

Watton's Town Delivery Plan



Future Breckland: Thriving People and Places

Watton's Town Delivery Plan
Future Breckland:
Thriving People and Places



HATCH

**We
Made
That**

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Foreword

Watton is a unique town full of potential sitting at the heart of our district. Its diverse population is supported by active community groups, a large anchor employer, valued leisure facilities, an important high street and a weekly market.

The town is not, however, meeting its potential and needs investment. It faces several challenges that need to be addressed and these have been made clear through the extensive engagement we have undertaken to produce this document. Challenges range from a lack of local identity to poor public transport connectivity and a lack of accessible green space.

This Town Delivery Plan sets out an ambitious programme to build on Watton's strengths and address its major challenges. It has been designed to strengthen the town's position as a service and community hub while also ensuring it meets the future needs of residents and those in surrounding rural communities.

These ambitions will be met by delivering complementary game changing interventions which will enable transformative economic, social and environmental change. These are Watton's investment priorities for the next decade. These interventions do not represent everything that could be done, but are the most impactful activities that partners can focus precious resources on.

We believe that this plan reflects all the lessons we have learned during our engagement with Watton's residents, stakeholders and businesses. The successful delivery of this plan will rely on the strengths of the partnership behind it.

Future Breckland Project Team

01

Watton's Town Delivery Plan



Watton's Town Delivery Plan

This document sets out our Town Delivery Plan for Watton. 'We' are the residents, businesses, organisations and public bodies that have a stake in the town and have been involved in the creation of this plan. This plan sets out how we will 'level up' our town and build a bright future.

Collective Ambitions for Watton

Our collective ambition for Watton, which is based on our local aspirations and robust evidence, is to:

Enhance the look and feel of our High Street to make it a more attractive place to spend time and money.



Improve sport, leisure and community facilities so our diverse community has access to the best provision in the county.



Make our town greener and more environmentally sustainable to help improve our wellbeing and quality of life.



Strengthen our foundational economy to ensure the town meets current and future needs of our residents.



Celebrate and support our diverse community and strengthen ties between different groups.



Ambition Realised

This ambition will be realised through five game changing interventions which are our investment priorities:

1. Attractive Watton:
Enhancing our Town Centre.

2. Inclusive Watton:
Improving Local Provision.

3. Destination Watton:
Rejuvenating Loch Neaton.

4. Welcoming Watton:
Gateway into the Town Centre.

5. Connected Watton:
Re-connecting Watton and Swaffham.

6. Innovative Watton: Digital Creative Media Centre.

Watton Highstreet looking West



Source: We Made That, 2021

These will be complemented by (a) the delivery of some **tactical short-term interventions** that will deliver highly visual improvements to the town and, (b) through the endorsement of a series of **long-term high-impact proposals**.

This document, and these interventions, represent our agreed plan for the future of Watton. Public, private and third sector partners will work collaboratively to bring our aspirations forward over the next ten years. The purpose of the document is to guide our collective action and to illustrate that we have a clear and agreed plan to external funders.

Our plan has been developed in line with Government's methodology for developing town action plans and in line with the Leveling up white paper to ensure that Watton is in the strongest position possible to secure future public sector investment. While Breckland Council, Norfolk County Council, Watton Town Council and partners may directly invest their resources into the priorities identified in this plan, there is limited local funding available so securing wider public and private sector funding will be essential to realise our ambition.

Future Breckland

Thriving People and Places

This Town Delivery Plan fits within Breckland Council's ambitious Future Breckland: Thriving People and Places programme. This initiative sets out a clear blueprint for the future of the district and aims to deliver significant economic, social and environmental improvements through investment in the district's five market towns and their rural hinterlands.

This blueprint is captured in the forthcoming Future Breckland: Thriving People and Places Prospectus. The Prospectus sets out five objectives for the district, which are:

- **Town Centre Regeneration:** Regenerating Breckland's town centres to help them adapt to changing conditions, and attract people and businesses.
- **Skills and Education:** Supporting our residents to train and pursue further education and continual education to increase employment opportunities and meet ongoing employment needs.
- **Investing in housing and infrastructure:** targeted investment in housing, public transport and active travel to improve quality of life.
- **Growing our business and enterprise base:** Encouraging new businesses, expansion and relocations by improving the availability of business services and premises.
- **Culture and Heritage:** Building on Breckland's rich heritage and culture, while enhancing tourism opportunities and bringing our local communities together.

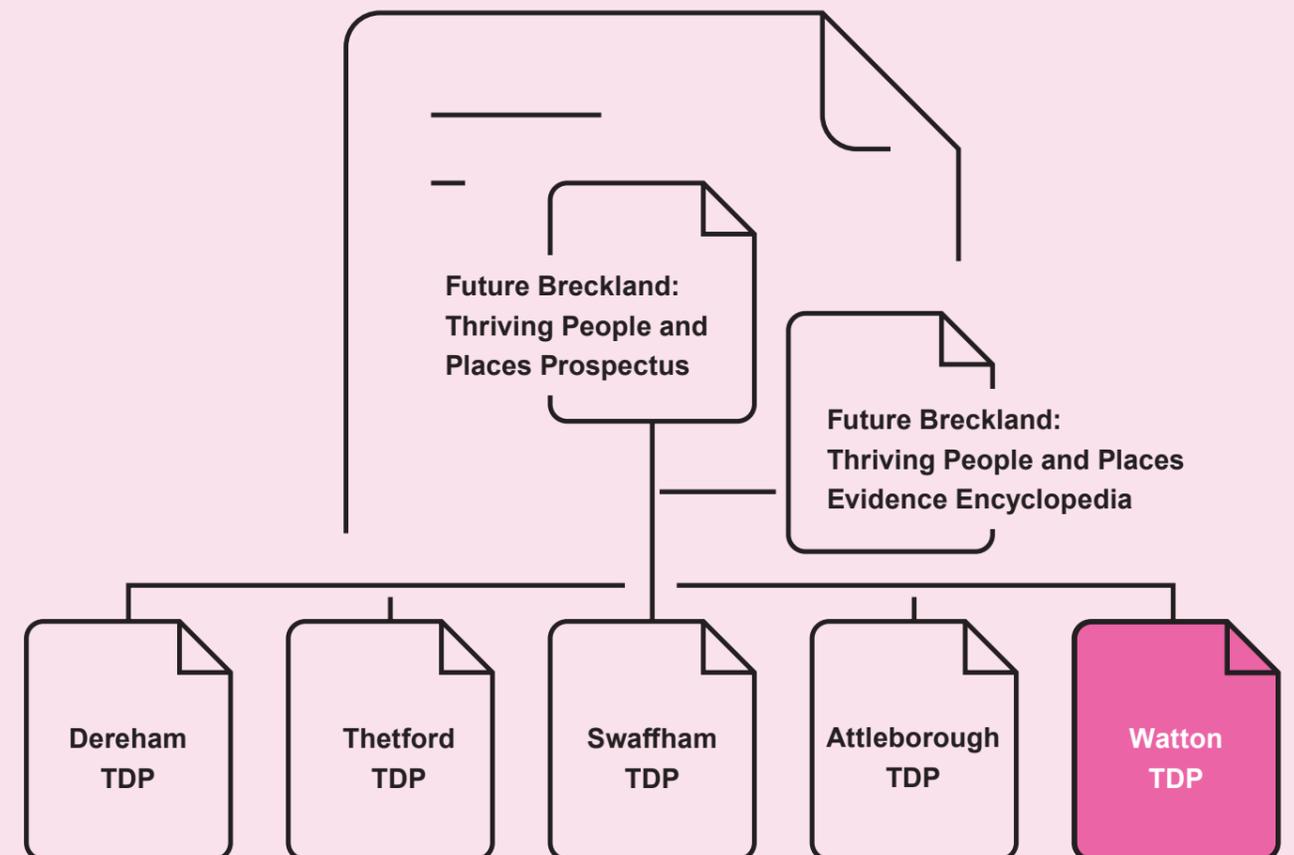
- **Improving Sustainability:** Delivering net zero commitment while enabling our business and residents to reduce their carbon footprint.

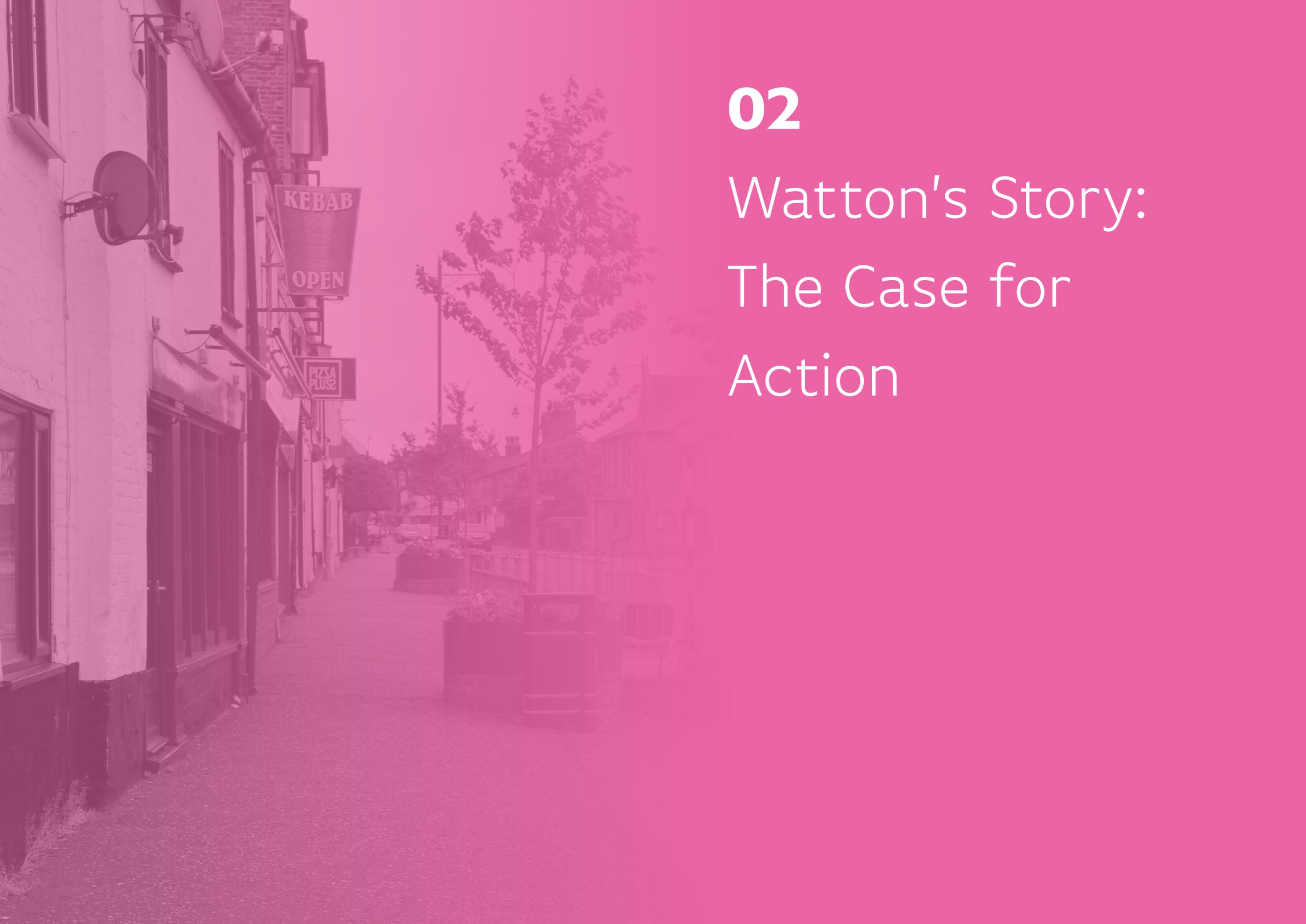
This Watton Town Delivery Plan, and those for Thetford, Dereham, Attleborough and Swaffham, sit below the Prospectus and include actions that will deliver against both the district-wide and town-specific ambitions.

While the five Town Delivery Plans will drive most change it is recognised that some district wide challenges need to be addressed through strategic investments at the district rather than town level. A series of game changing interventions for these areas, which will positively impact Watton and its wider hinterland, are set out in the forthcoming Prospectus.

All these documents are informed by robust evidence and data which is available in the **Future Breckland: Thriving People and Places Evidence Encyclopedia**.

Our Guiding Documents



A street scene with a kebab shop and a pizza shop, overlaid with a pink gradient. The kebab shop sign says "KEBAB" and "OPEN". The pizza shop sign says "PIZZA PLUS2".

02

Watton's Story: The Case for Action

Watton's Story

The Case for Action - Levelling up Watton

Watton's Economic History

Our town has a proud history shaped by its agricultural, manufacturing and military roots. The opening of Royal Air Force (RAF) Watton in the 1930s, which was home to the RAF and United States Army Air Forces during the Second World War, fundamentally shaped our town which evolved to meet the needs of military personnel throughout the war and beyond.

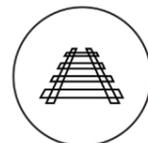
In recent decades our town has become a modern place with an economy dominated by Manufacturing, Public Services and Business Support Services. We now have a population of over 8,500 people, which is almost 20% more than in 2011.¹

Becoming an industrious market town



In the 16th and 17th century craft and trade businesses flourished in Watton, including butchers, bakers, brewers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, saddlers and coopers. These supported the workers of the town's main industry which was the manufacture of woolen cloth. The wealth this generated paid for Watton's most distinctive landmark, the clock tower, as well other buildings.

Linking into the wider region



The opening of the Thetford to Watton railway line in 1869 by the Thetford and Watton Railway Company was one of the most important events in Watton's economic history. It provided an important route to move raw materials, products and people to other parts of the region and was extended to Swaffham in the late 1800s. It closed to passengers in 1965 and the site of the old station is now an important industrial development.

Supporting the Royal Air Force



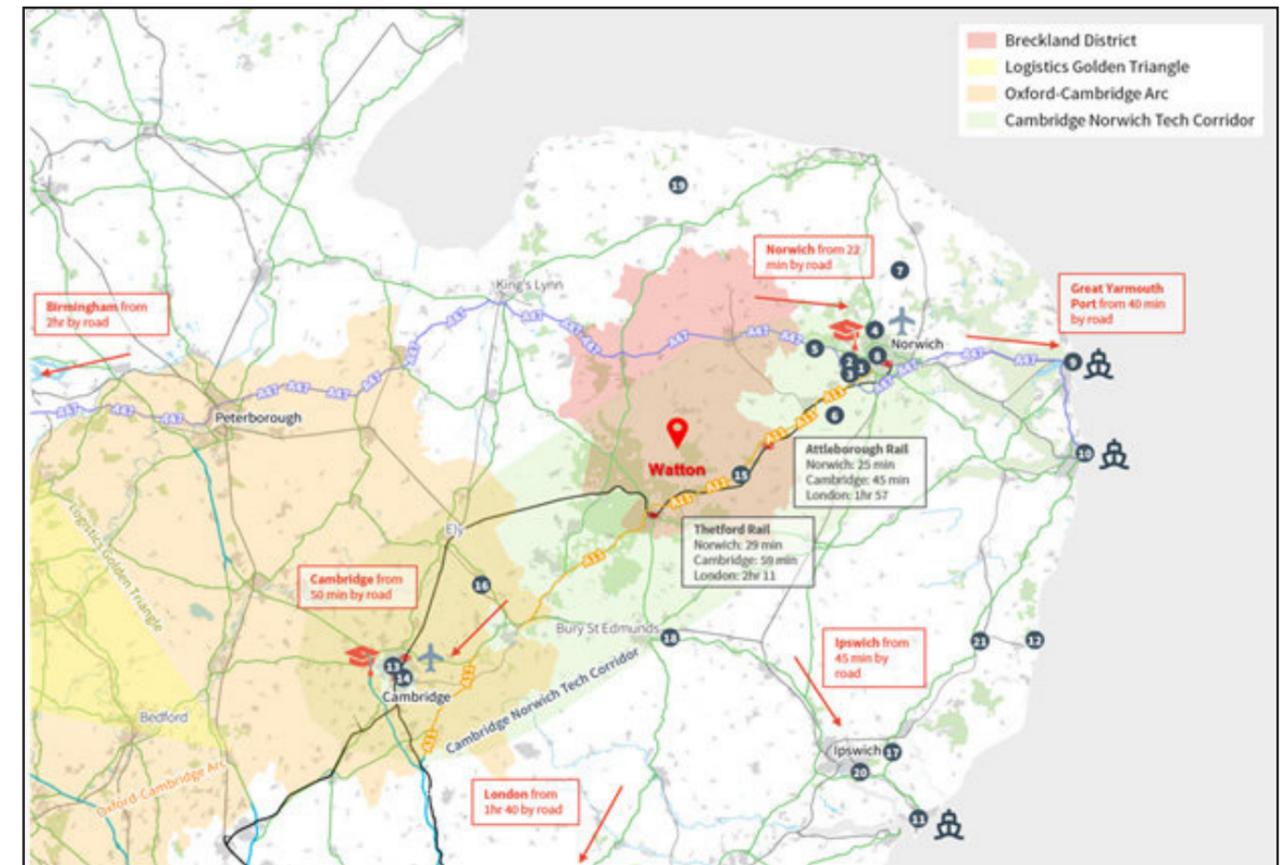
The opening of RAF Watton in 1936 represented a significant milestone in the town's development and economic history. It provided significant employment opportunities for the town's agricultural workforce, who helped with its construction, and it became an integral base for RAF operations during the Second World War.

Transitioning to a modern market town



Over the last century Watton has changed to become a modern market town. The local economy is more diverse than other local towns due to the presence of important anchor employers (e.g. Cranswick, Tesco and Norfolk Academies). The most prominent sectors are Manufacturing, Public Administration and Business Support Services.

Figure 1 Watton's Strategic Location



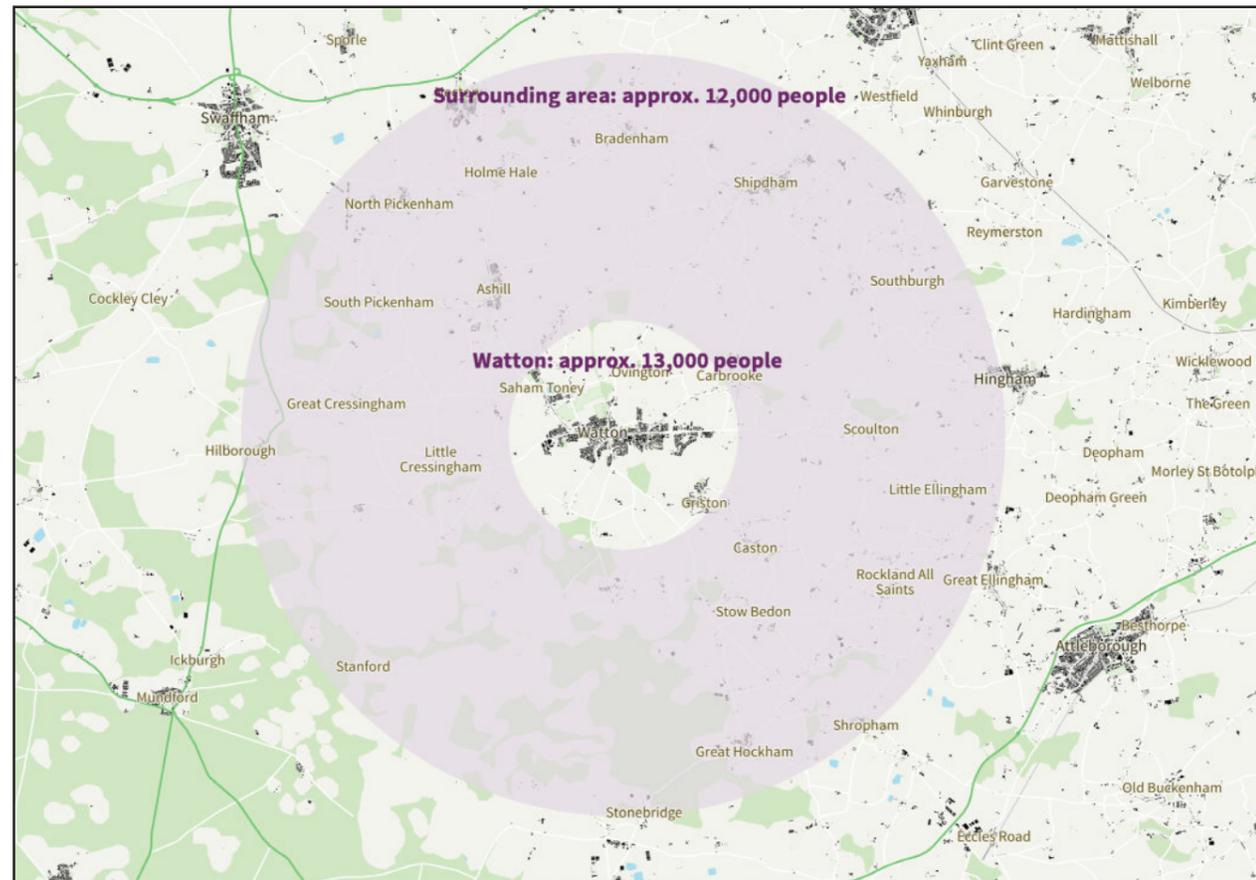
Watton's Economic Geography

Watton is located in the centre of Norfolk and is in driving distance of Norwich and King's Lynn via the A47 and Cambridge and Thetford via the A11. It is surrounded by a number of rural villages making it a key local centre for surrounding communities.

