knowledge

### Strengths

- 20 minutes to work  
20 minutes to the coast
- Coastline, The Fens
- Over 10.5m trips in 2023
- Total tourism value - £565m, total visitor spend - £423m
- £11m business rates retention 2022/23
- CO2 emissions have decreased since 2005
- Active travel increased by 8.2%

### Challenges

- Coastal erosion, floods, drought, climate change threats
- The Wash – flood risk management
- Lower than average proportion of properties with EPC rating of A-C
- Ouse Washes Habitat Creation programme failing
- Above average per capita transport emissions



## Physical Capital

### Strengths

- 10.5k new homes planned by 2040, with 4K a sustainable urban expansion to the south of King's Lynn at West Winch
- Offshore wind off Hunstanton
- Rail connectivity to Cambridge and London

### Challenges

- Declining town centres, above regional average high street retail vacancy rates
- Limited rural transport impacts night-time economy and workforce mobility to employment centres
- 30% of neighbourhoods are in the bottom 20% nationally on IMD barriers to housing
- Rural businesses - physical/digital infrastructure
- Some areas are 1h+ by car from nearest employment centre of 5,000+
- 64% of neighbourhoods have above average travel time to key services
- Summer tourism pressures on infrastructure
- Grid connectivity
- 2/3 leisure centres at risk due to building condition



## Cultural Capital

### Strengths

- Cultural and heritage assets:
- St. George's Guildhall,
- Sandringham,
- The Walks,
- Corn Exchange
- King's Lynn historic town centre
- Hanseatic Port
- Vibrant Downham Market, Hunstanton and Burnham Market
- King's Lynn/West Norfolk festivals
- Growing immigrant population
- Downham Market food/hospitality offer

### Challenges

- Residents unaware of Borough's offer
- Assets underutilised/lacking activation to benefit the local economy/community



## People and Community

### Strengths

- Worthwhile life, happiness scores above UK average, anxiety scores below UK average
- Lynnsport

### Challenges

- 26% aged 65+ - this group growing the most
- Declining proportion aged 25-39
- Impact of rurality on health – insufficient access to GPs
- c.20k residents live in areas among the 20% most deprived in England, with life expectancy varying significantly based on where in the Borough one lives
- 56% of households have 1+ dimension of deprivation
- Joint least densely populated LA, lower population growth than across the East of England
- GDHI increased from 2017-21, but still below UK average
- Poor evening economy, and lack of an offer for young people



## Skills and Knowledge

### Strengths

- School of Nursing Studies
- Above average percentage of firms provide on the job training
- BOOST Programme
- Above average proportion of 16–18-year-olds in apprenticeships
- CWA University Centre
- Partnership with Anglia Ruskin University

### Challenges

- 6.7% of the population have no qualifications
- 4.5% NEET, higher than national and Norfolk averages
- 30.3% of people with level 4+ qualifications - below average
- Second highest levels of economic inactivity in Norfolk (22.1%)
- Lack of hospitality skillset to support visitor economy sector
- Limited HEI presence
- UKSPF investment ending March 2025



## Enterprise Capital

### Strengths

- School of Nursing Studies
- Above average percentage of firms provide on the job training
- BOOST Programme
- Above average proportion of 16–18-year-olds in apprenticeships
- CWA University Centre
- Partnership with Anglia Ruskin University

### Challenges

- 6.7% of the population have no qualifications
- 4.5% NEET, higher than national and Norfolk averages
- 30.3% of people with level 4+ qualifications - below average
- Second highest levels of economic inactivity in Norfolk (22.1%)
- Lack of hospitality skillset to support visitor economy sector
- Limited HEI presence
- UKSPF investment ending March 2025



## Institutional Capital

### Strengths

- Long Term Plan for Towns - King's Lynn (TBC)
- Business Improvement district
- King's Lynn Enterprise Park
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy (in development)
- Norfolk Floods Strategic Alliance
- CTAP Programme
- Norfolk Economic Strategy

### Challenges

- Upward trend in temporary accommodation
- Lack of day-to-day support for small businesses
- Decline in cases of homelessness prevention
- Perception that town centre car parking charges impact footfall



