

Wisbech Regeneration Plan

Wisbech Neighbourhood Board

20 November 2025

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Local Context	4
3.	Target Area	6
4.	Vision for the Future.....	7
5.	Strategic Case for Change.....	9
6.	Alignment with other Programmes and Investments	24
7.	Match Funding and Leveraged Investment.....	31
8.	Community and Stakeholder Engagement	32
9.	Governance	38
10.	Assurance.....	40

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Wisbech Regeneration Plan outlines our community's ambitions and proposals for transforming Wisbech into a place that we can be even more proud of. It builds on a keen understanding of what people want for the future, and of how we can shape the town to create new and better opportunities for everybody. It includes a four-year investment plan designed to speedily address existing concerns, and a wider ten-year strategy which will change how our residents and businesses live and work.
- 1.2 The Regeneration Plan is based on a series of comprehensive consultations with all parts of our community and explains how we will use the £20m Neighbourhood Plan to change our town. Our work has also been guided by our Town Vision, which reflects the aspirations of people who live, work and visit in Wisbech.



By 2035, Wisbech will emerge as a rejuvenated and vibrant town, celebrated for its safety, community and outstanding heritage. Our vision is to drive a comprehensive regeneration effort using historic and geographic assets such as parks, the river and the Town Centre. We aspire to create a dynamic environment where residents and visitors alike enjoy an enhanced quality of life and a renewed sense of community.

Wisbech will harness its rich heritage as a foundation for growth, integrating thoughtful design and development to revitalise public spaces, improve infrastructure, and boost local businesses. Our goal is to transform Wisbech into a more attractive and functional town, with modern facilities and improved connectivity that put Wisbech on the map. This will create jobs and skills for young people, and ensure everyone will share in our new prosperity.

Success will be measured through tracking the impacts of our regeneration efforts, including visible improvements in infrastructure and public spaces, increased economic activity, a surge in local and visitor engagement, and a reduction in anti-social behaviour. Indicators of progress will include rising property values, expanded business opportunities, positive feedback from the community and a reduction in crime statistics. Increased foot traffic in revitalised areas will reflect our success in creating a town that meets the needs of its residents while attracting new visitors.

By 2035, Wisbech will be a thriving, well-integrated town that proudly celebrates its heritage and embraces a future of growth and opportunity.

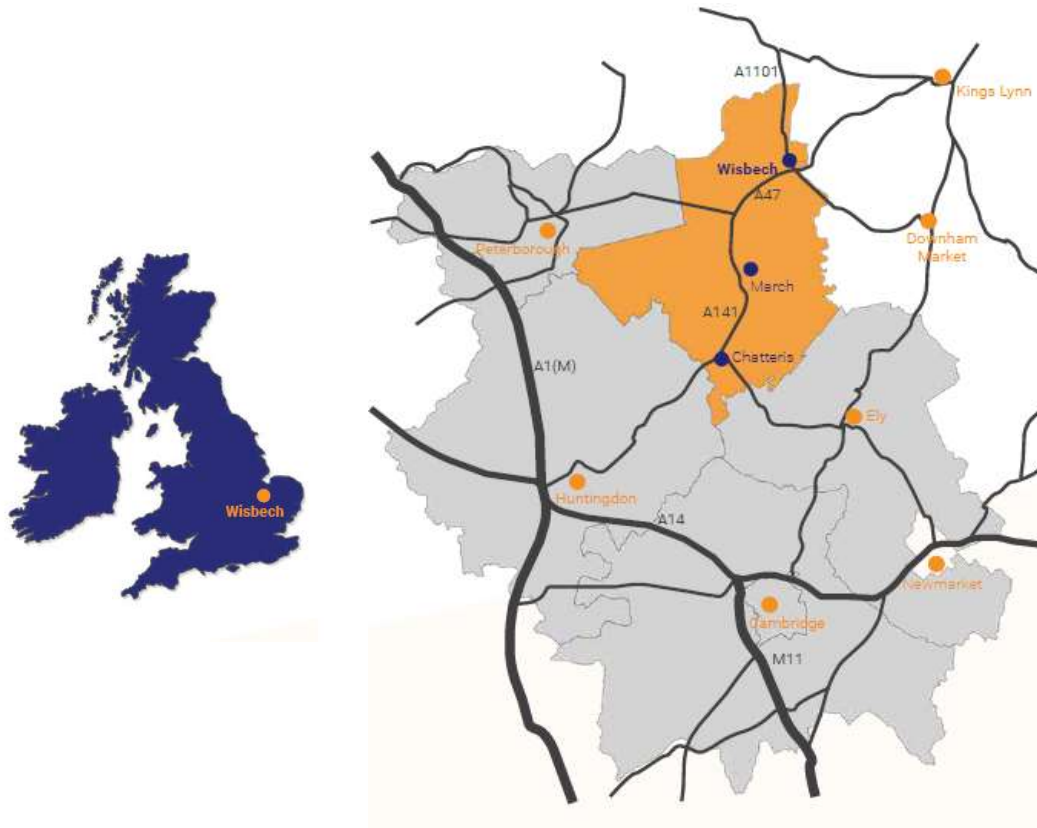


- 1.3 The Regeneration Plan follows the proscribed format laid out by MHCLG, and is arranged as follows:
- Local Context
 - Target Area
 - Vision for the Future
 - Strategic Case for Change
 - Alignment with other Programmes and Investments
 - Match Funding and Leveraged Investment
 - Community and Stakeholder Engagement
 - Governance
 - Assurance

2. Local Context

- 2.1 Located between Peterborough, Cambridge and Kings Lynn, ten miles north of March, Wisbech is the largest market town in the Fens, with a population of approximately 31,500. The town is an inland port located on the River Nene, which has long played an important role as a trading centre serving a wide rural catchment.

Figure 1 Wisbech Location



Source: Fenland District Council, Wisbech Masterplan 2022

- 2.2 In the absence of another city nearby the town is an important local centre offering retail, leisure and healthcare services to the area. The town draws commuters in from the surroundings, with key sources of employment including food processing industries, as well as manufacturing, logistics and storage. Wisbech suffers from poor connectivity due to issues with lack of public transport provision and inadequate road links. It is one of the largest towns in the country without a train station and has limited cycle infrastructure. Key arterial routes such as the A47 running east to west are predominantly single carriageway and are prone to closure and heavy traffic. The lack of connection to the wider region and beyond limits commuting opportunities and growth.
- 2.3 Wisbech has fantastic attributes to celebrate and build from including:
- A collection of some of the most impressive Heritage Assets in the county
 - A fantastic community that has proved resilient and proud through multiple generations
 - A central focus for the wider region across the Fens that has remained relevant since its origins

- 2.4 Like many towns there remains some challenges to overcome to reach the Town's potential. The Agricultural Industry is in constant need of change to suit modern methods of food production, and the change of industry demands have resulted in an increase in poverty rates within the area. There is a real skills deficit in the workforce, not helped by a lack of quality training provision. And like many town centres across the UK, the retail market has significantly changed leaving voids in the once busy high street. Wisbech has not been immune to these forces and the retail and cultural offer has somewhat deteriorated.

4. Vision for the Future

Our Vision for Wisbech

By 2035, Wisbech will emerge as a rejuvenated and vibrant town, returning to its status as a prosperous anchor in the Fens – celebrated for its safety, community and outstanding heritage.

Our vision is to drive a comprehensive regeneration effort utilising historic and geographic assets such as parks, the river and the Town Centre. We aspire to create a dynamic environment where residents and visitors alike enjoy an enhanced quality of life and a renewed sense of community.

Wisbech will harness its rich heritage as a foundation for growth, integrating thoughtful urban planning and development to revitalise public spaces, improve infrastructure, and boost local businesses. Our goal is to transform Wisbech into a more attractive and functional town, with modern facilities and improved connectivity that put Wisbech on the map. The town will be driven by an ambitious Neighbourhood Board which will seek investment into the town at every opportunity. This will create jobs and skills for young people, and ensure everyone will share in our new prosperity.

Success will be measured through monitoring of improvements in infrastructure and public spaces, increased economic activity, a surge in public engagement, and a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

Indicators of progress will include rising property values, expanded business opportunities, positive feedback from the community and a reduction in crime statistics. Increased foot traffic in revitalised areas will reflect our success in creating a town that meets the needs of its residents while attracting new visitors.

By 2035, Wisbech will be a thriving, well-integrated town that proudly celebrates its heritage and embraces a future of growth and opportunity.

- 4.1 Our Vision Statement reflects the priorities and aspirations of local people. Success will be measured through monitoring of improvements in infrastructure and public spaces, increased economic activity, a surge in public engagement, and a reduction in anti-social behaviour. Indicators of progress will include rising property values, expanded business opportunities, positive feedback from the community and a reduction in crime statistics. Increased foot traffic in revitalised areas will reflect our success in creating a town that meets the needs of its residents while attracting new visitors.
- 4.2 By 2034, Wisbech will be a thriving, well-integrated town that proudly celebrates its heritage and embraces a future of growth and opportunity.
- 4.3 Our priorities for change are built on the following principles and ambitions:
 - Making the most of what makes Wisbech great
 - Tackling negative perceptions and barriers to people using the town centre
 - Enhancing outcomes and opportunities for young people
 - Improving Wisbech's profile regionally and nationally
 - Making it easier for residents to choose sustainable and inclusive travel options

Table 1 Town Vision Ambitions and Aspirations

Goal	Description
Making the most of what makes Wisbech great	Maximising the value of heritage, tourism, open spaces, and supporting its active community.
Tackling negative perceptions and barriers to people using the town centre	Improving the town centre environment, including vacant sites, better amenities and cleanliness. Improving feelings of security and combatting antisocial behaviour, including improved activities and opportunities for young people.
Enhancing outcomes and opportunities for young people	Developing community sport and leisure facilities to promote active communities and reduce youth offending.
Improving Wisbech's profile regionally and nationally	Re-establishing Wisbech as a cultural centre and visitor destination.
Making it easier for residents to choose sustainable and inclusive travel options	Improving bus and cycle infrastructure, accessibility for the disabled, helping the town centre to become more inclusive.