Our town has several defining characteristics, which represent good 'ingredients' for a successful market town:

¹ ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2011 Census, 2011 and 2020.

Figure 2 Watton's Catchment



Source: Hatch, 2021; iGeolise, ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates

- **Popular weekly market:** Our market is held every Wednesday and sells a range of local produce and household items.
- **Impressive architecture:** We have one of the widest high streets in the region and boast some attractive buildings and architecture.
- **Important leisure and community facilities:** Our community benefits from community and leisure provision at the Charlotte Harvey Centre, Queens Hall, the Sports Association and Social Club, Loch Neaton Trust and Wayland Business Centre.
- **Engaged and active community:** We have a range of community groups that offer a broad spectrum of services and activities that benefit our residents.

Watton High Street Planters

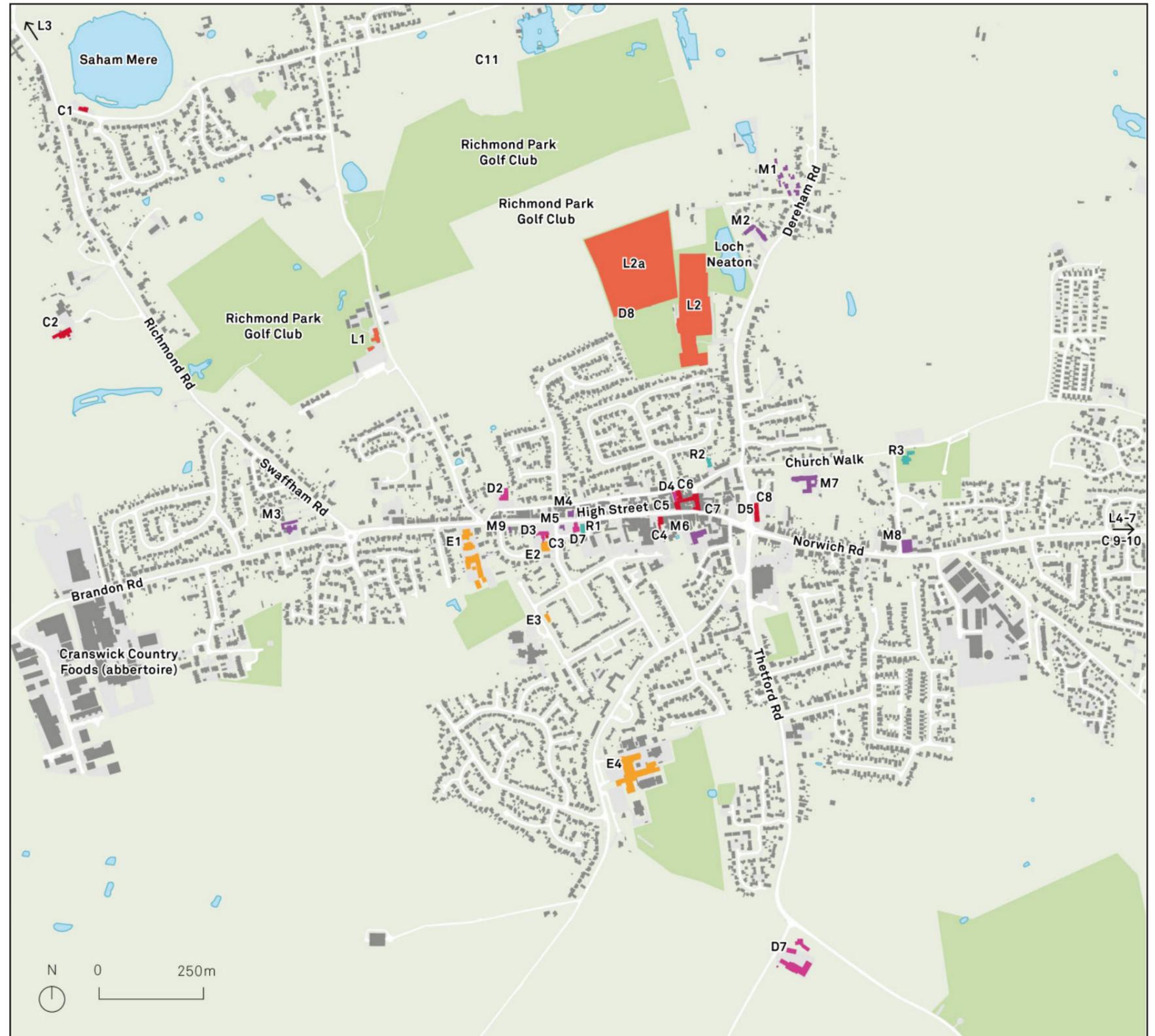


Source: We Made That, 2021

- **Valuable anchor employers:** We have a small handful of employers that deliver significant economic value to our town and high street.
- **Diverse communities:** Our community is distinctively multicultural which is an important asset that we could celebrate more.
- **Wide catchment and influence:** The town's shops, schools, health centres and leisure amenities serve a wide rural hinterland. Around 25,000 people live within 20 minutes' drive of the town.

Figure 3 Watton's Cultural, Community and Leisure Assets

- **Culture**
 - C1 The Old Bell Pub
 - C2 Broom Hall
 - C3 Dragonfly Gallery (Wayland House)
 - C4 The Crown Pub
 - C5 Museum for Watton (Watton Town Hall)
 - C6 King's Arms Pub
 - C7 Wednesday Market
 - C8 Saturday Antiques Fair (Queen's Hall)
 - C9 Watton Antiques and Collectors' Centre
 - C10 Watton Salerooms
 - C11 The Meadows (Wayland Agricultural Show)
- **Health & leisure**
 - L1 Richmond Park Golf Club
 - L2 Watton Sports and Social Club
 - L2a Watton Junior Football Club
 - L3 Saham Toney Cricket and Watton RFC
 - L4 Full Fitness Gym and Climbing Centre
 - L5 The Wonder Wood (children's amusement centre)
 - L6 Kid's Play (Indoor Play Area)
 - L7 NR Health and Fitness Club
- **Education**
 - E1 Watton Junior School
 - E2 Watton Library
 - E3 Watton and Westfield Nursery
 - E4 Wayland Academy
- **Community Spaces**
 - D1 Men's Shed
 - D2 Charlotte Harvey Trust; youth & community centre
 - D3 Wayland House
 - D4 Watton Town Hall
 - D5 Queen's Hall (Bookable Events Space)
 - D6 Watton Lodge (Bookable Events Space)
 - D7 Watton Christian Community Centre
 - D8 Watton Men's Shed
- **Religious**
 - R1 Watton Methodist Church
 - R2 Watton Pentacostal Church and Gallery
 - R3 St Mary's Parish Church
- **Medical and Care Services**
 - M1 Conquest Care Homes
 - M2 Kalmia Mallow (assisted living)
 - M3 Verve Health - Drug and Alcohol Rehab
 - M4 Together Watton Dental Care
 - M5 Watton Health Clinic
 - M6 Watton Health Practice
 - M7 Linden Court Residential Care
 - M8 Dorrington House (assisted living)
 - M9 Hansell DM Dentist
 - M10 Lancaster House (assisted living)
 - M11 Buckingham Lodge Care Home



Source: We Made That, 2021

Watton's Weaknesses and Threats

Our town centre needs investment to realise its full potential...

Our town centre provides important services for residents and people living in surrounding villages, but it needs investment to make it more attractive to visit and spend time. Observational analysis undertaken by We Made That highlights this:

- There are few trees and little soft landscaping.
- Chaston Place is an important public space but has an unattractive physical appearance.
- The eastern gateway to the high street is an unattractive entry to the town.
- Parking takes up a lot of public space.
- The long high street varies in quality.
- Heavy traffic comes dangerously close to narrow pavements in some locations.
- Pavements become congested during busy market days and peak times.
- The public realm is inaccessible in places for those using wheelchairs, mobility scooters and buggies.
- There are not enough safe crossings for pedestrians.
- There is a lack of green space close to the town centre.

The analysis also indicates constraints in the movement of people and vehicles, both within the town and across the wider district. Currently there is:

- Limited cycle provision in and around Watton.
- Cluttered cut throughs from the High Street to surrounding streets.
- Limited bus services to and from Norwich in the evening.
- No signage along the Pedder's Way directing ramblers to Watton.
- High levels of traffic and congestion particularly at peak times.

These limitations constrain our residents, workers and visitors and reduce the attractiveness of Watton as a place to visit.

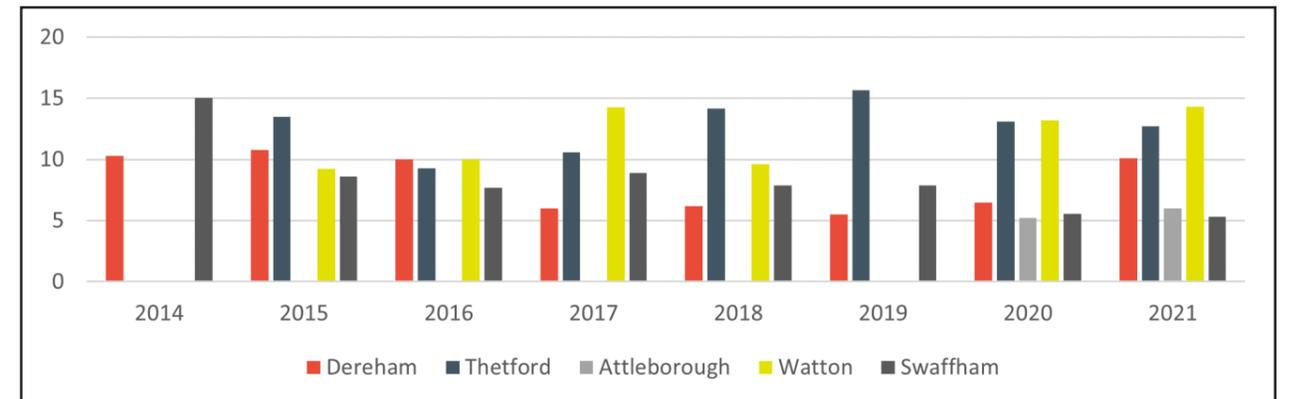
Our town centre also has a high retail vacancy rate which is linked to these issues as well as wider macro-economic trends (e.g. related to online shopping and changing consumer trends). Around 14% of our retail units are vacant versus 5% in Swaffham, 6% in Attleborough and 10% in Thetford. We also have an oversupply of estate agents and secondhand shops versus the national average (+8% and +4%) and an undersupply of clothes shops (-4%), cafes, banks, restaurants, bars, pubs and clubs (-3%).

Watton High Street Pedestrian Crossing



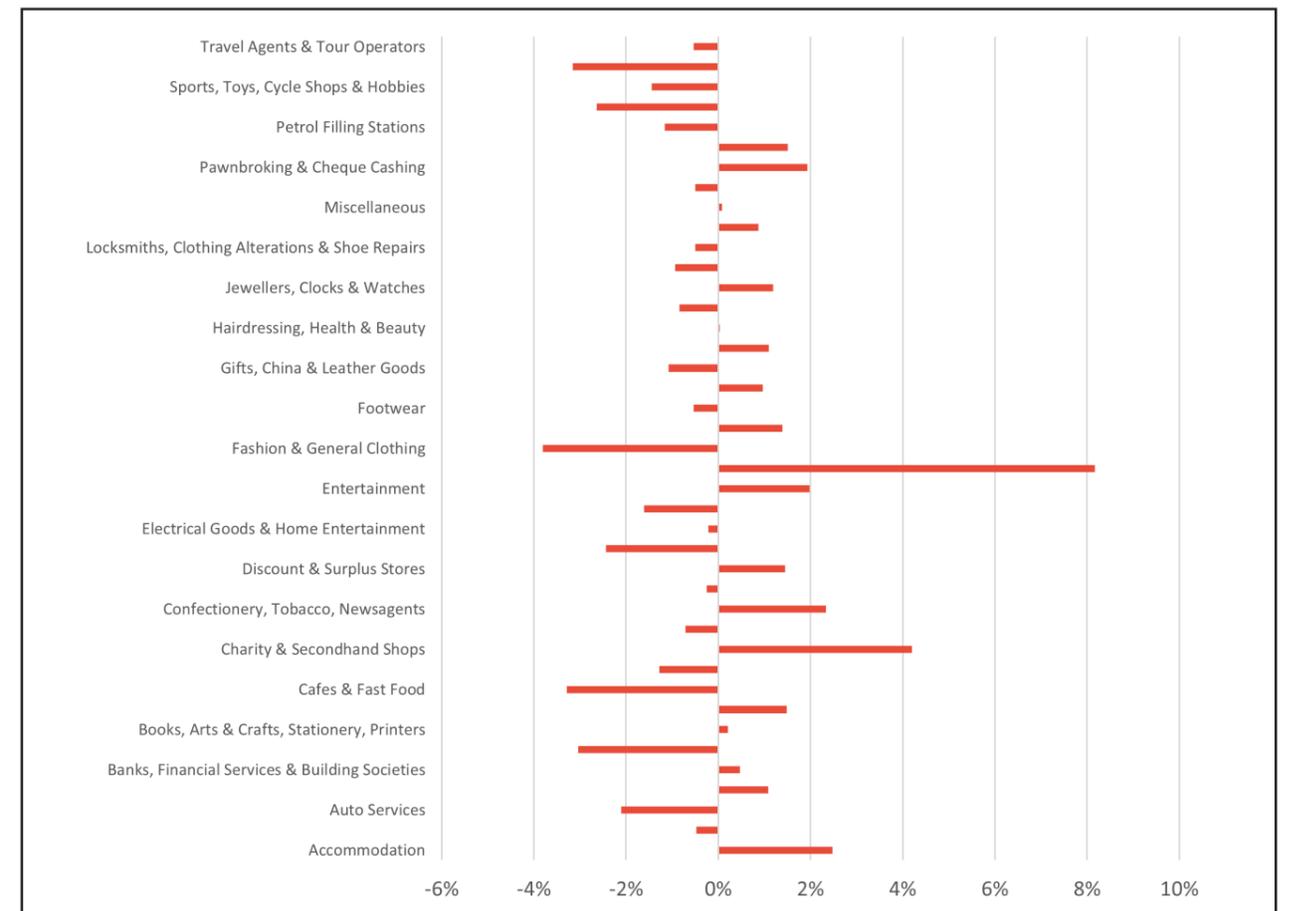
Source: We Made That, 2021

Figure 4 Watton's Retail Vacancies, 2014-2021



Source: Local Data Company, 2021

Figure 5 Watton's High Street Retail Units by Category vs Great Britain Average



Source: Local Data Company, 2021²

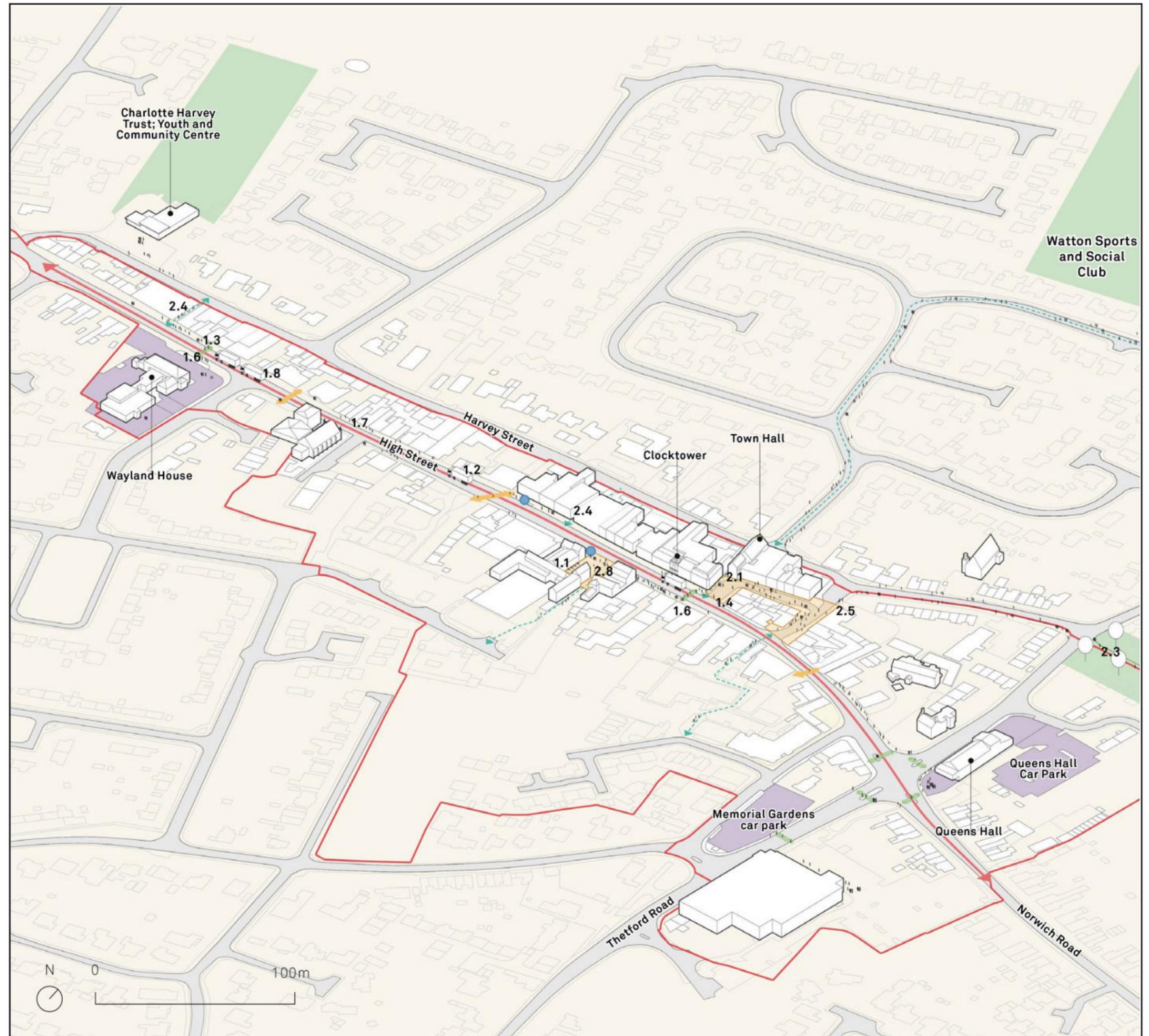
2. A figure of +4%, as an example, indicates that Watton's town centre has 4% more retail units of a particular category than the average town centre in Great Britain. A figure of -4% means that it has 4% fewer retail units of a particular category than an average town centre in Great Britain.