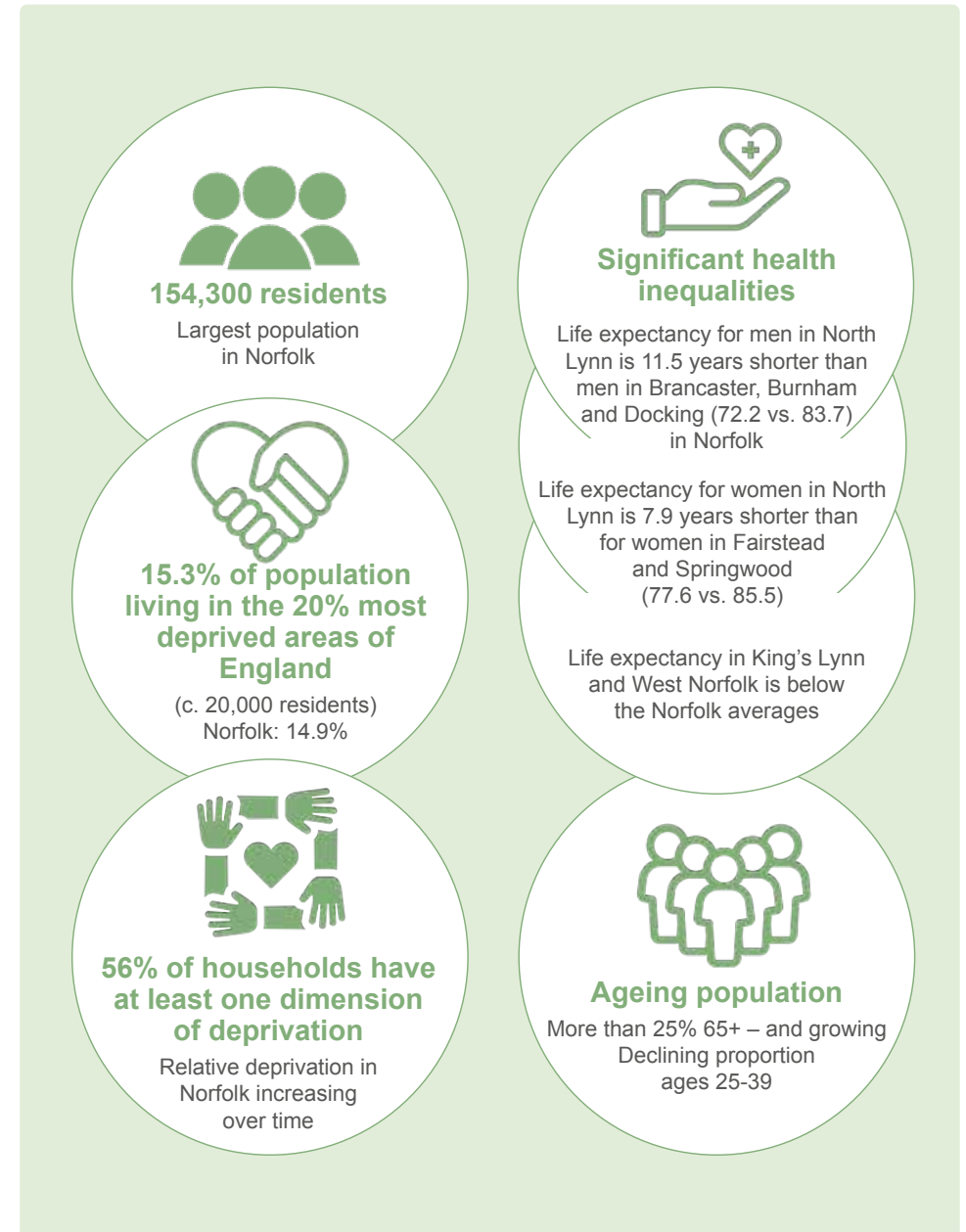
## OUR ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY LIFE

West Norfolk has a wealth of beautiful natural assets, such as the Fens, rural countryside, and coastal offer, which make our borough a fantastic place to live, learn, work, visit, and invest. These assets give our residents a strong quality of life, enabling them to be 20 minutes from work and 20 minutes from the coast, and make West Norfolk an ideal trip away for individuals and families alike. Our worthwhile life and happiness scores are both above the UK average, while our anxiety scores are below the UK average.

Challenges still remain, with climate change, specifically coastal erosion, threatening to change our natural environment and potentially alter our visitor economy drastically. We lack sufficient housing and necessary supporting infrastructure supply. Poor health disproportionately impacts some of our communities, with our rurality posing a particular challenge - rural residents struggle with less access to GPs and other essential health services, and mental health conditions associated with social isolation.

Our residents and visitors benefit from trainline connectivity to outside of the area, particularly to Cambridge and London. This is ideal both for short trips, or for re-locating professionals mainly working from home – enabling them to work in a faster-pace urban environment, and recharge surrounded by rural beauty at home. However, transport and travel connectivity within the Borough is highly limiting.

Culture and heritage are at the heart of our places, and assets like St. George's Guildhall, Sandringham Estate, King's Lynn historic town centre, the Hanseatic Port, and more, attract national and international visitors. Our festivals further contribute to our thriving sense of community and shared identity. However, our culture and heritage assets are currently underutilised, or lacking activation to benefit the local community and our economy. Our town centres are similarly underutilised, with above average retail/industrial vacancy rates, and our leisure centres are increasingly falling into disrepair.



# OUR PLACES

West Norfolk is a diverse borough comprising three main towns, King's Lynn, Hunstanton and Downham Market, and several small villages.

