

# West Norfolk Economic Strategy

R&D Panel Interim update paper, 23 July 2024

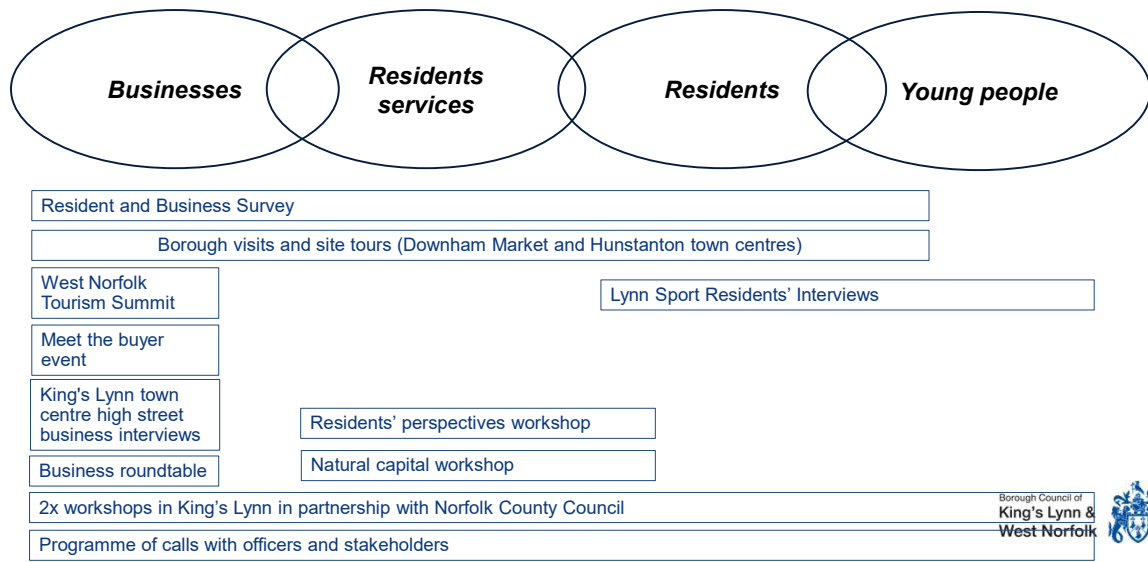
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## What is the purpose of this document

- This paper provides an interim report on findings from engagement so far for the Economic Strategy.
- Stakeholder engagement to inform the strategy has been concluded. As such, the document is a readout of the perspectives (on issues, opportunities, and actions) gathered to date, presented for information so that Members are aware of the feedback provided by those living and working in the Borough.
- The work to develop the strategy is ongoing. An early draft of the evidence, emerging vision, and strategic priorities has been produced for officers' comments, and it will be iterated and shared more widely for comments over the summer.
- Next steps:
  - Iteration of the vision & strategic priorities
  - Drafting and iteration of the full strategy (including wider narrative, survey & data analysis and incorporating feedback from engagement)
  - Drafting of investment approach / emerging investment opportunities

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## Engagement so far...



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## Future Engagement

We will work with internal officers, stakeholder organisations, businesses, and investors, over the summer, to consult on / iterate the vision and priorities and identify investment opportunities / call for projects once we are all aligned on the vision and priorities. Future engagement will include:

- Visitor perspectives continue to be collected via the KL Cultural & Heritage Strategy.
- Residents' interviews and engagement continue via KL Long Term Plan for Towns.
- Investors' perspectives will be gathered through dedicated session on testing priorities and investible propositions
- Draft vision and priorities consultation and draft iteration

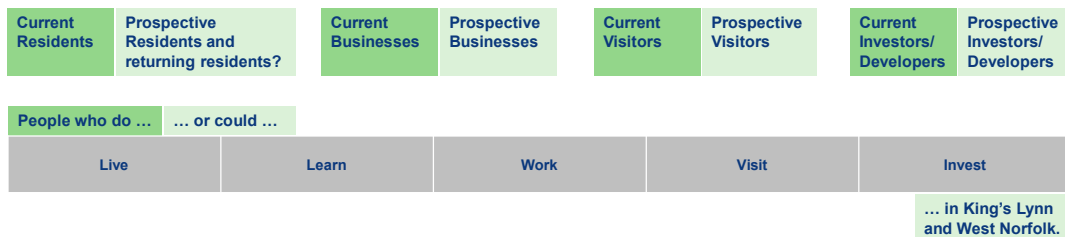
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## Starting point - themes in the KLWN UKSPF Investment Plan



