

2

Urban Development Strategy

Introduction and Foreword

This document sets out an Urban Development Strategy for King's Lynn. It provides the basis from which the creation of a better built environment can be planned and implemented. It is intended to be living document, and as such may be amended or added to in the light of changing circumstances. It sits amongst a family of documents, which together form the Urban Renaissance Strategy for King's Lynn.
- Councillor Dobson; Leader, Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

Where now for King's Lynn?

King's Lynn today: a town at the crossroads

This is an exciting time for King's Lynn; opportunities are arising. The Nar-Ouse Millennium Community is starting to take shape. The Walks are being restored to their former glory, with other parks and public spaces to be improved. Plans for a marina, which will help transform how people think about King's Lynn, are emerging. Key sites that are derelict or under utilised are coming forward for development that will benefit the town as a whole, as well as those living in the surrounding villages. Government planners have delivered a vote of confidence in the town: the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy identifies King's Lynn as a Key Centre for Development and Change and sets out plans for continued growth, with a total of 12, 000 homes to be built in the borough by 2021. These are just the changes that are already under way, or about to get under way, but the potential is far greater. A step change in the way we plan, design, move about and use King's Lynn is required if we are serious about achieving the Vision of the town becoming "an attractive, vibrant and prosperous town, where people choose to live, work and visit"

The raw materials are in place: a well-preserved historic core that would be the envy of many towns in the world (if only the world knew about it); a waterfront location that gave King's Lynn its identity (before the town turned its back on it); a vibrant market square that can once again become the hub of an entire region (provided its people can be enticed back to the market); a location on the fringes of a growing, high-value tourist area (if the tourists realised the benefits of turning off the A47); high levels of local accessibility and car parking (which is threatening to clog up and strangle the town); several good development sites (that are currently a blight); a population ready to help shape the environment around them (if they were given the opportunity to do so); the chance to grow the town's population in an attractive, sustainable way (that is, better than it has typically been done since the 1970s).

These are some of the opportunities discussed later in the document.

This Urban Development Strategy must be a turning point. It sets the strategy for developing the town centre and its fringes over the next 20 years, learning lessons from initiatives that have proved successful elsewhere and applying them to the local context.

The Urban Development Strategy is based on a thorough analysis of how King's Lynn works today. The audit carried out during its preparation found that:

- There is a poor relationship between the high quality historic core along the waterfront and the 'functional' or 'operational' town that people visit on a daily basis;
- The quality of the buildings and public spaces in the functional town centre varies greatly;
- Apart from areas close to pubs, restaurants and theatres, the town centre becomes deserted from the early evening onwards;
- Cars – moving or parked – dominate the street scene and there is much congestion;
- Many peripheral housing areas are poorly designed and contribute to social problems;
- Young people feel that there is not enough for them to do;
- The local economy needs to broaden its base because it relies too heavily on sectors that have little growth potential.

“an attractive, vibrant and prosperous town, where people choose to live, work and visit”

The bigger picture: why urban renaissance in King's Lynn?

King's Lynn has to be the focus of growth, development and improvement in West Norfolk. As the East of England Towns and Cities Strategy points out, putting the region's existing urban centres first, making them more attractive and efficient, is a priority for several reasons. Principally:

- Market towns, regional centres and cities are, and always have been the logical places to group services of all kinds, and to locate the majority of the public transport; it cuts average journey lengths, makes it more likely that people will choose sustainable transport options, and makes services more accessible to all;
- More compact development, in and around town centres, and where possible on previously-used ('brownfield') land, helps to protect the countryside.

For these reasons, government policy now expects development to be in towns first. This is why King's Lynn has to be rediscovered, revitalised and revalued. As does solid, imaginative and responsive planning and design. The watchword for these activities has to be 'quality'. In line with the vision above, King's Lynn needs to attract people to live, work and enjoy themselves. It has to become a place of choice. It has to exploit the clear link that exists between quality of place, of design, of the built and natural environment and of economic and social well-being. The economy of the 21st century, all over Western Europe, is going to be led by lively, well-designed, efficient, well-balanced urban centres, and not necessarily large ones. The challenge is to ensure that King's Lynn is amongst them.

King's Lynn tomorrow: making the most of what it's got

The town envisaged in this document is coherent and compact in the places it needs to be. It has rediscovered its waterfront, which has become lively with people of all ages, locals and visitors alike. They are enjoying new riverside attractions: restaurants, cafes, walks and a marina. People are living in the town centre, making the most of its improved shops, services jobs and homes. More people are working in growing sectors, such as education, tourism and business services, as well as the food related and shipping industries that have always been prevalent in King's Lynn. More residents are choosing more sustainable modes of transport to get into and about town, including foot, bike and bus. Residents working to improve their housing estates have brought about marked improvements. King's Lynn is seen as a model of thoughtful, sustainable regeneration that stands the test of time.



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The overarching principles

Twenty seven overarching principles will underpin the Urban Renaissance of King's Lynn. Generated with and tested by a large range of local stakeholders (community groups, businesses, service providers, the Council, government agencies) at a series of day-long workshops, their aim is to make best practice in planning, design and management, at every level from the town wide scale to the individual building, the norm in King's Lynn.

The principles, or sustainable development objectives, are based upon a mix of national and international best practice and a thorough analysis of the issues facing the town. They form the basis for each of the five key sections in the Urban Development Strategy:

Built Environment

Development, regeneration and the operational aspects of King's Lynn must:

1. Provide opportunities for a lively waterfront;
2. Be complementary and be well linked to the historic parts of the town centre;
3. Introduce more housing to the town centre where appropriate;
4. Create destinations for visitors to the town;
5. Impress through its quality of design and construction;
6. Be founded upon high quality public space;
7. Provide a rich mix of town centre uses;
8. Diversify the town's offer in terms of shopping, leisure, housing and services;
9. Balance the need for accessibility by motor vehicles with the needs of pedestrians and a high quality walking environment;
10. Fulfil the needs and aspirations of local people of all ages.

Transport and Movement

Development, regeneration and the operational aspects of King's Lynn must:

11. Organise parking differently to make better use of space;
12. Reconfigure movement patterns and user behaviour to lessen congestion;
13. Promote opportunities for people to choose public transport over the car where practical;
14. Establish a safe and attractive network of routes for pedestrians and cyclists;
15. Minimise the impact of traffic.

Economy

Development, regeneration and the operational aspects of King's Lynn must:

16. Provide opportunities for economic diversification, including newer under-represented knowledge-based sectors;
17. Promote tourism;
18. Create the kind of environment that will attract inward investment
19. Help to put the town 'on the map' by offering the right sorts of business facilities and infrastructure;
20. Strengthen the town's identity.

Social Provision

Development, regeneration and the operational aspects of King's Lynn must:

21. Respond to the changing needs of the existing and growing population;
22. Increase access to services and opportunities for education, training, work and leisure to retain its young talent;
23. Be supported by local communities.

Viability

Development, regeneration and the operational aspects of King's Lynn must:

24. Be commercially viable;
25. Be in line with market perceptions, but also help to change them by raising the quality property market profile of King's Lynn ;
26. Provide opportunities for retail, housing, leisure, employment and other uses;
27. Have a clear plan for its delivery.