## Hunstanton

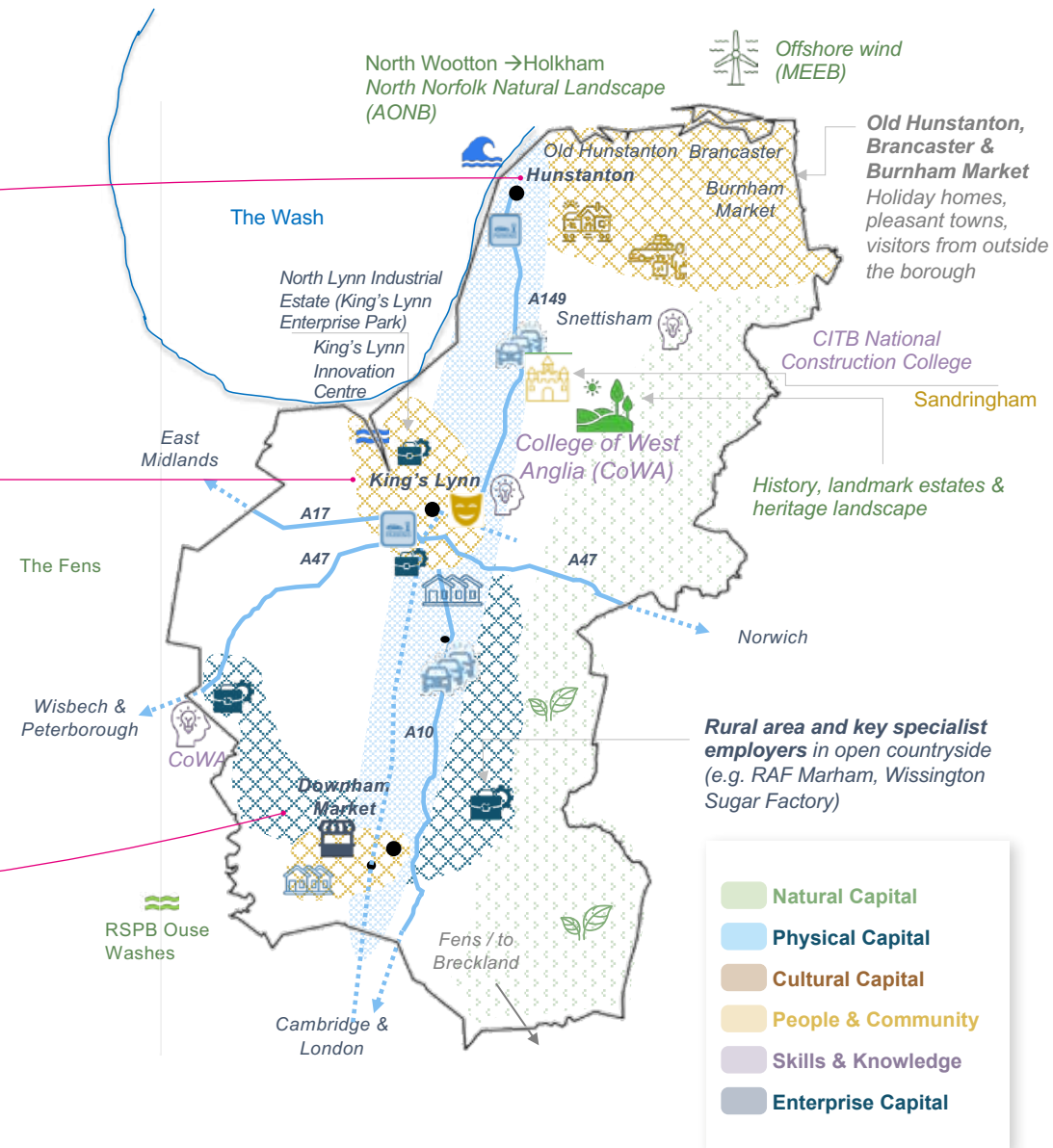
Known for its beautiful beaches and coast, Hunstanton is characterised by affluent areas with many holiday homes and an older retired population. **However**, its facilities need improvement, it struggles with over tourism in the summer, and coastal erosion poses a significant threat.

## King's Lynn

King's Lynn has a rich cultural and heritage offer, as well as maritime and river assets. **However**, the town is not perceived as a cultural destination. It struggles with a declining retail offer and limited leisure activities for young people and families, leading residents to prefer nearby cities like Norwich. The town has good rail and road connections to Cambridge and London, but congested roads, limited public transport create barriers for residents to come into town. The Town Investment Plan aims to catalyse a number of investments to address these issues and enhance both the day and night-time economy.

## Downham Market

Town growing rapidly, independent shops popping up, high demand for houses, lower prices than Cambridge, up-and-coming young demographic, **but** not enough to do for young families. Schools, health and leisure facilities are not yet there to meet the demand of a growing population.



# OUR SOCIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES

West Norfolk faces a complex and interconnected set of challenges related to housing, transport, and health, which together create a cycle that impedes economic progress.



**Old and inadequate housing stock:** Our housing stock is aging and inefficient, with insufficient diversity in housing size, types, and tenure options, making it difficult to accommodate current and future demographic changes. Many homes are situated in conservation areas, which restricts opportunities for renewal. Additionally, numerous built areas are at risk of flooding. Despite efforts to support housing growth and address market failures, significant challenges persist, particularly in the private rented sector and affordable housing provision. The limited housing offer, combined with the diverse market across urban, southwest, and northeast areas, has resulted in under-occupation in King's Lynn town centre, inadequate provision in Downham Market, and a predominance of second homes, holiday homes, and larger properties in coastal and rural areas. Furthermore, proposed government housing targets for West Norfolk, increased by 88%, make it even more critical to unlock land and expand housing provision, particularly in Downham Market, King's Lynn, and along the Downham to King's Lynn corridor, to meet growing demand and future needs, along with the necessary facilities to make our towns vibrant and healthy places to live.



**Transport and connectivity constraints:** Despite direct train connection to major cities such as Cambridge and London, public transport options within the borough are insufficient, especially in rural areas, and road congestion often creates a barrier to access essential services and economic opportunities. These issues contribute to rural isolation, impacting our residents' quality of life and economic prospects.



**Population health challenges:** As a borough, we face significant health challenges, including pockets of high deprivation, homelessness, and poor physical and mental health outcomes. While higher healthy life expectancy is a strength in some parts of the borough, it masks the stark inequalities faced by residents in areas of significant deprivation, particularly in King's Lynn. In these areas, both healthy life expectancy and overall life expectancy are notably lower than the averages for Norfolk and England. Moreover, rural isolation, where residents have limited access to work and services due to poor transport links, further exacerbates health disparities. This reality is often lost in quantitative data due to the sparse population density in rural output areas.



