



# **THE VISION FOR KING'S LYNN 2000 - 2023**

Produced for the West Norfolk Partnership by:  
Regeneration Team  
Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

April 2004

# Golden Past...Brighter Future

## The Vision for King's Lynn

### Introduction

King's Lynn has always been a prosperous town with a strong maritime and industrial tradition. It has been a centre of international trade since the 12<sup>th</sup> century but now the town is seeing changes in its economy. It is also part of one of the fastest growing regions in the Europe, yet within the town there are marked contrasts between the prosperous and the less affluent areas and in opportunities available to its residents.

We need to close these gaps and to work together to build the future of King's Lynn.

### The Vision

The Vision for King's Lynn is that:

**King's Lynn will be an attractive, vibrant and prosperous town, where people will choose to live, work, and visit.**

The Vision will be delivered through:

**King's Lynn being the primary retail, leisure and cultural centre serving the populations of west Norfolk, north Cambridgeshire and south Lincolnshire** with the associated growth in population, income and wealth, and in the range and quality of facilities.

**King's Lynn being a strong economic centre where there is a diverse employment base built on the town's strengths in engineering, food and food related activities, and tourism** with the emphasis on the more technically advanced, higher value added activities providing higher quality, better paid and sustainable jobs.

**King's Lynn having active and empowered communities that have the capacity and ability to respond to local needs at the local level** with the emphasis on raising aspirations, confidence and motivation in the poorer and most disadvantaged communities.

Local people, the local business community and the public sector agencies, working in partnership, will concentrate on the agreed priorities through a series of short and longer term actions.

## **Develop King's Lynn as the primary retail, leisure and cultural centre for this part of the Region.**

The Priorities are to:

### Improve the range and quality of the retail product of the town

King's Lynn is the main retail centre for the residents for the Borough and is a principal centre for people living just outside West Norfolk. The town centre fulfils a leisure role with entertainment centres, bars and restaurants, and has a range of service functions. There are around 5,300 retailing jobs.

The town centre has 73,000 square metres of retail floorspace in 347 shops, which is greater than the comparable centres of Bury St Edmunds and Boston. However whilst the percentage of floorspace in comparison shopping and that occupied by multiple retailers is above the national average, King's Lynn offers limited range of choice.

Developments over the last 10 years or so have principally been in regional and sub regional centres. King's Lynn has seen little development over the same period and has seen a decline in the number of retailers.

The town centre redevelopment will provide an opportunity to strengthen the retail product. However for there to be the desired improvement in the range and quality of choice there will need to be an increase in the amount of expenditure in the town centre. This, in turn, will require an increase in the levels of disposable income and a change in the types and scale of expenditure.

Principle actions will be focussed on:

- Attracting new retailers including specialist outlets
- Retaining existing retailers
- Improving the markets and promoting them as distinctive features of King's Lynn.

### Attract more people to the town centre

King's Lynn serves a catchment population of around 200,000. Historically town centres have competed with each other by offering the same mix of shopping and facilities but at differing scales. However there have been fundamental changes to this pattern of retailing with the development of major covered shopping facilities, and edge of town and retail warehousing.

In order to attract people, particularly from outside the natural catchment, to visit a shopping centre there is a need to combine the vitality of a modern shopping centre with local distinctiveness. However for King's Lynn to expand the product it has to offer there is a need to increase the size of the local catchment, recapture the visitors that have been lost to neighbouring centres as well as attracting new visitors from further afield.

The principle actions will include:

- Promoting the town as a shopping destination.
- Developing a range of events throughout the year.
- Developing the non shopping activities in the town centre.
- Increasing the population of the town and its hinterland.

### Improve local access and parking

Approximately 65% of the trips by local residents to the town centre are by car and the majority of visitors also travel by car. The town centre currently has some 2500 off street and 450 on street public car parking spaces as well as a number of private spaces.

Whilst a thriving centre needs a good supply of attractive, convenient and safe car parking there is also a need to make it easier to reach the centre, to move around it and to facilitate the use of alternative means of travel to the private car.

The principle actions will include:

- Improving access into the Town and the Town Centre.
- Increasing the car parking capacity in the Town Centre.
- Improving the facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Improving public transport provision.

### Strengthen the town's housing, arts, cultural and recreational facilities

The town has the largest concentration and range of housing in the Borough. There are approximately 18,600 dwellings within the built up area of the town (including the Woottons). Around 75% of these dwellings are in Council Tax bands A and B compared with 59% for the Borough and 55% for Norfolk. Only 7% are in band D compared with 12% for the Borough as a whole and 17% for Norfolk. For the higher bands (bands G and H), these comprise only 0.3% of the dwellings in the town whereas it is around 1.5% for the Borough and Norfolk.

Whilst the predominance of bands A and B tends to characterise many urban areas it demonstrates the limited choice of properties. There are only 54 dwellings in the town in the top two bands and 336 in the top three bands. There is a need to broaden the number and choice of properties at the higher end of the market.