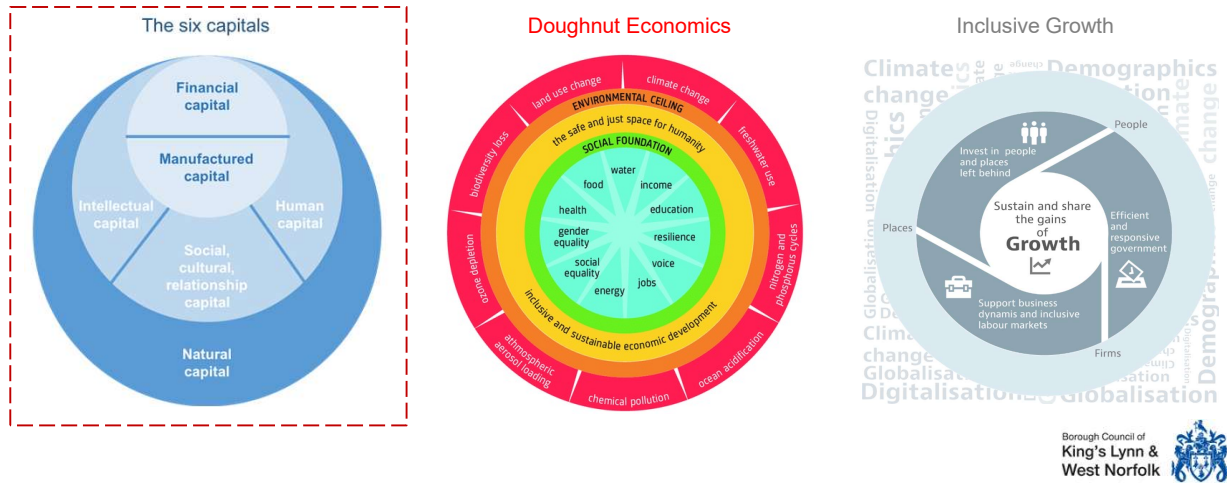
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## Strategy focus - Who is KLWN for?



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## Strategy structure – different models



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## Draft strategy framework: Our capitals approach

Success in delivering growth involves recognising our strengths and weaknesses and formulating a coordinated application of growth levers, guided by our vision and strategy, to achieve economic growth.

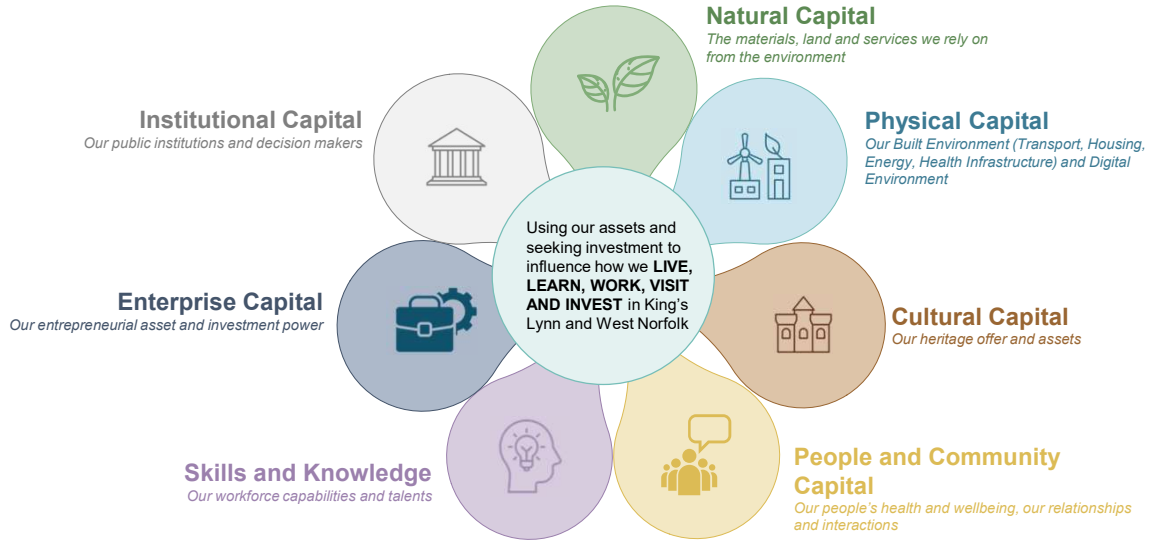
Growth is important, but we believe that inclusive, sustainable economic growth, which enhances the wellbeing of our residents and the sustainability of our environment, needs to consider the impact and potential across various aspects of economic life.

Adopting a capitals approach allows us to identify surpluses of capital in the Borough, which should be further increased and used responsibly, and recognise capitals that are depleted and require investment. Ultimately, this approach seeks to add value across all areas. This is why we have chosen this comprehensive framework. The capitals approach recognises that everything is interlinked, and we cannot focus solely on business capitals. We need to start by understanding where we are today through the lens of our capitals, then look at the levers for growth that encompass all aspects of our economy and community to better plan for where we want to be.

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## Draft strategy framework: Our capitals approach

Success in delivering growth is reliant on effectively leveraging strengths and addressing areas of weakness. The strategy is therefore also underpinned by a capitals approach, seeking to identify and deploy strong concentrations of capital in the Borough, recognise capitals that are depleted and require investment and ultimately seek to add value across all.



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## Draft strategy framework: levers of growth

The core purpose of the vision and strategy is to drive economic growth in the Borough. As such, the work is theoretically underpinned by 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:

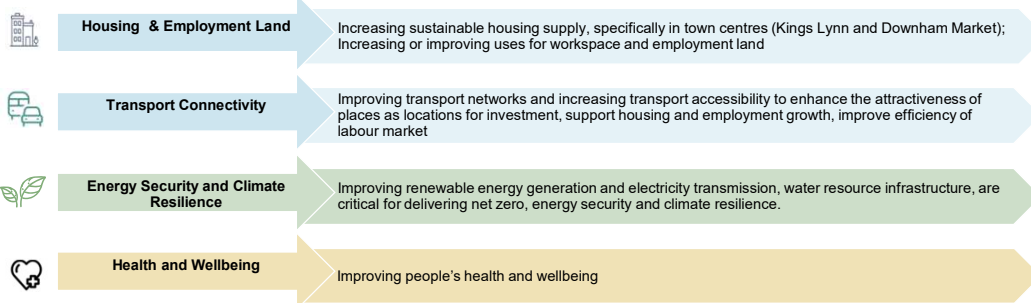


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## Draft strategy framework: levers of growth