Figure 6 Watton's Public Realm

- 1.1 The high street has a limited supply of formal bike racks
- 1.2 Excessive parking utilises valuable space in the "widest market town high street in Norfolk" is dominated by a steady flow of traffic and heavy-goods vehicles
- 1.3 One of two zebra crossings on Watton High Street has an uneven camber that makes crossing precarious for those in mobility scooters and wheelchairs
- 1.4 During market days, reduced pavements can become congested and force pedestrians closer to the traffic-heavy High Street
- 1.5 Narrow pavements force pedestrians closer to traffic and make passing others challenging
- 1.6 The 300 metres between the high street's 2 zebra crossings encourage pedestrians to cross elsewhere
- 1.7 Cafe tables, passing pedestrians and friends stopping to chat jostle for space on the restricted pavements
- 1.8 Heavy traffic comes dangerously close to the narrow pavements
- 2.1 Despite the relative success of the market's transposition, there is limited space for people to gather, whilst vehicles interrupt lines of site to market stalls
- 2.2 The public realm can be generous in some locations, allowing for spill out space and a sociable public realm - improvements to the quality of the public realm would further enhance this
- 2.3 Church Walk, a handsome thoroughfare connecting the town centre to St Mary's Parish Church, could benefit from lighting in evenings
- 2.4 Cut-throughs from the high street are narrow, cluttered and poorly lit
- 2.5 Despite its recent reconfiguration, the road layout between Middle Street and Dereham Road can be tricky to navigate
- 2.6 The lack of dropped curbs limits accessibility for those using wheelchairs and mobility scooters, and can force them to use the road rather than the pavement
- 2.7 There is a notable lack of green space, soft landscaping and trees in and around the town centre. Addition of planters help to address this but add clutter to the pavement
- 2.8 Chaston Place is an important public space pocket but multiple ownership has hampered consolidation. Proximity to Middle Street lends itself to a co-ordinated redesign with a better crossing to the market

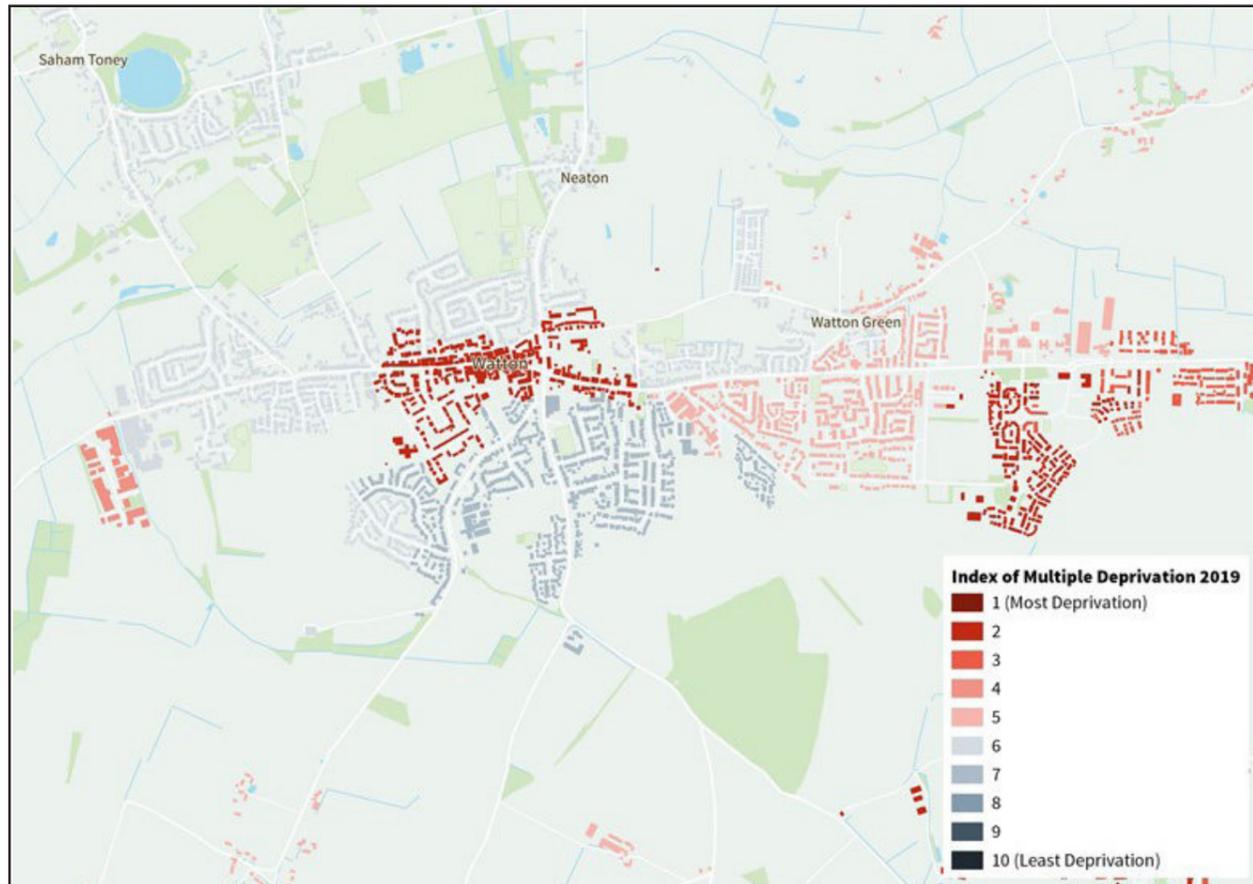
KEY

-  Pedestrian routes and cut-throughs
-  Formal crossings
-  Informal crossings (dropped curbs accesible to wheelchair users)
-  Main course of vehicular traffic
-  Bus stop
-  Vehicular roadways
-  Access only
-  Parking
-  Town centre boundary



Source: We Made That, 2021

Figure 7 Watton's Deprivation Patterns, 2019



Source: Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019

Our community organisations are critical to supporting our diverse, deprived and ageing local population...

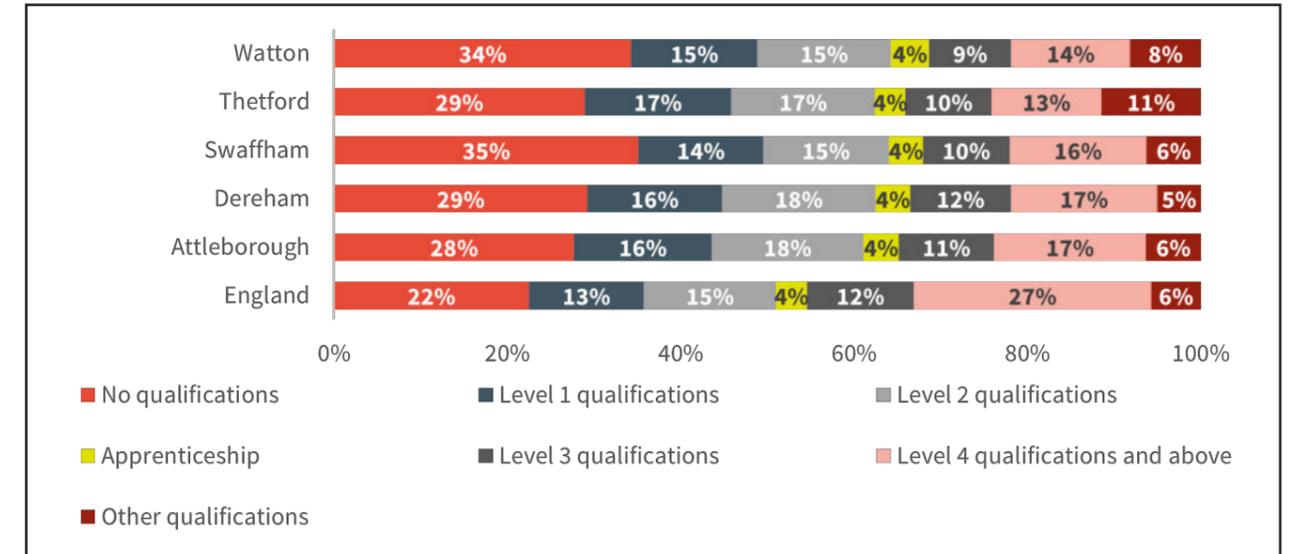
Our population is diverse and supported by several valued community organisations, including the Charlotte Harvey Trust, The Wayland Partnership, Queen's Hall (Watton Village Hall) and the Watton Sports Association and Social Club. The work of these groups is particularly important given the high levels of deprivation in our town, which are among the highest in the country (particularly around the town centre and to the south of Carbrooke in the east). The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated deprivation, as evidenced by claimant counts

increasing by 192% between May 2018 and May 2020.

Our town also scores poorly in relation to Access to Healthy Assets and Hazards - a multi-dimensional index for Great Britain measuring how "healthy" neighbourhoods are. Challenges are present across the board, with four out of five neighbourhoods in the top 30% worst performing areas in the country for air quality, access to blue/green space and access to health infrastructure and retail provision.

While important social and leisure facilities exist across the town, including the Charlotte Harvey Centre, the Queen's Hall and Watton Sports

Figure 8 Qualifications Levels Across Breckland's Market Towns, 2011



Source: Census, 2011

Association and Social Club, these buildings are ageing and some organisations face challenging financial situations. As the town continues to grow and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic pressure on these community groups and their facilities will intensify.

Linked to these issues, qualification levels in our town are among the lowest in Breckland and below the national average. More than one in three of our residents have no qualifications and only 14% have Level 4 qualifications or above.³ Our local secondary school also 'Requires Improvement' according to Ofsted. With low skill levels and poor participation of residents in higher education (only 18% of our young people go to university), we risk a perpetual cycle of low ambition, low achievement and brain drain. We also have an ageing population, with 30% of residents aged 65+, impacting our economy and labour market.

³ Level 4 qualifications include apprenticeships, diplomas, NVQs and certificates of higher education.

We have an important foundational economy and several anchor employers...

Our town is home to around 230 businesses which provide 2,600 jobs. Some of these businesses are 'anchor' employers that support many jobs and make a significant contribution to the local economy. Some of these have traditionally attracted European workers and will be affected by changes to migration policies as a result of Brexit.

Cranswick Country Foods

Cranswick is one of Britain's largest food producers. The company was started by a group of farmers from Yorkshire in 1975 and it now employs over 7,000 people across the UK. The company purchased meat processing firm Bowes of Norfolk in 2009 and acquired the Watton Meat Processing Factory as part of this.

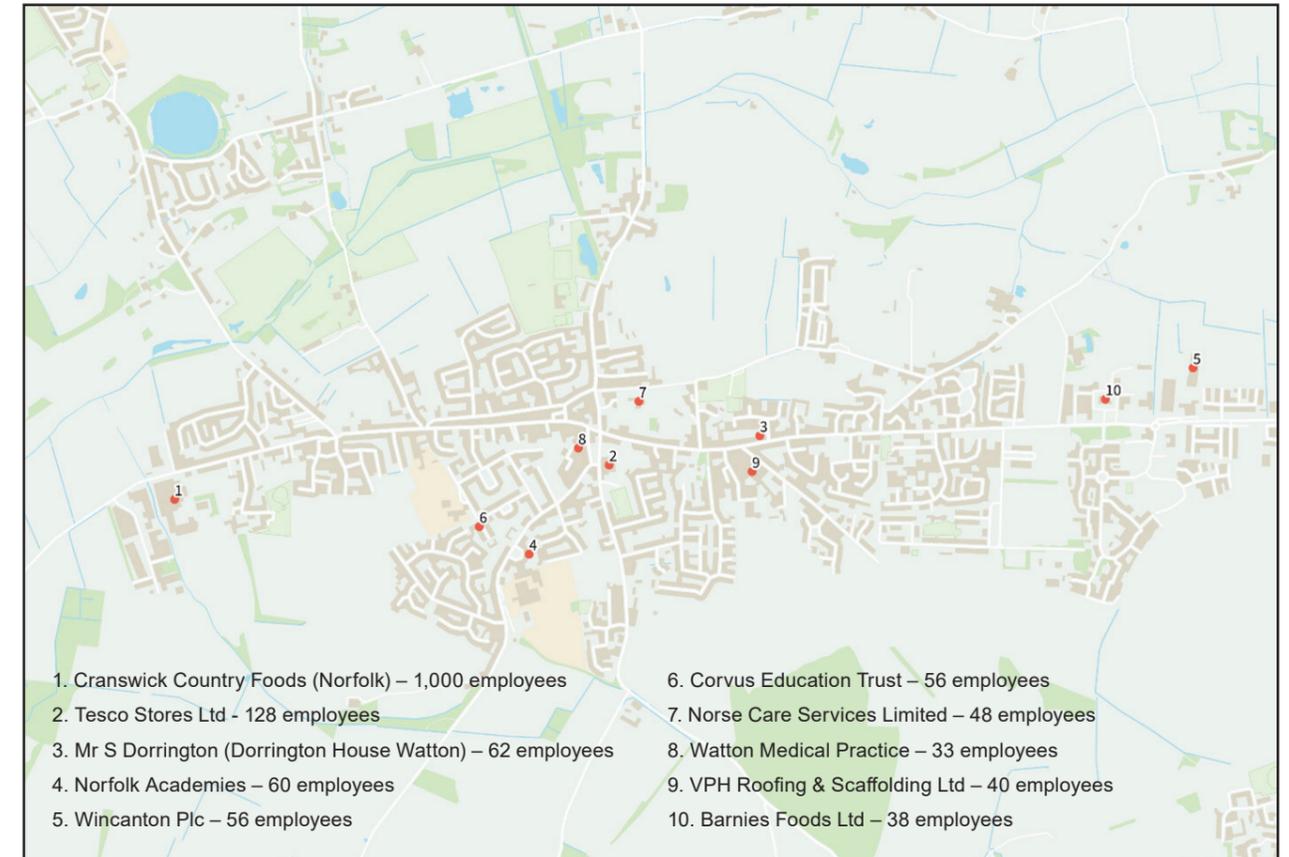
Cranswick is our largest employer with over 1,000 people working at the site and around 70% of these living locally. With median gross annual pay for Process, Plant and Machine Operatives in the East of England being £25,408⁴, it is estimated that the value of Cranswick to the economy is around £25 million per year with around £17.8 million being retained locally. Local employees spend their wages in our high street shops and businesses supporting our town's economy and vitality.



Source: Cranswick PLC | Great British Taste

4. ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2019 provisional data based on SOC 10.

Figure 9 Watton's Major Employers, 2021



Source: IDBR, 2021

The rest of our economy is dominated by lower-value and lower-wage activities such as retail, public administration, education and health. This highlights that our economy is geared to providing important goods and services for our residents.

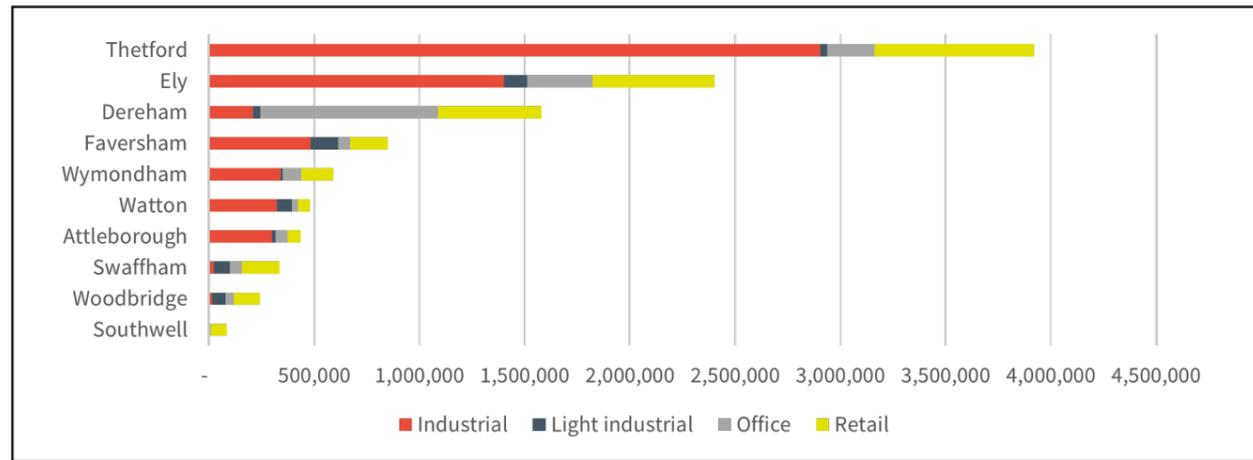
The size, value and diversity of our economy, which directly impacts the deprivation issues previously set out, is being held back by a range of factors discussed throughout this chapter – namely our limited labour market, low skill levels, poor public transport connectivity and constrained commercial property market.

Our commercial property market is one of the most significant barriers as nearly all our industrial space, which is our dominant commercial use,

is fully occupied, ageing and poor quality. This is stopping new productive businesses from locating in our town and is preventing a healthy churn of businesses. We also have a lack of light industrial space compared to other towns and almost no office space.

Our economy is also constrained by poor public transport connectivity. We have 218,000 people living within a 45-minute car journey of the town but only 8,000 people within a 45-minute public transport ride. This is a particular issue in the evening as the last bus service stops at 7pm. This limits Watton's potential as a commuter town and makes it a less attractive proposition to new residents, businesses and visitors.

Figure 10 Commercial Floorspace Across Breckland's Market Towns, 2020



Source: Co-Star, 2021.

Our reliance on cars is evident in data provided by the Department for Transport – private vehicles account for 77.4% of movements through our town centre. Meanwhile buses and coaches only account for 0.3% of movements and bicycles account for 0.2%. This necessary reliance on private vehicles has knock on impacts for pollution, congestion and safety which impacts the health, wellbeing and quality of life of our residents and visitors.

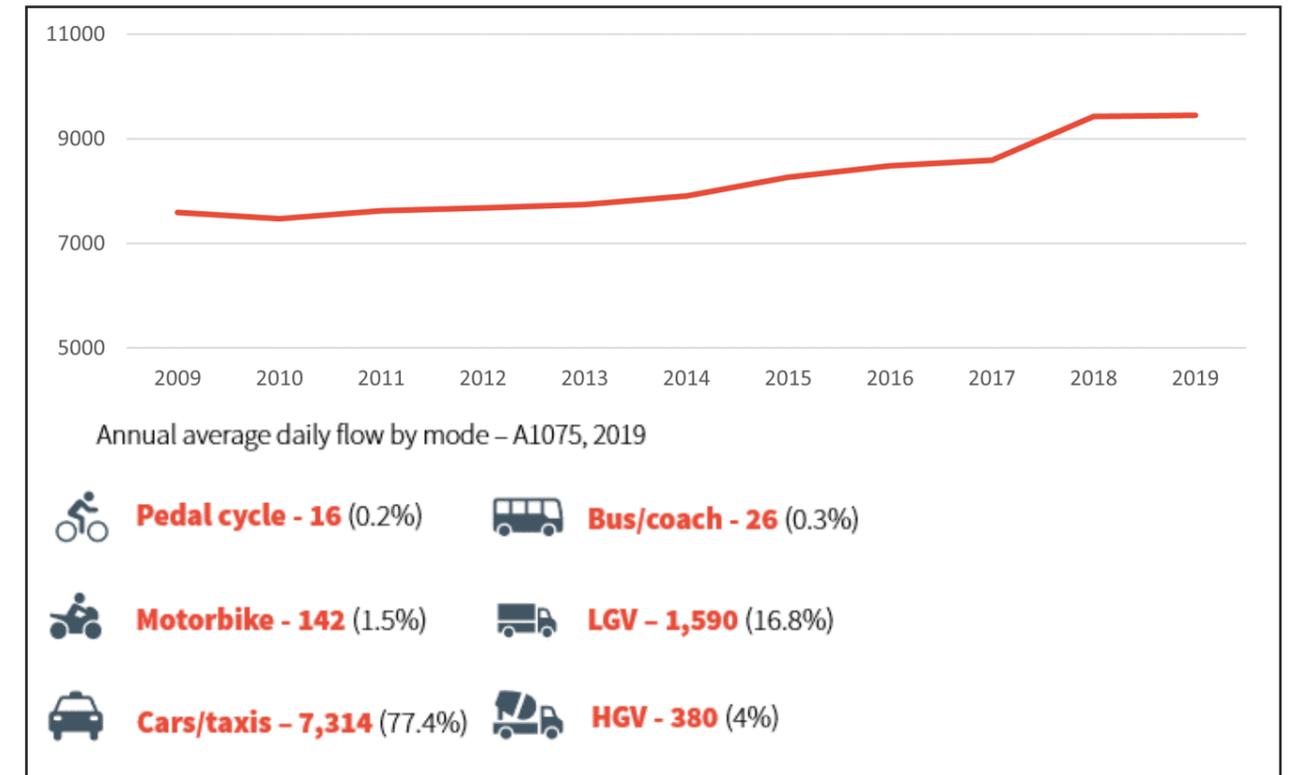
For our economy to reap the benefits of the 4th Industrial Revolution we also need to improve our digital connectivity. Although 96.5% of premises have access to super fast speeds only 3% have access to the fastest speeds which many businesses now demand. This will act as a drag on our ability to attract new and diverse high-value business to our town. As the world becomes increasingly digital it will also constrain the quality of life for residents.

