



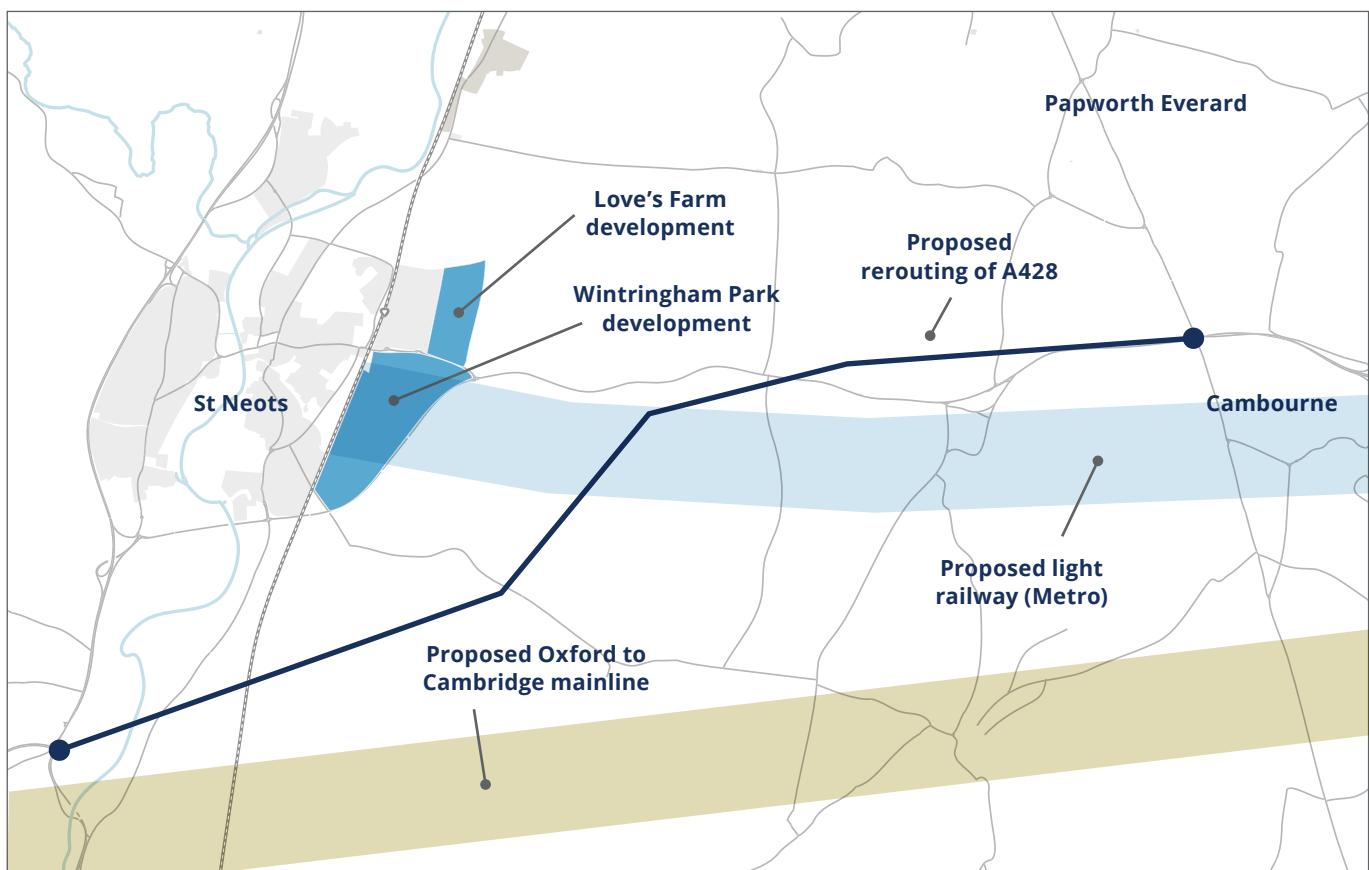
# ST NEOTS MASTERPLAN FOR GROWTH STRATEGIC BUSINESS CASE PHASE ONE



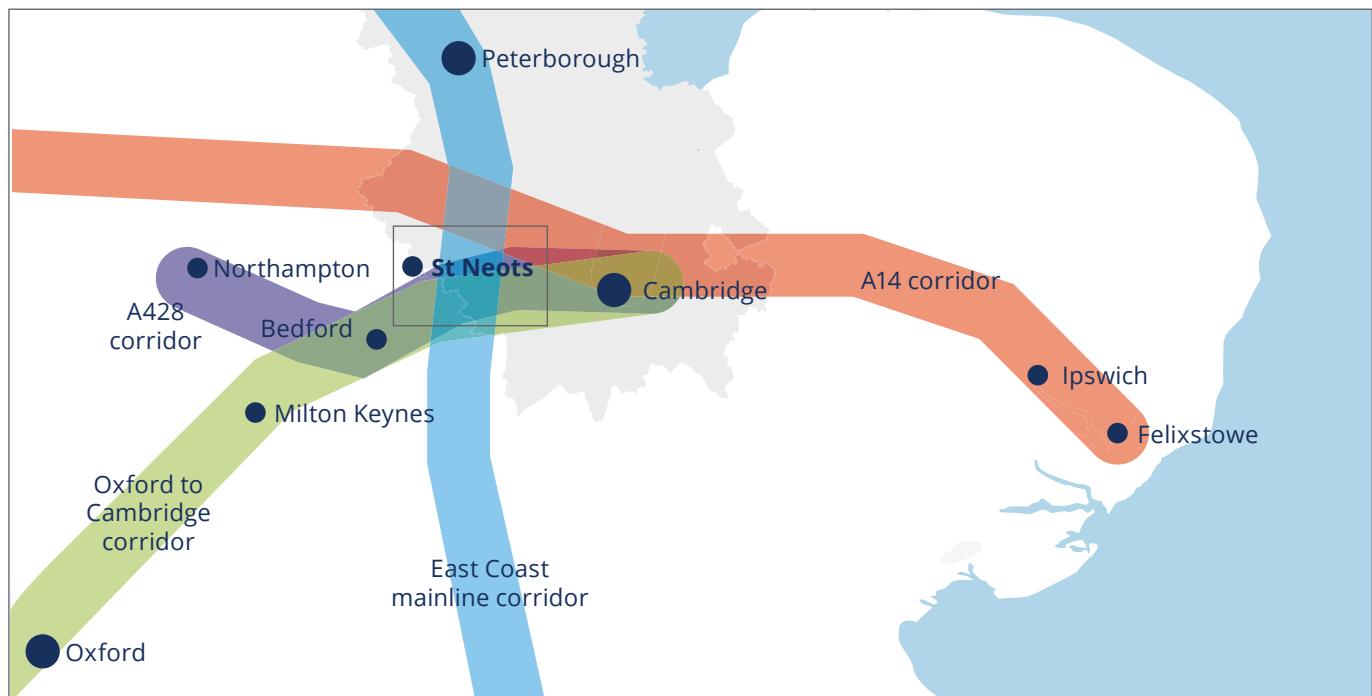
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# ST NEOTS IN CONTEXT