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### Cross-cutting levers/ growth enablers:



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## Readout of key findings from engagement

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## Recurring topics

### Growth

- 'Managing growth' or creating growth?
- Transport investment
- Services linked to housing growth
- Borough disparities
- Rural isolation, skills gaps and need to raise aspiration
- Risk of losing out / other areas will get better
- Need to look at regional growth - Cross-county growth to be sustainable
- Sustainability and Carbon neutrality is key when talking about growth or maintaining growth
- 10-year plan, but need to look much further for the vision 20 – 30 years

### Identity, Place Branding & Marketing

- What is our identity? How good are we with what we do?
- Focus on sector strengths – links between agri | food | leisure & tourism | net-zero
- Communication is key, need to be better in messaging out
- Young people retention - give young people belief of what the area is for, why to live here

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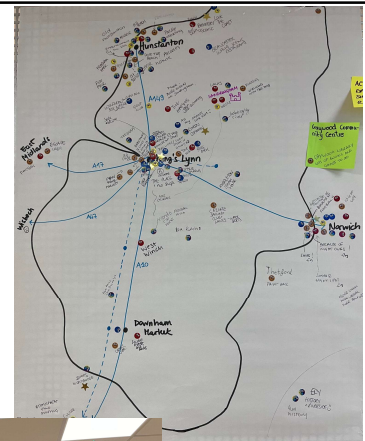
## Thinking to the future – over the next 10, 20, 30 years

- **Aging population and decline** - How do we keep retired population active for longer time? Potential of the retired population to take-up new activities post-retirement. Life-long learning and life-long working. Intergenerational living solutions. 'Active' Place to live, work and retire.
- **Young people retention** and greater risk of **depopulation in rural region** – young people's needs, skills and aspirations in 20 years time?
- Rural communities facing socioeconomic and demographic challenges linked to the potential opening or closure of natural resource-based industries.
- **Role of culture, leisure and sport** – Traditional leisure centres or outdoor experiences and studio gyms? Role of natural environment in improving people's wellbeing. Access to leisure activities for young people, families, older people
- **Climate change and tech are** changing agricultural sector globally - mega greenhouses and vertical farming? Addressing emissions due to land use and agricultural sector? Robotics and controlled environmental systems. Within AI, not trying to be a tech hub, but focussing on robotics and engineering linked to our sectorial strengths
- **Climate change and tourisms** – costal erosion, constraints in water supply, increasing floods, increasing drought periods
- **Decarbonisation, carbon capture, renewable energy and circular economy** opportunities e.g. use of heat production from paper mills and food suppliers, hydrocycle, etc

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## Residents' engagement

- Resident and Business Survey (over 300 responses, live until 05 June)
- King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton town centres visit
- 2x workshops in King's Lynn in partnership with Norfolk County Council
- Residents' perspectives workshop incl. engagement with public services and agencies (health and wellbeing, leisure, education, safety, housing needs)
- Lynn Sport Resident's engagement (drop in discussions at Lynn Sport on a weekday afternoon, engaging with people of all ages and demographics, while a young persons' workshop was ongoing at Lynn Sport)



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## What's one word or phrase you would use to describe King's Lynn and West Norfolk?

As part of the strategy development, we launched a survey for people who live and work in King's Lynn and West Norfolk, and we asked respondents to describe the borough using one word or phrase.

Their responses are presented in the word cloud to the right, with the relative size of the word reflecting the frequency with which it came up in responses.

The most common descriptors were, 'historic', 'beautiful', 'home', 'peaceful', 'friendly', 'great', 'potential', 'underrated', reflecting a widely-held belief within King's Lynn and West Norfolk that the area has a lot to offer, but it may currently be underperforming.



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## From residents

### Residents enjoy living in King's Lynn and West Norfolk because...

- Proximity to coastline and surrounding natural environment
- Rural lifestyle and the countryside, for its clean air, quietness, and landscapes
- Quality of life, due to slower pace, low pollution, and access to nature
- Strong cultural appeal and historical offer including King's Lynn and Sandringham estate and numerous festivals
- Community and cultural offer, anchored by friendly people, a strong sense of community, and cultural attractions
- Relative affordability, when compared to nearby Cambridge, and London

### Residents are concerned about the future of King's Lynn and West Norfolk because of...

- Education and skills gaps – post-16 education, skills provision
- Housing development without supporting infrastructure, such as schools, GPs, dentists
- Town centre decline in favour of out-of-town retail parks
- Environmental risks such as coastal erosion, flooding
- Lack of high-quality job opportunities to attract young people

### Residents would like to see the following changes in King's Lynn and West Norfolk...

- Improvements in road infrastructure and public transport, including rail links and busses
- Revitalisation of town centres through mixed-use development (restaurants, shops) and town centre living
- Conversion of vacant spaces in town centres into indoor markets, community hubs, independent shops, start-up space
- Improved community services and facilities, such as leisure centres and activities for young people



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## From the residents' perspective workshop