Watton's Strengths and Opportunities

Our town also has many strengths and opportunities that we can build on:

- Watton has a popular local market:** Our market plays an important role in our community and is part of our identity. There is an opportunity to enhance its look, feel and offer to attract more people to spend time and money in the town centre.
- Watton has important community and leisure assets:** These include Wayland House, Watton Library, the Charlotte Harvey Centre, Queens Hall and Watton Sports Association and Social Club. There is an opportunity to improve and address gaps in provision through closer working, better co-ordination and investment in physical assets and sites.
- Watton has multicultural communities:** We boast one of the most diverse communities in the district. This should be celebrated and there is an opportunity to strengthen ties between different groups.
- Watton has valuable anchor employers:** Cranswick is one of the largest employers in the district and makes a significant contribution to the local economy and vitality

Figure 11 Total Vehicle Count on A1075 and Average Daily Flow by Mode



Source: DfT Traffic Counts, 2021

of our high street. Other important employers include Tesco, Dorington House, Norfolk Academies and Wincanton. There is an opportunity for the public and private sector to work more closely to deliver even greater benefits to the town and its communities.

- Watton has unique green spaces:** This includes Loch Neaton, a beautiful lake surrounded by greenery, Wayland Wood, an ancient woodland mentioned in the Domesday Book, and Saham Mere, a glacial lake, residual from the Ice Age.
- Watton has attractive architecture:** Our town centre has some attractive architecture and one of the widest high streets in the county. There is an opportunity to use this to

attract more people to visit, but investment is required in the look and feel of the town centre to realise this.

- Watton has several important development sites:** There are a number of housing sites across the town that can provide much-needed accommodation for existing and new residents (e.g. on Saham Road and Norwich Road).
- Watton is a safe and pleasant place to live:** Our town is a pleasant place to live due to its architecture, community groups and proximity to the countryside. We also have the second lowest crime rate across Breckland's market towns after Attleborough.

03

Watton's Future: The Next Ten Years



Watton's Future

The Next Ten Years

This Town Delivery Plan capitalises on Watton's strengths and addresses its challenges. It will enhance our position as a community and service hub and ensure the town meets the future needs of residents, businesses and community groups as well as those in surrounding rural communities. It is our blueprint to level up Watton.

Aspiration for Watton

This is captured in our ten-year aspiration for Watton, which is to:

Enhance the look and feel of our unique High Street to make it a more attractive place to spend time and money.



Improve sport, leisure and community facilities so our diverse community has access to the best provision in the county.



Make our town greener and more environmentally sustainable to help improve our wellbeing and quality of life.



Strengthen our foundational economy to ensure the town meets the current and future needs of our residents.



Celebrate and support our diverse community and strengthen ties between different groups.



View of Watton High Street from Dereham Road Junction



Source: We Made That, 2021

Watton High Street by Middle Street



Source: We Made That, 2021

Aspiration Realised

This aspiration will be realised through:

1. Actively pursuing and prioritising five priority **high-impact game changing interventions**.
2. Supporting and endorsing a series of **long-term high-impact infrastructure proposals**.
3. Delivering **tactical short-term interventions** that rapidly deliver highly visual improvements.

We also want Watton to become a true **21st century market town** that embraces the opportunities presented by a post-COVID and post-Brexit world. The interventions set out in this report have been selected and designed in line with the 21st century market town principles detailed overleaf.

Becoming a 21st Century Market Town

Market towns were founded on exchange, business and trade. To do this, they have always needed to function on a human scale – where people can cycle or walk to shop and work, where businesses are embedded in the community, where people can buy local produce, and where countryside and town are open to all.

A market town of the 21st century needs to be this and more. It needs to be friendly, compact and self-contained, but large enough to provide for daily needs. It needs to reflect current economic, social and ecological trends. Modern business is as much about knowledge and people, as it is about goods and transportation. In the 21st century the distance between places will matter less and the place that people are located in will matter more.

21st century market towns will be places where people congregate and interact, providing goods and services to meet each others needs. They will need to be able to evolve and meet the changing needs of the communities that they serve, including their rural hinterlands. Businesses will benefit from loyalty, distinctiveness and reputation, and people will take pride in the community and its townscape.

21st century market towns are needed now, and Watton and Breckland's other towns can become models for other areas. This includes evolving the local offer in response to the trends associated with COVID-19, but also ensuring that it adapts to wider shifts relating to the future of the high street and local economies.

The most successful market towns of the future will be proactive and have a relentless focus on meeting the needs of current and future generations. Among other things, they will provide:

1 Spaces for hybrid working
Employees are likely to be travelling to workplaces less frequently in the future but may not want to work from home due to space constraints and distractions. Market towns with flexible workspace close to where people live are likely to be popular and in demand.

2 Homes for different groups
Market towns are attractive places to live but many lack a ready supply of homes, particularly for young people and families. Market towns of the future will provide a range of housing types that cater for young people, families and older people which will ensure diverse and vibrant local populations.

3 First class digital infrastructure
High speed digital connectivity is the backbone of many high-value high-growth industries, particularly businesses in the ICT, Digital and Creative sectors. Markets towns with good digital infrastructure will be well-placed to attract businesses and hybrid workers in these fields which will bring wider economic benefits.

4 Strategic active travel networks
People are increasingly cycling and walking due to the environmental, health and financial benefits it provides versus driving and using public transport. Market towns that enable easy and safe active travel are likely to be highly appealing to businesses and workers, particularly where this enables people to access all their work, leisure and service needs within a short period of time.

5 Easy access to major employment centres
The most competitive market towns of the future will offer efficient transport links to major employment clusters and urban centres. While remote working makes distance less of an issue than in the past, employees will still want to be able to access workplaces easily and quickly when not working remotely.

6 A full service offer within easy reach of homes
The concept of the '15 Minute City' is gaining traction in policy and strategy – this is broadly accepted to be an ideal geography where most needs are met within a walking and cycling distance of 15 minutes. Many market towns already fit this definition (they are '15 Minute Towns') and the most successful will look to provide a full range of services locally that meet future needs of residents and businesses.

7 Diverse and experiential centres
Changing consumer expectations and the rapid rise of online shopping means that consumers are spending less in shops on high streets. The most resilient future town centres will be those that have a diverse offering that meets a wide range of needs in order to drive footfall. They will have places to work (e.g. [Sevenoaks Studios](#)), visit (e.g. [Turner Contemporary Margate](#)), meet (e.g. [Macknade Food Hall Faversham](#)), dwell (e.g. [Bancroft Gardens Stratford-upon-Avon](#)), participate (e.g. [Anerley Town Hall](#)) and live (e.g. [Queen's Walk East Grinstead](#)).

8 Strong and resilient local economies
Many market town economies are dominated by low-growth sectors that are at risk from macro-economic shifts and automation (e.g. Retail, Hospitality, Manufacturing and the Public Sector). The most resilient market towns will diversify their local economies to ensure a more balanced mix of more traditional industries and higher-growth and higher-value sectors.

The interventions set out in this document embrace these principles. They will help Watton become a true 21st century market town that is home to a diverse range of people and businesses. People who live in our town will have easy reach to neighbouring towns and cities, but will choose to work, relax, shop, learn, volunteer, socialise, exercise and meet locally. They will:

- Use improved sports, leisure and community facilities to socialise, have fun and access support.
- Take advantage of enhanced community provision to develop skills and enhance wellbeing.
- Access high quality green spaces close to home to exercise, relax, gather and unwind.
- Visit a more accessible, attractive and reinvigorated high street and market offering.
- Travel more sustainably within the town and to neighbouring towns using enhanced walking and cycling infrastructure.

These shifts will make Watton more vibrant, interesting and modern and it will genuinely reflect current economic, social and ecological trends. We will become even more proud of our town over the next ten years and will become its biggest and loudest advocates.



Building the Plan

This Town Delivery Plan is underpinned by the latest available evidence and extensive local engagement. It has been co-ordinated by Breckland Council with Hatch and We Made That, but it has been developed by and is owned by 'us' - the residents, businesses, organisations and public bodies with a stake in Watton.

Touchpoints

Nine touch points were organised over an intense twelve-week period:

- 1. One-to-one consultations:** In-depth consultations were held with local stakeholders. These conversations explored a wide range of topics, including stakeholders' views on Watton's strengths and weaknesses, their aspirations for the future and potential interventions that could deliver transformative impacts.
- 2. Meet the team event:** An online meeting was held with local people to introduce them to the consultant team and Breckland Council's Future Breckland: Thriving People and Places programme. Attendees were given an opportunity to ask questions, share their aspirations for Watton and sign up for additional engagement events.
- 3. Online survey:** A website was set up to provide information to the public about the Town Delivery Plan process and the opportunities available to engage. A short survey was included for people to express their views on the future of the town.
- 4. Walking workshop:** A walking workshop was held with consultants, stakeholders, Watton Town Council and Breckland Council officers. This allowed stakeholders and officers to share their views about different parts of the town and the types of interventions needed.
- 5. SWOT workshops:** An online SWOT workshop was held to have an open discussion with members of the public about their thoughts on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat aspects of the town.
- 6. Market stalls:** An in-person market stall was held at the Wednesday market to introduce local people to the project and gain insights into their thoughts about the town and how it could be improved.
- 7. Priorities workshop:** An in-person workshop was held to discuss a long list of emerging proposals so that members of the public and stakeholders could contribute thoughts and ideas, as well as letting the consultant team know which proposals they felt should be prioritised. The conversation and findings were taken into account before the short list of interventions was agreed.
- 8. Online draft report:** The draft Town Delivery Plan was published online for public comment. The report was amended in response to comments received.
- 9. Feedback from consultation was used to develop the final report.**

Around 21,300 people have been engaged as part of this process from a wide range of different groups.⁵ Key stakeholders engaged include representatives from Watton Town Council, Wayland Chamber of Commerce, Hethel Innovation, Cranswick, Wayland Academy, Norfolk County Council, St Mary's Church, Watton Sports Association and Social Club, Charlotte Harvey Trust and Loch Neaton Trust. Many other residents, businesses, charities and third sector organisations were also involved in the development of this document.

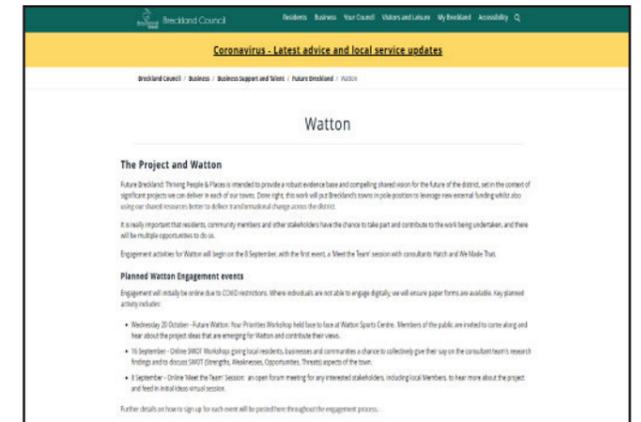
It is also estimated that around 250,000 people will have heard about the plan through radio interviews, press articles, social media posts and direct website hits on the Watton page of the [Future Breckland](#) website.

Consultation Display Boards from Market Workshop led by We Made That



Source: We Made That, 2021

Breckland Consultation webpage for Watton



Source: Breckland Council, 2021

Consultation Workshop Watton



Source: We Made That, 2021

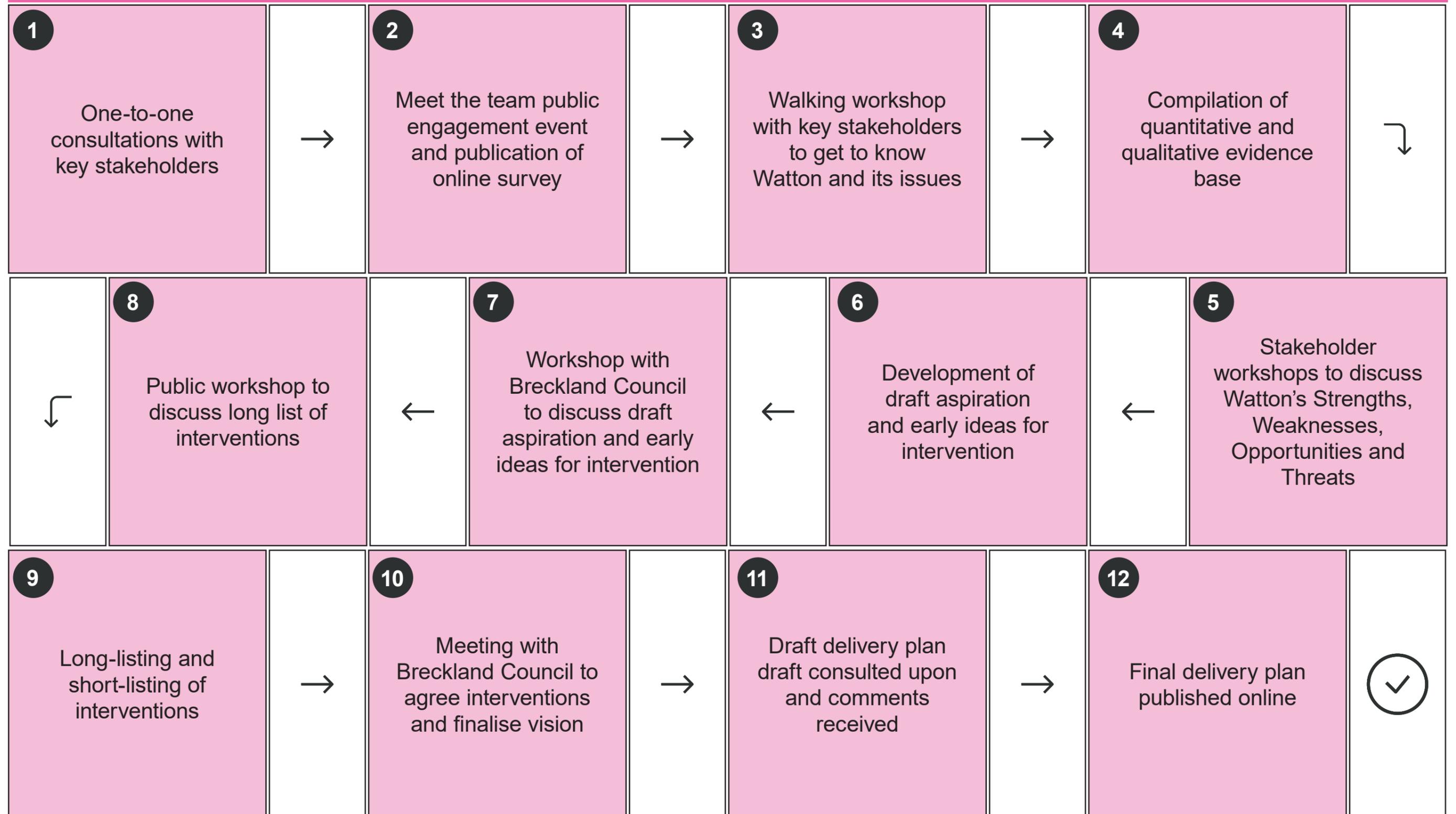
Consultation Presentation Watton



Source: We Made That, 2021

5. A 'Person Engaged' is defined as someone who has: (a) attended an interactive session, (b) participated in a relevant meeting, (c) been involved in a 1-1 conversation, (d) responded to the survey and/or, (e) been in receipt of substantial programme information that they have had the opportunity to comment on.

Figure 12 Building Watton's Town Delivery Plan



Selecting the Game Changing Interventions

Six game changing interventions have been selected to transform Watton. These are:

1. **Attractive Watton:** Enhancing our Town Centre.
2. **Inclusive Watton:** Improving Local Provision.
3. **Destination Watton:** Rejuvenating Loch Neaton.
4. **Welcoming Watton:** Gateway into the Town Centre.
5. **Connected Watton:** Re-connecting Watton and Swaffham.
6. **Innovative Watton:** Digital Creative Media Centre.

More detail is provided on these later in this report. These represent a clear investment package that will:

- Help to deliver our aspiration for Watton.
- Contribute to Breckland Council's overarching Future Breckland: Thriving People and Places objectives (See Chapter 1: Watton's Town Delivery Plan).
- Align with the themes of major Government funding pots (e.g. town centre regeneration, cultural investment, active travel and policy priorities such as the Levelling Up agenda).
- Complement existing activity and policy aspirations for Watton from different partners.
- Align with Breckland Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2023.
- Complement and integrate with one another to deliver positive change.

These interventions were selected using a robust prioritisation process that aligns with Government's methodology for developing place-based plans and securing public sector investment. This involved scoring a long list of around 20 potential interventions that emerged through the engagement process against five 'success factors':

1. **Impact:** Will the intervention have a transformative impact on the town?
2. **Ownership:** How complex is the ownership structure?
3. **Dependencies:** How many dependencies need to be resolved to bring the intervention forward?
4. **Need:** Does the evidence collated indicate that this intervention is needed?
5. **Timescales:** Can the intervention be delivered in under ten years?

Each intervention was given a score for each 'success factor' by the independent consultant team. The highest scoring interventions were added to a shortlist, but given the focus on delivering transformational change only those with a high score for 'impact' were eligible for this list.

The consultant team also used their professional judgment and qualitative insights to ensure that the shortlist of game changing interventions selected (a) address the town's primary issues and challenges, (b) integrate and complement one another, and (c) can collectively deliver a step change for the town.

This prioritisation process is important because, while all the interventions on the long list have merit, it is not feasible or realistic for partners to deliver all of them given the current funding climate. This process enables the town's limited resources to be directed to projects that will deliver the biggest impact for Watton.

Some interventions have not made the short list but are still considered as important by partners and our community. The game changers will therefore be complemented by (a) the delivery of some **tactical short-term interventions** from the long list that will rapidly deliver highly visual improvements and, (b) through the provision of support for a series of **long-term high-impact proposals**.

Table 1 Contribution of Game Changing Interventions to the Watton Ambition

Interventions	Watton Aspiration				
	1	2	3	4	5
Inclusive Watton Improving Local Provision	Strong Positive Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
Attractive Watton Enhancing our Town Centre	Positive Impact	Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact	Positive Impact
Destination Watton Rejuvenating Loch Neaton	Strong Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact			Strong Positive Impact
Welcoming Watton Gateway into the Town Centre		Strong Positive Impact		Strong Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact
Connected Watton Re-connecting Watton and Swaffham	Strong Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact		Positive Impact	Positive Impact
Innovative Watton Digital Creative Media Centre	Positive Impact		Strong Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact	Positive Impact
Key	1. Improve sports, leisure and community offer 2. Make our town greener and more environmentally sustainable 3. Strengthen our foundational economy to meet current and future needs		4. Enhance the look and feel of our High Street to make it more attractive 5. Celebrate and support our diverse community		
	■ Strong Positive Impact ■ Positive Impact				

Contributing to Breckland-Wide Objectives

As well as delivering against the Watton ambition, these game changing interventions will contribute to six Breckland-wide objectives that have been developed in response to the district's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as set out earlier in this document (See Chapter 1: Introduction). Together with the plans for Thetford, Dereham, Attleborough and Swaffham, they will deliver district-wide economic, social and environmental benefits.