Proposed route for Oxford to Cambridge mainline and light railway (Metro) are for illustrative purposes only.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

St Neots will be a sub-regional manufacturing dynamo, a town that interacts with neighbouring towns and cities as part of a balanced economic system, where local people work in local jobs and enjoy a vibrant and well-connected town with a thriving centre.

This is the vision at the heart of the St Neots Masterplan for Growth. This report brings forward £5.8 million of investments and initiatives which the Steering Group believe will pave the way for accelerated growth, £4.1 million from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). This is a vital first stage in the delivery of an additional £185 million of Gross Value Added (GVA) which includes the following initiatives.

## INITIATIVES FROM PHASE ONE

- 1** For the first time, a holistic range of interventions that will rejuvenate St Neots town centre as the linchpin of the Masterplan strategy to bring more industry and local jobs to St Neots.
- 2** Plans to boost the future growth of the St Neots manufacturing and KIBS (Knowledge Intensive Business Services) sectors, including a commitment from Urban&Civic to accelerate the provision of incubator space on Wintringham Park.
- 3** A brand new central bridge alongside an improved riverside area – opening up new spaces as part of a more vibrant town centre.
- 4** St Neots becoming the first smart town in the country – bringing the digital connectivity programme from our cities to our market towns for the first time.
- 5** Establishing a new joint investment vehicle to take direct control over commercial space in St Neots where intervention is needed to unlock prime sites.
- 6** Bringing major employers like Kier Group and the St Neots Manufacturing Club together to invest in better provision of skills training and career opportunities to residents.
- 7** A comprehensive transport study, linked to the future Metro and Expressway, which will take traffic away from St Neots town centre.

Image credit: Vision of what St Neots town centre might look like in the future. With prominent vacant properties brought back into use, a vibrant Market Square, and better environment for visitors (Image created pro bono by the Neotists on behalf of the masterplan).

The Combined Authority objective is to double the GVA across the region. Such growth is unlikely in our market towns without strategic intervention and detailed planning.

The St Neots Masterplan for Growth arose from this strategy. The aim is to deliver a plan which stimulates the St Neots economy to grow faster, increasing business growth and the quality of life for residents. This will act as a template for the delivery of masterplans for other towns. When the programme has been fully rolled out these towns will be enjoying a revitalised central-area economy, have a thriving employment base with reducing daily commuting numbers, a well-established education and skills systems in tune with local employers, an advanced digital economy which supports the daily movements of the town, sufficient affordable homes to support the growing population.

The St Neots Masterplan for Growth was produced independently by Inner Circle Consulting as the result of extensive stakeholder consultation and economic analysis. It was approved by the Combined Authority board in October 2017 and a Steering Group was appointed to develop business cases for the initiatives proposed. It is firmly believed that this masterplan approach, and investment in the complete first package of interventions, will position St Neots as a strategic hub in the Cambridge/Milton Keynes/Oxford Corridor as a priority growth engine for Government over the next thirty years.

“This is a very positive example of a market town taking responsibility for its own destiny, deciding the sort of place it wants to be, and partnering to achieve it.”

*Cambridgeshire and Peterborough  
Independent Economic Review – May 2018*

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

St Neots has been the subject of many initiatives in recent years; each designed to regenerate the economy of the town centre and make the town a better place to live. A strong community spirit exists, with more than 17,000 members of the town's Facebook page, stimulated by an active cultural and amenities programme, but the town centre Initiative and the recently completed neighbourhood plan have been unable to arrest the slow decline of the town centre and the steady fall in employment opportunities in the town area.

The masterplan identified that a regeneration plan must be developed and delivered by a multi-discipline group and demands the simultaneous development and delivery of all aspects of social, economic and transportation reforms; supported by consistent and substantial funding. Above all it demands unwavering support from all those stakeholders who represent the source of the funding, the social and economic organisation of the town, and finally a strictly non-partisan approach to local politics.

To this end the Steering Group was established which brings together representatives from the town, district, county, combined authority, the local manufacturing sector, the creative industry, adult learning and skills, community development and resilience, town amenity and cultural programming, town centre development, and transport infrastructure. The Steering Group has met monthly since October and has also formed into smaller working groups assisted by specialist outside skills, for example digital technology and transport modelling, whenever appropriate.

The Steering Group terms of reference confirms the importance of solid financial business cases to support all interventions and to that end the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Commission, Chaired by Dame Kate Barker, represents a vital guide and arbiter of the proposed outcomes and their impact upon the growth of GVA.