### Challenges

#### Transport

- After dark travel infrastructure, limited bus routes
- Don't make enough of connection to London
- Timeliness of transport services, connectivity to Norwich
- Weak transport infrastructure limits courses students take
- Lack of cycle lanes/safe ways to 'active travel'
- Safety concerns young people have around driving
- Jobs require driving license
- 'Mad Mile' roads prevalent in the area

#### Infrastructure

- The area closes up after 5/6pm, lack of evening activities/night-time economy
- Rural isolation – connectivity, house prices, people leaving the area as it's difficult to see career paths, leaving is clearest path
- No capacity to apply for national funding programmes
- Risk of replication of (county-wide) Norwich centric focus to KL focus (to detriment of outlying areas/towns)
- School system – limited private and better/stronger public offer, particularly high schools - lack of/poor quality education in earlier key stages leads to and enforces low aspiration
- Over-tourism

### Strengths/ways forward

#### Transport

- Reconnect Hunstanton to Norwich rail connection
- King's Lynn to King's Cross connectivity
- Roads A47 dual from Peterborough to Norwich
- Roads A149 to A10 dual roads from Hunstanton to Cambridge
- Walking and cycling links
- Attractive for commuters (who spend £ here)
- Gateway to Norfolk

#### Infrastructure

- New leisure centre Hunstanton
- Dated swimming pool - Knock it down, move it to Lynnsport and make Lynnsport fit for the future
- Nature reserves, digs, natural environment, countryside and space
- Norfolk Coast
- History and built environment
- Can leverage Place Needs Classification (Band 1A) and Place Partnerships (Sport England)

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## From the residents' perspective workshop

### Challenges

#### People and Communities

- Long waiting lists for childcare, pre-school provision?
- Mental health – societal shift but acute in KLWN, poor service provision
- High levels of qualifications without work
- Career progression in mid-life
- COVID has significantly reduced the transferrable work skills/soft skills
- Stigma around certain jobs, brain drain
- Challenge of employer engagement – low response/interaction
- Start up support not great – looking at Cambridge/Norwich
- Limited private sector visibility
- Not enough opportunities for STEM skills
- Social development of young people
- Lack of aspiration because of lack of inspiration, long term issues
- Young people feel that the King's Lynn town is always looking backward. They don't see the future being supported.
- In 2018, ¼ of children and young people surveyed experienced loneliness all or most of the time
- After school provision - teens don't want adult-structured environment
- Inequality
- Inferiority complex – people perceive the place as a backwater
- No connection between the Borough's services → gaps for young people
- Health and well-being needs a place-based strategy
- Not enough to do for retired... 'waiting'
- Not telling a coherent story, no brand identity – unclear asks

### Strengths/ways forward

#### People and Communities

- Quality of life slightly slower (valued)
- Levelling Up for culture – ACE and cultural funder eyes are on WN
- Hanseatic league
- Older community has a lot to offer
- Active community groups
- Families with strong roots and networks
- Potential to leverage skills and experience of immigrant population
- Young people feel rooted here – not a transient community
- Connections to trusts and foundations
- Great opportunities to build skills and knowledge through partnership working with employers, but they're too busy to offer work experience. Potential to upskill staff through funded training
- Ownership contribution – certainty of funding
- Lots of small businesses
- Private enterprise to promote health and wellbeing
- Improved IAG
- Young people need a voice and to be seen

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## Suggestions from Residents' perspective workshop

- Visitor economy
  - Residents' prices and tourism tax
  - Hunstanton year round offer and connectivity
  - North Norfolk like Margate, Great Yarmouth
- Business/sectors
  - Home worker hubs?
  - Science and engineering park to capture Cambridge overheat
  - Connectivity to wider industries
  - Networks for businesses and professionals
- Young people
  - Bradford model for targeted support?
  - Exposure to future opportunity and experiences for young people
  - Early years arts, culture, sports, nature provision
  - Free ticketing and careers education
  - School curriculum around resilience
- Mental and physical health
  - Physical activity provision – watersports?
  - Embedding positive mental health from a young age
    - Integrated
    - Preventative measures
- Transport
  - Guided busway to Norwich
  - Car club? More driving instructors
  - Thriving walking and cycling routes
  - Traffic improvements in Hunstanton, for local use
  - Joint ticketing for bus and bike and scooter pools
- Around education/lifting aspirations
  - Careers fair via IAG, including entrepreneurial support
  - Change perceptions of certain careers, highlight the adaptability of career paths
  - Careers and future-focussed guidance in person, at schools, or in the Multi User Community Hub
  - Linking up of education/courses available to local job needs
  - Exposure to 'local influencers/champions'
  - NCC Youth Pledge for employers – Youtube training videos (programme ending, adopt at KLWN level?)
  - Educating students on the 'how to' practicalities around starting a business
- For communities:
  - [BoxUp](#) – shared sport and leisure equipment
  - Improved communication to residents about what's going on in the Borough
    - Present in schools
    - Events
    - Many channels to reach different audiences
- On the appeal of the Borough
  - Change perceptions of KLWN
  - Diversify town centre offer beyond food and drink
    - Decrease business rates
- Enabling options and choice, removing barriers where possible
- Balanced housing market
- Downham infrastructure (schools, doctors, etc.)
  - Independent shops struggle to thrive, need an activities and entertainment offer



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## From the Norfolk Economic Strategy workshops