Source: Wisbech Masterplan

5. Strategic Case for Change

Key Challenges in Wisbech

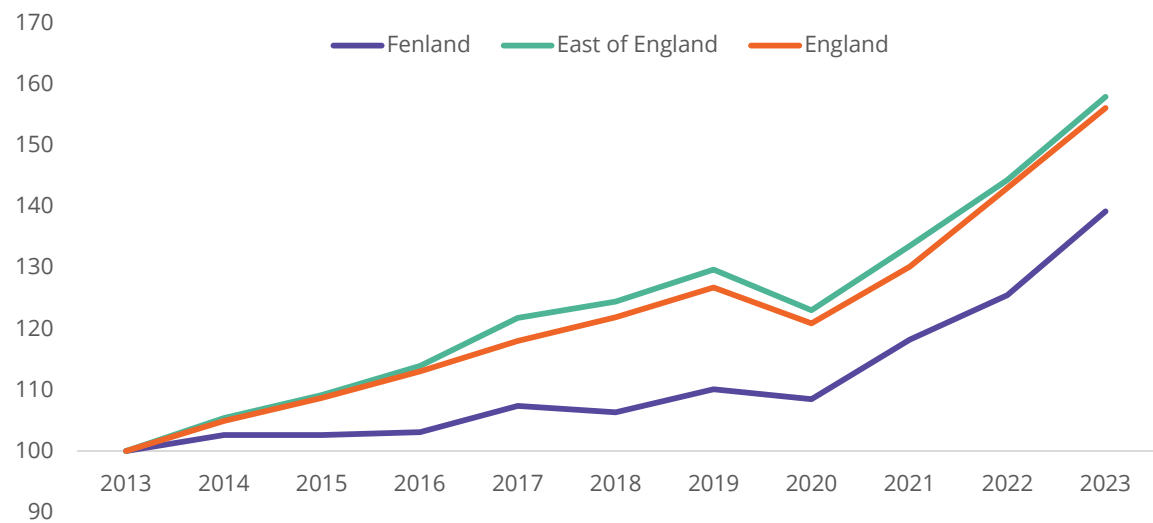
- 5.1 The evidence provided by the MHCLG clearly describes a town with a strong case for change. In almost all indicators, the town lags behind the national average. Yet there are also great opportunities for Wisbech. As shown by **MHCLG's Index of Priority Places**, the district of Fenland is a Tier 2 local authority and is ranked the 124th most in need of investment out of 309 local authorities in England. In terms of accessibility and travel, the area is severely disadvantaged, being the 71st most disadvantaged in the country.
- 5.2 Within Fenland, Wisbech faces a number of more specific challenges. Community consultation and independent assessment reveals a weight of negative perceptions about the town, often focused on a run-down town centre beset by anti-social behaviour. Despite this, Wisbech has much to celebrate and build from, including significant cultural and heritage assets, and resilient and active local communities.
- 5.3 Some of the key challenges faced by Wisbech are:
- **Ingrained economic disadvantage:** Low and slow economic growth, contribution and deprivation.
 - **A declining town centre and challenging viability:** Unable to capitalise on its historic and cultural assets.
 - **Lack of opportunities for residents and young people:** Unemployment is high, access to training and higher paid jobs is limited.
 - **Susceptibility to crime and poor social trust.**
 - **A relatively isolated economy.**

INGRAINED ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE

- 5.4 Fenland has among the lowest productivity and GVA levels in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and East of England region. GVA per filled job is just £56,675 in 2023, as opposed to the East of England average of £69,151, and the English average of £74,814¹. The gap between Fenland and the rest of the country has also been widening in the last 10 years to 2023.

¹ GVA per filled jobs data estimated using GVA data for 2023 (current prices) and employment data obtained from the Business Register and Employment Survey (2023) both available from the Office for National Statistics.

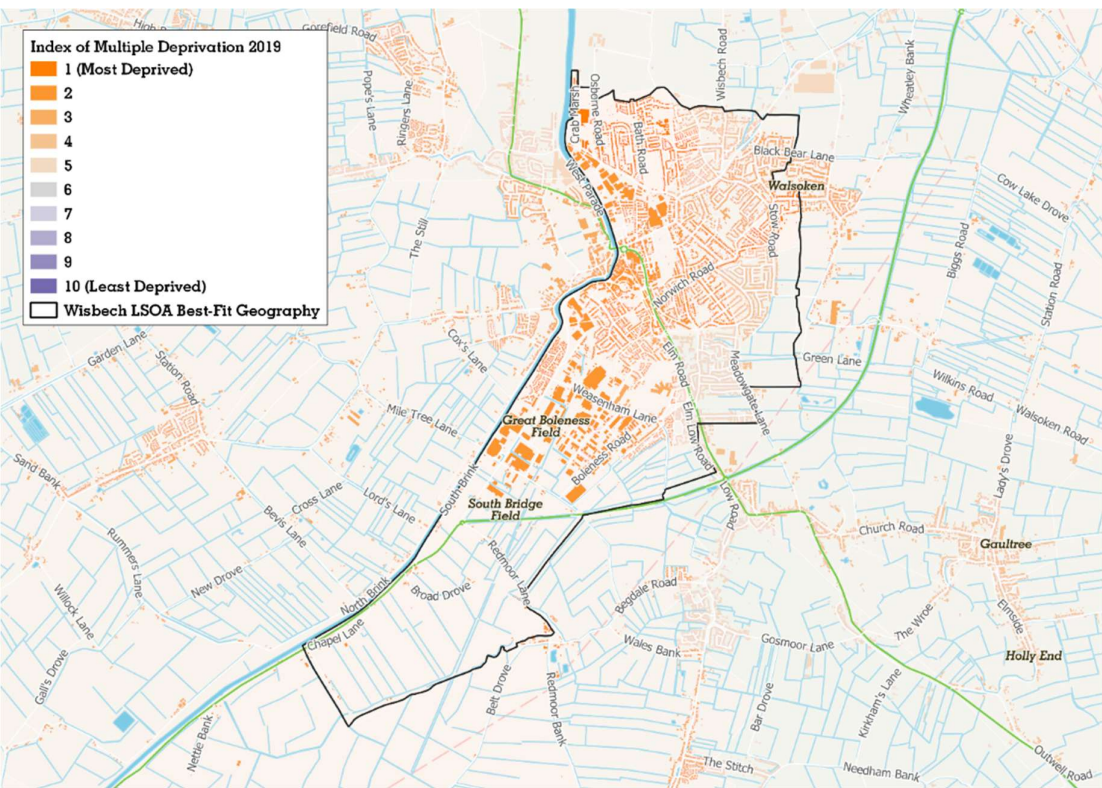
Figure 3 GVA Change 2013-2023



Source: ONS (2025), 2013-2023

5.5 Deprivation in Fenland is widespread, but particularly acute in Wisbech. 24% of workers in Fenland earn below the living wage, which is 4% higher than the East of England, and the national average (ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2020). Health (9 out of 12 Fenland neighbourhoods are in the 20% most deprived wards) and skills outcomes are particularly poor in the area.

Figure 4 Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019



Source: MHCLG (2019), Indices of Multiple Deprivation

- 5.6 Survey results highlight that residents feel the local area is 'left behind' compared to the rest of the country. 63% respondents stated that they feel their area has been very left behind compared to the rest of the country.

Figure 5 Perceptions of Local Community



Source: Zencity (2025), 'Wisbech Survey Results'

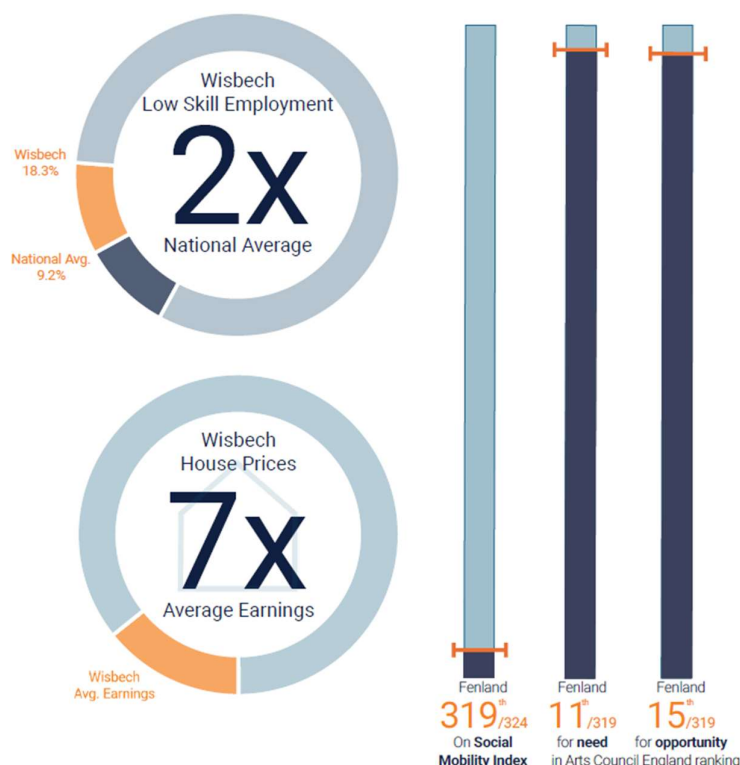
A DECLINING TOWN CENTRE AND CHALLENGING VIABILITY

- 5.7 Wisbech has proven many times in its history that it has all the ingredients to ensure financial and cultural strengths can be sustainable on a local level. But the town is performing poorly in relation to other centres in Fenland and the wider East of England area. The Place Index suggests a Fenland wide vacancy rate of just 6%, the position in Wisbech is much worse:
- In Wisbech Town Centre there are approximately 259 retail outlets. There are 57 retail units vacant (22%) in Wisbech, which is higher than the national average and considerably higher than the estimates used in the MHCLG Index of Priority Places.
 - On the basis of total floorspace, 27.8% of total floorspace is vacant compared to a national average of 16.1%.
 - Rental value in Wisbech is consistently (19%) lower than Fenland and the East of England for both office and retail.
- 5.8 Despite this, the town centre has many assets, such as a recently upgraded marketplace and many buildings of significant historic merit. These assets are currently not being capitalised upon, and as such vital opportunities to increase footfall in the town centre are being missed. Insights from Zencity highlight that, among respondents who are proud to live in their local area, the top reasons they are proud are "because of the green and natural spaces here" (73%) and "because of the culture heritage and history of the local area" (46%). Supporting and enhancing these characteristics of the area will be an important consideration for the Regeneration Plan.

LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 5.9 Unemployment is higher than the national average, and unemployment rates are higher than the East of England, and England by around 2%. Fenland has a higher rate of people working at occupational level 1 (18.3%) than nationally (9.2%) and lower rates at levels 3 and 4.