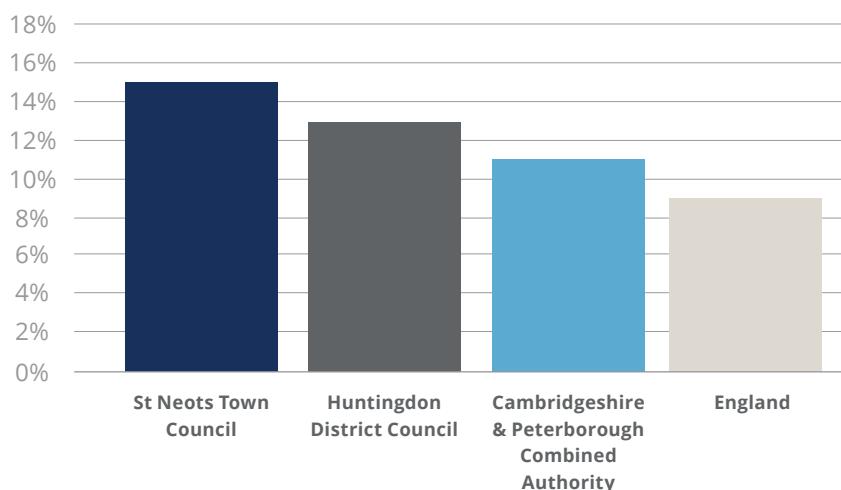
# THE ECONOMIC CASE

The development of the St Neots Masterplan for Growth assessed the economic growth potential of the town within the existing statutory framework, including the local plan and neighbourhood plan. This identified a growth potential of; 3,600 new jobs and 4,000 new homes by 2036. This has the potential to generate a £185 million increase in the Gross Value Added (GVA) generated by the town. The accelerated delivery of this growth, in line with the strategic economic strategy for the wider area, will be ensured by the masterplan approach.

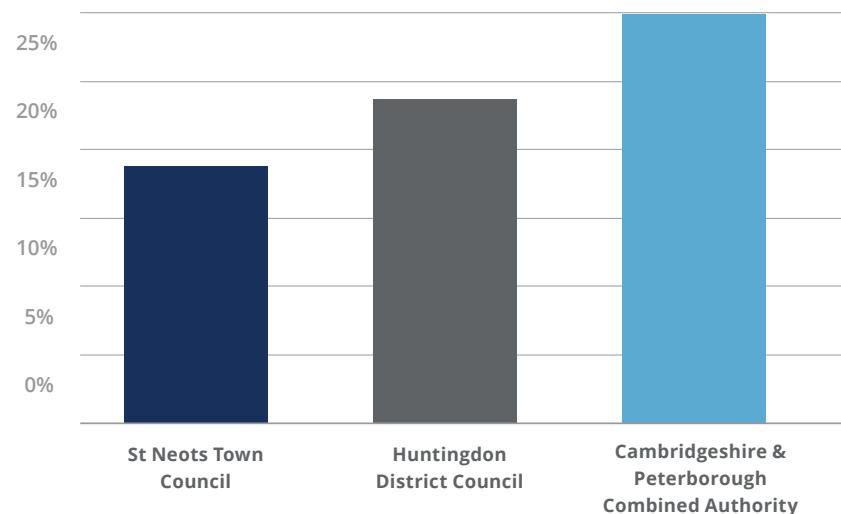
For example, the masterplan identified two specific sectors which provide growth opportunity for St Neots based upon their current footprint within the town alongside future growth plans for the wider area; manufacturing industries and KIBS.

Furthermore, the Interim Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) outlines advanced manufacturing and materials as one of the strategic growth sectors which the region should seek to prioritise in strategies, noting its high levels of productivity and its interrelationship with other high-growth sectors that are fuelled by the products of manufacturing businesses.

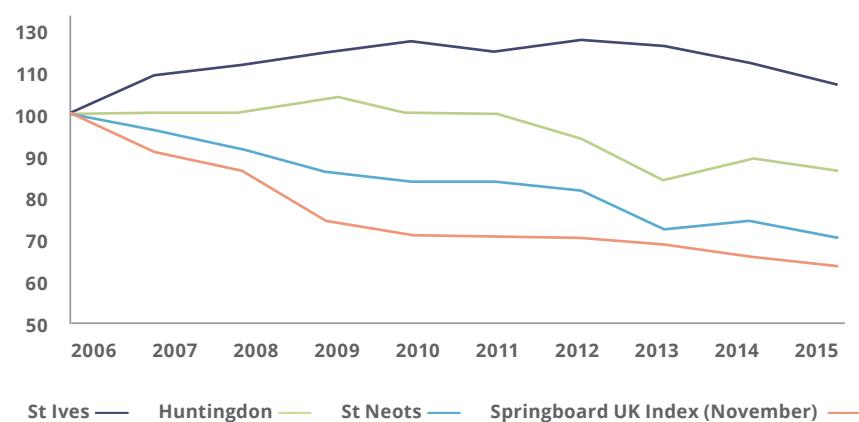
Manufacturing employment 2014<sup>1</sup>



KIBs supporting industries<sup>2</sup>



Footfall change (indexed 2006 + 100)



1 Source: ONS Crown Copyright Reserved, <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/gva-per-workforce-job-in-london-and-the-uk>

2 Source: GLA Economics, <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/gva-per-workforce-job-in-london-and-the-uk>, ONS Crown Copyright Reserved

The analysis that underpins the masterplan identifies that currently approximately 25% of the GVA generated by those that live in the town is lost because it is generated outside of the Combined Authority area. St Neots has a wealth of highly-trained professionals living in the town but working outside of the area. For example, there is a net outward migration of nearly 3,000 workers from St Neots every day, and nearly 400 people work in the high-value and high-growth KIBS industries but commute out of St Neots.

It is a central vision of this masterplan to capture that lost economic activity by creating the conditions that will enable those currently commuting to start up businesses and work in St Neots.

Thriving market towns are dependent upon vibrant town centres. These act as economic hubs in their own right but have a larger role to play in the overall economy of a town. A critical factor in the decisions taken by major businesses to relocate or grow will always be the attractiveness and vibrancy of a place. Like many towns up and down the country St Neots is finding itself competing with major cities, and the decline of the town centre is not only exemplifying but adding to this challenge.

Therefore, the masterplan is focused on not only achieving a GVA uplift of £185 million, but in doing so building the foundation for a town that is home to productive and prosperous industries in its own right which will drive even further economic gain.

This will be measured through a comprehensive basket of key indicators and associated targets. These are outlined in detail on page 20 of this report. They include:

- town centre footfall
- the national Javelin Venuescore measure for town centres
- the number of vacant retail premises
- the impact of the events programmes, and
- visitor satisfaction.

These measures around the vibrancy of the town centre are in turn contributors to the wider economic measures of the masterplan as a whole, namely the GVA of the town and the total number of jobs in the town.