### Opportunities

- Engage, promote, support the construction sector – CITB (Constructionarium)
  - Sustainable construction?
- RAF Marham, West Winch, Drove Orchards, Thornham
- Agri-tech, collaboration of knowledge intensive sectors to modernise foundational sectors
- Space to grow businesses – large scale, industrial – repurposing farm buildings for high tech businesses
- Growth Fund (similar to Germany)
  - Co-design of funds with businesses
- Mentorship – retirees for working age population
- Engage with farmers and landowners to facilitate business hubs/clusters (farm buildings) to complement housing growth (Hunstanton)
- Coherent skills strategy – long term perspective
- Circular economy, decarbonisation, renewable energy
- Collaboration with professional services to create a 'business environment' sharing best practices – i.e. FIG in Norwich – pathway to support younger new entrants – a community approach
- Mixed-use rural hubs

### Challenges

- Link between employers and skills providers
- Hospitality and healthcare skillsets lacking
- Supporting infrastructure (transport, power)
- Recruitment - local supply of highly skilled employees, and managerial roles
- Loss of working age population
- Changing expectations of employment
- Disjunct between housing delivery and jobs and transport
- Sizewell C – risk of loss of labour market
- Cynicism around skills strategies to date
- Knowledge of business support among businesses
- Grant writing for businesses
- Competitive bids, procurement processes, skillset of SMEs
- Returning to work
- Planning and bureaucratic barriers
- Quality of jobs – place, quality of life, wages proportionate to cost of living → jobs campaign?



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## Businesses' engagement

- Resident and Business Survey (over 300 responses, live until 05 June)
- King's Lynn town centre visit
- West Norfolk Tourism Summit
- 2x workshops in King's Lynn in partnership with Norfolk County Council
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Borough visit and site tours (Downham Market and Hunstanton town centres)

### SHAPING TOMORROW TOGETHER: THE FUTURE OF WEST NORFOLK

We are developing a new Economic Strategy for West Norfolk as part of our corporate priority to promote growth and prosperity.

Whether you live, learn, visit, work, run a business or invest in West Norfolk, we want to hear your thoughts and ideas. Tell us what's important to you and what you'd like to see happening.

**YOUR VOICE MATTERS! - JOIN THE CONVERSATION**

Scan or click, share, and Shape the Future Together.  
[www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/KLWNES/](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/KLWNES/)



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## From town centre businesses

### Challenges

- Restrictions related to heritage buildings or conservation areas hampering the day and night-time activities of the premises
- Vacant shops and decreased footfall in towns
- Parking charges - confusing, high charges, outdated payment systems
- Tuesday Market now significantly reduced - feeling that it has decreased town centre footfall significantly

### What needs to change

- More investment / marketing of the Riverfront as a historical/touristic asset
- Make planning application easier / less lengthy processes
- Incentives for small independent businesses, decreased rates and rents, shared spaces, co-location for small indoor market in vacant units
- Suggestions around free parking once a week, discounted rates or parking memberships for residents and town centre employees/contractors, parking charge waivers for overnight visitors or increasing discounts for visitors staying multiple days.
- Festivals/events are good and great footfall generator but need investment to avoid road congestion

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## From tourism businesses

### Challenges

- Frustrations with planning permissions and approvals due to the high proportion of heritage/conservation areas. Lengthy process to address energy retrofitting
- Impact of new planning regulations for properties rented out as short-term lets, affecting renting out of second homes

### What needs to change

- More streamlined planning application process
- Strong natural and cultural appeal, numerous cultural events and festivals, businesses have high demand but need richer experience for visitors across the borough, from the town offerings to the countryside and coastal areas.
- Towns could do more to accommodate their guests.
- 'Brown' attraction signposts on the roads indicating the beaches/riverfronts
- Support retired population to establish new activities post-retirement in the visitor economy

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## Other engagement

- Programme of calls with officers and stakeholders
- Natural capital workshop
- Businesses roundtable

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## From natural environment perspectives

### Challenges

- Risk to our natural assets of over-tourism
- Issues related to flooding – reshaping economic life, roads, the Wash, Fenland areas
- 300h mitigation land
- 10% biodiversity net gain → legal obligation – additional challenge for leisure/recreational economy
- Welney road access
- Shortage of hotel space vs. AirBnb's and second homes → BnB's closing down in recent years, AirBnb's don't have to comply with the same restrictions
- Easier to work/commute to Cambridge than within the Borough
- Infrastructure not in place for levels of tourism
- Not enough access points
- Public transport offer
- Disability access
- Existing economic spatial situation → main employers in open countryside locations (RAF Marham, Wissington Sugar Factory)
- Keeping up with post-covid economic challenges
- Coast will look very different in 20 years
- Ouse Washes Habitat Creation Programme

### Strengths to build on/ways forward

- Limits of acceptable change
- Tourism economy – North Norfolk national landscape local offer
- Opportunity for active visitor economy (outdoor, coastal trails, strategic paths (e.g. Peddler's way))
- Lots of good independent food places that are gaining national and international focus
- Downham Market – food, independent shops, boutiques
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy in development
- Norfolk Floods Strategic Alliance
- CTAP Programme
- Likely to be involved in more national infrastructure priorities
- Many ongoing initiatives already in place (e.g. local nature recovery strategies)
- Land and coast skills study
- Wild Ken Hill Glamping
- North Wootton – Holkham → North Norfolk Natural Landscape (AONB)
- Offshore wind (MEEB)

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## From representatives, officers & business