*Houses in rural areas*



*Houses in Downham Market*



*Houses in King's Lynn*

These issues are compounded by inadequate housing and transport systems, as well as limited health and leisure facilities in town centres and rural villages, which struggle to meet existing and future demand.

If left unaddressed, we risk the private housing market continuing to focus primarily on attracting and catering to retirees, resulting in an increasingly older population. This will lead to a surge in demand for healthcare services for the elderly, placing additional strain on our health infrastructure.

Meanwhile, younger residents may leave in search of better opportunities, leading to school closures and a shrinking workforce, limiting the borough's ability to innovate and attract new businesses, further stunting economic growth. In rural areas, where poor transport links already contribute to isolation, outmigration of younger residents and demographic shifts would only deepen existing health and wellbeing disparities.

**To reverse this trend, we need a comprehensive strategy that integrates improvements and enhanced provision in housing, transport, health and community infrastructure.**

Specifically, we need a modern housing stock and the right type of housing that meets the needs of all age groups; enhanced public transport to reduce rural isolation and improve access to services and employment

opportunities; and strengthen health, leisure and community facilities, that promote physical wellbeing and foster social inclusion, particularly in isolated rural areas.

By implementing these changes, we can make West Norfolk more attractive to younger adults and families, support a healthier and more balanced community, and lay the foundation for a sustainable and prosperous future for all residents.



## OUR BUSINESS BASE AND ECONOMIC LIFE

West Norfolk is an important economic centre in Norfolk, its largest for businesses, second largest for employment and strong for productivity. Our most productive sectors are Energy and Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, with Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering having the highest GVA of all our sectors (£530m, approximately a 28% share).

A higher percentage of firms in the borough provide on the job training compared to the national average, highlighting their investment in upskilling our local population. There is also significant investment coming into the Borough, through programs in King's Lynn, our Enterprise Zone, and the Business Improvement District.

We still, however, struggle with untapped potential in our working age population and business base; we have a lower proportion of employment in high skilled occupations, our business base is expanding at a consistently slower rate compared to nationally, and our jobs density remains below both regional and national averages. Agri-food – our only large-emplying sector with a distinct local specialism – is not on a growth trajectory, presenting a challenge for future growth.

The declining proportion of our population aged 25-39 is particularly difficult, in light of our lower rate of high-level skills and higher rates of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Combined with our high levels of economic inactivity, this presents a challenge to developing a workforce with the skills needed for the future.



**£3.2bn GVA;**  
**£34.2 GVA**

per hour worked  
(productivity, 2022)  
Norfolk: £32.90  
UK: £39.7



**6,650**  
**businesses\***

+15% (2013-23)  
Norfolk: +14%  
England: +23%



**30.3%**  
**NVQ Level 4+**

Norfolk: 33.1%  
England: 43.2%



**79.8%**  
**employment rate**

Norfolk: 77.4%  
National: 75.8%



**£589.20 median**  
**workplace wages**

Norfolk average:  
£588.30

**£585.30 median**  
**resident wages**  
Norfolk average: £600.00



**22.1% economic**  
**inactivity rate**

Norfolk: 20.2%  
England: 21.4%

# OUR DISTINCTIVE SECTORS

West Norfolk's economy is characterised by strengths that have evolved from our industrial and cultural heritage, our location and our natural environment.



## Agri-Food

West Norfolk is a hub for agri-food in the UK, home to businesses across the full food supply chain, from producers to processors, manufacturing and wholesale through to local retail and food service, as well as wider supporting services such as fertilisers, packaging and machinery. A critical part of our industrial heritage, this specialism will be as important in our future as it has been in our past.



## Manufacturing and Engineering

Flowing originally from our agri-food and maritime economy, our businesses have developed significant inter-connected expertise in manufacturing and engineering. Our world leading manufacturers benefit from connection to our engineering economy, which includes locally owned SMEs and global companies operating alongside the Port of King's Lynn, which specialises in agri, manufacturing and recyclables, and RAF Marham, one of the largest air bases in the UK.



## Water and Waste management

West Norfolk has a long history of water-related industry. Shaped by our location and network of rivers, the port and maritime trade drove our economic growth for centuries and our agriculture industry has always relied heavily on water management. This legacy underpins our expertise in sustainable water management and advanced wastewater treatment, which in are in turn leading to emerging strengths in waste-to-energy and the wider circular economy.



## Visitor Economy

Our visitor economy is built on our historic heritage, cultural assets and natural landscapes, which draw visitors year-round. West Norfolk combines beautiful architecture, coast and countryside with unique market towns, which alongside a growing programme of festivals and a developing arts scene, positions us as a strong cultural and historic destination.

Trajectory/Measure	Growth	Static	Decline
Employment	13,970	22,390	27,500
% of Employment	22%	35%	43%
Businesses	1,000	2,890	1,700
% of Businesses	18%	51%	30%
GVA (£millions)	579	1,425	1,048
% of GVA	19%	47%	34%

# OUR ECONOMIC CHALLENGE

Despite West Norfolk’s strong role in the Norfolk economy and the presence of many prominent and successful businesses, the picture overall is one of challenge. Looking at the recent economic performance of sectors across our whole economy identifies three particular issues:

**Whether looking at measures of employment, businesses or gross-valued added, only 20% comes from sectors that are on a growth trajectory.**

Our distinctive sectors don’t over-ride these trends, rather recent trends show our agri-food sector is struggling; businesses have closed and whilst employment overall has not declined, it has not grown. At the same time, agri-food is growing elsewhere in the UK, which means we have started to lose ground on our specialism. Whilst engineering and manufacturing are on a positive trajectory, too few of our sectors – distinctive or found everywhere - are growing.