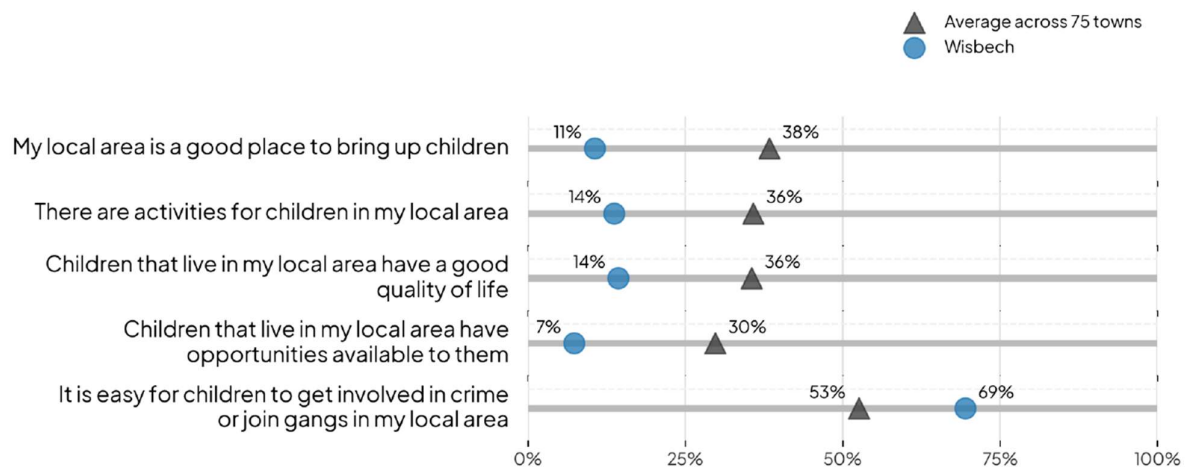
Figure 6 Socioeconomic Indicators



Source: ONS, Social Mobility Index, Arts Council England.

- 5.10 At the same time the Social Mobility Index ranks Fenland 319th out of 324 local authorities. In terms of the House Price Affordability, which is a measure of house prices relative to the residents' earnings, house prices are currently 7.4x higher than average resident earnings in Fenland.
- 5.11 This picture is exacerbated by a lack of visible or accessible skills training, sporting and creative opportunities available to residents. In 2021 Arts Council England identified Fenland as a Priority Place for intervention in the arts, placing it 11th out of 319 Local Authority Districts in England in terms of 'Need'. This was despite the area's relatively high presence of community groups and cultural partnerships, placing it 15th out of 319 districts for 'Opportunity'.
- 5.12 Furthermore, survey insights from Zencity highlight concerns from residents about the local area for children and young people. These are lower than average results across the survey questions.

Figure 7 Children and Young People (% agree)



Source: Zencity (2025), 'Wisbech Survey Results'

SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CRIME AND POOR SOCIAL TRUST

- 5.13 The economic and social factors described above leave Wisbech communities more vulnerable to crime and exploitation than in most of the country.
- 5.14 The Fenland district is the second smallest in terms of population in Cambridgeshire but hosts disproportionately large populations of individuals potentially vulnerable to victimisation by or participation in serious organised crime, notably: foreign migrant and temporary workers, the unemployed or underemployed, the economically deprived, and looked-after children.
- 5.15 A 2020 study of child criminal exploitation showed Wisbech had a particularly high concentration of under 18s affected by crime harm, including the Waterlees and Clarkson wards. Medworth ward is one of seven long-term high harm wards in the county that collectively generate 20% of all harm in Cambridgeshire². This is further reinforced by the Zencity data, highlighting that 'It is easy for children to get involved in crime or join gangs in my local area' more than the average across the 75 Plan for Neighbourhood towns (+17%)³.
- 5.16 Looking at detailed crime reports, Wisbech has a recorded crime rate of 124.2 reported crimes per 1,000 people, as shown in Table 2. This is higher than the recorded crime rate in Fenland (78.4) and England (76.7). When looking at the breakdown of reported crime, violence and sexual offences has the highest prevalence, with 44.7 reported crimes per 1,000 people which is higher than the average rates for Fenland (34.8) and England (32.3).

² Fenland Community Safety Partnership.

³ Zencity (2025) Plan for Neighbourhood Survey Results: Wisbech, July 2025. Survey carried between 9th of April to the 26th of May 2025.

Table 2 Crime Statistics in Wisbech, Fenland and England

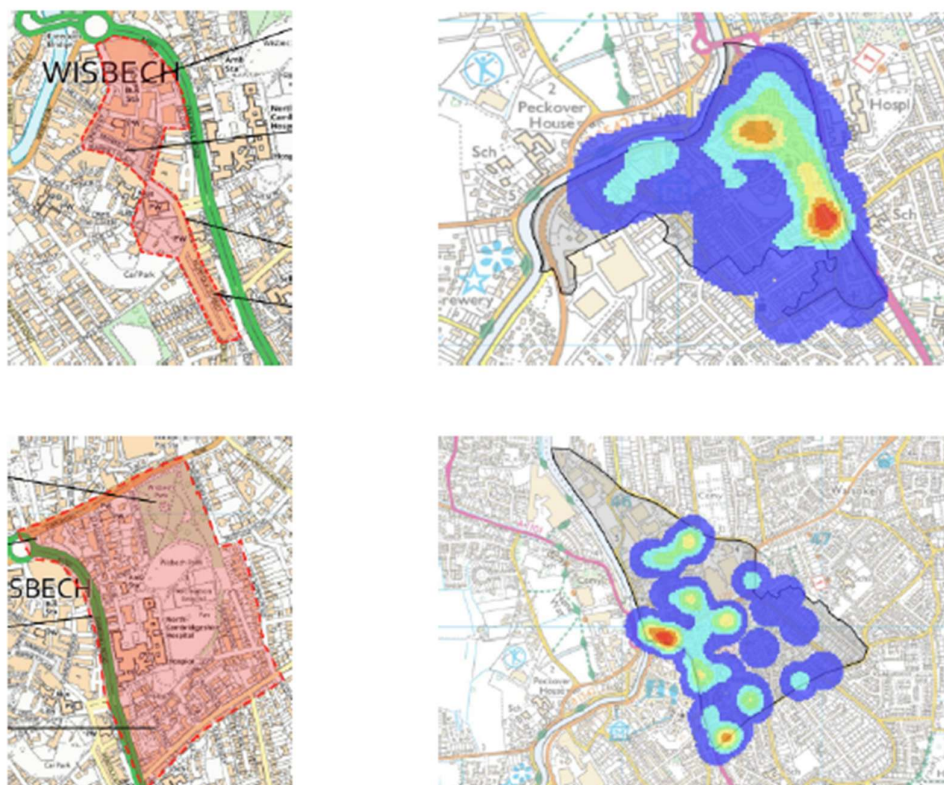
General Crime and Social Indicators			
Indicator	Wisbech	Fenland	England
Recorded crime rate per 1,000 population (2022)	124.2	78.4	76.7
Anti-social behaviour per 1,000 population (2024)	19.9	13.9	14.8
Social trust (%) (2023)	-15%	-8%	-3%
Recorded Crime by Type per 1,000 Population (2024)			
Crime Type	Wisbech	Fenland	England
Bicycle theft	0.9	0.7	0.9
Burglary	6.2	3.5	3.9
Criminal damage and arson	12.1	8.4	7.1
Drugs	3.9	2.1	2.8
Other crime	2.5	28	2.0
Other theft	14.4	7.3	6.9
Possession of weapons	1.8	1.2	0.9
Public order	6.3	4.6	6.6
Robbery	0.9	0.5	1.3
Shoplifting	12.6	6.1	7.9
Theft from the person	0.9	0.5	2.3
Vehicle crime	8.6	5.0	5.7
Violence and sexual offences	44.7	34.8	32.3

Note: Rates were calculated using 2022 mid-year population estimates due to data availability.

Source: MHCLG (2025) Wisbech – local data profile pack

- 5.17 Antisocial behaviour is an issue regularly cited in community and stakeholder engagement, including the recent engagement workshop with the High Streets Task Force. This is backed up by analytical work by Cambridgeshire Constabulary, which has identified a number of 'hot-spots' within Wisbech town centre. Their analysis shows that whilst Fenland District as a whole has a high proportion of properties categorised as 'Comfortable Communities', these parts of Wisbech town centre are predominantly categorised as 'Urban Adversity'.

Figure 8 Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Hotspots in Wisbech Town Centre

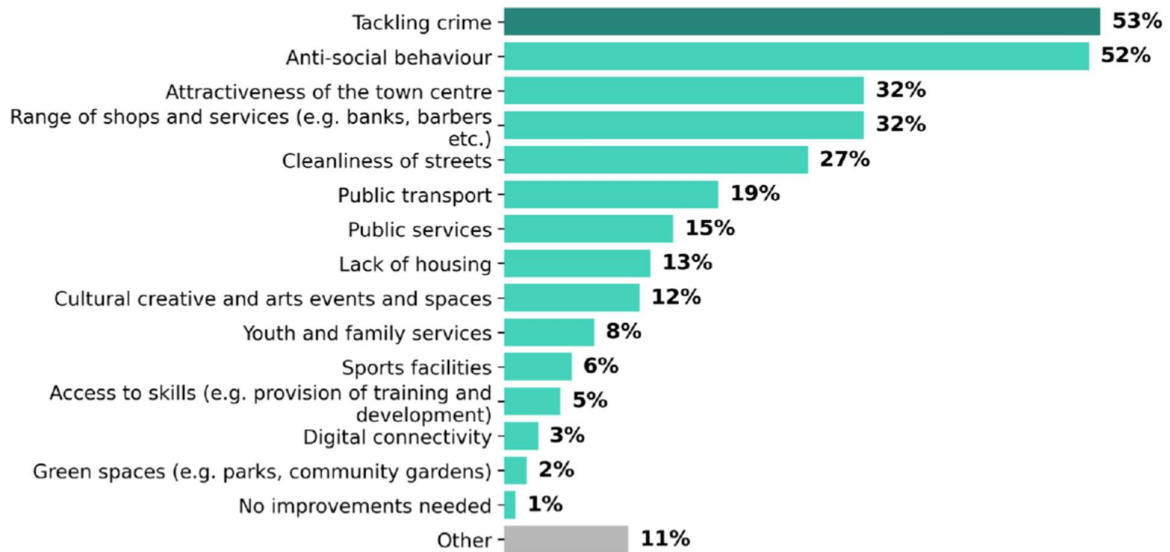


Source: Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

- 5.18 Net social trust is defined as the estimated proportion of people who say they generally trust others minus the proportion of people who say that you cannot be too careful when dealing with people. According to Onward (2023), Wisbech has a social trust score of -15%, which is significantly lower than the Fenland average of -8% and England average of -3%, showing that there is a lower level of social trust within Wisbech than national levels. More deprived Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) are likely to have lower levels of social trust than less deprived MSOAs in Wisbech.
- 5.19 Tackling crime is the highest priority area residents would like to see improvements in, with 53% of residents indicating this when asked to identify areas for improvement in Wisbech as outlined through an online survey carried by Zencity (2025)⁴, see Figure 9. Tackling anti-social behaviour is the second most indicated answers, with 52% of responses highlighting the need. Overall, safety concerns are a key challenge for residents – with 55% of respondents indicating that safety is one of the main reasons they are not proud to live in Wisbech. Approximately 58% of responders consider the area to be run down.

⁴ Zencity (2025) Plan for Neighbourhood Survey Results: Wisbech, July 2025. Survey carried between 9th of April to the 26th of May 2025.