### Leveraging our sector strengths

- Support smaller companies and our sector strength growth in **Heritage, Leisure, Agriculture, Food production and Net Zero** – Better agricultural strategy to navigate import/export bureaucracy post-Brexit
- Technology, Innovation, AI coming from different angles, cross cutting theme, but not our strength – focus on growing our sectors and enhance links to Cambridge science parks/life science/med tech instead
- Nar Ouse Enterprise Zone – better defining the selling point - distribution and light/traditional industry plus green / net zero
- Need to address skill shortages
- More flexibility over workforce recruitment to support agriculture and leisure sectors

### Transport investment

- A10 - Ely rail junction and the A10 from Lynn to Cambridge (Brandon Creek to Littleport)
- Another rail station, King's Lynn South?
- A149 to Hunstanton
- Car parking on the north coast
- Duelling of the A47 to Peterborough and the A17 upgrades
- Downham to Littleport bus via Welney
- Electric coastal hoppers and more access points/transport links

### Health investment

- QEH – better road links, car park and future health cluster expansion

### Energy

- Hydrogen generation

### Visitor economy/leisure

- 'Enjoy, respect, protect' – communicate biodiversity/recreational management to visitors, encouraging responsible recreation, tied in with amenity and accessibility
  - Balance conservation, enhancement, natural impact of tourism
- Promote Downham – rural outdoorsy offer? Artistic/vintage/thrift day trip?
- Promote free assets, active eco-tourism offer (camping/glamping)
- Tourist 'contribution'/tax feeding back into environment
  - Additional revenue streams (ex. tourist tax, Eco-tourism BID)
- Re-balancing the tourism economy – not just about the coast being busy, but what happens when the coast changes over time?
- Interreg projects on sustainable tourism
- Flexibility in how assets are used each season (e.g. fallow years)
- Hotel investors? Boutique hotels?
- Cheap accommodation for tourists → camping?
- Need infrastructure and facilities - if not, tourism can harm environment
- Shifting perceptions of 'natural beauty' with respect to the landscape

### Policy/strategy

- Connection in the system around land use planning
- Local implementation of county/national projects
- Limits of acceptable change strategy
- Coordination of natural assets seasonally and annually
- Role of the economic strategy – sustainability of how we work with nature
- Increase development levy → feed into GIRAMS (HMM fund)

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## Next Steps and Emerging Vision and Strategic Priorities for Comments

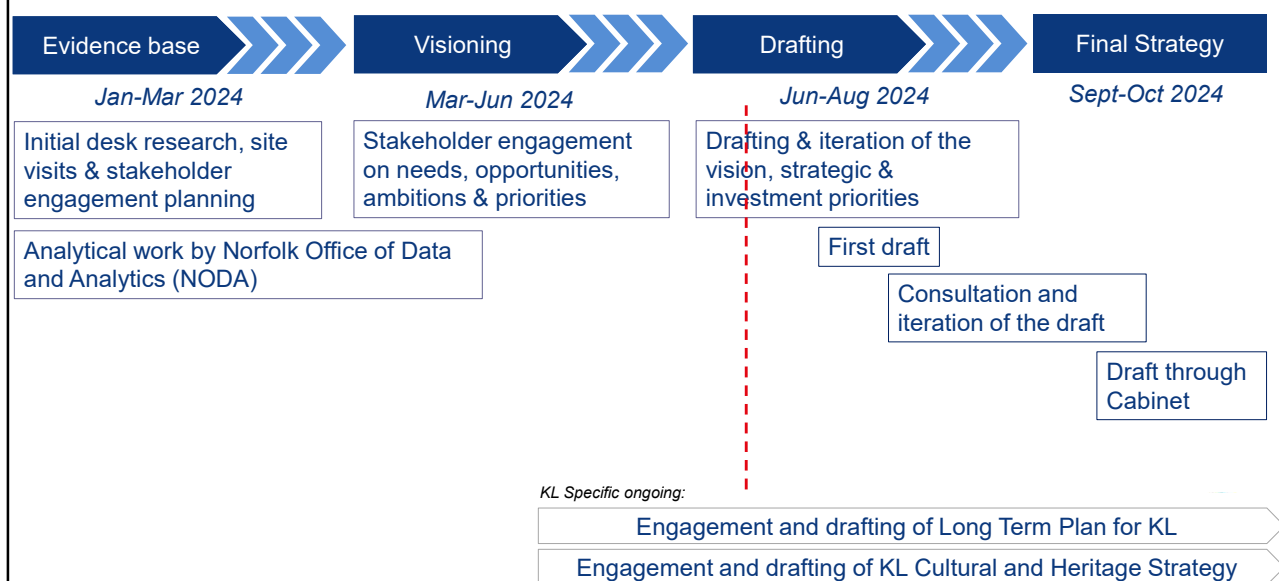


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## Next steps - from engagement findings towards vision and strategy drafting

- The engagement has brought up various insights regarding needs and opportunities, along with detailed feedback and suggestions.
- We have been working over the past weeks to synthesise the engagement findings with analytical evidence to identify a long-term vision for the borough. This includes the identification of emerging priorities framed under our capitals and levers for growth approach. These are currently being reviewed by officers and will be iterated and shared more widely over the summer.
- Over the next few months we will work to produce the following by **early Autumn 2024**:
  - **A shared long-term vision**, providing a strong, shared story of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk to date and its goals for the future.
  - **A supporting strategy**, providing a clear plan and route forward for delivering the vision – with an outcomes framework that (ideally) can see through the next 10 years (or two political terms).
  - An approach to developing **projects for investment**, through which to deliver the strategy and vision.