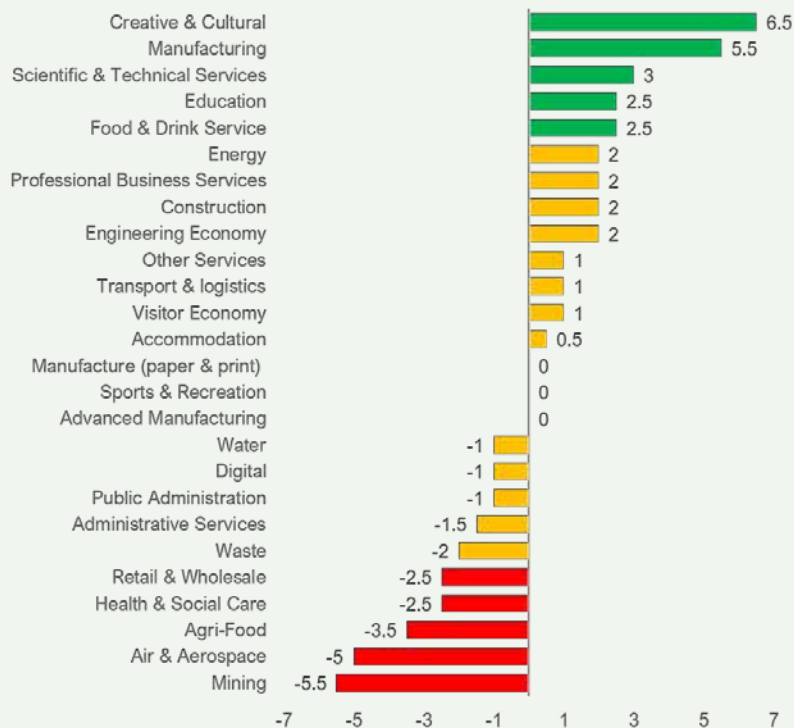
**Industrial specialisms in West Norfolk, beyond agri-food, are fragile.**

In manufacturing, our specialism lies in the traditional manufacturing base, which intensifies the importance of supporting our businesses with the transition to advanced and modern methods of manufacturing. Our other specialist sectors are either comparatively small in terms of number of jobs and businesses, e.g. water and waste management, or are not supported by allied strengths in the economy, and therefore require concerted interwoven development. The visitor economy is a prime example of the latter: whilst there is a distinct concentration of holiday accommodation, particularly on the coast, and we have destination worthy assets, this is not reinforced by strong concentrations of other leisure and recreation activities and services.

**Under-representation in professional service economy activities.**

We have a small, but growing, number of businesses in science and technological services, and the creative and cultural sectors, but our business base is significantly under-represented in these and in professional and digital service businesses that form a critical part of today’s service economy. Strengthening and pro-actively developing from our positions of deep expertise will be of paramount importance moving forward. However, we must also build capacity where we are underpowered and these service sectors must form a greater part of our business base in the future, to support and enable growth.

Growth trajectory by sector



Note: This measure reflects sectors that have seen the most proportionate growth in 5 years across five measures: businesses, employment, gva, productivity and specialisation. They may not be most productive or most specialised or largest.

# A CHALLENGING COMBINATION OF CORE ISSUES

In enterprise, skills, people and physical capital - the core of the KLWN economy today - is a set of interlinked, embedded issues that must be addressed to deliver future growth. None of these have quick fixes, nor can they be addressed in isolation. Rather, they require combined, long-term action.

## WE HAVE:



Smaller business base

**A smaller business base.** Despite strong rates of business creation for Norfolk, too few businesses are on a growth footing and indexed change in the number of businesses in the borough shows King's Lynn and West Norfolk consistently behind growth in the business base in the East of England and nationally.

Fragile industrial specialisms

**Fragile industrial specialisms and underpowered professional services.** Our strength in agri-food is undoubtedly an asset, but we must address fragility in our other distinctive sectors to promote growth. We also have far less activity than average in professional, digital and sci-tech services, these are not only sources of high-value work in themselves, but also critical enablers of growth in our distinctive sectors.



Lower demand for high level skills

**Fewer residents with high-level skills.** King's Lynn and West Norfolk has been consistently below the East of England and national averages for the proportion of the resident population with high level skills. This is predominantly a reflection of the jobs available, which tend to demand low-mid level skills.

Restricted labour market

**Restricted labour market for senior and professional roles.** Whilst the rate of growth in senior roles has matched East and National averages, KLWN has had consistently fewer senior and professional jobs available. This is a reflection of the smaller business base and the customer service, trade and production focus of the businesses.



Lower demand for high level skills

**A steeper decrease in working age population.** The proportion of our population that is working age has been consistently below the East of England and national average over the last 20 years and indexed change shows a significant divergence in working age population growth compared to the situation nationally.



Housing constraint

**Constrained housing.** There is poor distribution of housing tenures across the Borough with particular challenges in the urban areas and low representation of households with children. Housing is less affordable and there has been a fall in home ownership with mortgages.