Figure 9 Areas Requiring Improvement



Source: Zencity (2025), 'Wisbech Survey Results'

A RELATIVELY ISOLATED ECONOMY

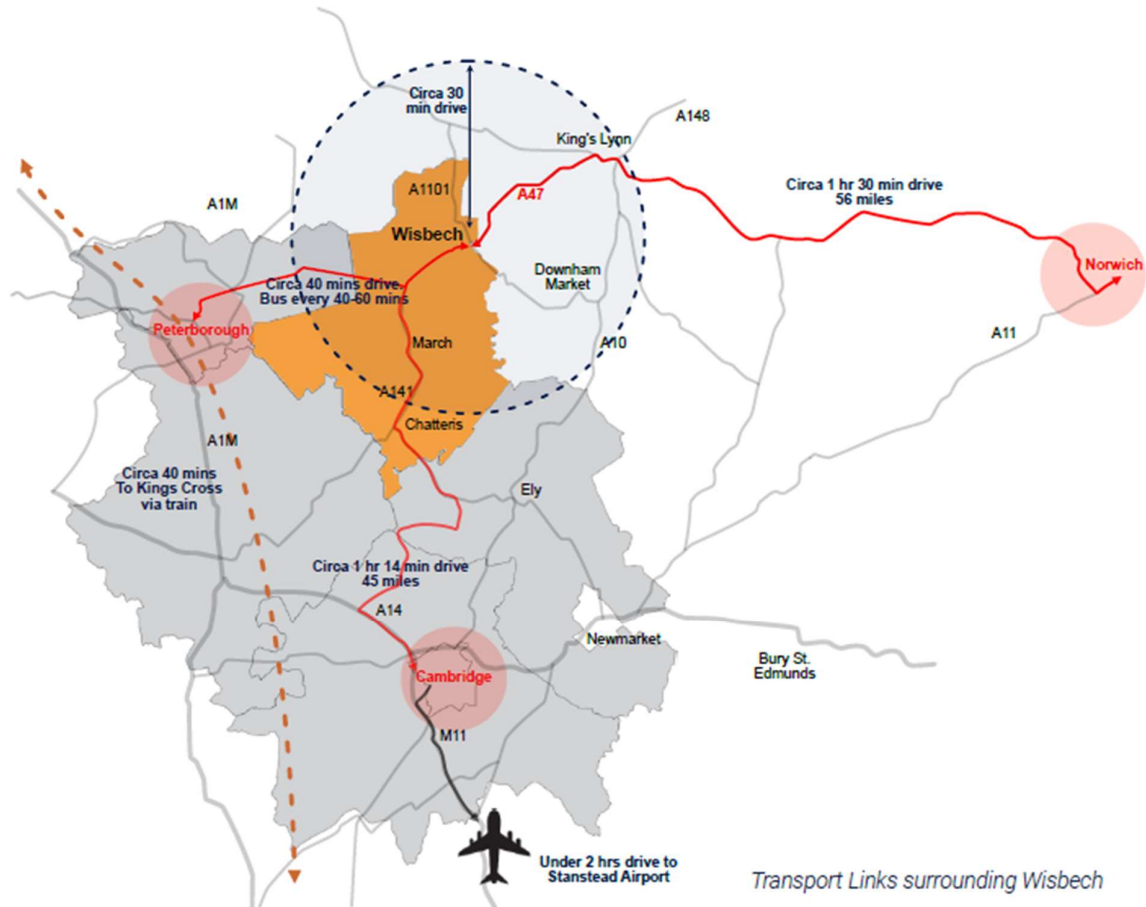
- 5.20 Wisbech suffers from poor transport connectivity. The fact that the A47 is single carriageway for much of its journey east and west from Wisbech makes it unsafe and slow. Cycle infrastructure to connect the town to other places is poor. All of the above means that it is difficult to work in any of the East of England's primary employment centres – Peterborough, Cambridge, and Norwich – while living in Wisbech. The economic impacts of this are clear.
- 5.21 Within Wisbech there are low levels of professional employment, meaning that many who want to move on in their career feel they need to leave the town. This takes people and resources away. It is also a missed opportunity to bring more money in to flow around the town, which would help the high street immensely.

Figure 10 Impacts of Poor Transport Connectivity



- 5.22 Whilst these major regional transport links undoubtedly need improving, this is considered beyond the reach of the Plan for Neighbourhoods funding and should be pursued through a wider programme of regional investment.

Figure 11 Transport Links in Wisbech



Priorities for Change

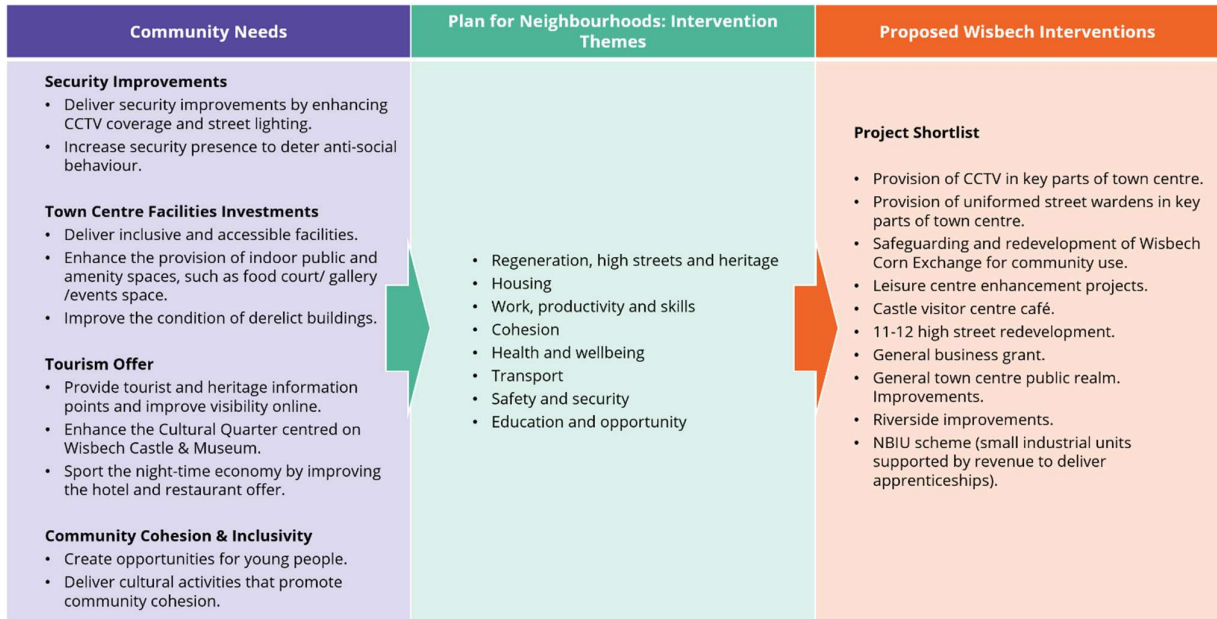
- 5.23 The Neighbourhood Board's vision is underpinned by an extensive and ongoing programme of consultation, carried out over the last 8 years. Throughout this period, opinion has been sought directly from local people (for example, the comprehensive I Love Wisbech and Wisbech 2020 consultation programmes), as well as from expert advisers in regeneration and placemaking (for example, the High Streets Task Force, the Growing Fenland Wisbech Masterplan and an Independent Economic Commission).
- 5.24 Through this period, key issues raised by local people include:
- Improving the town centre to encourage greater usage, including improved cleanliness, addressing derelict or vacant sites, exploiting the town's heritage assets and encouraging a better mix of town centre retail/leisure/cultural uses.
 - Addressing antisocial behaviour and feelings of safety and security in the town centre through more visible policing, CCTV and other security measures.
 - Improving the range and availability of facilities and activities for young people, including sport, leisure and cultural opportunities.
 - Strengthening the cultural and heritage offer in the town centre and building a stronger identity and brand for the town around this.

- Forming place management partnerships to improve the attractiveness of key areas within the town, and tackle ASB, including Town Marshals and more targeted policing.

Alignment with Objectives

- 5.25 The links between identified areas of community need, the Plan for Neighbourhoods intervention themes and the proposed interventions are displayed below.

Figure 12 Actions and Alignment



Areas of Intervention

- 5.26 The Neighbourhood Board has shortlisted the following projects, which all constitute pre-approved interventions under the 16th June 2025 Guidance issued by MHCLG.
- 5.27 This list includes three major capital projects, which will be prioritised by the Neighbourhood Board following an initial stage of due diligence.

Table 3 Shortlisted Interventions

PROPOSED INTERVENTION	TIME PERIOD	PRE-APPROVED INTERVENTION CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
PROVISION OF CCTV IN KEY PARTS OF TOWN CENTRE	4 Year Investment Plan and ongoing	Safety & Security – design & oversight of built and landscaped environment to design-out crime and encourage positive behaviour	Mixture of initial capital funding and ongoing revenue funding support
PROVISION OF UNIFORMED STREET WARDENS IN KEY PARTS OF TOWN CENTRE	4 Year Investment Plan and ongoing	Safety & Security – policing interventions to target crime prevention in specific locations	Revenue funding
GENERAL BUSINESS GRANT	4-year Investment Plan horizon	Work, productivity and skills: Developing and expanding local business support and networks for smaller businesses and social enterprises Regeneration, high streets & heritage: better accessibility for disabled people	General Business Grant available for application to the Town Board.
SAFEGUARDING AND REDEVELOPMENT OF WISBECH CORN EXCHANGE FOR COMMUNITY USE	4 Year Investment Plan	Cohesion: Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civic society, youth and community groups.	Capital project, likely to extend beyond 4-year investment plan horizon
<<<<<<<<< <AND/OR> >>>>>>>>>			
LEISURE CENTRE ENHANCMENT PROJECTS	4 Year Investment Plan	Health and well-being: funding for local sport and activity facilities, to foster community engagement and connection.	Enhancement of facilities to improve health and wellbeing access. To allow more community focused activities above and beyond the current health facilities.
<<<<<<<<< <AND/OR> >>>>>>>>>			
CASTLE VISITOR CENTRE CAFÉ	4 Year Investment Plan	Regeneration, High Street & Heritage: Enhanced support for arts, cultural, heritage activities, projects and facilities and historic institution that make-up the local cultural offer.	Improvements to the Wisbech Castle café and hub to celebrate local heritage.
<<<<<<<<< <AND/OR> >>>>>>>>>			

PROPOSED INTERVENTION	TIME PERIOD	PRE-APPROVED INTERVENTION CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
SAFEGUARDING AND DEVELOPMENT OF KEY SIETS IN THE TOWN CENTRE	4-year Investment Plan horizon	Regeneration, high streets and heritage: funding for improvements to town centres, neighbourhoods and high street, including capital spend and running costs	Restoration and redevelopment of historic High Street properties. Potential for mixed-use space including retail and housing.
TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS	Outside 4-year Investment Plan horizon	Regeneration, high streets & heritage: public realm improvements	Upgrades to public spaces to enhance the town's appearance and usability. Includes improved hoarding to uplift visual appeal and safety.
RIVERSIDE IMPROVEMENTS	Outside 4-year Investment Plan horizon	Regeneration, high streets & heritage: public realm improvements	Revitalisation of the riverside area to boost leisure and tourism. Focus on landscaping, seating, and pedestrian access.
NBIU SCHEME (SMALL INDUSTRIAL UNITS SUPPORTED BY REVENUE TO DELIVER APPRENTICESHIPS)	Outside 4-year Investment Plan horizon	Work, productivity and skills: developing and expanding existing business support and networks for smaller businesses	

Note: Most projects fit into multiple categories for pre-approved interventions, only the most relevant has been suggested for each project.