The town already hosts a number of arts and cultural events and contains a variety of entertainment and sports venues, museums and galleries. The development of the Corn Exchange has strengthened the town's role as a focus for the arts. However there is a need to strengthen and broaden the town's role as the primary centre by building on the town's heritage, identifying new recreational and cultural opportunities and developing the role of the town centre as an 'all day' centre.

Principle actions will include:

- Broadening the range and choice of housing in the Town.
- Developing the water front opportunities.

Increasing the range of non-retail and evening events and entertainment available in the town centre.  
Identifying new, niche opportunities for recreational and cultural events and activities.

### Secure and broaden the regional health and educational facilities in the town

King's Lynn has the 580 bedded District General Hospital situated on the outskirts of the town and provides a comprehensive range of specialist, acute and obstetric services. The hospital serves the population of the west part of Norfolk, as well as parts of north Cambridgeshire and south Lincolnshire.

The College of West Anglia is the principal Further Education College offering a range of vocational and non-vocational course. The College serves a wide catchment covering the western part of Norfolk and extending into Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire.

Principle actions will include:

- Securing the provision of a comprehensive range of specialist health services.
- Expanding the range and location of health facilities.
- Broadening the courses and training opportunities offered by the College.

### **Develop King's Lynn as a strong economic centre building on the town's strengths in engineering, food and food related activities and tourism.**

The Priorities are to:

#### Increase the number of full time and well paid jobs.

In 2001 there were approximately 25,000 jobs in the town (52% of the jobs in West Norfolk). Between 1998 and 2001 there was a 3% decline in the number of jobs in the town and there was also a decline in the number of full time jobs. In 1998, 66.5% of the jobs were full time and by 2001 this had fallen to 65%. Over the corresponding period the number of full time jobs in the Borough and the region has remained relatively static. This trend is likely to have continued since 2001.

24% of the jobs in the town are in declining sectors (traditional manufacturing and land based activities), which is marginally less than the figure for the Borough as a whole (25%) but greater than the regional figure of 15%. The share of employment in growth sectors (ICT, finance, life sciences and advanced engineering) is just under 5% for the town compared with 3% for the Borough and 7.6% for the region.

Gross weekly earning in King's Lynn are similar to those for the Borough and the County being in the range of £320 to £330 per week. However this is compared with a regional average of £415 per week. There has also been an increasing trend towards the relocation of the higher paid jobs away from the town.

The reliance on employment in declining sectors coupled with a trend towards part time and low paid jobs could put the town at a disadvantage in terms of its future economic performance.

The principle actions will include:

- Creating more full time jobs in the growth sectors and those sectors where the town has a strength.
- Increasing the number of business start ups and their survival rates.
- Supporting business growth and business retention.

#### Provide a skilled and adaptable workforce.

Educational standards across the age ranges in the town are below those for the Borough, the County and the Region. 27.5% of the working population in the town has poor literacy skills and 29% have poor numeracy skills. In certain wards these percentages rise as high as 36% for poor literacy skills and 42% for poor numeracy skills.

At GCSE level pupils at the town's High Schools are underachieving compared with the Borough as a whole, which in turn is underachieving when compared with Norfolk and England. 46% of pupils in King's Lynn obtained 5 or more A\* to C GCSEs in 2002 compared with 47.6% for West Norfolk, 49.7% for Norfolk and 50% for England.

The low level of qualifications continues to be reflected in the adult population. 37.5% of the working age population of King's Lynn has no accredited qualifications. This compares with 36% for the Borough, 32.4% for Norfolk and 27.8% for the East of England. The percentage of the working age population in the town that have NVQ level 3 ('A' level equivalent) qualifications is 6%, for West Norfolk as a whole it is 6.4% rising to 7.4% for Norfolk and 7.9% for the Region. At the degree/higher degree level the figures are 10.8% for King's Lynn, 12.8% for West Norfolk, 14.7% for Norfolk and 18.1% for the Region.

With the ever present issue of skills shortages, hard to fill vacancies and recruitment difficulties the low levels of qualifications and educational attainment may hinder the continued growth of existing activities and the ability of the economy to move into new areas of economic activity.

Principle actions will include:

- Improving the skills across all levels of the workforce.
- Addressing the barriers to people taking up employment and progressing.
- Enhancing the employability and work readiness of the current and future workforce.
- Raising attainment and aspirations of school leavers.

#### Safeguard the future of the food processing sector and associated industries

Food processing sector embraces companies employed in manufacture of food products and beverages, manufacture of machinery for food and fishing. There are 25

companies in the town in these sectors who between them employ around 1800 people. Within the Travel to Work area there are a further 29 companies who employ another 650 people.

In addition there are companies in other sectors, which also contribute to the importance of food sector including, packaging companies, warehousing, haulage and distribution. However it is not possible to identify through the published statistics how much of their business is directly food related.