## TO GROW OUR ECONOMY, WE NEED:

**More businesses, who in turn create more jobs and more supply chain and investment opportunities for other businesses (who then create more work).**

To act on two fronts:

- 1) harness our specialisms, leveraging our expertise to the full to pursue growth
- 2) maintain and build stable capacity in the wider economy

**Our businesses to drive greater demand for high level skills, providing motivation for residents to up-skill.**

**Our businesses to offer more opportunities for senior professional jobs**

**More working age residents, and those residents need jobs and homes to live in.**

**A new approach to housing, delivering supply that is available, attractive and affordable for more working age residents**



# IMPERATIVES TO ACT

We live, learn and work in a beautiful place that people want to come to visit and invest in. We are surrounded by nature, which influences many positives in our way of life, but brings great responsibility to manage and maintain it for the future. Our rich heritage is infused in our industry and our culture, we are place where people have settled and thrived for centuries and continue to be an open, welcoming community.

However, our communities feel constrained. Moving around the Borough is hard, finding the right home is problematic, health – physical and mental – is a challenge for many. Despite feeling engaged with the natural environment, people increasingly look outside of the Borough and its towns for entertainment, experiences and opportunities.

**The imperatives to act to change direction from where we are today are strong. We need to:**



Transform our towns in into lively destinations during day and night for residents and tourists



Increase economic participation and activity among all age groups, from young people to older residents



Improve productivity across our sector strengths and retain more economic value within the local community



Manage our natural resources proactively, efficiently and sustainably, increasing our resilience to climate change



Create active, inclusive, connected communities, improving health, wellbeing and economic vitality

3

**OUR VISION  
AND STRATEGY  
FOR 2045**

NOVEMBER 2024



## OUR VISION FOR 2045

Our vision is founded on the understanding that a vibrant economy encompasses not only economic growth but also the wellbeing of our residents and communities, and the sustainability of our towns, places, and natural environment. To achieve this, we have broken down the vision into five strategic pillars. These will guide our efforts

to ensure inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous economic growth for our residents and businesses while ensuring that our beautiful heritage, landscape and natural resources can continue to be responsibly used by our community and tourists.

**In 2045 King's Lynn and West Norfolk is a model for sustainable, active and inclusive rural communities, where the benefits of economic growth are shared widely, and natural and cultural heritage is preserved, enhanced and celebrated for future generations.**

**King's Lynn and West Norfolk will be a vibrant economy, characterised by:**



Thriving, connected towns that are destinations for both residents and tourists



Access to education and good work, at all phases of life



Specialised agri-food, engineering, waste & water and visitor economy sectors, with productive jobs and businesses that are a reason to stay in the area, re-locate to it and invest in it



Proactive, efficient and sustainable management of our natural resources



Happy, healthy people living in inclusive, connected communities with access to housing, health services, social and leisure facilities

## THRIVING TOWNS

**We need to transform our towns in into lively destinations during day and night for residents and tourists, so that more people live in, work in, enjoy and visit them.**

In 2045 our towns will be lively and attractive during both the day and night, offering a strong entertainment and dining scene. More people will live in our towns and will choose to spend more of their leisure time and money within the area. We will attract more tourists who will explore our beautiful coastal and countryside areas, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant town centres, supporting a year-round borough-wide visitor economy.

### To get here we will focus on:

- Developing modern, safer, more attractive, mixed-use town centres, with vibrant day and night entertainment
- Increasing the residential and non-retail workplace presence in town centres, enabling the expansion of housing provision, mix, and supporting services along the Downham Market to King's Lynn corridor
- Improving sustainable and public transport (more frequent and better-connected), active travel and parking solutions to into town centres and workplaces
- Effectively leverage our cultural and natural assets
- Incentivising a year-round tourism across the borough, not only on the coast

### Our indicators to understand progress towards this over the long-term are:

- Increase in housing units in town centres and residential occupancy
- Increase in footfall in town centres
- Town centre vacancy rates decrease

### We have foundations for success in this from:

- King's Lynn Town Investment Plan
- Hunstanton Neighbourhood Development Plan
- West Norfolk Tourism Development Plan
- Public Realm Action Plan
- Hunstanton Southern Seafront & Town Centre Masterplan
- Norfolk Walking & Wheeling Strategy
- Hunstanton Southern Seafront & Town Centre Masterplan
- Norfolk Walking & Wheeling Strategy



*Multi-use Community Hub*

### In development:

- King's Lynn Long Term Plan for Towns - a 10 year vision and 3-year investment plan to access funding to regenerate the town centre
- King's Lynn Cultural and Heritage Strategy – 10-year strategy to bring together our array of creative partners, residents and businesses on the priorities to support the development of Creative Industries in King's Lynn
- Downham Market Town Tourism Plan
- Local Plan 2019-2040 – updated strategy to shape and steer new development in West Norfolk
- King's Lynn Transport Strategy
- King's Lynn and Hunstanton Parking Strategy
- Ely Junction Upgrade to increase service frequency to/from King's Lynn



*Downham Market Clock*

# ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND GOOD WORK

**We need to increase economic participation and activity among all age groups, from young people to older residents, so that we can see increased employment rates across all age groups, better access to high quality jobs, and raised skills and wages.**

In 2045 we will be a community where younger people are inspired into local careers and find ample opportunities to start their careers locally and older people can work, or volunteer, for longer if they want to. We will attract mid-career professionals and families to settle and work in our borough. Clear career pathways and targeted high-skilled training will match the needs of local industries, ensuring that residents can access high-quality jobs.