5.28 Table 4 displays how these proposals match against the Neighbourhood Fund objectives:

Table 4 Alignment with Funding Objectives

PROPOSED INTERVENTION	ALIGNMENT AGAINST FUNDING OBJECTIVES	NOTES
Provision of CCTV in key parts of town centre	Thriving Places / Stronger Communities	Build community cohesion through increasing safety
Provision of uniformed street wardens in key parts of town centre	Thriving Places / Stronger Communities	Build community cohesion through increasing safety
Safeguarding and redevelopment of Wisbech corn exchange for community use	Thriving Places/Stronger Communities	Redevelopment of Community space and key regeneration site
Leisure centre enhancement projects	Thriving Places/Stronger Communities	

PROPOSED INTERVENTION	ALIGNMENT AGAINST FUNDING OBJECTIVES	NOTES
Castle visitor centre café	Thriving Places	
Safeguarding and development of key sites in the Town Centre	Thriving Places	
General business grant	Taking Back Control/Thriving Places	Business grant to support training and relayed activities
General town centre public realm improvements	Thriving Places	
Riverside improvements	Thriving Places	
NBIU scheme (small industrial units supported by revenue to deliver apprenticeships)	Taking Back Control	Skill focused intervention

Regeneration Plan Outcomes

- 5.29 The proposed interventions are expected to give rise to a range of positive outcomes. These are outlined in Table 6.

Table 5 Spending Outcomes

PROPOSED INTERVENTION	LONG TERM OUTCOMES FOR WISBECH
Provision of CCTV in key parts of town centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved perception of safety, supporting increased footfall and confidence in town centre use. Greater sense of security for residents, particularly vulnerable groups. Attracts businesses and visitors by creating a safer environment, supporting evening economy.
Provision of uniformed street wardens in key parts of town centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced place management and crime deterrence, as well as providing reassurance for residents and building confidence in the local area. Improved business outcomes by reducing antisocial behaviour and encouraging longer dwell time in the town centre.
Safeguarding and redevelopment of Wisbech corn exchange for community use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of historic asset will engender pride in place and improve perceptions of place as the Corn Exchange as a highly visible and prominent location on the River Nene. Potential to repurpose for community use by civic, youth, cultural and charitable organisations will foster inclusion and participation, creating opportunities for social enterprises and events-based economy, supporting jobs and skills.
Leisure centre enhancement projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements to facilities will encourage users to engage in physical activity, tackling health inequalities. Improved access to sport and wellbeing activities improves the range of activities for young people and families in the area, retaining activity and spend in the area.
Castle visitor centre café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in Wisbech Castle will improve the asset for use by visitors and the local community, increasing pride in place as one of the town's most prominent attractions. This should also increase local spend and act as a gathering place for the community.
Safeguarding and development of key sites in the Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of new commercial space in currently derelict site on the high street. Overcome negative perceptions associated with a derelict building in primary shopping area and introducing a new activity onto the high street, supporting employment and spend.
General business grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General business grant will support business start-ups and SME growth in the area by providing access to funding with broader parameters than commercial lenders.
General town centre public realm improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancements to the town centre environment will provide improvements to the streetscape, offering more usable, welcoming and attractive spaces for daily use and events. This should support dwell time and local retail and hospitality.
Riverside improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the riverside area as an attractive and welcoming part of the town centre – improving the connection between the central shopping area and the amenity offered by the waterway.
NBIU scheme (small industrial units supported by revenue to deliver apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intervention will support bringing underused land and premises back into use for new and existing businesses. This will be enhanced by the provision of revenue spend to create apprenticeship roles – improving pathways into work through apprenticeships and skills training for young people.

Intended Use of Powers

- 5.30 Table 7 shows the Neighbourhoods Board's current view on the nature of the powers that they may wish to exercise - in conjunction with Fenland District Council (or its legacy body).

Table 6 Intended Use of Powers

POWER	INTENDED USE
REGENERATION & HIGH STREET	Likely to explore relevant powers in relation to improvement of the built environment in the town centre.
HOUSING	Possible minimal use of powers to promote reuse of derelict buildings
WORK, PRODUCTIVITY & SKILLS	Powers largely irrelevant for Neighbourhood Board priorities
COHESION	Limited use, perhaps around Co-operative Placemaking
HEALTH AND WELLBEING	Limited use around design of public realm
TRANSPORT	Powers largely irrelevant for Neighbourhood Board priorities
SAFETY AND SECURITY	Likely to explore in some detail given the community focus on crime reduction
EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITY	Will consider role of Neighbourhood Board in the delivery of the Young Futures Programme to reduce the risk of crime, and where there is work ongoing in the 75 communities Neighbourhood Boards should consider what role they could play as part of that

6. Alignment with other Programmes and Investments

Planned Investments

6.1 There are a range of recently delivered schemes and planned investments proceeding in Wisbech that the Regeneration Plan will complement and enhance.

6.2 Recent investments include:

- Recently reopened Castle attraction in the heart of the town
- Recently renovated Museum (2022)
- Recently redeveloped Market Place (opened June 2022)

6.3 Investments underway include:

- 24 High Street
- Wisbech Park
- National Lottery Heritage Fund high street improvement project
- Nene Waterfront redevelopment

24 HIGH STREET

6.4 Fenland District Council has procured a construction company to develop the empty site at 24 High Street that has stood empty as a 'missing tooth' in the High Street for more than 40 years.

6.5 The new building will consist of a small ground floor shop unit, and 7 flats over three stories above. The building has been designed to complement the historic High Street. The original completion date was October 2024, with that now more likely to be March 2025, due to difficulties encountered during the build.

6.6 Funding for this project is predominantly from Fenland DC, National Lottery Heritage Fund, with CPCA contributing £250k from a housing fund as the flats will be rented as affordable units.

WISBECH PARK

6.7 The proposals for Wisbech park are for an outdoor electricity supply which will facilitate/generate additional use of Wisbech Park. The electricity supply will support the organisation of leisure, recreation, sports and other community activities (such as targeted youth work and health and wellbeing-related activity); the annual Armed Forces Day event and the annual WisBEACH Rock Festival (delivered by Wisbech Town Council). This will support community cohesion and integration and a "sense of place" for local people.

6.8 The provision of an electricity supply would prevent the need to use generators (which are costly to hire and run, use fossil fuel, are noisy and produce fumes and odour).

6.9 As the owner of Wisbech Park, Fenland District Council (FDC) would undertake the procurement exercise on behalf of Wisbech Town Council. Although the proposed electricity supply would be the responsibility of Wisbech Town Council, which would be its primary user, the council will make it available to local community groups and bodies to support activities and events delivered in the park.

6.10 The financial requirement for this investment c. £25,000. Funding will be relocated from the Wisbech Shop Watch Radio Scheme underspent following the cancellation of the scheme.

WISBECH HIGH STREET IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

- 6.11 National Lottery Heritage Fund supported Wisbech High Street improvement project, awarding a £1.9m grant to support the restoration of several buildings on the High Street, bring new uses back into empty properties and transform the derelict sites at number 11-12 and 24.
- 6.12 Eligible works under the grant conditions included repairs to roofs, chimneys, leadwork, downpipes, gutters, parapets, stonework, brickwork and repointing. The project also supported traditional repair of windows, doors and external joinery, including historic shopfronts, with all repairs undertaken using traditional materials replicating original patterns and details. The buildings were selected having been identified previously as High Priority.
- 6.13 Alongside the High Street building improvements, a series of heritage-related activities for local community learning and participation were organised. The project delivered activities agreed under the Activity Plan over 4 years. These included traditional construction skills training, archaeological investigation, photography, exhibitions and open days as well as close involvement with community groups and schools to promote heritage learning.

NENE WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT

- 6.14 A major residential development is due to commence ground works in Spring 2026 at Nene Parade. The first phase of the scheme, originally promoted by Fenland Future Ltd, a subsidiary of the council, will provide a care home up to 70 apartments with amenity space and communal space.
- 6.15 The development will provide safe, comfortable, and independent living for older residents while offering access to tailored care and support services, to meet a growing need for adaptable accommodation within Wisbech, ensuring that residents can maintain their independence in a secure and supportive environment. It will also support the creation of 25 local jobs.
- 6.16 A planning application has been submitted in June 2025 with a decision expected in autumn 2025. The proposals would make use of existing brownfield land, contributing to the regeneration and rejuvenation of the Nene waterfront.

Masterplans for Wisbech

WISBECH MASTERPLAN 2022

- 6.17 The Wisbech Masterplan sets out the long-term spatial vision for Wisbech that responds to local needs, builds upon the town's core strengths, and positions it for investment and as a visitor destination.
- 6.18 It sets out key ambitions for to drive change in the town through:
- Improved connectivity and pedestrian links
 - Enhancement of key streets and public realm
 - Extending the town centre to Nene waterfront
 - Celebration of historical assets of Wisbech
 - Making Wisbech an attractive visitor destination
 - Creation of new community and civic facilities
 - New leisure, entertainment and hospitality venues
 - A range of new quality housing for diverse needs
- 6.19 The masterplan covers an area of approximately 40 hectares, focusing on the core town centre, and seeks to address challenges such as low wages, housing issues, and a deteriorating retail and cultural offer. Key objectives include renewed town centre focus, improved connectivity, street greening & public realm, enhancement, reconnecting to the waterfront, celebrating heritage assets, new community services, innovation & educational facilities & new housing in the centre.

- 6.20 The document sets out a vision for the future of Wisbech which includes the provision of a safe and welcoming environment to attract all sectors and provide opportunities that can be delivered in a relatively short timescale in order to satisfy the demand, both current and anticipated. The Masterplan identifies a way in which the town centre will be attractive to business owners looking to expand or locate in the area and provide the opportunities for leisure operators to bring in additional investment to boost the town.