There is an existing level of skill and expertise in these sectors and they account for 7% of the town's employment. However much of the activity is in low value added products, which are vulnerable to being moved to areas of cheaper labour. There is a need to secure new activities of higher added value and to move existing activities away from low value added products.

The principle actions will include:

Working with the industry to address key issues affecting the sector including workforce recruitment and development.

Developing a centre of excellence and innovation for the food sector taking advantage of the Town's strategic location in relation to the food research clusters in Norwich and Cambridge.

#### Secure investment in advanced engineering and the manufacturing sector.

Advanced manufacturing and engineering covers the high value activities rather than assembly work. The sector embraces a broad range of activities including precision engineering, robotics and control systems, pharmaceuticals and life sciences, specialist design and manufacture and advanced metals and chemicals.

There are 80 companies within the town in these sectors and a further 115 in the wider Travel to Work. These companies employ approximately 2850 within the town and a further 850 in the Travel to Work area.

The significant number of companies in these sectors and the presence of the necessary skills and expertise could provide the framework from which further activities could be developed.

Principle actions will include:

Working with the industry to address key issues affecting the future expansion and development of the sector.

Exploring the opportunities provided by renewable energy and alternative fuels.

#### Develop King's Lynn as a short break visitor destination focussing on the town's heritage and the area's natural environment.

Short breaks of 1 to 3 nights account for around 25% of all holiday trips taken by British residents and this is the fastest growing holiday type. Research has shown

that visitors spend almost as much during a short holiday as during a stay of 7 or more nights.

Figures for King's Lynn are not currently available but the figures for West Norfolk give an indication of the value of short break visitors to the local economy. In 1999 there were approximately 66,150 overnight visitors to West Norfolk generating around £6.5m spend. The majority of these visits were from the domestic market

King's Lynn has the potential to develop the market around its well preserved core of historic and architecturally significant building. The good rail links to Cambridge and London and the opportunity to attract in visitors visiting other parts of Norfolk and surrounding area will assist in developing this market.

However the town can portray a neutral or negative image to potential visitors and the approaches to the town centre and the centre itself can give a poor first impression. There is a lack of focus for visitors to experience the essence of the town and its historic strengths. This together with the limited high quality shopping provision and specialist shops, insufficient restaurants and the need for wider range and quality of accommodation all hinder the development of the town as an important historic visitor destination.

The principle actions will include:

- Developing a Marketing campaign that will create a positive image of King's Lynn as a quality, historic visitor destination.
- Increasing the investment in the accommodation, restaurants and other visitor orientated facilities available in the town.
- Reducing the reliance on low spend day visitors and broadening the seasonality of visits.

### **Raise aspirations, confidence and motivation in the more disadvantaged areas of King's Lynn to create active and empowered communities**

The Priorities are to:

#### Strengthening communities

A series of workshops to evaluate community regeneration with community leaders in October / November 2003 showed that distrust and fear of one group for another has a powerfully negative effect on an area. Communities of confident, outward-looking people who can embrace change and not feel threatened, on the other hand, help to create 'good places to live'. Creating relationships between different groups within and between communities are important in strengthening social capital and developing the confidence and skills necessary for community and economic participation.

To enable residents to take action to improve their areas and to strengthen their communities, the focus will be on areas of greater disadvantage.

The principle actions will include:

Building capacity, through community development workers, community leaders and volunteers

Building bridges between people of different age groups, class, nationality and race, length of residence

Establishing a forum of community leaders to share experience and make links across communities and with strategic partners.

### Raise aspirations, develop skills and grow our own talents

Raising attainment and skills is an important goal for West Norfolk, especially in the more disadvantaged urban and rural areas of King's Lynn and its economic catchment. To achieve this it is vital to broaden the horizons and raise the aspirations of young people and adults; and increase their awareness of the opportunities for a career path in King's Lynn. There is also a need to increase the awareness of local businesses of the potential offered by local school and college leavers and the workforce in general.

The principle actions will include:

Family and community learning centred raising aspirations and building confidence, establishing the building blocks for skill development and improving access to better employment opportunities.

'Growing our Own' talents and skills by raising awareness of, and match, opportunities for 'locally grown' higher level skills and strengthening basic, technical, supervisory and management skills within the workforce

Developing an 'enterprise culture'.

### Creating and sustaining community wealth

Community groups have been very resourceful and successful during the SRB programmes in developing community facilities that meet local needs, generate income to support local activities, develop local skills and in some cases create jobs. Community or social enterprise has an important role in improving areas, increasing community participation and developing skills. As well as building on this experience, there is a need to ensure that community facilities are sustainable over the long term and do not fold when short-term public funding programmes come to an end.

The principle actions will include:

Developing social enterprises, specifically to generate income, skills and/or jobs by and for local communities.

Exploring income-generating options and the development of management skills for community facilities.

Linking facilities across communities, in terms of both physical routes and shared experience.