# THE STRATEGIC CASE

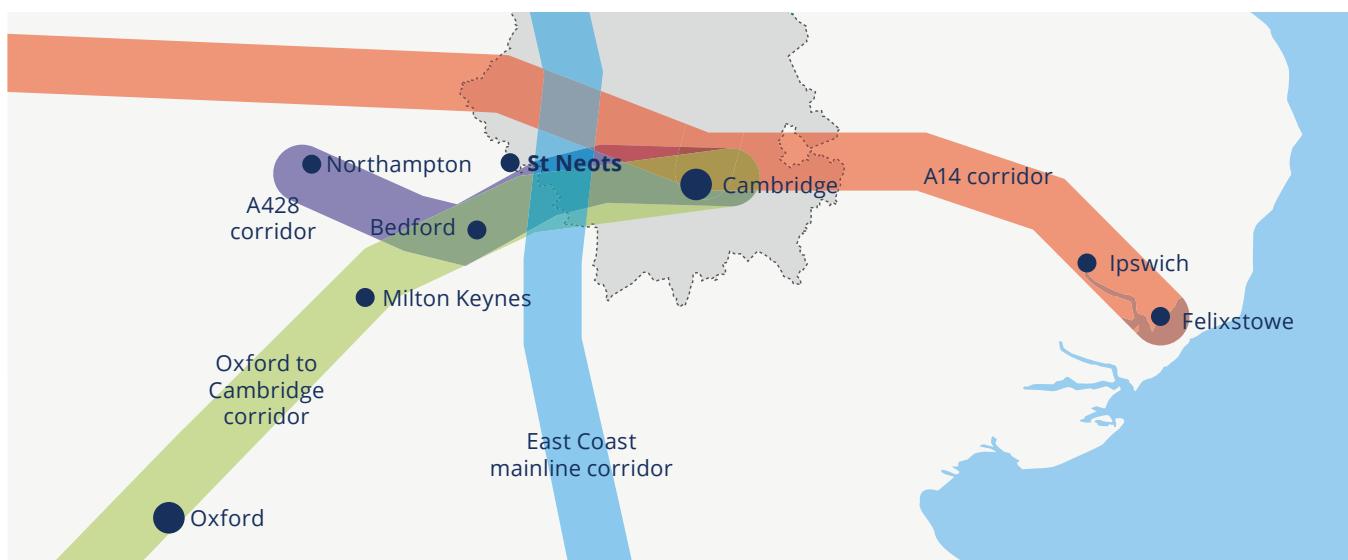
The St Neots Masterplan for Growth sits within the strategic context of the Combined Authority's development of a Local Industrial Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Local Industrial Strategy is currently being developed by the Combined Authority and will pick up recommendations made by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review which was published in interim form on 9 May and which had the following findings which are significant for St Neots.

“The consultation has revealed strong and perhaps unusually high levels of excellence, such as the work of the Combined Authority, Huntingdonshire District, and St Neots Town Council on the St Neots Masterplan for Growth. Clearly this is one example of the new system starting to work, underpinning by the principle of subsidiarity which has been key to the ‘devolution revolution.’ We also note that this is a very positive example of a market town taking responsibility for its own destiny, deciding the sort of place it wants to be, and partnering to achieve it. Other market towns should look to develop their own futures, by allowing themselves to grow, and by creating jobs for local people to ensure that economic vibrancy does not just become the preserve of larger settlements.”

Within the context of the Local Industrial Strategy the Combined Authority has already committed to the development of a Masterplan for Growth for every market town in Cambridgeshire. St Neots has benefited from being the trail blazer market town for this initiative and is therefore well placed to take a prime position within this strategic setting.

Furthermore St Neots is located within the strategically significant Cambridge/Milton Keynes/Oxford Arc which has been assessed by the National Infrastructure Commission as being “a single knowledge-intensive cluster that competes on the global stage. The Commission identifies opportunities to create well-designed, well-connected new communities and deliver one million new homes and jobs in the area by 2050” [www.nic.org.uk/our-work/growth-corridor](http://www.nic.org.uk/our-work/growth-corridor). The corridor is therefore of strategic importance for government as well as the Combined Authority and other local partners, and the progression of the St Neots masterplan within that context is a strategic opportunity.





## PHASING THE ST NEOTS MASTERPLAN

The Steering Group has initiated a number of programmes to deliver the Masterplan for Growth. By necessity these are being brought forward in a number of phases as set out below. Each of these phases are of course connected by the overarching strategic context of the masterplan itself.

It should be noted at this point that the long-listing of options, and the options appraisal process itself was carried during the exercise of developing the masterplan. This was carried out through a Place DNA Tool run by Inner Circle Consulting:

“The Place DNA Tool analyses performance across seven key areas — regeneration, planning, infrastructure, transport, housing, community and industry.

The skill of application of the findings from the Place DNA analysis is the incorporation of subjective information. This subjective information forms external influences on the activation of certain parts of the towns’ genome.

To identify the external influences and their importance we combined the Place DNA data backed analysis with the feedback that we have secured from local stakeholders, politicians, community activists and business groups. The results allow the identification and confirmation of issues and influences that are underlying the economy of the town.

Appropriate interventions are then formed from the combined analysis. Programme and policy interventions form the basis for a holistic masterplan for growth that supports and invigorates the towns unique economic place DNA genetic make-up.”

Therefore in the development of this strategic business case these options have been taken forward and been further tested and developed in their own right.

“As the pilot market town within the Combined Authority market town programme, it is pertinent to bring forward a first phase of activity that addresses the heart of these towns across our whole county – a vibrant and thriving town centre and market which act as the hub for community and business life in the town.”

Caption: Vision of redevelopment potential of priory quarter, utilising currently vacant properties as part of masterplan approach.

# PHASE ONE STRATEGIC BUSINESS CASE

## — A VIBRANT TOWN CENTRE

The Phase One Strategic Business Case brings together packages under the banner of creating a more vibrant town centre.

- Improving footfall in the town centre.
- Generating business activity in the town centre.
- St Neots smart town.

This strategic business case is being sponsored by the St Neots Masterplan Steering Group for endorsement and collective investment by Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC), and St Neots Town Council (SNTC).

This strategic business case is a collective proposition bringing together the following programmes, with the associated funding sought. Detailed outlines and implementation plans for each scheme are complete and available from the relevant delivery organisation.