GROWING FENLAND: WISBECH MARKET TOWN

- 6.21 The Growing Fenland: Wisbech Market Town report is a response to CPCA's plans for Market Town Masterplans. These are being brought forward across the district. The report brings forward a set of strategy proposals for the whole district, which will help tackle challenges around health and education. The role that Wisbech plays in contributing to these is recognised, with Wisbech's educational deprivation being highlighted as a big challenge, as well as Health outcomes in Wisbech.
- 6.22 This Plan is based on master-planning work completed for the town of Wisbech and creates credibly linkages between the projects selected and ongoing, recently completed, and work planned to commence imminently within the town centre. The Plan links the recently reopened Castle attraction in the heart of the town and the recently renovated Museum (2022), with the recently redeveloped Market Place (opened June 2022), the ongoing National Lottery Heritage Fund supported Wisbech High Street improvement project (due to complete in March 2023, value £1.23m), through to Nene Waterfront where a major mixed-use development is due to commence ground works shortly.

Relevant Strategy and Policy

National Strategy and Policy

PLAN FOR CHANGE

- 6.23 Published at the end of 2024, the Government's Plan for Change sets out the overarching vision of "national renewal" that the Government aims to deliver on during this Parliament. It outlines key national missions to set the direction of change for the next decade, reflecting five overarching priorities:
1. Kickstart economic growth
 2. Build an NHS fit for the future
 3. Safer streets
 4. Break down the barriers to opportunity
 5. Make Britain a clean energy superpower
- 6.24 The Government commits to providing long-term policy certainty and economic stability that will ensure a resilient economy built on secure borders and national security. Hence, economic growth is the priority mission of the Government. To achieve that, the Plan for Change sets out key milestones to progress during this Government's tenure and deliver on the five strategic objectives:
- Raise living standards in every part of the United Kingdom and deliver the highest sustained growth in the G7.
 - Build 1.5 million homes in England and fast-track planning decisions on at least 150 major economic infrastructure projects.
 - End hospital backlogs to meet the NHS standard of 92% of patients in England waiting no longer than 18 weeks for treatment.
 - Employ 13,000 additional officers, police and community support officers and special constables in neighbourhood roles in England and Wales.

- Give children the best start in life and aim to achieve a record 75% of five-year olds in England ready to learn when they start school.
 - Secure home-grown energy, protecting billpayers, and putting the country on track to at least 95% clean power by 2030, while accelerating the UK to net zero agenda.
- 6.25 To ensure these objectives are met, the Government is increasing investment and reforming the economy to prioritise stability and prosperity across the UK. Higher public and private investment are expected to support infrastructure delivery, regional growth, trade, innovation and net zero to create new economic opportunities. The devolution of powers from Whitehall to local authorities and regions is seen as key to achieving that by giving more power to local decision makers.

INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

- 6.26 The Industrial Strategy Green Paper, published in November 2024, sets out the Government's 20-year plan to deliver economic growth for the UK, building on the country's unique strengths and untapped potential – which would enable further development and growth of world-leading sectors.
- 6.27 The Strategy focuses on tackling barriers to growth in the highest potential growth-driving sectors and places, creating the right conditions for increased investment, high-quality jobs and ensuring tangible impact in communities across the UK. Its goal is to capture a greater share of internationally mobile investment in strategic sectors and spur domestic businesses to boost their investment and scale up their growth, seen as an essential step in achieving, sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth.
- 6.28 The Industrial Strategy identified eight growth-driving sectors that offer the highest growth opportunities for the economics and businesses: Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy Industries, Creative Industries, Defence, Digital and Technologies, Financial Services, Life Sciences, and Professional and Business Services. Investment and development in these sectors will be prioritised and barriers to growth will be addressed.
- 6.29 A core objective of the Industrial Strategy is unleashing the full potential of cities and regions. Efforts will be concentrated on places with the greatest potential for our growth sectors: city regions, high-potential clusters, and strategic industrial sites. Devolution and establishing Mayoral Combined Authorities is seen as a key to ensuring a successful delivery. Existing partnership with devolved governments will also support the considerable sectoral strengths of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Regional and Subregional Strategy and Policy

CAMBRIDGE AND PETERBOROUGH STRATEGIC SPATIAL FRAMEWORK (NON-STATUTORY)

- 6.30 The Strategic Spatial Framework Phase One defines the immediate priorities for sustainable growth and includes actions they will take to support the sustainable delivery of over 100,000 quality new homes and more than 90,000 additional jobs.
- 6.31 The Combined Authority supports the implementation of the local plans to help meet the Frameworks ambitions. Fenlands Local Plan as an example, seeks to contribute 11,000 homes and 7,200 jobs during the plan period to 2031, with Wisbech being a major contributor (3,350). Through sustainable growth the plan seeks to address current health inequalities, community deprivation, lack of affordable housing, low skills, and educational attainment.

CPCA INDEPENDENT ECONOMIC REVIEW

- 6.32 The Review sets out 14 recommendations to drawn out the actions which, if taken, can secure a prosperous future for the area. The recommendations cover wider economic ambitions and placemaking ambitions consistent with the Wisbech ambition.

- 6.33 Fenland has been selected by Arts Council England as a Priority Place. Joint work between Fenland Council, Arts Council and a local strategic creative group is anticipated to raise the profile of creative and cultural assets in Wisbech in 2023 and 2024 as part of a joint Shared Prosperity Fund and Arts Council grant.

Local Strategy and Policy

FENLAND DRAFT LOCAL PLAN 2021-2040, 2022

- 6.34 Fenland District Council is in the process of updating its Local Plan (2014). A draft version of the new Local Plan was published in 2022. The Draft Plan sets out the emerging policies and proposals for growth and regeneration, and the proposed sites to deliver the growth. It sets out the vision for the district to 2040:

“By 2040 all settlements, big and small, will be attractive and prosperous places to live, set within our unique and protected Fens landscape. They will benefit from economic growth and inward investment. Between 2021 and 2040, Fenland will grow by approximately 10,500 new homes and 18,000 new jobs, meeting the needs of all communities. Growth will be focussed on our four market towns, but villages will not be left behind, with appropriate levels of development being permitted to ensure they remain thriving local communities. The district will attract new business, jobs and investment, whilst also supporting existing businesses and encouraging them to expand, helping to boost productivity. Rural communities and the rural economy will be supported. Growth in homes and jobs will be closely linked, with new infrastructure such as schools, roads, health facilities and open space provision planned and provided at the same time as the new buildings. The natural and historic environments, and their assets, will be conserved and enhanced, and high-quality agricultural land will be protected, with new development taking into account the surroundings of the area in which it would be situated. Through growth, current issues such as health inequalities, community deprivation, infrastructure deficit and low skills, will be tackled and addressed. Growth will attract investment, businesses and new residents to the district.”

- 6.35 Part B of the draft Local Plan outlines the spatial strategy for the district to:
- Deliver 10,525 new homes by 2040.
 - Create 18,000 jobs, through the allocation of 215 hectares of employment land between 2021 and 2040.
 - Promote sustainable development, regeneration, and improved quality of life.
 - Support economic growth and attract investment.
 - Ensure compliance with national policies, including Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 6.36 As the district’s largest population centre in Fenlands, Wisbech is key to achieving these goals and delivering on the vision. Policy LP3 notes that employment growth strategy will be principally focused on the market towns, including Wisbech and includes three Established Employment Areas which are critical to the local economy.
- 6.37 Policies LP35: Regeneration of Wisbech enables the implementation of development which contributes to the regeneration of Wisbech by:
- Allocating strategic sites for regeneration, particularly the Nene Waterfront area, which is identified as a key location for mixed-use development including housing, employment, and leisure.
 - Encouraging investment in infrastructure, public spaces, and transport links to improve connectivity and attractiveness.

- Supporting residential and commercial development that aligns with the town’s heritage and urban character.
- Promoting environmental enhancements, such as flood resilience and biodiversity improvements, especially in areas prone to flooding.
- Aligning with the Wisbech Masterplan, which outlines long-term ambitions for economic growth, town centre revitalisation, and improved quality of life.

FENLAND ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGIC REFRESH 2025-2028, 2024

6.38 The Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2025–2028 builds upon Fenland District Council’s long-term Economic Development Strategy (2012–2031) and follows the first refresh (2022–2025). It aims to ensure that the Council continues to support and enable economic growth across the district, adapting to changing national and global contexts such as Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and a new UK government.

6.39 The strategy is structured around five core themes from the original Economic Development Strategy:

- Enterprise: Supporting start-ups and entrepreneurship, including access to grants and business advice.
- Workforce Development: Improving skills, raising aspirations, and aligning education with employer needs.
- Business Retention & Growth: Helping existing businesses expand and remain competitive.
- Inward Investment: Attracting new businesses to Fenland, especially in key sectors like food production, engineering, and renewables.

6.40 The Refresh also responds to external challenges and opportunities. It acknowledges the impact of Brexit on trade, the shift toward service-based exports, and the need for sustainable economic strategies. Therefore, it reflects five key action areas for the council:

1. Growing businesses: Through engagement with existing local businesses the Council will target the support that is available to help enable each business to grow and assist them to overcome any barriers to growth or to develop opportunities. This will include ensuring that businesses are aware of and supported in applying for any grant funding support for which they are eligible.
2. More business start-ups: Help ensure that the support is in place to help enable local people to start a business and to stay in business including where possible the availability of grant funding.
3. Attract new businesses: Help attract new businesses into the district from supermarkets and fast-food brands to businesses seeking a first UK base. The Council will proactively engage with targeted new business opportunities to ascertain each businesses plans and location requirements.
4. Available workforce: Help ensure both the supply of and skills of the available workforce are appropriate for the Fenland marketplace, as well as offering young people improved aspirations, increased wage levels and alternative career paths. Represent businesses skills requirements into the development of skills support funding and development of relevant courses.
5. Available serviced land and premises: Acquiring technical and specialist support to bring forward employment sites and premises to include infrastructure, highway, and market/commercial assessments. To bring together these and other similar requirements into an “Commercial Investment Land and Property Database” for Fenland.

LOCAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY STRATEGY (LERS), 2021

6.41 The LERS aims to be a leading contributor both to the UK's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and to its future global success. The recovery phases and objectives are set out as follows:

1. Response (2021) – helping people and businesses manage the impact of the pandemic
2. Recovery and Rebound (2021-2023) – reopening of the economy
3. Renewal and Future Growth (2023 onwards):
 - Help people at risk of unemployment by accelerating retraining and upskilling
 - Build back faster by accelerating start-ups, scale ups and set ups
 - Build back better and greener by accelerating high tech jobs and cluster growth, focussing on green, digital, and net zero technologies.