## Recap of process and next steps



## Our Vision for 2045

This section presents **the emerging vision for King's Lynn and West Norfolk** and the changes we aim to achieve over the next 20 years.

This has been informed by the challenges, strengths, and trends identified via engagement and data evidence, it is designed to build on our unique assets and opportunities to create a prosperous future for all in the borough and enhance how people live, learn, work, visit, and invest in King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

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.

## Our Vision for 2045

**In 2045 King's Lynn and West Norfolk is a model for sustainable and inclusive rural communities, where the benefits of 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 towns that are destinations for both residents and tourists



Access to good work, suited to stage of life



Specialised engineering, food & agricultural and tourism & hospitality sectors, with productive jobs and businesses that are a reason to stay in the area, re-locate to it and invest in it

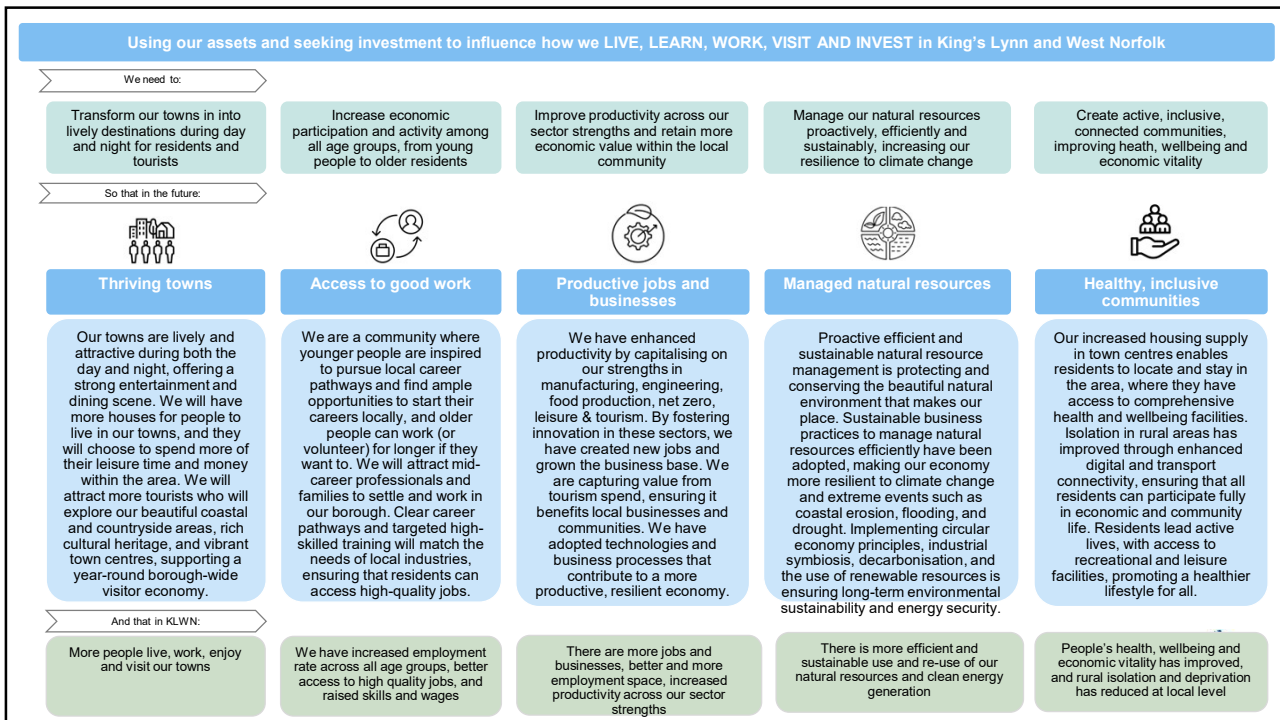


Proactive, efficient and sustainable management of our natural resources



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





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## How do we get to the vision? Our Strategic Priorities