### SUMMARY OF EACH PROPOSAL

## IMPROVING FOOTFALL IN THE TOWN CENTRE

### NEW TOWN BRIDGE AND THE RIVERSIDE

St Neots Riverside area has already seen a number of recent improvements, including the development and opening of the Riverside Miniature Railway (RMR) which operates as a community interest company (CiC) and is run entirely by volunteers. Since opening in 2017 it has received overwhelming support from the St Neots community, town and district councils, and many local businesses that have helped fund its development.

This has greatly increased footfall to Riverside Park and has subsequently benefited the Ambiance Café also located there. As a result, the café has re-opened the pitch and putt in the park, further adding to the leisure offer for visitors. They are also considering bringing back a rowing boat hire service on the boating lake. This illustrates the latent potential of the Riverside area.



Image of St Neots Masterplan preferred statement bridge design by Knights Architects.

The construction of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge for St Neots town centre was therefore identified as a major opportunity in the masterplan and has also been prioritised as part of the Combined Authority's Priority Transport Schemes [www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/assets/Combined-Authority/Transport-Delivery-2018-19-280318.pdf](http://www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/assets/Combined-Authority/Transport-Delivery-2018-19-280318.pdf). As part of this process the bridge has been evaluated through the Combined Authority's infrastructure funding criteria and is therefore included as part of the infrastructure programme.

The wider opportunity now is that this new bridge will be brought forward in line with the strategic context of the masterplan, as a result this scheme has been combined with another masterplan recommendation to create a more attractive riverside area. This wider scheme will now play a key role in linking the Market Square with the riverfront and will include; the new bridge, an improved riverfront paths linked to the bridge, this will also include the provision of a riverfront bandstand (linked to the project to deliver an enhanced events programme).

## ENHANCED MARKETING AND EVENTS PROGRAMME

St Neots already has a comprehensive annual community events programme; the majority of the larger scale events are organised and funded by St Neots Town Council, although several well-established local organisations also successfully contribute towards the annual programme. Across the year St Neots has more than twenty large scale, well supported events, all of which are free to attend. The largest annual events include the Armed Forces Day Gala, Dragon Boat Festival, Rowing Regatta and Christmas Lights Switch On which all attract in excess of 5,000 attendees and are well supported by local businesses. Other popular cultural events include the Museum's Living History Festival, Food and Drink Festival, Business Showcase, Summer Band Concerts, Film Festival and May Day Fete.

In August 2018 the Inland Waterways have chosen to hold their annual Festival of Water in St Neots, which will see visitors from near and far descend upon the town. The festival attracts more than 100 boaters, campers and 7,000 attendees are expected to visit St Neots over the course of the weekend.

The county council's library service is programming arts activities as part of The Library Presents programme. Two seasons, Autumn and Spring, will be hosted by St Neots Library in the town centre. These will be a mix of evening and family-friendly daytime events, which are selected by local people from a menu of high quality activity. Some events may be held in alternative St Neots locations, as the Library may not be large enough. The Library Presents is funded for four years by Arts Council England (previous programmes available, next season begins September 2018). [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/libraries-leisure-&-culture/libraries/library-news/library-presents](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/libraries-leisure-&-culture/libraries/library-news/library-presents).

As there is already a wide breadth of events taking place across the town, the masterplan project should look to build on the success of established events, opening them to a wider audience and enhancing the offer. St Neots Town Council has already started engaging with town centre stakeholders to gain opinion on which events and activities would benefit businesses in the town centre and increase footfall.

But there is currently insufficient human resource to deliver the quantum of desired activity. This project will see the two-year provision of a full-time events and promotions manager and a small additional operational budget to work alongside the town council to enhance the delivery of the

existing events programme with additional and/or bigger events and promotion campaigns. In the first instance the detailed feasibility of a Business Improvement District (BID) being established will be pursued as it is proposed that the BID mechanism could be used to provide a longer-term source of funding to support this additional activity for up to five additional years and possibly beyond.

Since the national legislation was passed in the UK 14 years ago, BIDs have become one of the most popular and sustainable place management funding tools in the country. With almost 300 BIDs operating in the UK, they have proven to be a sustainable source of funding to help places proactively manage improvements and initiatives that promote the growth and well-being of a locality. BIDs are established by means of a ballot of potential levy payers and where they have been in operation for a five-year period and gone to a second or third term ballot, support is almost always increased, clearly demonstrating the value perceived by the businesses that are paying for them.

In 2017 51% of BIDs reported other external investment income as a direct result of their BID activity. With a leverage factor of 0.31, BIDs in total increased the income into their community above their own levy income by 31%.

## TOWN CENTRE TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS

A major identifiable reason for the current under-performance of St Neots town centre is the large amount of traffic which, by necessity, uses the High Street. This has built as an issue over time as a result of St Neots' expansion and inadequate sticking plaster measures to address the pressures between vehicles and pedestrians. This has resulted in a High Street and a Market Square which are unpleasant for pedestrians and therefore at odds with creating a vibrant town centre.

Therefore the masterplan will tackle this issue strategically. A transport study will be undertaken which will examine traffic flows in and around the town centre and will report back solutions. This study will take into account the impending upgrade to the A428 as part of the Expressway between Cambridge and Oxford, as well as the two bridges on the B1041 on the approach to Little Paxton.

The potential for reopening Priory Lane for one-way traffic has been discussed and tested by the masterplan group and will be strongly considered as an option within this study. This option has been identified as a priority by the Steering Group and will therefore be considered in the first phase of the study.

## MARKET SQUARE STREET FURNITURE

These collective interventions to boost the vibrancy of the town centre can only be successful if the town centre is a visually appealing and easily accessible space. These are the final aspects which need to fall in place to increase footfall and therefore economic activity in the centre.

This needs to be done in line with existing character and heritage of St Neots – bringing a distinctiveness to the town centre that will add to appeal. Therefore the masterplan package includes provision to; provide cycle parking in and around the town centre, and to improve bus stop infrastructure.