7. Match Funding and Leveraged Investment

- 7.1 The Plan for Neighbourhoods will help the Neighbourhoods Board in bidding for further match funding from several providers. External funders often offer funding out with the condition of match funding being available to enhance the investments in to the town. Plan for Neighbourhoods funding will act as this match allowing the board to leverage even more investment into the town, over and above the £20,000,000 already committed.
- 7.2 Examples of funders and other partners that we would look to engage with to assist in delivering projects in line with our key themes are:
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
 - National Lottery grants
 - Historic England
 - Arts Council England
 - Sport England
 - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority
 - Cambridgeshire County Council
 - Homes England
 - Infrastructure partners
 - Anglian Water / UKPN / Gas / Fibre optic service suppliers
 - Larger local and regional businesses and employers such as Nestle and Purina
 - Cambridgeshire Constabulary
 - Police & Crime Commissioner
 - National Highways

8. Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The Neighbourhood Board

- 8.1 Engagement with the local community begins with the membership of the Neighbourhood Board itself. The Board is made up of several key partners across Wisbech, Fenland and the Wider Cambridgeshire area. With a focus on local knowledge and experience at the heart of the Board, the Board is made up of a private sector Chair, local political leaders, local community leaders and local business leaders. The Board is distinct from the local authority, and any district council officers attending meetings are not afforded voting rights.
- 8.2 The Town Board's vision is underpinned by an extensive and ongoing programme of consultation and engagement, carried out over the last 8 years, and is reinforced by a strong commitment to further consultation as part of the Plan for Neighbourhoods.
- 8.3 Throughout this period, opinion has been sought directly from local people (for example, the comprehensive I Love Wisbech and Wisbech 2020 consultation programmes), as well as from expert advisers in regeneration and placemaking (for example, the High Streets Task Force, the Growing Fenland Wisbech Masterplan and an Independent Economic Commission).

Public Engagement

- 8.4 The following consultation programmes have focussed on identifying broad challenges and opportunities for the town, the Regeneration Plan and Board have been based upon a large amount of direct consultation with the wider public:

WISBECH REGENERATION PLAN ONLINE SURVEY 2025

- This survey and the results can be found here:
- https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/22678/Wisbech-Regeneration-Plan-Survey-Report/pdf/Wisbech_Regeneration_Plan_Survey_Report.pdf?m=1763727474257
- The Wisbech Regeneration Plan Online Survey was undertaken online from the 3rd to the 19th of November in 2025.
- The survey focussed on ensuring that the draft regeneration plan continued to meet the requirements, thoughts and objectives of the town. It also sought to provide confidence to the board that the projects shortlisted in the plan had public support.
- The findings of the report were clear. The feedback shows that regeneration cannot be purely aesthetic or infrastructure led. Success depends on a holistic approach that prioritises:
- Safety and enforcement as the foundations for all other improvements,
- Community engagement and trust-building are important to the public, ensuring transparency and visible progress.
- Balanced investment in heritage, public spaces, and encouraging commerce is needed to create a vibrant, inclusive town centre

WISBECH REGENERATION PLAN POP UP CONSULTATION EVENTS 2025

- Across two dates in November, consultations regarding the draft plan were held at the Hudson Leisure Centre in Wisbech. These events were promoted through the Town Board, partner organisations and online.
- Across the two dates a total of 16 interactions with attendees from the public were held.
- The findings reflected the evidence outlined later within this report and within the Wisbech Regeneration Plan Online Survey. The key themes that almost all discussions centred around were the feeling of safety in the town, lack of presence of enforcement against anti social behaviour, cleanliness and public realm issues – particularly lighting and CCTV coverage and the ongoing protection of heritage across the town.
- All of the interactions were positive and focussed on the potential of the town.
- There was a strong feeling that the Town Board have understood the needs of the town and addresses *some* of them accordingly given the funding envelope within the Regeneration Plan. As a result of this there was a strong support for the vision statement and the plan as a whole.
- It was clear from discussions with the public that there is a fatigue around funding investments and consultations. Historically consultations have been regular, but investment has not.
- The public also expressed trust in the Town Board providing all decision making and information is transparent and accessible.

THOMAS CLARKSON ACADEMY STUDENT COUNCIL SESSIONS 2025

- A session was held at the Thomas Clarkson Academy to discuss Wisbech with the students, focussing on what they felt was good, bad and missing from the town.
- It was clear Wisbech Town was appreciated for its shops, food outlets, community events, and sports facilities. Common mentions included Tesco, Greggs, McDonalds, The Hudson Leisure Centre pool, and the parks. Heritage and architecture are also valued, though it was noted that there are very limited community/third spaces.
- Major concerns include cleanliness (litter, rubbish), crime and safety (drugs, gangs, knife crime), and lack of entertainment options. Infrastructure issues like walking routes, poor lighting, and absence of a train station are highlighted. The students also noted wider issues with the town's appearance and limited variety of shops.
- Young people predominantly want to see more safety measures (police presence, CCTV, lighting), diverse retail options (Primark, H&M), and leisure facilities (bowling alley, arcades, skate parks, youth clubs). They would like better maintenance (street cleaning, pothole repairs). A key takeaway from the session was the request for a dedicated community space and for events and groups in the town, outside of the leisure centre this does not currently exist within the town.
- Future project specific sessions are also planned to include the views of young people in project development.

I LOVE WISBECH

- https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/22531/I-Love-Wisbech-report-2019/pdf/I_Love_Wisbech_consultation_findings_2019.pdf?m=1759141214273

- A comprehensive consultation exercise undertaken in 2019 by Hunts Forum for Cambridgeshire County Council Business Intelligence Service, with the aim of conducting a community conversation with those who live, work and invest in the town of Wisbech.
- Consultation included in-person surveys in the town centre, online surveys and a series of community workshops. Consultation themes were broad, asking respondents what they love about Wisbech, how they would make it better, and what they thought could be done. This was a partnership project, including many community organisations, such as Care Network Cambridgeshire, Blackfield Creatives CIC, the Ferry Project and the Rosminin Centre.
- Many responses focussed on tackling antisocial behaviour and improving the attractiveness of the Town Centre.

WISBECH 2020

- <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/wisbech2020vision>
- An online survey carried out in Autumn 2016, this consultation asked residents broad questions about how they feel about Wisbech, and the proposed vision for 2020. Heritage, countryside and open spaces were seen as the town's main assets, whilst transport links, run-down buildings and policing were regularly identified as key challenges. The responses to the broad consultation questions show a very strong alignment with the Pride in Place menu of Themes and Interventions.

8.5 More specific consultation programmes have focussed on specific themes, areas or projects, including Wisbech Park Community Hub, the creativity and culture strategy, accessibility, development in East Wisbech

WISBECH PARK COMMUNITY HUB

- Carried out in Summer 2021, this consultation survey asked residents about what facilities they felt would most improve Wisbech Park. The most commonly suggested facilities included security measures such as CCTV and lighting, more inclusive facilities (e.g. changing places, baby changing), equipment to improve the active opportunities for young people, community garden/allotments, and tourist/heritage information.

BROAD HORIZONS – A CREATIVITY AND CULTURE STRATEGY FOR FENLAND

- An online consultation from Spring 2021, Broad Horizons focussed on the themes of Connections, Communication, Empowerment and Inspiration to respond to the changing population and improve community cohesion. Whilst there was some scepticism about deliverability at the time of the consultation, there was also clear support for a renewed focus on cultural activities in the town.

WISBECH ACCESS STRATEGY

- Carried out in Winter 2017, this consultation sought feedback on the draft Access Strategy. There was general acceptance and agreement of the need for transport improvements, although there was a clear lack of support for any road infrastructure that might restrict a potential future rail link to the town.

EAST WISBECH DEVELOPMENT

- An extended consultation exercise completing in Spring 2018, including surveys and visioning workshops. This included both broad questions about how Wisbech could be improved, as well as specific points about a proposed new residential development. Preferred improvements to the town included green infrastructure and open space for biodiversity, formal and informal recreation, traffic management to promote people priority, facilities for young people, and better street lighting to improve safety.

Expert Input

- 8.6 In addition to the open public engagement exercises summarised above, Wisbech has also undertaken a number of consultations with place-based regeneration specialists, each of which has drawn in stakeholders from the community to frame the proposals:

HIGH STREETS TASK FORCE

- [https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/22530/High-Street-Task-Force-Wisbech/pdf/High Streets Task Force report 2023.pdf?m=1759139848303](https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/22530/High-Street-Task-Force-Wisbech/pdf/High%20Streets%20Task%20Force%20report%202023.pdf?m=1759139848303)
- A specialist consultation exercise in Spring 2023, run by the High Streets Task Force, and including a series of visits, stakeholder workshops and reports. The exercise identified high architectural merit, high quality market square and good parking provision as key strengths, hindered by image problems that prevent the town from attracting potential visitors. A branding and communications strategy, and a town marshal system to combat anti-social behaviour were key recommendations.

GROWING FENLAND – WISBECH TOWN MASTERPLAN

- https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/22532/Wisbech-Growing-Fenland-report/pdf/Wisbech_Growing_Fenland_report.pdf?m=1759141711890
- A strategic consultation-based masterplan by regeneration specialists Metro Dynamics, developed between 2018 and 2020, exploring the future of Wisbech. The masterplan identified the wealth of heritage assets, strong outdoor market and full calendar of cultural events and community organisations. It recommended interventions to address the lack of evening/nighttime economy, poor health and education outcomes, and the poor transport links to regional employment centres. Specific recommendations included improving the attractiveness of gateway sites, repair of derelict buildings, creating indoor public space such as a covered market, consolidating a strong cultural quarter around the Wisbech Castle, improving policing in the town centre, and improved physical wayfinding and online visibility of the town's attractions.

- 8.7 Alongside the completed consultation exercises above, ongoing active engagement includes:

- Fenland Community Safety Partnership
- Cinnamon Network

Other Insights

- 8.8 The Regeneration Plan emphasis and focus has also been informed by input from MHCLG. Insights from Zencity (https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/22585/Plan-for-Neighbourhoods-survey-July-2025/pdf/Plan_for_Neighbourhoods_survey_July_2025.pdf?m=1760612123600) were collected for Wisbech from the 9th of April to the 26th of May 2025. 127 respondents from Wisbech were digitally recruited through social media, mobile apps and survey panels. These insights have been included in the case for change and key messages are outlined below:

- **Satisfaction with local area:** Most respondents in Wisbech are not satisfied with their local area as a place to live (52%), think it has greatly declined in the last 12 months (45%) and expect the area to get worse to live in 2 years from now (64%).
- **Pride in local area:** Most respondents in Wisbech are not proud to live in their local area (58%), the top reasons are "the area is run down" (58%) and "safety concerns" (55%). Of those who are proud to live in the area, it is "because of the green and natural spaces here" (73%) and "because of the culture heritage and history of the local area" (46%).