Catalysing Positive Change

Public sector investment is required to unlock our opportunities and kickstart catalytic change. This is because several market failures are holding the town back:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Viability Gap: Commercial rents are comparatively low making most investments unviable without public sector support.</p> | <p>2. Abnormal Costs: Our town centre has some historic properties that are difficult and expensive to develop deterring investors.</p> |
| <p>3. Public Goods: Access to green space, air quality, exercise provision, for example, provide wider societal benefits that the private market is unlikely to address in optimal quantities.</p> | <p>4. Public Goods: Public realm, transport infrastructure and some commercial properties are the responsibility of public bodies and therefore require active intervention.</p> |
| <p>5. Equity Failure: Ensuring all groups have equal access to outcomes and removing barriers that exclude certain groups requires public sector intervention.</p> | <p>6. Co-ordination Failure: There is a need to pull together the aspirations and work of different partners to ensure alignment and deliver genuine transformative change together.</p> |

Investment in the interventions set out in this document will address these market failures and deliver positive change. This is summarised in our Logic Model overleaf – this captures the rationale for the interventions and illustrates how they will deliver positive impacts for both Watton and Breckland.

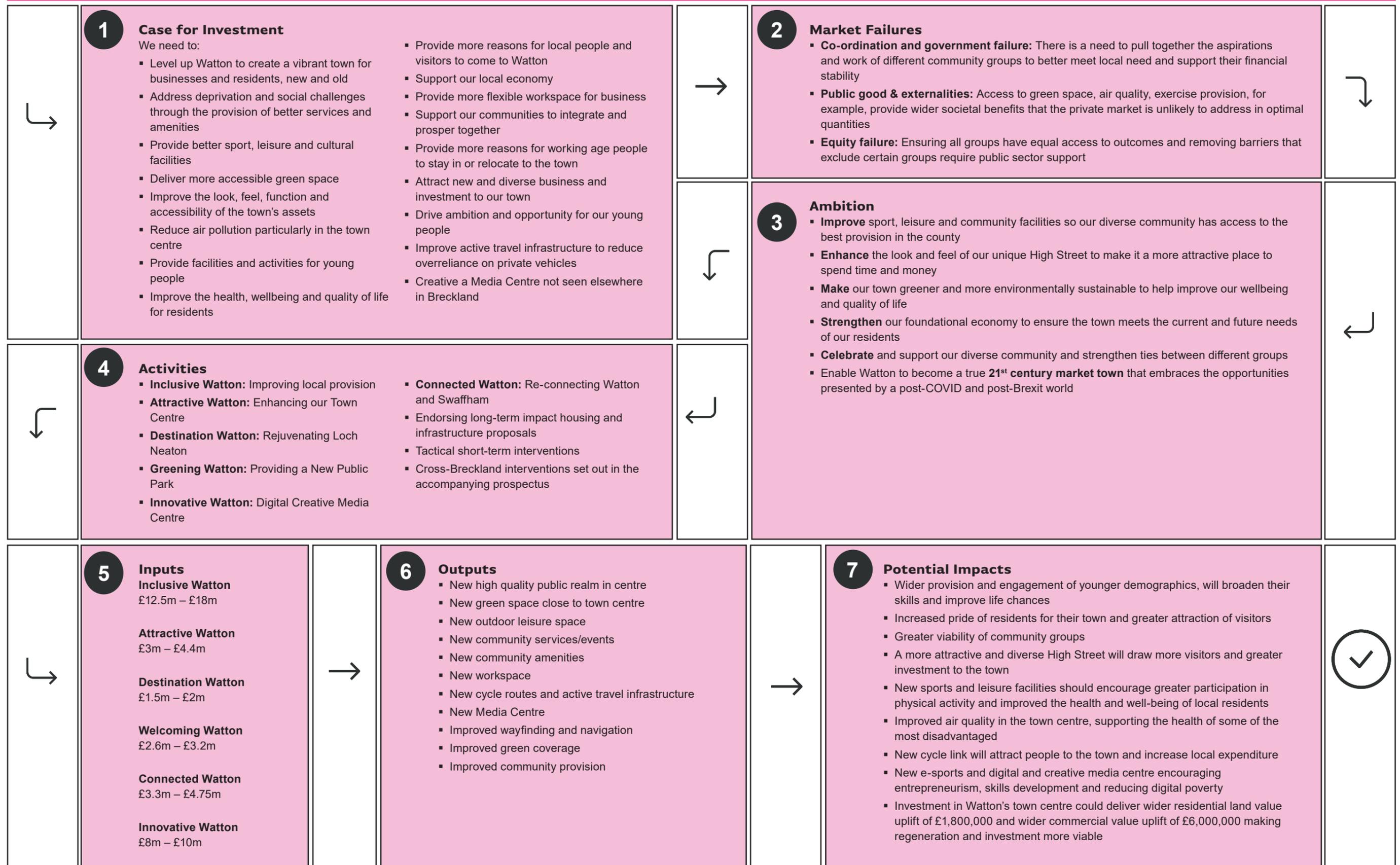
Logic Model

A logic model is a graphic that reflects the theory of how interventions lead to positive outcomes. It represents, in a simplified way, a hypothesis about how interventions work together to deliver positive change.

It is important to note that this work will complement and add to existing aspirations for the town, district and region. For example, the Town Delivery Plan aligns with:

- Emerging Watton Neighbourhood Plan (2021-2036):** This sets out Watton Town Council's vision for Watton to remain a vibrant, healthy and helpful town for all with ample open and formal spaces for health and recreation. It aims to enable strong links to other towns and provide equal opportunities for living, working and learning for all residents during their lives.
- Watton's Town Centre Design Code (2020):** This sets out design guidelines for the town centre to inform the development of the Watton Neighbourhood Plan. A range of design codes are provided relating to town centre uses, street furniture, seating, night time activity, street lighting, parking, traffic calming, shop fronts, signage and sustainability.
- Breckland's Local Plan (2019-2036):** This summarises Breckland District Council's ambition to deliver 15,000 new homes and 64 Ha of employment land across the district by 2036. Watton is expected to contribute over 1,600 homes.
- Norfolk's Strategic Planning Framework (2019+):** This details a collective spatial vision for Norfolk that reflects the aspirations of all the county's Local Planning Authorities. The vision focuses on strengthening the regional economy, increasing resilience to climate change, regenerating settlements, meeting housing need and building excellent physical and digital connectivity.
- Norfolk's Together, For Norfolk Plan (2019-2025):** This is Norfolk County Council's plan for the future of the county and it sets out a commitment to invest in Norfolk's growth and prosperity by: (1) focusing on inclusive growth and improved social mobility; (2) encouraging housing, infrastructure, jobs and business growth; (3) developing the workforce to meet the needs of local businesses; and, (4) reducing the impact of economic activity on the environment.
- Norfolk's Draft Transport Strategy (2021-2036):** This sets out Norfolk County Council's aspiration to improve the county's transport system by embracing the future, prioritising sustainable travel, improving connectivity and increasing accessibility. It restates the County's aspiration to dual the A47, including between Easton and Tuddenham.
- Norfolk's Rural Strategy (2017-2020):** This sets out Norfolk County Council's vision for rural Norfolk which is focused around exploiting future growth opportunities by embracing technology-led growth, creating a world-class environment to live, work and visit and delivering a competitive land-based industry.

Figure 13 Watton's Logic Model





04

Watton's Game
Changers:
Enabling
Transformative
Change

Watton's Game Changers

Enabling Transformative Change

Figure 14 Overview of Interventions

1. Inclusive Watton: Improving Local Provision

Coordinated services to improve provision currently provided at:

- 1.1 Charlotte Harvey Centre
- 1.2 Queens Hall
- 1.3 Wayland House
- 1.4 Watton Sports Association & Social Club

2. Attractive Watton: Enhancing our Town Centre

- 2.1 Chaston Place upgrades
- 2.2 Middle Street pedestrian prioritisation
- 2.3 Improvements to accessibility
- 2.4 Improvements to streetscape

3. Destination Watton: Rejuvenating Loch Neaton

4. Welcoming Watton: Gateway into the Town Centre

- 4.1 Visual enhancements at eastern gateway; potential for facade improvements, filling vacant units and wayfinding artwork
- 4.2 Improved public realm and pedestrian environment
- 4.3 Improved cycle connections
- 4.4 Opportunities for improved edge conditions and identity artwork

Key

- Inclusive Watton
- Attractive Watton
- Welcoming Watton
- Attractive Watton: traffic and pedestrian movement improvements
- Destination Watton
- Connected Watton
- Quick Wins
- Key connections and pedestrian routes
- Town centre boundary



5. Connected Watton: Reconnecting Watton and Swaffham

6. Innovative Watton: Digital Creative Media Centre

A new state-of-the-art digital and creative training centre.

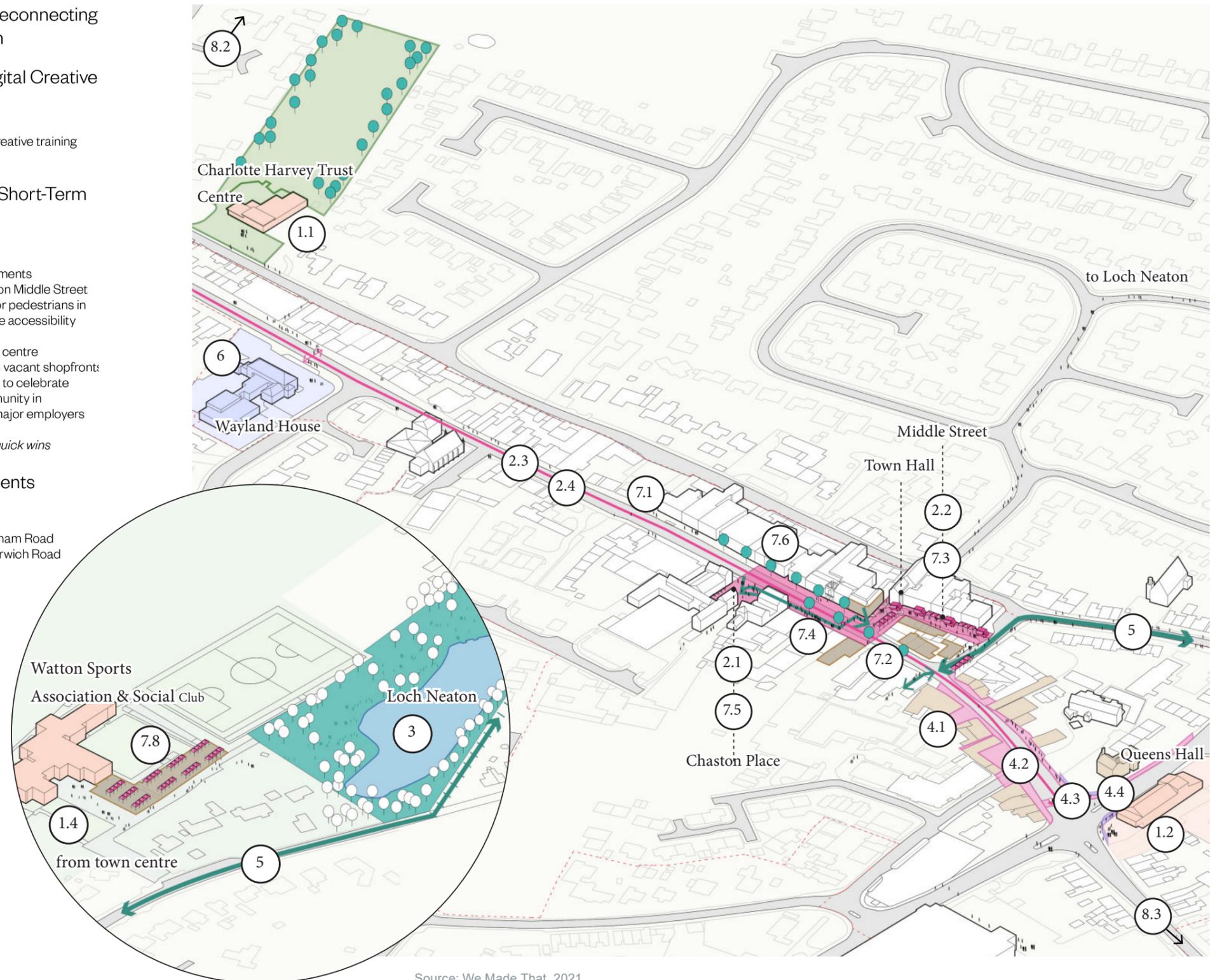
7. Watton's Quick Wins: Short-Term Tactical Interventions

- 7.1 Shop front improvements
- 7.2 Potential for facade improvements
- 7.3 Testing of pedestrianisation on Middle Street
- 7.4 Improved crossing options for pedestrians in the town centre and step-free accessibility
- 7.5 Improved bicycle parking
- 7.6 New trees and plants in town centre
- 7.7 Pop-up events to test uses in vacant shopfronts
- 7.8 Themed events and festivals to celebrate Watton and its diverse community in conjunction with the town's major employers

Refer to section 5 for the full list of quick wins

8. Long-Term Endorsements

- 8.1 Town centre bypass
- 8.2 Housing development on Saham Road
- 8.3 Housing development on Norwich Road



Source: We Made That, 2021

1. Attractive Watton: Enhancing our Town Centre

Project Description

Our town centre has one of the widest high streets in the region as well as impressive market town architecture and some important heritage assets. Alongside our weekly market, it plays an important service function and underpins our foundational economy.

There is, however, a need to improve our high street's look, feel and accessibility to make our centre a more attractive place to spend time and money. The main issues that need addressing are:

- Parts of the high street are tired, dilapidated and unattractive.
- Crossings are far apart and, in some cases, precarious creating an unsafe and inaccessible pedestrian environment.
- Pavements are difficult to navigate in some areas with limited dropped curbs for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and buggies.
- The high street is dominated by a steady flow of traffic and heavy goods vehicles and there is a lot of parking taking up valuable public space.
- There is a lack of green space, soft landscaping and trees in and around the centre.

The aim of this intervention is to make a series of tactical improvements to our town centre that will create high-quality and well-connected public spaces that become the focus for social activity on the high street, enhance our market, drive footfall and support activities in the wider area.

Four co-ordinated investments will create a new focal point to our town centre:

1. Upgrading Chaston Place and its public realm
2. Making Middle Street more pedestrian friendly and upgrading market infrastructure
3. Improving accessibility and connectivity, particularly between Chaston Place and Middle Street
4. Improving the streetscape and environmental sustainability of the town centre

More detail on these, and how they interlink, is provided below and a visual representation has also been included.

The next step is to undertake a full feasibility and design study in line with the principles set out here.

Project Rationale

Our high street is central to our foundational economy which supports our residents and neighbouring communities. But it is not reaching its potential as it has:

- High retail vacancy rates
- A busy and polluted main road
- Limited space for market stalls
- Restricted pedestrian access to market at Middle Street
- Dilapidated buildings and assets
- Poor accessibility, particularly for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and buggies
- Lack public space for people to rest and dwell

Strategic Alignment

Watton Ambition:

- Will improve the look, feel and function of our high street making it more attractive to visit
- Will drive high street footfall and spend strengthening our foundational economy
- Will support our diverse community and strengthen ties between different groups through the provision of new inclusive public spaces for all
- Will make the town greener by providing spaces for people to spend time and congregate away from the busy main road
- Will make the high street more environmentally sustainable through planting, trees, EV charging, traffic management etc

Breckland Objectives:

- Will support town centre regeneration by enhancing the look, feel and accessibility of our centre
- Will support inclusion as new public spaces will be more accessible and will cater for a diverse range of local people
- Will enhance business and enterprise by driving footfall and local spend
- Will enhance historic buildings and assets contributing to the district's heritage

Government Ambitions:

- Aligns with Government ambitions related to town centre regeneration as set out in the prospectuses for the Stronger Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund

Proposed Actions

- **Chaston Place Upgrades:** Improvements to the public realm at Chaston Place to enhance the appearance of this important public space. This will include the provision of additional seating, lighting, cycle storage and trees to improve the visitor experience.
- **Middle Street Pedestrian Prioritisation:** Creating a new pedestrian friendly town square around Middle Street to support our market and adjacent businesses. This will involve providing a new pedestrian space away from the main road which will establish a sense of place and attractive environment for both traders and shoppers. Improved market infrastructure will be provided to maximise the impact of investment, such as improved market stalls and power points for market traders.

This project will involve closing Middle Street and Dereham Road to traffic which will increase the quality of place and support the market to thrive. Through traffic along these roads is non-essential and used mostly for parking, pick up and loading. Based upon extensive experience in similar towns we believe a shared surface is a much more suitable option for the future.

- **Improvements to Accessibility:** Increasing the width of pavements in parts of the town centre and combing this with traffic calming measures to improve pedestrian safety in our town centre. Crossings will also be improved, including between the newly upgraded Chaston Place and Middle Street, to make the town centre easier to move around.
- **Improvements to Streetscape:** Long-term improvements to the streetscape and public realm, including making the town centre greener through investment in trees, living walls, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, electric vehicle chargers and speed restrictions.

Existing Site Photographs

Public Space Watton High Street



Source: We Made That 2021

Middle Street Market



Source: We Made That 2021

Delivery Partners

- Norfolk County Council; Watton Town Council; Breckland Council; Landowners; Market Traders; Business-owners

1. Attractive Watton: Enhancing our Town Centre...continued

<p>Estimated Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our estimate is a maximum of £4.4m across four projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chaston Place Upgrades £749,000 Middle Street Pedestrian Prioritisation £1,685,000 Improvements to Accessibility £1,238,000 Improvements to Streetscapes £734,000 	
<p>Potential Funding Mechanisms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector grants (e.g. Levelling Up Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund); Developer contributions (e.g. s106); Local public bodies (e.g. Breckland Council, Watton Town Council and Norfolk County Council capital funds) 	
<p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further engagement with landowners, stakeholders and market users; Feasibility studies, including detailed transport and traffic study; Concept design and detailed design; Negotiate agreements with relevant landowners r.e. Chaston Place; Secure planning and statutory permissions; Secure capital funding; Implement capital schemes 	
<p>Timescales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short term (0-3 years): Full feasibility and detailed designs. Trialling of temporary pedestrianisation of Middle Street. Medium term (3-5 years): Conclude negotiations with landowners and secure necessary permissions. Implement short-term elements of scheme. Long-Term (5 Years+): Full capital improvement works. 	<p>Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 830sqm public realm improvements 460 sqm for Chaston Place public realm improvements 1010 sqm highways improvements: traffic calming measures 1385 sqm for Middle Street & Dereham Road shared surface 200 sqm of Town Hall frontage improvements
<p>Potential Impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced public realm should attract locals and visitors to the town centre increasing expenditure in local businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An evaluation of public realm improvements in Bristol shows a 25% increase in footfall on Saturdays⁶ Improved public space and green space in Sheffield City Centre increased footfall by 35% and led to a £4.2m net increase in spending within local businesses⁷ Pedestrianisation and the introduction of a new public square in Coventry led to a 25% increase in weekend footfall⁸ Investment in good quality public realm should increase local land values making wider regeneration more viable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A study by the Northwest Regional Development Agency found that good urban design can lead to an increase of up to 20% in capital value and accelerate lettings and sales rates⁹ Public realm investments in Sheffield contributed to an increase in property rental value of £1.60-£2.40 / sq. ft. and a 1-1.5% yield improvement¹⁰ Using MHCLG appraisal guidance it is estimated that investments in Watton's town centre could deliver wider residential land value uplift of £1,823,810 and wider commercial land value of £6,152,641¹¹ 	

- High levels of public investment should encourage other business-owners to improve their properties and stimulate wider investment in the town
 - St Anne's on the Sea invested £1.75m in refurbishing their main pedestrian square which stimulated over £20m of wider private sector investment in the town¹²

- Highways upgrades should reduce noise and air pollution making it more pleasant to visit, dwell and spend time
- Enhanced town centre appearance should improve perceptions of Watton as a place to live, work and open a new business

Project Examples

- Brentford Market, Brentford: A £2 million improvement scheme to upgrade the public square outside the old Brentford Magistrates' Court and support the town's Sunday market. The scheme sought to rejuvenate Brentford High Street as a successful livable town centre and reassert its sense of place and identity. The project improved users' experiences and enhanced the public realm by combining art and high quality materials to create a multi-functional space.
- Grey to Green, Sheffield: An ambitious and innovative inner-city renewal scheme transforming 1.6 kilometres of road space into a high-profile linear green route for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. Green infrastructure such as sustainable drainage systems, tree planting and urban meadows have been used as key tools in the transformation.