# GENERATING BUSINESS ACTIVITY IN THE TOWN CENTRE

## INVESTMENT VEHICLE TO UNLOCK COMMERCIAL SPACE

Being developed by Huntingdonshire District Council is the concept of a revolving capital fund to support targeted interventions. This would create a vehicle whereby prominent vacant properties could be acquired and developed in line with the strategic direction of the masterplan, stimulating the economic vibrancy of the town centre at the same time as creating a recyclable fund.

Huntingdonshire District Council already operates a Commercial Investment Fund (CIF) that has seen significant investment within and beyond the district, aimed primarily at commercial floor space but also potential towards accelerating the housing market. The purposes of that fund are clear and indeed currently involve the likely acquisition of a major commercial asset in the town which would secure its longer term future and thereby the vibrancy of the town, and so can be seen already complimentary to supporting the economic success of the district. Based on that successful track record, the council is seeking to explore a separate Market Town Investment Fund gyratory financing model. The purpose of that would

- enable strategic financial interventions, whether that be through acquisition of property (often not driven by commercial return)
- implementation of minor capital projects where there is a proven business case (the bottom lines of which may be related to financial return, but more likely to be linked to social or environmental benefits and creation of place), or
- fund partnership working with other agencies to deliver community benefit (including the Combined Authority).

The operational principles and potential funding mechanisms are currently being refined for endorsement, with a view to establishing an approach that could be replicated and applied across the districts other market towns within the ongoing masterplan programme. It is envisaged that within such an investment approach, the Community Infrastructure Levy receipts of the St Neots Town Council could similarly be utilised, at least a proportion, to support and supplement a proactive local investment strategy.

## BUSINESS GROWTH DEMAND MARKET SURVEY

It is critical to the success of this masterplan that all the constraints facing local businesses are understood. For example, a commercial property audit of unused and available premises (action 01S) has been produced and has identified there is very limited appropriate and/or available commercial space in the town at present.

Therefore, as part of the Masterplan for Growth's first phase of delivery, the project Steering Group propose a targeted market research study is commissioned to identify the core needs of St Neots' existing business community and provide qualitative and quantitative insight into the key factors restricting commercial growth. This research is essential in order to prepare an effective strategy to deliver the above medium and long-term programmes aimed at increasing commercial activity within the town.

This research will underpin a huge amount of the next phase of masterplan activity, including the application of the investment vehicle to be established – so that investments are targeted against demonstrable business and industrial need.

A second phase of this work, to come later, will also extend the scope to those businesses currently outside of St Neots and what it would take to incentivise them to move to the town.

## ST NEOTS SMART TOWN

Through this programme St Neots will become the first smart town in Cambridgeshire. Digital technology now underpins almost all aspects of modern living in every sphere across work, travel, leisure, and health; and increasingly it impacts on economic strength. Across the county and in Cambridge the smart cities concept has arisen to discover practical ways in which data, innovative technology and better connectivity can be used to transform the way people live, work and travel.

This agenda though has not yet made it across to our market towns. As part of the Combined Authority's market town programme, and using the opportunity of St Neots as the pilot of that programme, it is proposed that St Neots is established as the first smart town in Cambridgeshire.

This will involve an initial discovery phase which will involve the testing of Smart Cambridge products in St Neots (such as smart data dashboards), consider how the libraries Makerspace initiative will promote the development of high end technology skills to support the smart town, and carry out engagement with the St Neots community to identify priority projects.

St Neots Scheme	Lead delivery partner	Funding in place	Funding sought from CPCA	Total investment
<b>Smart St Neots</b>				
Roll-out of St Neots smart town: Discovery phase	Connecting Cambridgeshire	Nil	£30,000	£30,000
<b>Town Centre Footfall</b>				
New town bridge and regatta riverfront	Cambridgeshire County Council	£1.5 million (CCC inc HDC S106 provisions)	£2.5 million £0.6 million	£4.6 million
Enhanced marketing and events programme / Business Improvement District	St Neots Town Council and Huntingdonshire District Council	£51,048 (SNTC/HDC)	£258,941	£309,989
Town centre traffic study	Cambridgeshire County Council	Nil	£175,000	£175,000
Market Square street furniture	Cambridgeshire County Council	£10,000* SNTC	£40,000	£50,000

## Town Centre business development

Business growth demand market testing	St Neots Town Council	Nil	£12,000	£12,000
Investment vehicle to unlock commercial space	Huntingdonshire District Council		Being scoped currently	
<b>Programme</b>				
Programme management	Huntingdonshire District Council	£95,333 (HDC)	£471,130 (All Hunts Towns)	£566,463
<b>Total</b>		<b>£1.7 million</b>	<b>£4.1 million</b>	<b>£5.8 million</b>

## PHASE TWO (PROGRAMMES CURRENTLY IN DEVELOPMENT)

Alongside the development of this vibrant town centre Strategic Business Case the Masterplan Steering Group has also been developing a pipeline of activity and further programmes. There are significant relationships and interdependencies between the Strategic Business Case and this pipeline.

The use of industrial and commercial space in line with the industry recommendations of the masterplan assessment.

The St Neots Masterplan for Growth identifies the key sectors that can play a major role in the future prosperity of the town, but only if the right interventions are made to support these sectors to grow. While Phase 1 is largely focused on the regeneration of the town centre, the second phase is focused on this sector-based industrial support and a significant amount of work is already underway. A key element of this sectoral growth support is ensuring appropriate land supply to meet current and future demands.

For example, the masterplan identifies the provision of future space for KIBS businesses as an industrial priority. This is emphasised by the fact that the current provision (Wyboston Lakes and the town centre based Workstation) are at full capacity, with waiting lists of businesses wanting to move in.

There are significant opportunities to prototype this approach in the existing growth allocations in the St Neots eastern expansion sites at Loves Farm and Wintringham Park, both of which are at advance stages of development consent. And include mixed communities of housing, employment and services space and community and education facilities.



The opportunity is even more timely during these beginning stages of development of the Cambridge/Milton Keynes/Oxford Corridor, into which the town should position itself strongly.

The Masterplan Steering Group have engaged with Urban&Civic as developers of the Wintringham Park site which is a major aspect of the eastern expansion of St Neots. Wintringham Park has in principle planning permission for 2,800 homes and includes 63,500m<sup>2</sup> of employment space. This is quite simply a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape and stimulate the next phase of St Neots' economic growth.