## To get here we will focus on:

- Raising young people's aspirations and ensuring access to quality schools, colleges, higher education, work-related training and jobs
- Raising skills levels in the borough, particularly more level 4 skills, ensuring an adequate supply of skilled labour aligned with local needs
- Retaining and attracting incoming young and mid-career professionals and families to work and live in the borough
- Supporting older individuals who want to continue working for longer

## Our indicators to understand progress towards this over the long-term are:

- Level 4+ skills attainment increases
- Wages and GDHI increases
- High proportion of senior professional employment

## We have foundations for success in this from:

- BOOST Programme
- Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan

## In development:

- Strategic Skills Plan (Adult Education Budget Devolution)
- School of Nursing Phase II



*School of Nursing Studies*



*The University Centre: partnership with Anglia Ruskin University*

# PRODUCTIVE JOBS AND BUSINESSES

**We need to improve productivity across our sector strengths and retain more economic value within the local community, so that we have more jobs and businesses, better and more employment space, and increased productivity across our sector strengths.**

In 2045 we have enhanced productivity by capitalising on our strengths in agri-food, engineering, waste & water and the visitor economy and by fostering innovation in these sectors created new jobs and grown the business base and widened our capabilities. We are capturing value from tourism spend, ensuring it benefits local businesses and communities. We have adopted technologies and business processes that are contributing to a more productive, resilient economy.

## To get here we will focus on:

- Developing key sectors strengths and enhancing professional service capabilities
- Fostering entrepreneurship, start-ups, scale-ups and inward investment
- Developing high-quality business premises and industrial sites and enhance destination marketing
- Promoting and enabling the adoption of cutting-edge technologies
- Leveraging connections to key economic hubs, such as the Cambridge corridor
- Encouraging supply chain efficiency and complementarities among sectors
- Supporting expanding international trade and export activities

## Our indicators to understand progress towards this over the long-term are:

- Increased employment land and commercial space
- Increased GVA in our growth sectors
- Increased number of high-growth enterprises

## We have foundations for success in this from:

- King's Lynn Enterprise Park Site Development Plan 2021-2026

## In development:

- Norfolk County Council Economic Strategy – will support economic growth of Norfolk and ensure that all residents, businesses, and places benefit
- Further incubator space at King's Lynn Enterprise Park
- Creative Hub at St. George's Guildhall for creative industries
- Business co-working/hot desking space in the Multi User Community Hub



*King's Lynn Enterprise Park*



*King's Lynn Innovation Centre*

# MANAGED NATURAL RESOURCES

**We need to manage our natural resources proactively, efficiently and sustainably, increasing our resilience to climate change, so that we can more efficiently and sustainably use and re-use our natural resources and generate clean energy.**

In 2045 proactive, efficient and sustainable natural resource management is protecting and conserving the beautiful natural environment that makes our place. Sustainable business practices to manage natural resources efficiently have been adopted, making our economy more resilient to climate change and extreme events such as coastal erosion, flooding, and drought. Implementing circular economy principles, industrial symbiosis, decarbonisation, and the use of renewable resources is ensuring long-term environmental sustainability and energy security.

## To get here we will focus on:

- Supporting interventions aiming to mitigate the impact of climate change on our natural resources
- Supporting businesses to become energy resilient, encouraging circular economy, decarbonisation and the generation / adoption of clean energy
- Ensuring local residents and businesses benefits from national relevant energy generation projects
- Encouraging sustainable and responsible tourism

## Our indicators to understand progress towards this over the long-term are:

- Increased investment in natural resource management
- Growth in our water and waste management sector
- Reduced damage levels from floods/drought events



*Hunstanton Cliffs*

## We have foundations for success in this from:

- Norfolk Climate Strategy & Borough Council Climate Change Action Plan
- Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme
- Wash East Coastal Management Strategy

## In development:

- KLWN Climate Change Strategy 2024-2028 – alongside an action plan, will set out our approach to tackling climate change and net zero by 2050
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy - will map the existing natural environment and identify opportunities for delivering nature recovery through habitat restoration, creation and expansion
- Norfolk LEAR – Local Energy Asset Report (to be replaced by the Norfolk Energy Plan)

# HEALTHY, INCLUSIVE AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

**We need to create active, inclusive, connected communities, improving health, wellbeing and economic vitality, so we can have reduced rural isolation and reduced deprivation at local level.**

In 2045 our increased housing supply in towns and villages is enabling residents to locate and stay in the area, where they have access to comprehensive health and wellbeing facilities. Isolation in rural areas has improved through improved digital and transport connectivity, ensuring that all residents can participate fully in economic and community life. Residents lead active lives, with access to recreational and leisure facilities, promoting a healthier lifestyle for all.

## To get here we will focus on:

- Enabling active and healthier communities
- Ensuring that all residents can access education, employment, leisure opportunities and health services, regardless of their age, location, background or disabilities
- Supporting community enterprises and promote civic engagement
- Removing mental health barriers to work and reduce sickness absences among young people
- Reducing rural isolation

## Our indicators to understand progress towards this over the long-term are:

- Longer healthy life expectancy in all areas of the borough
- Increased number of GPs/service providers per population
- Improvements in neighbourhood-level health indicators
- Increased mix of housing types

## We have foundations for success in this from:

- King's Lynn and West Norfolk Health & Wellbeing Partnership Strategy
- King's Lynn Transport Strategy
- Norfolk Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Transport East Transport Strategy
- King's Lynn Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
- Norfolk Walking & Wheeling Strategy

## In development:

- Housing Needs Assessment – will update previous assessments of the need for different types and tenures of housing
- Alive West Norfolk Capital Investment Strategy – will set out the investment required in our borough's leisure facilities
- Marmot Programme - Marmot principles for improving health equity
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – will set out the issues the borough faces locally and what it is doing to prevent homelessness