Public Space Altrincham Town Centre



Source: Planit-ie

Highstreet Horsham Town Centre



Source: Landbuild

6. The Pedestrian Pound: The Business Case for Better Street and Public Spaces, Just Economics (2016)
 7. The Pedestrian Pound, Living Streets (2018)
 8. ibid
 9. ibid
 10. The Pedestrian Pound: The Business Case for Better Street and Public Spaces, Just Economics (2016)
 11. This is a high-level gross estimate. Detailed economic modelling adjusted for additionality will be undertaken as part of the Breckland Prospectus early next year.

12. ibid

Figure 15 Attractive Watton: Enhancing our Town Centre (Exploratory Diagram of Proposed Strategy to Enhance the Town Centre)

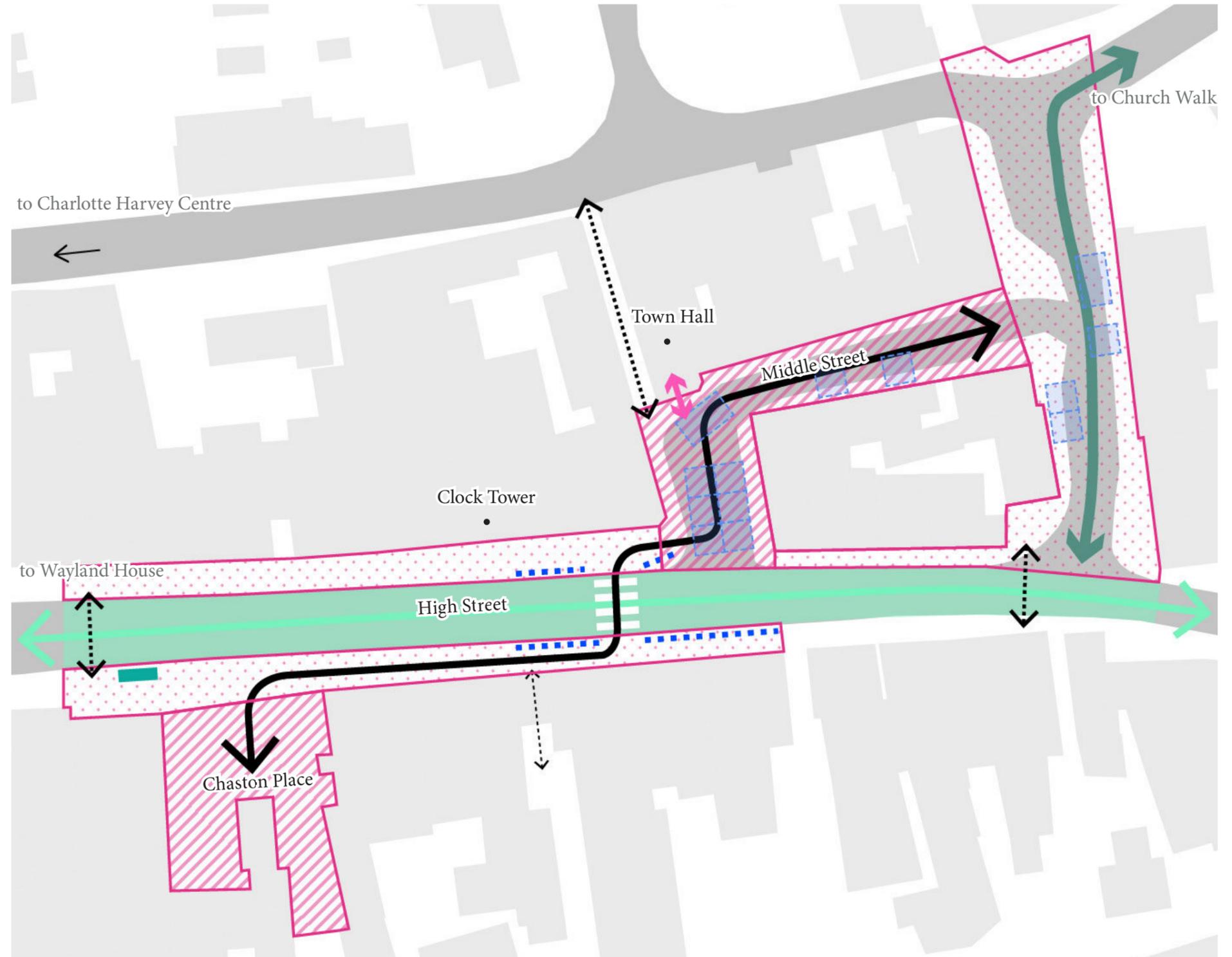
Key

-  Upgraded public realm to create sense of place and support market
-  Improved public realm
-  Traffic calming and greening measures to improve pedestrian safety
-  Vehicle movement
-  Improved pedestrian movement
-  Potential for enhanced pedestrian connections and crossings
-  Bus stop
-  Cycling and walking connection to Swaffham (see project 5)
-  Open up Town Hall frontage
-  Current approximate arrangement of stalls on market day
-  Remove railings
-  Existing buildings



Proposed areas

- 830sqm public realm improvements
- 460 sqm for Chaston Place public realm improvements
- 1010 sqm highways improvements: traffic calming measures
- 1385 sqm for Middle Street & Dereham Road shared surface
- 200 sqm of Town Hall frontage improvements



Exploratory diagram

Source: We Made That, 2021

2. Inclusive Watton: Improving Local Provision

Project Description

Our town has valued community organisations that work independently to deliver services to our residents. There are four core assets through which community services are currently delivered:

- The Charlotte Harvey Trust Centre is principally a youth and community centre but supports our wider community through services such as a food bank.
- The Queens Hall, which opened in 1956, has one of the biggest dance halls in the East of England and provides, though not exclusively, dance-based social classes and events.
- Watton Sports Association and Social Club provides indoor and outdoor sports and leisure facilities for residents of all ages.
- Museum4Watton, opened in 2015 based in part of Wayland Hall showing a number of artifacts local to Watton including a roman inhumation. The museum has received national lottery funding and is a member of the heritage network Norfolk.

All organisations provide valuable services to our community, but the groups operate independently of one another and are dispersed across our town.

This means the sites are not being optimally used and financial pressures on each organisation are high as they each manage their own individual assets. It also means that services are not as joined up as they could be.

This intervention involves investigating how services and facilities could be better coordinated to improve provision, make more efficient use of space and increase the financial viability of the different organisations. It will also involve investigating how the existing offer could be made even more inclusive and beneficial for residents and workers.

The review will assess opportunities and barriers to some, or all, of the facilities coming together on a single site to support an improved overall community service offering. This will look to build on the strong community connections and support networks already in place across the town.

The review of opportunities will also consider how consolidation of some, or all assets could free up other sites that could be used to address other economic and social challenges (e.g. provision of housing or new employment space).

Existing Site Photographs

Queens Hall Centre Watton



Source: We Made That 2021

Charlotte Harvey Centre



Source: We Made That 2021

Delivery Partners

- Charlotte Harvey Trust; Wayland Chamber of Commerce; Queens Hall (Watton Village Hall); Watton Sports Association and Social Club; Norfolk County Council; Breckland Council; Watton Town Council

Project Rationale

- Some of the country's most deprived neighbourhoods that use, and rely on, community services and facilities
- Low higher education participation and few opportunities for young people to develop skills
- Several large community groups operating independently of one another, with significant financial challenges
- Run down and ageing community and leisure assets
- Lack of green space for residents
- Limited activities for young people

Strategic Alignment

Watton Ambition:

- Will celebrate and support Watton's diverse community by improving the services that support it
- Will strengthen ties across demographic groups by bringing together various community services on a single site
- Will improve leisure, community, green space and cultural facilities to enhance the local offer and tackle entrenched deprivation
- Likely to help grow and diversify Watton's local economy if new business space is provided

Breckland Objectives:

- Will support inclusion through enhanced community services at a single delivery point
- Will support business and enterprise if new workspace is provided
- Will enhance and add to the district's culture offering

Government Ambitions:

- Aligns with Government ambitions to support communities and local regeneration as set out in the prospectuses for the Stronger Towns Fund and Community Renewal Fund

Estimated Costs

Our estimated costs are in the region of £18,000,000 but this does not include statutory service connections, enabling works and site clearance. This amount represents the total resources needed and could comprise of both public and private sector contributions.

Potential Funding Mechanisms

Community grants (e.g. Awards for All, Community Ownership- Fund); Sale of existing land and assets; Local public bodies (e.g. Watton Town Council and Norfolk County Council capital funds); Public sector grants (e.g. Levelling Up Fund, Shared Prosperity Fund and Community Renewal Fund)

Next Steps

Undertake a detailed review of the current community and leisure offering, including gaps in current provision; assess viability of the existing structure and operations; assess feasibility of bringing facilities together

Indicative Timescales

- Short term (0-2 Years): Review local provision with options and recommendations for improvement
- Medium term (2-10 Years): Implement plans and recommendations

2. Inclusive Watton: Improving Local Provision...continued

Potential Impacts

- Improved facilities and provision should encourage participation in sport, leisure, cultural and community activities
- Improved provision and participation will improve confidence and life chances of young people
 - Students from low-income families who take part in arts activities are three times more likely to get a degree¹³
 - Students from low-income families who engage in structured activities outside of school are 20% more likely to vote as young adults¹⁴
 - Young offenders who take part in arts activities are 18% less likely to re-offend¹⁵
 - Research conducted as part of the Art Council's Culture and Sport Evidence (CASE) Programme found that student participation in sporting activities can increase numeracy scores by 8% on average versus non-participants
 - Research from the Government's Department for Media, Culture and Sport found that underachieving young people who take part in sport typically see a 29% increase in numeracy skills and a 12-16% rise in other transferable skills
- Improved local provision will improve the wellbeing of our adult population
 - People who participate in a creative or cultural activities are 38% more likely to report good health compared to those who do not¹⁶
 - Arts and Mind's 2013 Arts on Prescription project in Cambridge led to significant improvements in participants' wellbeing and mental health – 76% reported increased wellbeing, 69% felt less socially excluded and 71% experienced a fall in anxiety¹⁷
 - The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence report that people who exercise regularly take 27% fewer sick days than their colleagues
- Bringing facilities together can improve the financial stability of community groups supporting them to continue their valuable work
- Bringing together facilities will free up other sites to deliver new housing and commercial space supporting economic development and growth
- Tackling gaps in the existing offer will lead to positive socio-economic outcomes
- New classes, activities and opportunities likely to bring communities together enhancing community cohesion
- Improved facilities likely to attract new regular visitors to the town increasing expenditure in local businesses
- New facilities will continue to support jobs and the local economy
- New flexible workspace offer would support employment and economic growth
 - A flexible workspace of just 200 sqm could support 17 FTE jobs and generate Gross Value Added of £837,703 m¹⁸

Project Examples

- Kyle of Sutherland Hub, Scotland: A new community hub in Sutherland that replaced a community portacabin and old double decker bus. The facility provides youth and family services, alongside income generating spaces like a fitness suite, soft play centre, café and multi-use hall. The Hub is a voluntary managed social enterprise and registered charity and has a focus on improving wellbeing, reducing isolation, skills development and overcoming deprivation faced by local communities. Funding was provided by a wide range of organisations including the National Lottery Fund, Foundation Scotland, RWE, The Highland Council, The Scottish Government, Youth Scotland, SSE, the Tudor Trust and Cattanach.
- Bungay Community Centre, Suffolk: A new community centre in Bungay which replaced the aged and dilapidated Honeypot Community Centre - a prefabricated building put up shortly after the Second World War. The new facility provides high-quality space for community members and includes a main hall, conference room, lecture room, community kitchen and bar. A wide range of activities are held in the hall, including Cadets, Mother & Toddlers, a Country Market, Bingo, Eastern Dance Group, Quilters, Table Tennis and many more.

Kyle of Sutherland Hub, Scotland



Source: Adams and Sutherland

Bungay Community Centre, Suffolk



Source: Bungay Community Centre

13. The Case for Cultural Learning, Cultural Learning Alliance (2017)

14. ibid

15. ibid

16. The Impact of Cultural Engagement and Sports Participation on Health and Satisfaction with Life in Scotland, Scottish Government Social Research (2013)

17. Arts and Minds, Arts on Prescription Evaluation, Susan Potter (2013)

18. Hatch calculations based on guidance from the Homes and Communities Agency

3. Destination Watton: Rejuvenating Loch Neaton

Project Description

Loch Neaton was originally set up in the early 1900s as a leisure park with a tennis court, bowling green, bandstand and lake for swimming, boating, fishing and ice skating.

Over time the park expanded into adjoining farmland and after the Second World War a concrete lined swimming pool was built, with a diving well, children's pool and spectator stands. The area also hosted cultural and community events – spanning from the arts to sports.

This intervention aims to rejuvenate our Loch for the enjoyment of residents. It will provide a unique selling point for our town to attract new visitors, residents, and businesses.

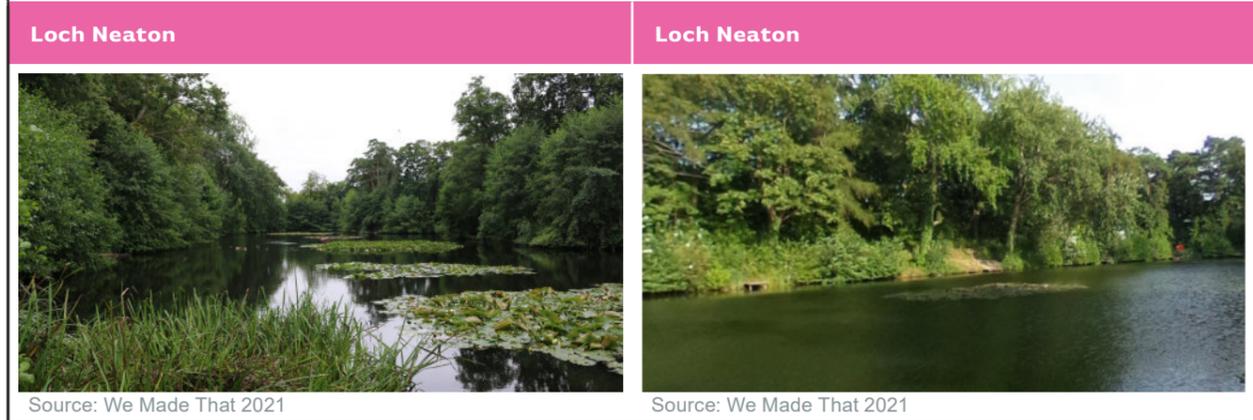
Implementing supporting facilities to maximise the success of the intervention including car parking, toilet facilities and a café.

The site will also become the gateway and starting point for a new Watton to Swaffham walking and cycling route (see Connecting Watton: Re-Connecting Watton and Swaffham). This will elevate the status of the facility and make it a regionally significant leisure asset. The supporting facilities will make it a natural start and/or end point for visitors.

The attraction will be developed and operated in line with the following principles:

- It will be accessible and affordable for all our residents
- It will provide spaces for both younger and older people
- It will be accessible to community groups and clubs
- It will enhance biodiversity and nature
- It will be designed and run to ensure the safety of visitors
- It will be run and maintained in a manner that ensure long-term viability

Existing Site Photographs



Delivery Partners

- Loch Neaton Trust; Watton Town Council; Breckland Council; Watton Flood Prevention Group; American Airforce; Norfolk County Council

Project Rationale

- Our town has limited activities for young people with a small amount of access to blue infrastructure
- Our town lacks an identity which limits its pull to new residents and visitors from surrounding areas
- We have a large potential visitor catchment market but there is currently little to attract people to our town
- In the 2011 Census 7% of residents reported that they were in bad or very bad health
- Deprivation in some areas of our town are among the highest in the country
- Loch Neaton is currently underutilised and not meeting its potential as an anchor attraction and facility for the town

Strategic Alignment

Watton Ambition:

- Will help strengthen our foundational economy by attracting visitors and encouraging expenditure in our local businesses
- Will help strengthen ties across our community by providing infrastructure that supports social capital

Government Ambitions:

- Aligns with Government ambitions to improve access to quality green and blue space especially in areas of deprivation or where there is poor or unequal access as set out in their Improving Access to Greenspace Review

Breckland Objectives:

- Aligns with Government ambitions for visible regeneration projects as set out in the prospectus for the Stronger Towns Fund
- By providing a unique attraction, it will contribute to the regeneration of our town
- Will rejuvenate one of Breckland's heritage assets, helping to increase the district's status as a visitor destination
- Will enhance access to Breckland's world-class green space, supporting environmental sustainability as well as health and wellbeing of locals and visitors.
- Will support inclusion by providing an accessible space for all people

Estimated Costs

It is difficult to estimate a capital cost without carrying out further topographical surveys and feasibility works. Estimates from similar projects suggest £1-2 million.

Potential Funding Mechanisms

Public sector grants (e.g. Levelling Up Fund, Shared Prosperity Fund, Community Asset Fund, Active Together Fund); Commercial model (e.g. entry fee); Community Infrastructure Levy; Local public bodies (e.g. Breckland Council's Commercial Property Investment Portfolio)

Next Steps

Consult with stakeholders; produce full feasibility and options assessment; commission full designs and plans; develop business plan; secure funding; secure planning permission; capital work

Indicative Timescales	Potential Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short term (0-3 Years): Consultation, options appraisal and full development plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4,000 sqm of accessible blue space
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium term (3-5 Years): Funding secured and construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4,500 sqm of upgraded green space

3. Destination Watton: Rejuvenating Loch Neaton...continued

Potential Impacts

- Increased expenditure in our town centre from regular users and visitors from outside the town
 - Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment report (2017) sets out that users of the natural environment spend between £6 and £9 on average in local businesses per trip
- Health and wellbeing improvements for our residents through enhanced amenities and more accessible green and blue space¹⁹
 - Birmingham City Council have calculated that the annual net benefit to society of their parks and green space is nearly £600m, which includes £192 million in health benefits
 - Sheffield City Council estimate that for every £1 spent on maintaining parks, there is a benefit of £34 in health costs saved, with their residents being the primary beneficiaries
- Increase land values from quality green and blue space making development more viable
 - The Office for National Statistics set out that the presence of large functional green space is associated with a rise in nearby residential property prices of 1.4%²⁰
 - The Office for National statistics set out that the presence of a large functioning blue space is associated with a rise in nearby residential property prices of 3.6%²¹
- Improved offer will attract younger and working age people to live in the town
- Accessible Green Space should support community cohesion and help to build social capital

Project Examples

- **Beckenham Place Park:** Beckenham Place Park is a former golf course that was converted into the London Borough of Lewisham's largest public park in 2017. Paid for by Heritage Lottery Funding, it offers 96 hectares of green space and includes a wide range of facilities, including café, ball court, football pitches, tennis court and sensory garden. One of the most popular elements of the park is its lake, which is London's first purpose-built swimming lake. It is 285m long, reaches depths of up to 3.4m and is used for a range of water-based activities (e.g., paddleboarding, swimming, canoeing etc). It is operated by PTP Coaching and users pay a small fee to use the facility.
- **Glentress Forest, Peebles:** The gateway to the Tweed Valley Forest Park in Scotland. Is very popular for mountain bikers, trail riders, runners and walkers. Attracts thousands of visitors each year due to the quality of its trails, but also its supporting offer which includes multiple bike hire businesses, a large car park and a popular café and restaurant. It also has a wildlife room with an observation beehive and televisions hooked up to nature cameras across the park.