- **Perceptions of local area features:** In Wisbech, residents rated all features less positively than residents across the 75 Plan for Neighbourhood towns. The biggest gaps were for 'Ease of getting around by public transportation' (-30%) and 'Availability of green and other attractive public spaces' (-29%).
- **Improving local area:** In Wisbech, the top areas residents would like to see improvements in are Tackling crime (53%) and anti-social behaviour (52%). In Wisbech, residents identified street drinking or drunken behaviour (54%) and drugs or evidence of drugs (50%) as the most pressing problems in their area.
- **Perceptions of children and young people:** In Wisbech, residents agreed with the statement 'It is easy for children to get involved in crime or join gangs in my local area' more than the average across the 75 Plan for Neighbourhood towns (+17%), but agreed with the statement 'My local area is a good place to bring up children' less (-28%).
- **Perceptions of local community:** In Wisbech, most respondents trust a few people in their local area (37%) for this question. Most respondents in Wisbech think that their area has been very left behind in comparison to the rest of the country (63%) in comparison to the rest of the country.

Ongoing Plans for Consultation

8.9 The Board is committed to undertaking ongoing consultation throughout the plan period.

- Town Wardens are tasked with recording interactions and reporting to the board on a quarterly basis. These will be a vital “ear to the ground” for the Board, regarding day-to-day happenings in the town.
- There will be individual project consultations as they come forward
- Annual general consultation is planned to be undertaken. There will be a consistent set of questions to track sentiment. This consultation will be held in person and online – staffed by council officers supporting the Town Board/ Town Wardens and Town Board members.

TOWN BOARD WEBSITE

8.10 The Town Board is underway with developing an online presence for the Town Board which is distinct and separate from Fenland District Council. This will display:

- The long-term strategy for regenerating your local area.
- The neighbourhood's vision for the future.
- A clear plan for how the Neighbourhood Board will deliver change over the next decade.
- A detailed investment and delivery plan for the first investment period.
- All relevant Town Board documentation (minutes, agendas, upcoming meetings and membership)

8.11 To maximise value for the community, it is also being developed to create a comprehensive tourism and community platform to serve residents, visitors and local businesses. This will include additional features such as:

- Business and attraction directories – each business and attraction should have its own individual page, including logo, name contact details, business information and map.
- Latest news and upcoming events - Blog-style latest news area for general community and tourism updates., categories and archive functionality, news items shareable on social media.
- Visitor information pages and social media integration – “getting here” and “directions” page with transport options.

- Accommodation listings – each listing should have a detail page for places to stay, searchable by name and location utilising map functionality, including images, contact details, links to book, and Google Maps integration.
 - A dedicated Town Board section with polling capabilities, surveys and updates – The dedicated page about the Town Board and its work will include news updates specific to the Town Board (distinct from the main news feed), ability to run polls/surveys on Town Board initiatives, Board member page, similar to business directory utilising individual pages with name, photo and information about the member.
- 8.12 This will be supported by a managed social media presence to increase community engagement, promoting local events, businesses, and attractions, and growing awareness of the Visit Wisbech website and wider tourism offer.

9. Governance

- 9.1 The Wisbech Neighbourhood Board is made up of key partners across Wisbech, Fenland and the Wider Cambridgeshire area.
- 9.2 Fenland District Council (FDC) shall act as the accountable body and FDC's governance and financial procedures will apply when developing and delivering Neighbourhood Board recommended projects and initiatives.
- 9.3 Advice, Board management and administrative support to the Board will be provided by professional Fenland District Council officers. FDC officers may also attend Board meetings, although they do not have voting rights.
- 9.4 Responsibilities of the Board:
- 1) To work together to shape and manage the investment of the Plan for Neighbourhoods funding for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government through the development of a 10-year Vision document and the development of a 4-year Investment Plan.
 - 2) To explore new ways of working to maximise the impact of resource deployment within core organisations to address the priorities for the community identified in the Vision document.
 - 3) To seek to add social value to the Wisbech Plan for Neighbourhoods project by considering wider socioeconomic, environmental and health impacts through the Vision document and the 4-year Investment Plan.
 - 4) To work together to deliver a collaborative approach towards strategic interventions which improve the long-term opportunities for the community.
 - 5) To explore and progress opportunities to deliver against the Vision for Wisbech town.
 - 6) To provide support and advice to the accountable body (Fenland District Council) in developing and managing the Vision plans in accordance with Government requirements
 - 7) To explore and maximise synergy of the Vision with other projects that are already underway or planned within the town.
 - 8) To maintain strategic oversight of the Vision document.
 - 9) To approve the 4-year Investment Plan and monitor delivery performance against that Plan.
 - 10) To ensure that the project team has sufficient resource, knowledge and capacity available to deliver the objectives of the Delivery Plan.
 - 11) To ensure the necessary liaison arrangements are in place to maximise capacity and resources across a range of potential partners within the town and regionally and nationally, and to work collaboratively to deliver the shared objectives of the Vision.
 - 12) To ensure the views of the community are represented and considered through the development of the 10-year Vision and 4-year delivery plan and communicated effectively to the local community through the development of a communications plan.
- 9.5 The Wisbech Neighbourhood Board has adopted a code of conduct setting out the expected behaviours required of Board Members, acknowledging that they each have a responsibility to represent the ambition of the Vision for Wisbech and are also agreeing to work constructively with Fenland District Council's delivery officers and partner organisations to develop and deliver the Vision and associated three-year delivery plan as stipulated by the MHCLG.
- 9.6 Full details of the Neighbourhood Board's members, roles, responsibilities and code of conduct are published on the Neighbourhood Board website: <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/> Wisbech Neighbourhood Board, including conflict of interests, registration of gifts, complaints and removal of board members.

- 9.7 Board Member Standards When acting in a Board Member capacity, members must be committed to behaving in a manner that is consistent with the Nolan principles (The Seven Principles of Public Life) to achieve best outcomes for residents and to maintain public confidence in the actions of the Board.

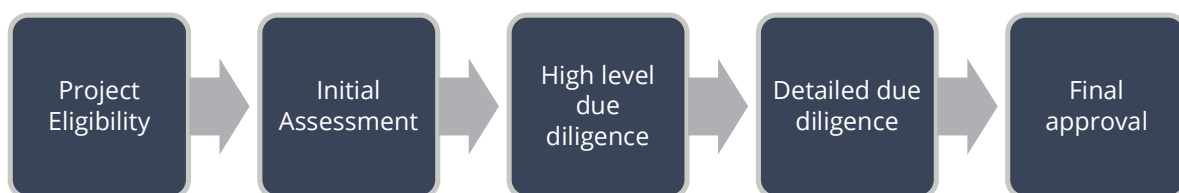
Nolan Principles

- **Selflessness:** Members of the Board should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity:** Members of the Board must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity:** Members of the Board must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability:** Members of the Board are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness:** Members of the Board should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty:** Members of the Board should be truthful.
- **Leadership:** Members of the Board should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

- 9.8 The Neighbourhood Board maintains robust control, including the need to understand the interdependencies of the different work streams of the project and areas of potential risk.

- 9.9 Decision making will follow the approach laid out in the Green Book and in guidance on producing Better Business Cases. Investment decisions will consider strategic, economic, financial, commercial and management related issues, with an emphasis on value for money and an alignment with the aims of the Town Vision. The process for approving investment decisions is outlined below:

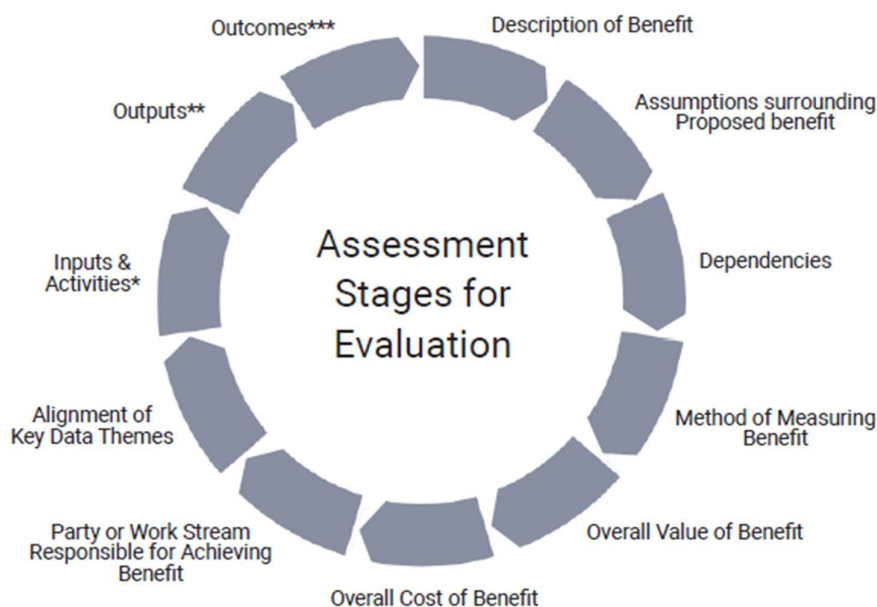
Figure 13 Process for Selecting Interventions



10. Assurance

- 10.1 Fenland District Council, as the accountable body, is experienced at running capital projects across a partnership. This is the approach that is successfully taking place for the March Future High Street Fund project. A project board of senior officers including, when necessary, the Council's Section 151 officer and legal representative, works with officers from multiple agencies (such as the County Council's Highways Major Infrastructure Team). Fenland District Council has put in place effective governance structures for the delivery of the Future High Street Fund (FHSF) project for the town of March. A similar approach would be developed for the Wisbech projects ensuring that the Neighbourhood Board remain the primary decision-making forum.
- 10.2 A Monitoring & Evaluation framework will be developed that will ensure that the MHCLG requirements for Level 1 and Level 2 evaluation are met and that there is a strategy for ensuring that lessons learned are well embedded in future policy and practice.
- 10.3 The different levels of evaluation that can take place (adapted from NESTA Standards of evidence) are set out below:
- **Level 1:** You can describe what you do and why it matters: logically, coherently and convincingly.
 - **Level 2:** You capture data that shows positive change, but you cannot confirm you caused this.
 - **Level 3:** You can demonstrate causality using a control or comparison group.
- 10.4 Counterfactual impact evaluation methods are not considered feasible given the scale and nature of the intervention and the extended time period likely for impacts to materialise.

Figure 14 Evaluation Process



- 10.5 Delivery of M&E will be led by the Programme Manager, supported by the Project Team. They will develop monitoring systems and a framework for contractors to report on progress against milestones. Monitoring data will be collated in a data tool to enable consistent tracking against milestones and targets. The localised impacts will also be evident in official statistical data, particularly from ONS, which

will be used to provide further context and demonstrate the wider impacts this development has on the town.

- 10.6 Fenland DC has the governance structures in place to monitor and evaluate this project. The council has experience in supporting and coordinating developments such as this one.