The Masterplan Steering Group has successfully agreed with Urban&Civic that this employment space can be brought forward in line with the masterplan, namely that creative space will be designed to support the development of the KIBS and Creative sector, and light-industrial and research and development space will be provided to support the development of the manufacturing sector.

The aspiration runs much deeper than this headline and the Masterplan Group has now invited a representative from Urban&Civic to work with the Steering Group to ensure that the site is designed and delivered to the highest possible standards, and in a way which is connected to the town centre and the wider plans for St Neots.

Similar engagement is planned with Gallaghers who have already delivered Loves Farm Phase 1 and have embarked upon Phase 2 of that plan for an additional 1,020 new homes, 5.52 hectares of B1 employment space and 2.08 hectares of other commercial and servicing facilities, likely to generate circa 2,900 new job opportunities.

## PROVISION OF SKILLS TO MEET BUSINESS NEEDS

The masterplan analysis identified that there is a lack of industry ready training within St Neots and that industry leaders in the town have expressed concern over the limited availability of trained labour that is suitable for the type of production and design work that is required. In order to address this key issue the chair of the St Neots Manufacturing Club and the County Council's head of Adult Learning and Skills have been appointed to the Steering Group and are developing a specific skills and training programme for St Neots.

Through this it has been agreed that St Neots will be used as a case study for the Combined Authority's emerging skills strategy for the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This will position the research and business engagement undertaken in St Neots at the forefront of strategic thinking for the county, and will also allow for the fast-tracked development of investment proposals.

The St Neots Skills workstream programme is developing against the following timetable:

<b>Plan to support skills</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Resource</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Target/outcomes</b>
Short term	Research business need now and in the future including replacement staffing	SR to undertake research with key business contacts	Report on need produced by 11 May 2018	A clear picture of need will be articulated to assist a skills plan by September 2018
Medium term	Provide support for careers staff in schools to understand the St Neots business landscape  Raise aspiration and increase access for young people to a wide range of career choices and post-16 routes	Work with the Careers Enterprise Company and local schools one full time employee support worker *Included in costing	Work to start in September 2018	By 2021 the schools in St Neots will have achieved at least six of the eight Gatsby Benchmarks.  By 2021 60% of young people in St Neots will go on to apprenticeships, vocational qualifications and higher education.  By 2021 90% of disadvantaged young people will be in a sustained positive destination.
Long term	Provide integrated bespoke training to support the growth of inward investment and existing business	Work with iMET to establish the programme *Cost to be determined	Plan ready by September 2018	Clear link to business growth-business report good access to available skilled staff in the local workforce.

# PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Governance arrangements have been established in to achieve collective community ownership of the St Neots Masterplan for Growth, responsibility for delivery of masterplan initiatives, and as a vehicle to oversee future iterations of the masterplan itself. This is made up of a Steering Group and Delivery Team.

Masterplan Steering Group	Masterplan Delivery Team
<b>Cllr Robin Howe</b> Huntingdonshire District Council <i>Chair</i>	<b>Nigel McCurdy</b> Huntingdonshire District Council <i>Chair</i>
<b>Tony Moscrop</b> St Neots Manufacturing Club <i>Deputy Chair</i>	<b>Dan Thorp</b> Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority
<b>Cllr Derek Giles</b> St Neots Town Council	<b>Katie Williams</b> St Neots Town Council
<b>Mayor of St Neots Barry Chapman</b> St Neots Town Council	<b>Jack Eagle</b> Cambridgeshire County Council
<b>Cllr David Wells</b> Cambridgeshire County Council	<b>Elaine Matthews</b> Cambridgeshire County Council
<b>Richard Slade</b> Neotists	<b>Lynsi Hayward-Smith</b> Cambridgeshire County Council
<b>Gordon Round</b> Town Centre Initiative	<b>Sue Bedlow</b> Huntingdonshire District Council
	<b>Stuart Rushby</b> Cambridgeshire County Council

The Combined Authority commissioned the development of the masterplan and retain involvement as a strategic partner and funding partner. Lead responsibility for the implementation of the masterplan is with Huntingdonshire District Council, as demonstrated through their leadership of the two governance groups.

Specific schemes that are launched as a result of the masterplan will each be subject to specific delivery arrangements, and in each case a lead delivery partner will be identified. The delivery partner will be responsible to the funding organisation(s) for their specific scheme, and the Masterplan Steering Group and Delivery Team will play a coordinating role in ensuring delivery and assurance.

The high-level delivery timetable for the Phase One Strategic Business Case is:

<b>Delivery Date</b>															
<b>2018/19</b>				<b>2019/20</b>				<b>2020/21</b>				<b>2021/22</b>			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Town Centre footfall</b>															
Bridge (1) and Riverside (2)						2						1			
Enhanced marketing															
Town Centre traffic															
Street furniture															
<b>Town Centre business development</b>															
Business survey															
Investment vehicle															
<b>St Neots smart town</b>															
Smart town discovery phase															
Programme management															

## THE COMMERCIAL CASE

The fundamental commercial case for the masterplan is the unique benefit of all partners acting together as part of a holistic approach, rather than acting in isolation.

The masterplan approach means that maximum strategic alignment, programme delivery, and therefore value for money and impact can be achieved.

Acting in isolation, partners risk duplication, contradiction and unintended overlap – all of which lead to inefficient use of public and private resources.

Therefore, the development of the masterplan itself and the subsequent formation of the Masterplan Steering and Delivery Groups are a demonstrable commitment to strong commercial actions, and provide an ongoing check-and-balance against non-commercial approaches.

It should be further noted that, if considered and examined individually, some interventions will not have a commercial or financial case with strong returns. But the purpose and benefit of the masterplan approach is that a holistic set of interventions can be progressed, many of which would not come forward in isolation but which are nevertheless critical as part of an overall package – which is the masterplan ethos.

# THE FINANCIAL CASE

The implementation of the St Neots Masterplan is a collective financial investment from across the local authorities involved in the partnership; The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Cambridgeshire County Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, and St Neots Town Council.

The Combined Authority has invested £50,000 to develop the masterplan itself, and has noted the initial findings of a £5.8 million package of interventions necessary to achieve the £185 million GVA uplift possible within current statutory planning parameters.