Beckenham Place Park, South East London



Source: Beckenham Place Park

Glentress Forest Café, Peebles



Source: Forestry and Land Scotland

Figure 16 Destination Watton: Rejuvenating Loch Neaton

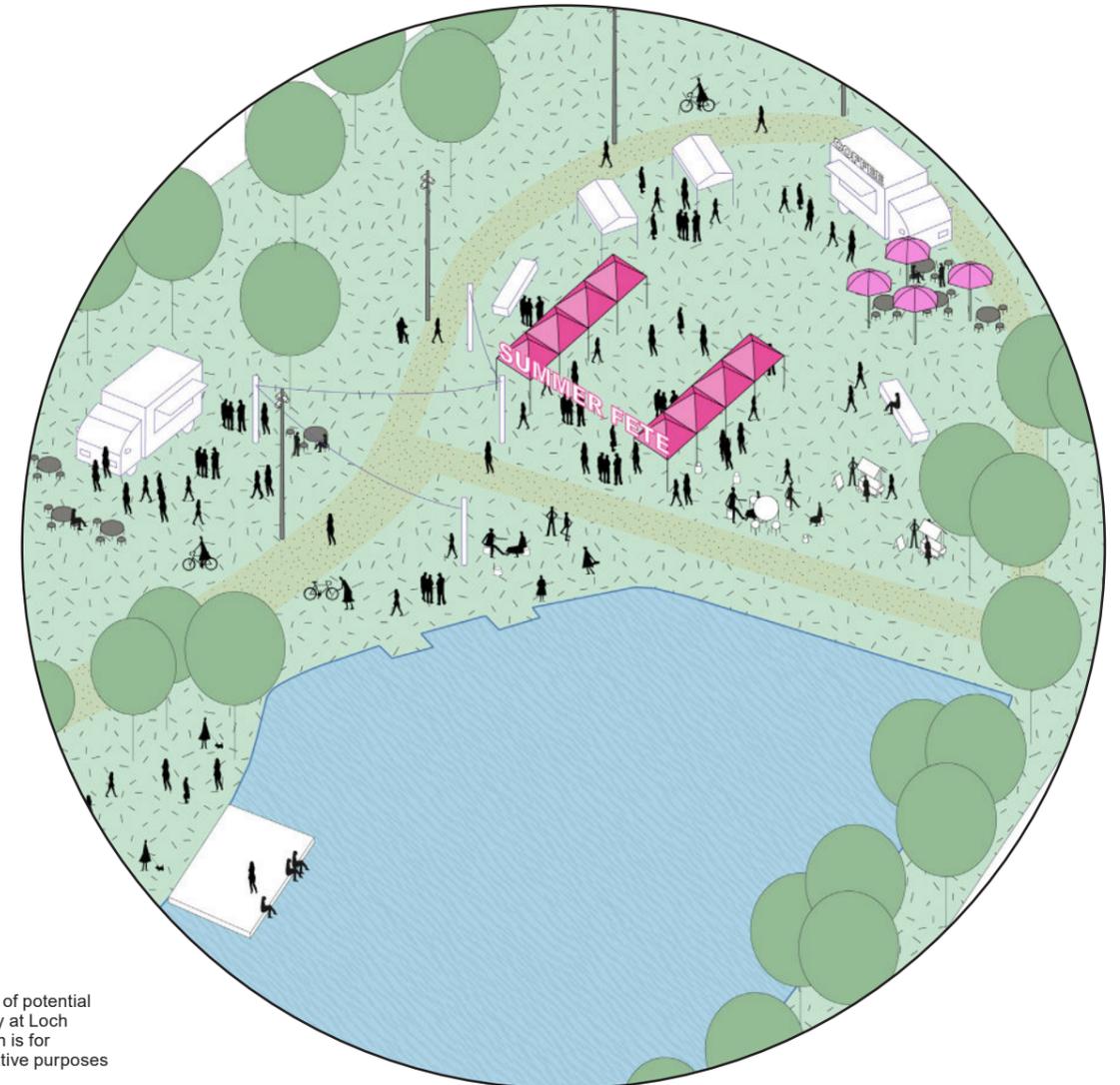


Image of potential activity at Loch Neaton is for illustrative purposes only

Source: We Made That, 2021

19. Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020, Public Health England (2020)

20. Estimating the impact urban green space has on property price, ONS (2018)

21. ibid

4. Welcoming Watton: Gateway into the Town Centre

Project Description

Watton receives a large level of vehicular through traffic when travelling on the Norwich Road (B1108), however there is no clear indication that you have arrived in the town.

A lack of wayfinding, poor quality shop frontages and vacant units all contribute to a poor sense of arrival which detracts from what the town offers residents and visitors.

There is a lack of green space, soft landscaping and tree in this part of the town centre

The intervention seeks to create a better sense of arrival through a number of targeted improvements as follows:

- New Watton identity artwork and wayfinding opportunities to announce arrival. This could be on flank walls and blank frontages

- Improved retail frontages to boost visual appeal of this part of the town
- Improved pedestrian and cycle environment connections
- Temporary activation of vacant units including window displays, meanwhile uses and pop up spaces.
- Green infrastructure

More detail on these, and areas of potential improvement, is provided in the image below.

The project, which links closely with Attractive Watton, will ensure that Watton is fit for purpose for the future and attracts visitors to spend time and money.

Existing Site Photographs

The Bull Watton



Source: We Made That 2021

The New Inn



Source: We Made That 2021

Delivery Partners

- Watton Town Council; Breckland District Council; Landowners; Business-owners, the community

Project Rationale

- The town centre lacks a sense of arrival which undersells Watton as a place.
- A lack of wayfinding means that it is not obvious that the high street is close by
- There are vacant /and low quality premises at the eastern end of the high street that create an underwhelming sense of arrival into Watton and discourage visitors, including passing traffic from visiting
- Increase the number of visitors and their dwell time into the town centre by improving the gateway into the town and improving perceptions.

Strategic Alignment

Watton Ambition:

- Will improve the sense of arrival into Watton, attract visitors from surrounding towns and encourage visitors to stay for longer periods.
- Will improve the look and feel and strengthen the link with the high street.
- Will make the town greener and more environmentally sustainable by providing green infrastructure and landscaping

Breckland Objectives:

- Will support the town centre by enhancing the look and feel of our centre.
- Will improve the town centre by enhancing accessibility
- Will support the town centre increasing the number of visitors and their dwell time.

Government Ambitions:

- Aligns with Government ambitions related to town centre regeneration as set out in the prospectuses for the Stronger Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund.

Estimated Costs

The estimated total cost will be between £2.6m to £3.2m dependent upon the level of interventions. Further feasibility studies are needed to confirm costs.

Potential Funding Mechanisms

Public sector grants (e.g. Levelling Up Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund); Local public bodies (e.g. Breckland Council (shopfront improvements), Watton Town Council and Norfolk County Council capital funds); Breckland Council Business Rate Relief; Crowdfunding Campaigns

Next Steps

Consult with stakeholders and local community; produce feasibility and options assessment; commission full designs / artwork and plans; develop business plan; secure funding; secure necessary planning permission (if required); capital work

Indicative Timescales

- Short term (0-3 Years): Consultation, options appraisal, full scheme plan and funding secured and construction.

Potential Outputs

- New identify artwork
- 190 sqm of shop front improvements
- Improved wayfinding signage
- Improved pedestrian and cycle environment connections
- 780 m² improved public realm

4. Welcoming Watton: Gateway into the Town Centre...continued

Potential Impacts

- Interventions will create a better sense of arrival will attract more people, driving footfall, interest and spend.
- Artwork and wayfinding help to give Watton a better sense of identity and place
- Artwork and wayfinding signage could be developed to showcase Watton's diverse community
- Improve perceptions as a place to visit and spend time and do business.
- Create interest and increased prospect for future commercial uses to help tackle existing term vacancies
- Artwork and shop displays could help engage local people including local artists or young people
- High levels of public investment should encourage other business-owners to improve their properties and stimulate wider investment in the town
 - Public realm investments in Sheffield contributed to an increase in property rental value of £1.60-£2.40 / sq. ft. and a 1-1.5% yield improvement²²

Project Examples

- Hay Hill Public Realm Improvements, Norwich:** Hay Hill was formerly a marketplace for Hay and other farm goods it is now one of the largest urban spaces in the city centre. However, the site has complicated level changes and layout which make it difficult for pedestrians to pass through or congregate. The central area will be cleared to encourage extended use and host cultural activities and events. This will include bringing a water feature back into use.
- Wilton Road shopfront improvement and window competition, Abbey Wood:** the programme offered financial grants to over ten shops on the high street to improve signage / window displays (including New Win Son restaurant), redecoration, brand identity support, food hygiene and internal equipment . Improvements also included updating the signs throughout the high street to improve the sense of arrival.

Hay Hills, Norwich



Source: Norfolk County Council

Abbey Wood Village Sign

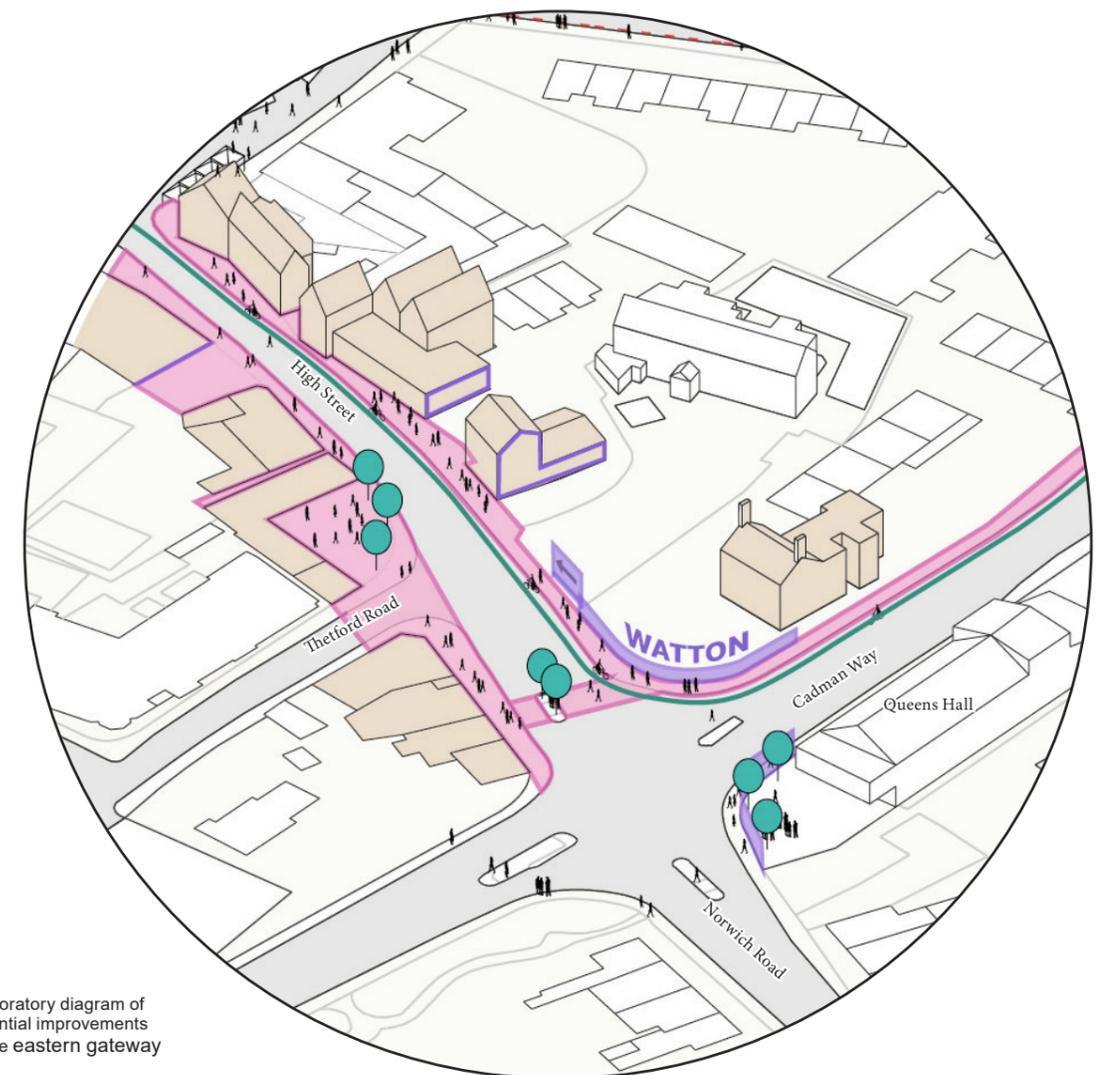


Source: Untitled Practice Architects

Figure 17 Welcoming Watton (exploratory diagram)

Key

- Improved public realm and pedestrian environment: ~ 1300sqm
- Potential frontage improvements, filling vacant units, wayfinding and artworks: ~ 2800sqm
- Potential opportunities for improved edge conditions, identity artworks and signage: ~ 90m
- Improved cycle connections (see project 5)
- Town centre boundary



Exploratory diagram of potential improvements to the eastern gateway

Source: We Made That, 2021

22. The Pedestrian Pound: The Business Case for Better Street and Public Spaces, Just Economics (2016)

5. Connecting Watton and Swaffham

<p>Project Description</p> <p>The Watton and Swaffham Railway, also known as the Crab and Winkle line, used to connect Swaffham and Watton to Thetford and beyond. It opened in 1875 and operated for around 90 years before closing.</p> <p>The aim of this intervention is to re-purpose and re-activate the line for walking, running and cycling. This will better connect our two towns for residents travelling for education, employment and leisure purposes while also creating a new attraction to encourage people to visit our towns and spend money in local businesses.</p> <p>The intention is for a trunk route to run from the Loch Neaton in Watton to the Old Station in Swaffham with secondary connections to our town centres and residential areas. This will improve accessibility and encourage residents to use their cars less. Relevant infrastructure (e.g. cycle lanes, pavements and cycle parking) will be provided to maximise use.</p> <p>The route will also link up with other bridleways and quiet lanes where possible to provide an extended walking and off-road cycling route. This will include a connection to the popular and well-visited Peddars Way linking the towns to the North Norfolk coast.</p> <p>This extended network will make the route and towns highly attractive to visitors. Investments to make Loch Neaton into an outdoor swimming lake and attraction in and of itself, as set out earlier in this plan, will make this route even more appealing.</p> <p>Given the route will be around 15km long it will need to come forward in stages. Early feasibility work indicates that attractive and viable routes can be created in stages by linking with the network of quiet lanes and bridleways that already exist in the area. The next step will be to undertake a full feasibility study and secure access to land required.</p> <p>This intervention will be developed in concert with the local cycling and walking infrastructure plans currently in development.</p>	<p>Strategic Alignment</p> <p>Watton Ambition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will improve sport and leisure facilities helping our town develop the best provision in the county Will make our town green and more environmentally sustainable Will improve linkages to the town centre which should help strengthen our foundational economy through higher expenditure Will provide an inclusive facility that supports our diverse community <p>Breckland Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will support town centre regeneration by attracting new people and groups to the town Will support inclusion through the creation of a new safe and accessible cycle route between two important nodes Will enhance physical infrastructure making it easier for residents, visitors and workers to move around Will improve sustainability by providing a green and low carbon alternative to driving <p>Government Ambitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligns with Government's focus on Active Travel, particularly the new 'Gear Change' policy which sets out a plan to deliver a step change in walking and cycling provision
<p>Delivery Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norfolk County Council, Swaffham Town Council, Watton Town Council, Breckland Council, Sustrans 	<p>Estimated Costs</p> <p>Estimated cost is between £3.3 - £4.75m. This also features as a strategic project in the Swaffham Town Delivery Plan.</p>
<p>Project Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparatively low proportion of trips in Watton and Breckland are made by bicycle or foot Overreliance on private vehicles is creating severe traffic, congestion and air pollution issues Lack of dedicated active travel infrastructure acts as a barrier to walking and cycling Current route between Watton and Swaffham is relatively busy and dangerous for cyclists Opportunity to attract more visitors and tourists to the town via new attraction Our town centre needs support to prosper and remain vibrant given its high retail vacancy rates Planned housing growth will place more pressure on road network without investment in active travel infrastructure Future infrastructure investment from Government will require dedicated cycling routes to be provided 	<p>Potential Funding Mechanisms</p> <p>Public sector grants (e.g. Levelling Up Fund and Active Travel Grants); Developer contributions (e.g. s106); Public sector finance (e.g. National Infrastructure Bank and Public Works Loan Board); Local public bodies</p> <p>Next Steps</p> <p>Undertake full feasibility study; develop full business case; produce detailed scheme plans; secure planning; secure funding; secure access; implement partial schemes; implement full scheme</p> <p>Indicative Timescales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term (0-1 Years): Full feasibility study and route planning Medium-term (1-4 Years): Partial scheme linking Watton to quiet lanes and bridleways Long-term (5-8 Years): Full scheme linking Swaffham to Watton with associated infrastructure <p>Potential Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 15km of new dedicated walking and cycling infrastructure; at least 300,000 trips per year

5. Connecting Watton and Swaffham...continued

Potential Impacts

- Increased footfall and spend in Swaffham and Watton town centres
 - Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment report (2017) sets out that users of the natural environment spend between £6 and £9 on average in local businesses per trip – this means local businesses in Watton and Swaffham could receive an additional £1.8-£2.7m per year if 300,000 trips are made annually²³
 - Transport for London report that walking and cycling investments can increase retail spend by up to 30%
 - Research from the University of Birmingham shows that cycle parking delivers 5x more retail spend per sqm than the same area of car parking
 - The opening of the Vennbahn Cycle Path in Germany contributed to a 20% increase in accommodation occupancy²⁴
- Improved health and wellbeing of residents which has implications for employers and productivity
 - The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence report that people who exercise regularly take 27% fewer sick days than their colleagues
 - The Department for Transport report that walking and cycling projects deliver £13 of economic value for every £1 invested

Project Examples

- Bristol and Bath Railway Path:** A 13-mile traffic-free flat cycling route between Bath and Bristol managed by Sustrans. The route includes a variety of sculptures, steam engines, pubs and shops making it popular with tourists as well as commuters. Around 2.5 million trips are made on the route every year, which equates to around 7,000 trips per day.
- Camel Trail Cornwall:** An 18-mile surfaced cycle route between Wenfordbridge, Bodmin, Wadebridge and Padstow. Following a disused railway line once used by the London and South West Railway, the trail follows the Camel Estuary before joining the Camel Valley to Bodmin. It is estimated that around 400,000 people use the route each year generating c£3m of expenditure in local businesses.²⁵