*Sustainable transport and regeneration scheme (STARS)*

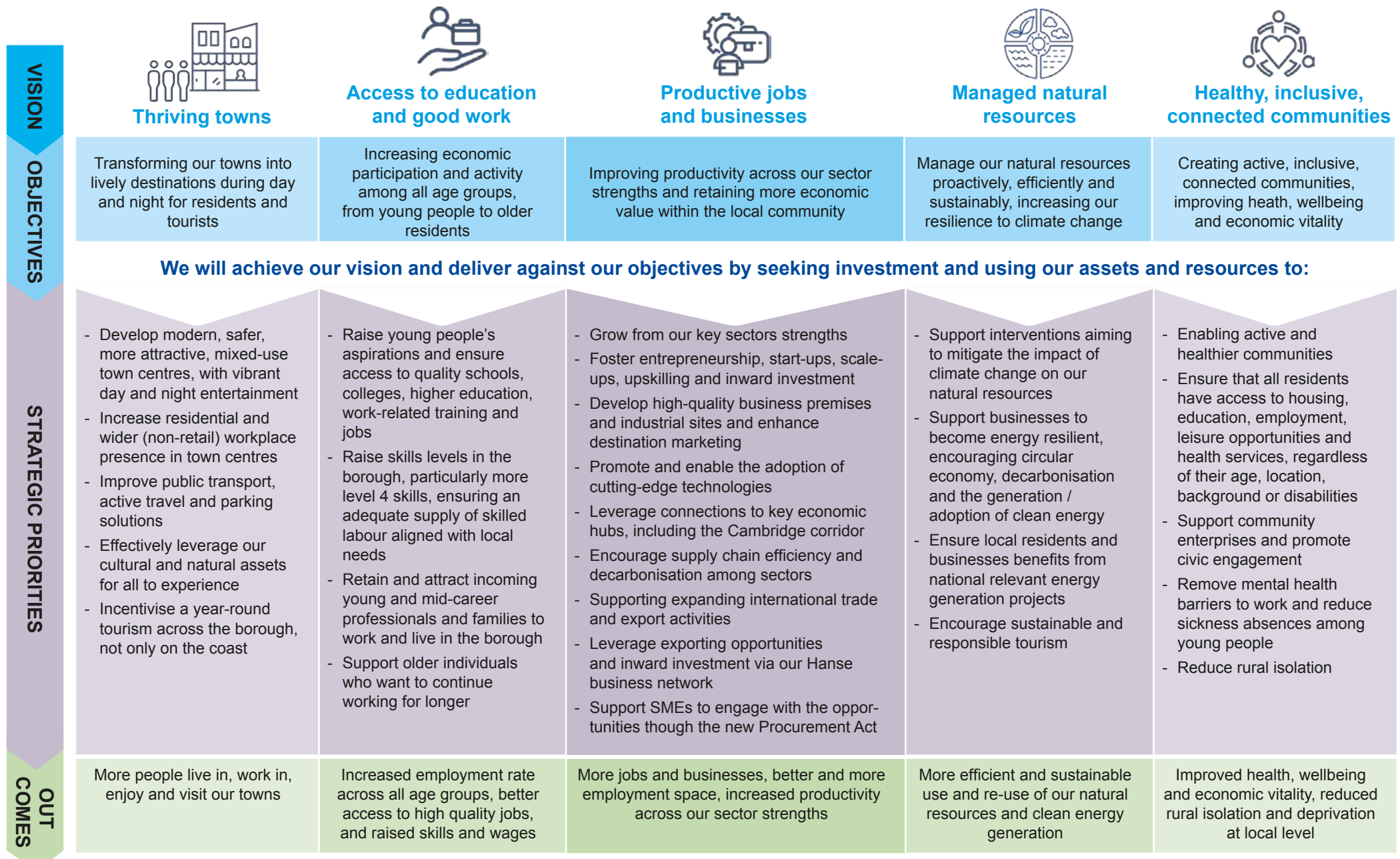


*King's Lynn Enterprise Park Active Travel Hub*



# OUR VISION AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In 2045 King's Lynn and West Norfolk is a model for sustainable, active and inclusive rural communities, where the benefits of economic growth are shared widely, and natural and cultural heritage is preserved, enhanced and celebrated for future generations.



## HOW WE WILL ACT

**Our vision and strategy for King's Lynn and West Norfolk are built upon the insights and aspirations of a diverse range of stakeholders, including community organisations, educational and training institutions, government and environmental agencies, businesses, and residents.**

Through collaborative effort, the council team has shaped a vision and priorities that reflect our current state and our ambitions for 2045. But this strategy is not just for the Council; it belongs to the entire community and it is through our combined efforts that these objectives will be achieved.

As we move forward, the Council will lead the call to action, inviting all partners, residents, businesses, and community groups, to work together, leveraging our unique strengths and assets to create a thriving future for

King's Lynn and West Norfolk. This strategy serves as the anchor and guiding reference for our collective actions over the next 20 years.

Together, we will design and implement a coordinated action plan aimed at enhancing economic prosperity and improving the quality of life for all.

An investment plan will follow, outlining the resources needed to realise our vision and priorities, along with a plan for regular monitoring and evaluation against our key metrics.





# WEST NORFOLK ECONOMIC VISION AND STRATEGY

NOVEMBER 2024

Borough Council of  
King's Lynn &  
West Norfolk