When the Combined Authority board received the masterplan in October 2018 it noted that business cases should be brought forward in line with the combined authorities investment principles, namely that where possible capital should be recycled and long-term sustainable funding models should be sought. Two major schemes are being brought forward within these specific principles; the proposal for the implementation of a Business Improvement District as a sustainable funding source for town centre activity and events planning, and the creating of an investment vehicle to acquire and re-purpose prominent commercial spaces in the town centre.

Each scheme within the business case has a lead partner identified. The lead partner will be responsible and accountable for the financial management of the scheme, accountable directly to the relevant funding partner.

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To ensure that the impacts realised by this programme of investment are in line with expectations the following measure for monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken:

Town Centre vibrancy key indicators and targets		
Indicator	Baseline (and date)	Target (and date)
Town Centre footfall 1. PMRS methodology	At Boots, High Street 26,820 per week; average across 20 locations 9,450 per week (November 2015)	Springboard national average year on year change to November +4% by 2021 +9% from 2021 to 2026 +7% 2026 to 2031 +3% 2031 to 2036 <sup>1</sup>
Town Centre footfall 2. Footfall counters	To be established during first year following installation of counters (Autumn 2018)	Springboard national average year on year change plus: +4% by 2021 +9% from 2021 to 2026 +7% 2026 to 2031 +3% 2031 to 2036
Javeline venuescores	Rank 437 (2014-2015)	Rank higher than 420 by 2023
Vacant retail premises	18 units 9.8% (2016)	Less than 15 units, 8.8% of total and better than national average by 2% by 2023
Events programme	Data being finalised	Data being finalised
Visitor satisfaction (surveys to be conducted annually at 4 points in the year)	Baseline to be established by survey of 380 visitors (Autumn 2018)	Year on year increases in the overall rating of the visitor experience
Wider St Neots Masterplan Key Indicators and Targets		
GVA	£497,247,864 <sup>2</sup>	National average change plus: +4% by 2021 +9% from 2021 to 2026 +7% 2026 to 2031 +3% 2031 to 2036 <sup>3</sup>
Total jobs	11,500 (BRES 2016 - 4 wards)	National average change in employment plus: +4% by 2021 +9% from 2021 to 2026 +7% 2026 to 2031 +3% 2031 to 2036 <sup>4</sup>

1 Target % increase equates to projected population growth over the same period according to November 2017 trajectory update to the CRG MID-2015 population estimates and forecasts

2 Blue Circle method 2 Based on census 2011 total jobs

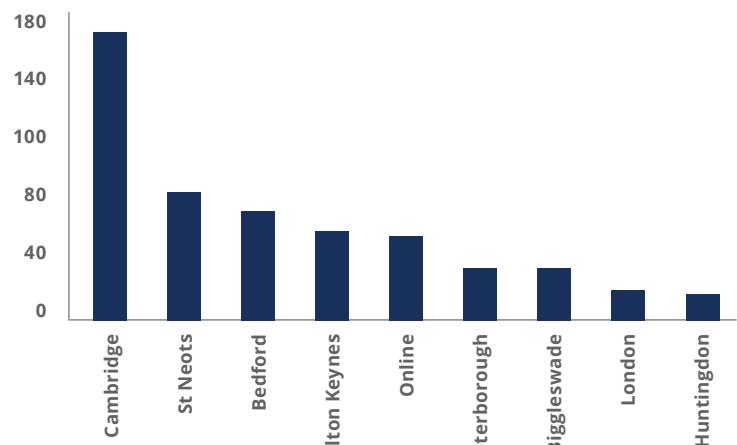
3 Target % increase equates to projected population growth over the same period according to November 2017 trajectory update to the CRG MID-2015 population estimates and forecasts

4 Target % increase equates to projected population growth over the same period according to November 2017 trajectory update to the CRG MID-2015 population estimates and forecasts

To assess the impact on the revitalisation of St Neots town centre footfall monitors will be installed in at least four locations and impact on footfall measured 24 hours a day, every day of the year, reviewed and reported back to the Steering Group at six-month intervals. HDC has footfall data which has been collected over a ten year period between 2006 and 2015 so additional annual counts will be commissioned using the same methodology in order that impact can be measured against this baseline data too.

Recent surveys of the Loves Farm residential area also produced data which corroborated evidence gathered for the masterplan regarding the large degree of residents who travel outside of St Neots for their non-food shopping (see diagram above). As part of the monitoring and evaluation of this programme further surveys will be undertaken annually to identify any changes in these trends and visitor perception surveys will be conducted in the town centre to assess the overall impact of the programme on perceptions of the town. Visitor perception surveys will measure factors such as visitor ratings of various aspects of the town (cleanliness, atmosphere, facilities, choice and quality of shops etc), areas of the town, what would make visitors stay longer as well as the overall visit experience. This breadth of information will help to shape projects in future phases of the masterplan programme.

Number of occurrences of non-food shopping\*



\*386 households responded and many listed multiple locations.

## THE NEXT PHASE OF ST NEOTS' DEVELOPMENT

It is worth referencing at this point in the life of the masterplan that the Steering Group has also set its sights firmly on the future development of St Neots.

There will be major opportunities for future development within and outside of the town in the years to come, and the Masterplan Steering Group are committed to working together and working proactively so that these opportunities can be assessed thoroughly and can be promoted within a wider strategy for the town, rather than coming forward on an ad hoc and unplanned basis.

This is a joint commitment to a strategic partnership approach at this stage, but one which has the potential to bring a fundamentally new dimension to future development in this key market town by collaboratively identifying and influencing its locational advantages for future employment, commercial and housing growth and positively exploiting the CaMkOx Corridor and A1/East Coast mainline opportunities to leverage profile and investment, particularly for future rail and road infrastructure.

Specifically the Masterplan Steering Group has identified that the accelerated provision of the 3,600 jobs currently within the local plan is just the starting point. The true impact of the masterplan will be in paving the way for the accelerated delivery of the circa 4,000 extra jobs which will come to St Neots above and beyond the current local plan, and how the next local plan can be shaped to best support the local industries that will underpin future expansion of the town.



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
& PETERBOROUGH**  
COMBINED AUTHORITY



Cambridgeshire  
County Council



**St Neots**  
Town Council