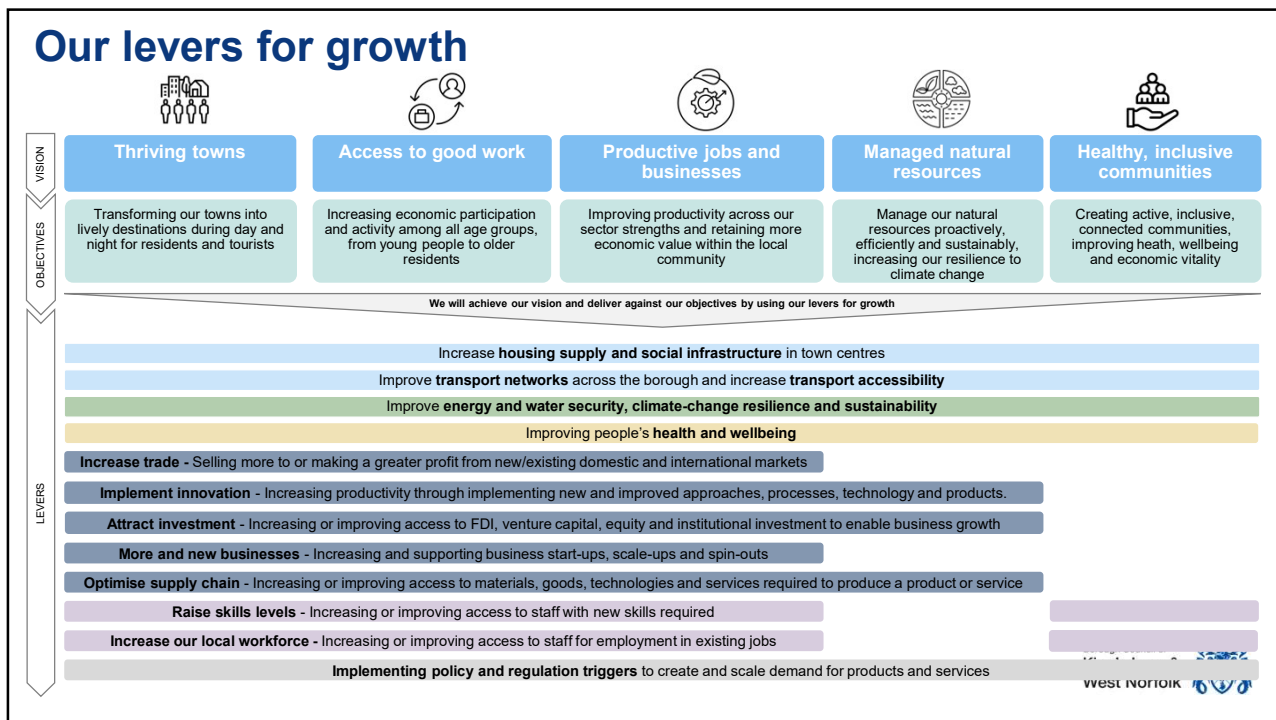
This section presents how we intend to achieve our vision for King's Lynn and West Norfolk over the next 5-10 years.

Underpinning these priorities is detailed evidence and rationale for change (which will be provided in detail in the strategy's full draft) that highlight the need to shift stubborn metrics where we underperform compared to regional and national averages.

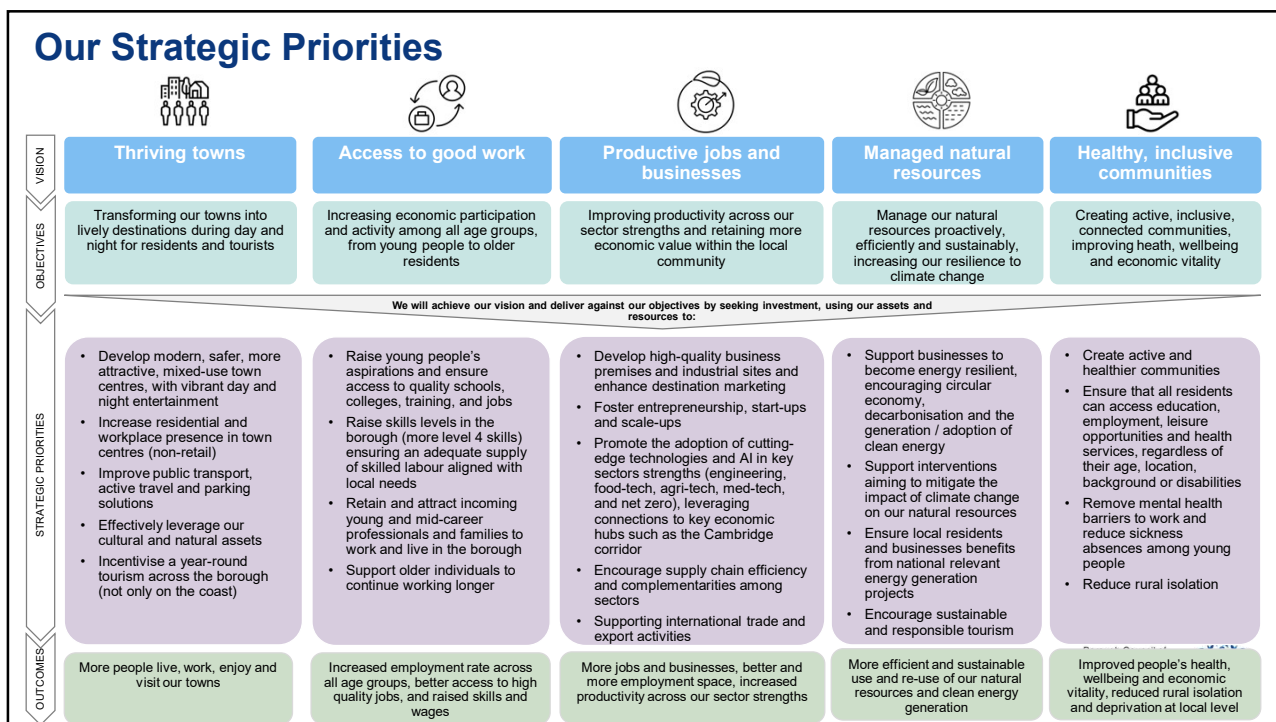
This section outlines our emerging strategic priorities, mapped against our five vision pillars. They respond to the local challenges and opportunities we need to address or maximise, and the national and global macro-trends we need to shift direction or embrace to ensure an inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous economy in the future.

The following slides highlight our levers for growth and where we want to focus our efforts, resources, investment, and assets to achieve our vision and deliver against our objectives.

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