Bristol and Bath Railway Path



Source: Visit Bristol

Camel Trail Cornwall



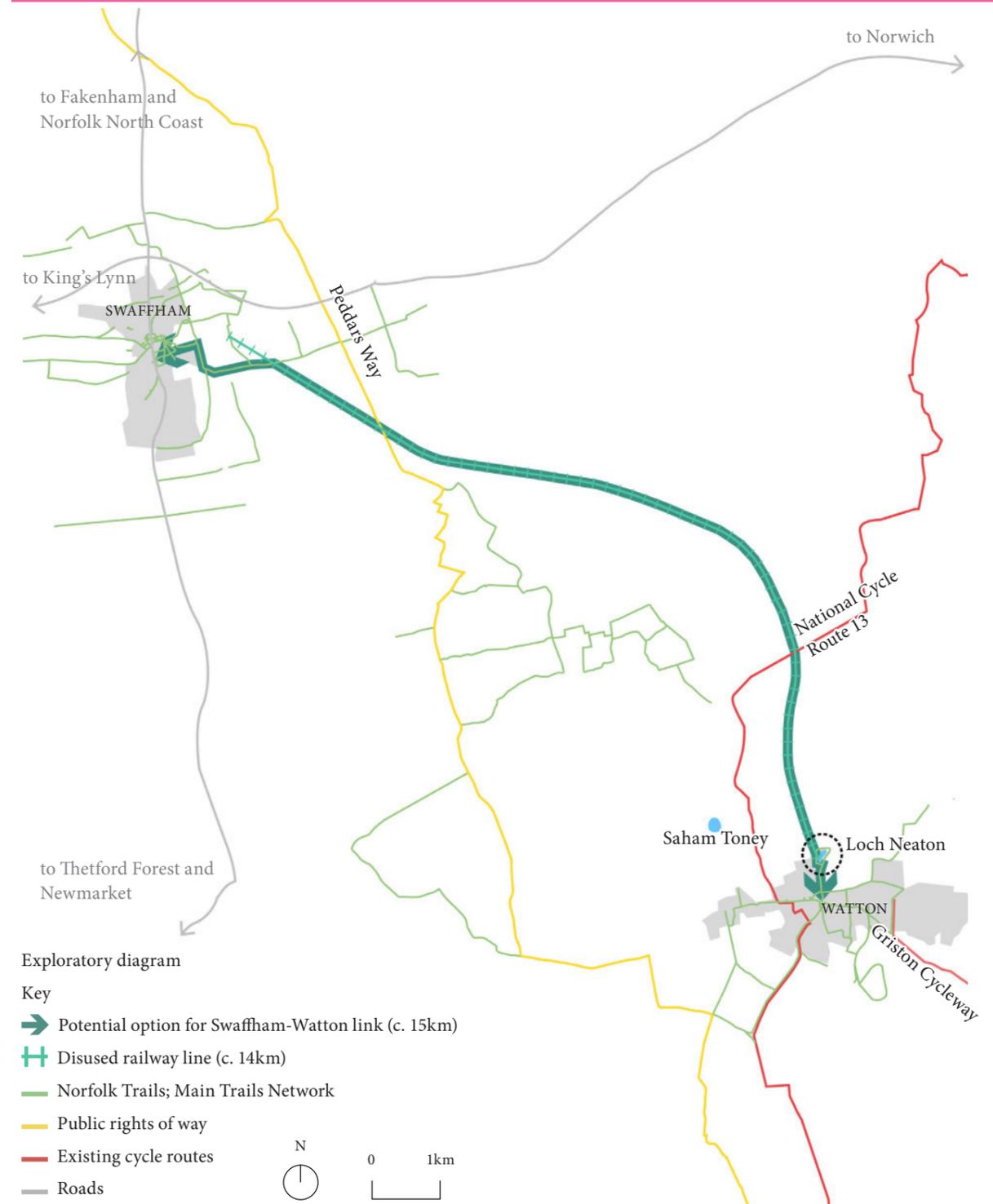
Source: Visit Cornwall

23. This is a conservative estimate based on ridership on other major walking and cycling routes in Norfolk

24. Visit England (2016)

25. North Cornwall District Council

Figure 18 Connecting Watton: Re-Connecting Watton and Swaffham (exploratory diagram)



6. Innovative Watton: Digital Creative Media Centre

<p>Project Description</p> <p>This project seeks to demolish the vacant Wayland House building on Watton High Street and construct a new Digital and Creative Media Centre. The Digital Creative Media Centre will create a state-of-the-art centre with coding training space, podcast studios, a gaming event cinema, incubator space for SMEs in creative and digital media and a café. It will create digital and creative training space for start-ups and an incubator. The centre will include 2,500 sqm of training and flexible office space. The creation of a new anchor on the high street will drive footfall and catalyse wider town centre regeneration.</p> <p>The existing building has been primarily vacant for several years and as a result footfall to the western end of the High Street is limited.</p>			
<p>Delivery Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wayland Partnership, Breckland District Council, Norfolk County Council 			
<p>Project Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The region has limited facilities for incubator space or training accommodation. The region does not have a complex that promotes computer game development. Lower higher education participation and few opportunities for young people to develop skills Some of the country's most deprived neighbourhoods are located within Watton is the highest in the country. Wayland House is a significant building on Watton High Street that is not fit for purpose and deters people from the western end of the High Street. Limited activities for young people 			
<p>Strategic Alignment</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td> <p>Watton Ambition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely to help grow and diversify Watton's local economy if new business space is provided. Encourage young people to continue training in Watton rather than relocating. Provide a safe and inclusive space for young people to meet Will improve the look and feel and footfall of the High Street. Will improve footfall on the Highstreet. </td> <td> <p>Breckland Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will support town centre regeneration by enhancing the look, feel and accessibility of our centre. Will enhance business and enterprise by creating training and incubator space. <p>Government Ambitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligns with Government ambitions related to town centre regeneration as set out in the prospectuses for the Stronger Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund. </td> </tr> </table>		<p>Watton Ambition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely to help grow and diversify Watton's local economy if new business space is provided. Encourage young people to continue training in Watton rather than relocating. Provide a safe and inclusive space for young people to meet Will improve the look and feel and footfall of the High Street. Will improve footfall on the Highstreet. 	<p>Breckland Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will support town centre regeneration by enhancing the look, feel and accessibility of our centre. Will enhance business and enterprise by creating training and incubator space. <p>Government Ambitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligns with Government ambitions related to town centre regeneration as set out in the prospectuses for the Stronger Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund.
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<p>Estimated Costs</p> <p>Our estimated costs are in the region of £8 - £10 million. The total sum will be dependent upon the nature of the development.</p>	
<p>Potential Funding Mechanisms</p> <p>Public sector grants (e.g. Levelling Up Fund) and Local public bodies (e.g. Watton Town Council and Norfolk County Council capital funds).</p>	
<p>Next Steps</p> <p>Undertake full mobilisation through Breckland Council and submit Levelling Up Fund bid. Appoint full project team including design and construction. Develop full planning application.</p>	
<p>Indicative Timescales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short term (0-2 years): procure full design team and develop planning application Medium term (2-10 years): enable the site, complete construction and open the Digital Creative Media Centre in Watton. 	<p>Potential Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a dedicated facility for e-sports, digital leisure and entertainment.

6. Innovative Watton: Digital Creative Media Centre...continued

Potential Impacts

- Improved facilities for local businesses in Watton.
- New facilities will continue to support jobs and the local economy.
- New flexible workspace offer would support employment and economic growth.
 - A flexible workspace of just 200 sqm could support 17 FTE jobs and generate Gross Value Added of £837,703 m.²⁶
- Improved offer will attract younger working age people to live in the town.
- Enhanced Town Centre Appearance should improve perceptions of Watton as a place to live, work and open a new business.
- Improvements will create a better sense of arrival and will attract more people, driving footfall, interest and spend.

Project Examples

- We Are Immersive Gaming Studio, Norwich : Award winning gaming production studio is based in Norwich, UK. Formed in 2015 We Are Immersive is a pioneer of innovative VR, AR and 360 degree video experiences. The company has worked with clients including West Ham United, Ikea and the British Red Cross.
- Hethel Engineering Centre, Norwich : Hethel Innovation are a based just outside of Norwich and offer support & advice to local businesses. They focus on engineering companies and work closely with Norwich University. The Engineering Centre includes a incubator hub for start up engineering businesses.

We Are Immersive Gaming Studio, Norwich



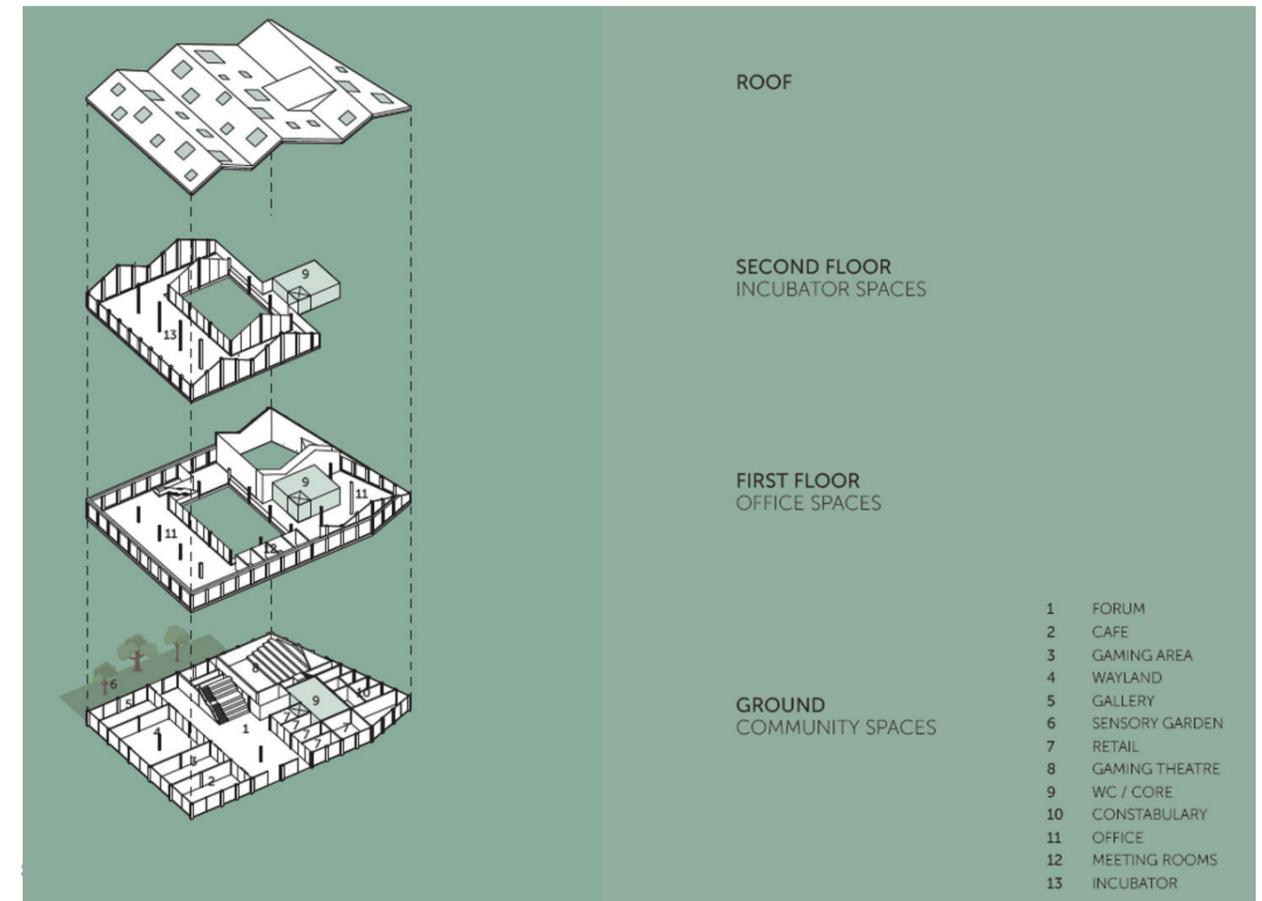
Source: Hethel Innovation

Hethel Engineering Centre, Norwich



Source: We Are Immersive Gaming Studio

Figure 19 Potential Design for Wayland House²⁷



26. Hatch calculations based on guidance from the Homes and Communities Agency

27. Project completed by 2024

Long-Term Potential Additions

There were several large-scale proposals on the intervention long list that could make a significant impact to Watton and its surrounding communities but did not make the short list of game changing interventions. This is because there is a need to manage the number of priority projects, but also because many of these are highly complex, have several dependencies, need further work and/or are being led exclusively by external parties.

Given their transformative potential, however, they are highlighted as further projects for our partners to support over the long-term. Breckland Council will not directly intervene in these projects but will support their development over time through activities like lobbying, feasibility working and developing supporting policies. These proposals are set out below.

Town Centre Bypass

The B1108, which goes through our town centre, is the main route between the A47 and A11 to the Norwich Research Park, the University of East Anglia and the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital. It has experienced long-term growth in traffic volumes over the last decade and the heavy goods vehicles that travel through come dangerously close to our narrow pavements. In addition to safety issues, this traffic creates high levels of congestion and pollution in our town centre particularly at peak times.

One option that could help alleviate these pressures is to build a bypass for through traffic. This would improve journey times for drivers while also reducing heavy traffic in our town and surrounding villages. Partners will work together to assess the feasibility of this over the next few years, which will include exploring different options and routes.

Delivery Lead(s): Norfolk County Council Highways and Breckland Council

Support Required: Options assessment, impact assessments, traffic modelling, feasibility studies, advocacy

1

Housing development on Saham Road

The Breckland Local Plan expects Watton to deliver over 1,600 homes by 2036. It identifies land off Saham Road amounting to 6.6ha as one of the main sites to help deliver this ambition. New housing is already in high demand, but as our town becomes more attractive and people look to move away from crowded towns and cities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic this is likely to increase further.

To meet this demand partners will work proactively with landowners and developers to bring forward development on this site. We will also work closely to ensure that the impact of any development is mitigated with appropriate investments in line with the ambitions of this Town Delivery Plan.

Delivery Lead(s): Norfolk Country Council, Breckland Council and Watton Town Council

Support Required: Impact assessments, planning policies, feasibility studies, developer negotiations

2

Housing development on Norwich Road

The Breckland Local Plan also identifies land off Norwich Road amounting to 2.7ha for residential development of at least 45 dwellings and a 60 bed care home. This could help meet our ever-growing demand for housing and support the needs of our ageing population.

Partners will again work proactively with landowners and developers to bring forward this site. We will also work closely to ensure that the impact of any development is mitigated with appropriate investments in line with the ambitions of this Town Delivery Plan

Delivery Lead(s): Norfolk Country Council, Breckland Council and Watton Town Council

Support Required: Impact assessments, planning policies, feasibility studies, developer negotiations

3

Financial Summary

The costs stated for each intervention have been prepared to establish a realistic cost limit for the proposed works. They are an approximation and do not represent the precise cost of works at this early stage. They are based on an assessment of similar schemes, recently received cost data and current market feedback.

All costs have been calculated to Q2 2022. This was done to make it easier to understand and because we cannot be sure when the works will commence due to uncertainties around funding. At this early stage in project development a range of costs have been given for each project to allow for significant risk and contingency values to be added to construction estimates and professional fees.

To take this forward delivery mechanisms will need to be explored for all such schemes and subjected to usual value for money tests. This will include undertaking feasibility studies, design work, business cases, viability appraisals, market engagement etc.. This information will assist in determining more accurate and site-specific cost figures.

A summary of the total costs by intervention is provided below:

Summary of the Total Costs by Intervention		
<p>£3m-£4.4m</p> <p>1. Attractive Watton Enhancing our Town Centre</p>	<p>£12.5m-£18m</p> <p>2. Inclusive Watton Improving Local Provision</p>	<p>£1.5m-£2m</p> <p>3. Destination Watton Providing a New Public Park</p>
<p>£2.6m-£3.2m</p> <p>4. Welcoming Watton Gateway into the Town Centre</p>	<p>£3.3m-£4.75m</p> <p>5. Connected Watton Re-connecting Watton and Swaffham</p>	<p>£8m-£10m</p> <p>6. Innovative Watton Digital Creative Media Centre</p>

While Breckland Council, Norfolk County Council, Watton Town Council and partners will directly invest resources into the priorities identified in this plan, there is limited local funding available. Securing wider public and private sector funding will therefore be essential to realise the ambitions for Watton. The overarching Future Breckland: Thriving People and Places Prospectus goes into more detail on this and sets out an approach to securing funding for Watton and the district more broadly.

05

Watton's
Quick Wins:
Short-Term
Tactical
Interventions



Watton's Quick Wins

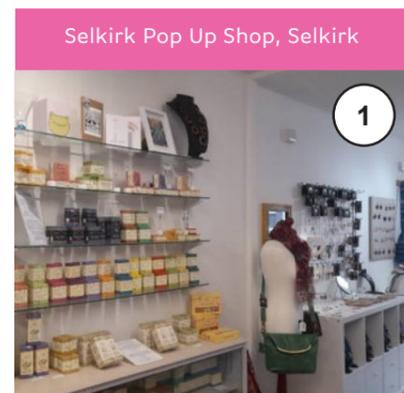
Short-Term Tactical Interventions

There are several funding pots available to support small-scale interventions across local market towns. This currently includes Breckland Council's Market Town Initiative, as well as pots held by county councillors and Watton Town Council. These funding streams will change and evolve over time, but there is likely to be some small-scale funding sources available over the next five to ten years.

With this in mind a series of tactical short-term investment areas have been identified to complement the game changing interventions as set out in the table below. Investment in these areas will rapidly deliver highly visual

improvements and ensure that small but important changes are catalysed by this plan. It is hoped that early intervention will encourage wider investment from businesses, residents, developers and investors as the other more transformational projects come forward.

The investment areas identified remain general to reflect uncertainty around the timing and nature of future local funding pots. They also represent priority investment areas, in line with the rest of this document, which respond to our most pressing needs as identified through evidence, consultations and wider research.



Source: Selkirk Pop Up Shops



Source: Shaftesbury Town Council



Source: Untitled Architects



Source: Greenblue



Source: Speak EV

Table 2 Tactical Short-Term Investments

Investment Area	Potential Interventions	Timescales
Public Realm Enhancements	Shop front improvements (e.g. hoarding artwork, window displays, painted shutters etc.)	0-1 Years
	Testing of pedestrianisation on Middle Street (2)	0-1 Years
	Improved crossing options for pedestrians in the town centre	0-1 Years
	Improved step-free accessibility of the town centre	0-1 Years
	Electric Vehicle charging points in and around the centre (5)	1-3 Years
Wayfinding Improvements	Improved wayfinding throughout the town and to green spaces	0-2 Years
	Improved signage along The Pedder's Way to encourage people to visit and spend time in town (3)	0-1 Years
Enhancing Green Space	New trees and plants in town centre (4)	0-1 Years
Place Marketing and Promotion	Pop-up events to test uses in vacant shopfronts (1)	1-3 Years
	Improved Watton-specific communications to help celebrate achievements and events	0-1 Years
Civic Society	Themed events and festivals to celebrate Watton and its diverse community in conjunction with the town's major employers	1-3 Years

06

Delivering the Plan



Delivering the Plan

Principles of Delivery

This Town Delivery Plan marks a step change for our town and will bring partners towards closer collaboration and the delivery of tangible change to level up the town. It provides a clear roadmap that we can support and progress at pace.

It does, however, come at a challenging time. The public sector has fewer resources than ever before, with several economic pressures having fundamental impacts on the town's businesses and residents.

Partners therefore will need to be innovative in approaching delivery as the principles set out below highlight:

New Practices and Support Delivery		
<p>Collaboration and Partnership: Making the most of opportunities to work collaboratively to share resources and accelerate, shape and refine delivery.</p> 	<p>Positivity and Problem Solving: Approaching delivery positively and having a 'can do attitude' to solving problems and overcoming barriers.</p> 	<p>Commitment and Focus: A shared long-term commitment to responding to the challenges and opportunities identified and driving forward delivery.</p> 
<p>Town and District: Striving to address district-wide issues while also addressing town-specific challenges and opportunities.</p> 	<p>Innovation and Creativity: Experimenting with innovative project ideas and exploring new approaches to leverage funding.</p> 	<p>Agility and Pace: Working rapidly together to deliver change and continuously reviewing projects to ensure they respond to changing needs.</p> 

Timescales for Delivery

A mix of short-, medium- and long-term interventions have been set out in this document. This has been managed intentionally to ensure that positive change can be delivered incrementally over time. It is hoped that early interventions will catalyse wider investment from businesses, residents, developers and investors as the other projects come forward. This is summarised in the indicative timetable, although it is important to note that these timescales will vary due to the nature of funding opportunities.

The next step for each game changing intervention will be to progress them towards becoming 'shovel ready' so that all the information and arrangements are in place for delivery once funding is secured. This may involve developing Full Business Cases and undertaking additional work where required, depending on the type and funding opportunities.

Table 3 Indicative Timescales

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Tactical Interventions										
Inclusive Watton: Improving Local Provision										
Attractive Watton: Enhancing our Town Centre			Partial				Full			
Welcoming Watton: Gateway into the Town Centre										
Destination Watton: Transforming Loch Neaton										
Connected Watton: Re-connecting Watton and Swaffham			Partial				Full			
Innovative Watton: Digital Creative Media Centre										

Management of Delivery

Breckland Council has acknowledged responsibility for supporting the delivery of this plan by commissioning and overseeing this work. However, given no project is within the sole gift of one partner, successful delivery will require the support of a wide range of local organisations.

A new Future Breckland Board will help oversee the overarching 'Future Breckland: Thriving People and Places programme'. The board will help bring together key views and perspectives from core partners and stakeholders from across the private, public, charity and voluntary sectors to enable effective and informed decision making and resource planning at a district level.

Unique partnership and local approaches will now be established as required within each of Breckland's five Market Towns, based on the feedback and experience of developing this plan, alongside existing local structures and areas of interest. The aspiration is that these groups will be to help coordinate, realise and, as necessary, prioritise local activity.



HATCH

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Made
That**