Wisbech 2020 vision
“A passion to deliver a prosperous future”

Updated January 2016
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wisbech 2020 Vision is an exciting partnership plan to address the current and future challenges facing Wisbech to maximise the opportunities available to the town. The vision has been promoted and steered by the Leaders of Cambridgeshire County Council and Fenland District Council and the local MP, with Wisbech Town Council also playing a key role in supporting and delivering the actions outlined in the vision document. Private and voluntary sector partners have played a significant role in supporting the Wisbech 2020 Vision, especially Anglian Water and their business alliance, who have sponsored Wisbech 2020 summit events and played a leading role in the ‘Infrastructure for Growth’ element of the project.

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), Fenland District Council (FDC) and Stephen Barclay MP are committed to working with partner agencies to improve the lives of Wisbech residents. Stakeholders are working together to improve the infrastructure, economy and profile of the town, helping to attract new businesses and enabling residents to maximise their potential through better access to jobs and learning opportunities.

Since the project was first developed in April 2012, extensive consultation has been carried out to ensure that the Wisbech 2020 Vision reflects the views of local elected members, local stakeholders and the local community. The project has seen many partners working together to deliver some carefully planned projects which have achieved some impressive results. Improvements to Wisbech can not only be seen, they can be felt. Everyone – residents and visitors alike – are starting to talk and think more positively about Wisbech as a result of the 2020 Vision work. This is a real success in itself and helps everyone to gain confidence in the project and the objectives it is trying to achieve.

Through the Wisbech 2020 Vision approach, we have identified a number of challenges and key opportunities for the future. These challenges and opportunities might change over the years, but our resolve to do our best for the town of Wisbech does not.

We are facing the future with a renewed confidence and we are determined to succeed. We aim to have a positive impact on infrastructure and growth, further promote the town centre, improve skills and educational attainment levels, address health and wellbeing issues and celebrate our achievements through increased positive publicity.
INTRODUCTION

The Wisbech 2020 Vision is so much more than a glossy document. It represents a real focus on the town of Wisbech, and a celebration of all the town has to offer. It is also helping many different organisations to work together to address some of the current and future challenges faced by the town.

Why Wisbech?
Almost a quarter of all Fenland residents live in the beautiful market town of Wisbech. Known as the Capital of the Fens, Wisbech is renowned for its elegant Georgian architecture. It also has busy port area, two secondary schools (one of which is on an impressive improvement journey), a successful and thriving business sector based around the fertile food producing Fen soil and lower than average house prices. In addition, it is well placed geographically, with access to the major cities of Cambridge, Peterborough and Norwich and close to the attractive Norfolk Coast.

Like other parts of the country, Wisbech also has a long history of socioeconomic challenges and some areas of Wisbech are within the top 10% of the most deprived areas of the country. The difference in Wisbech is there are some real opportunities to make an impact on these challenges through embracing growth, improving infrastructure, revitalising the town centre, increasing job opportunities, and improving health and learning opportunities.

What is the Wisbech 2020 Vision?
The Wisbech 2020 Vision creates a bold vision for the future success of the town of Wisbech.

This revised Wisbech 2020 Vision document has been produced for local residents, local businesses, partner agencies and other stakeholders to highlight our achievements so far, as well as our plans for the future. It is also hoped that this document will demonstrate how well local organisations are working together to improve the town of Wisbech, and how much more we could do with the help of additional funding streams.

This latest version of the Wisbech 2020 Vision has a renewed focus on skills and education and health and wellbeing. As well as being seen as important building blocks for any successful community, these key areas were identified by our partners as issues which needed additional work to really drive improvements and make sound plans for the future.

You will find an action plan on pages 8 to 13 which highlights the actions that we plan to focus on up to the year 2020.

At the end of the document, you can read about the latest addition to the Wisbech 2020 Vision, a public consultation which asks what the town might look like beyond 2020. Local residents, businesses and visitors will be encouraged to tell us about their ambitions for the town and what could enable a real transformational change.
THE STORY SO FAR…….

The Wisbech 2020 Vision was first launched back in April 2012, and we have achieved so much in a relatively short space of time.

To inform the original vision, we looked at Wisbech through the lens of eight key themes. We held stakeholder workshops, attended by over 200 people, and consulted the public through surveys and engagement events held on Wisbech Market Place. The information and suggestions gathered helped us to produce the action plan in the first Wisbech 2020 Vision document which was published in January 2013. Many of these actions have now been delivered, and the evidence can be seen and felt throughout Wisbech.

Achievements and improvements which have taken place throughout Wisbech include:

- The ‘Infrastructure for Growth’ leaflet was launched in November 2014 to help drive the economic case for transport improvements, including the Wisbech to Cambridge rail link, and access in and out of Wisbech.

- £1m of funding has been received for feasibility work on improving transport in and around Wisbech, including the potential reopening of the Wisbech to Cambridge rail line.

- A further £10.5m of funding has been earmarked for transport improvements in Wisbech for 2016 - 2021, subject to feasibility studies.

- £300m investment was approved for the A47, which will include improvements to the Guyhirn roundabout.

- A further £6m investment for the College of West Anglia which means that new facilities will open in September 2015, in addition to the £7.2m Technology Centre which was part funded by Cambridgeshire County Council and Fenland District Council.

- A dedicated campaign delivered in Wisbech to promote the provision and use of high speed broadband.

- £19,000 of funding was received to promote and diversify the arts and culture offer in the town.

- The Wisbech Market Town Transport Strategy was developed and adopted by Cambridgeshire County Council.
• Volunteers were recruited and trained to deliver a Community Translation/Interpretation Service, and additional ESOL courses were also delivered.

• The Time Credits scheme was launched in Wisbech, and continues to be a great success.

• A successful £2m bid was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the sustained improvement of the High Street area. Development funding of £108,000 will help FDC and partners to progress plans to apply for a full grant in the second round of bidding.

• Supported, with the Octavia Hill Birthplace Museum Trust (OHBMT), the National Trust and local partners, the transformation by OHBMT of a derelict site into Centenary Green, a beautiful open space for all to use and admire.

• Work has started on improving Constantine House, supporting the improvement of other key derelict buildings in the town.

• The new Tesco superstore opened in Cromwell Road, along with a cinema and restaurants.

• A new retail park has opened on the old Tesco site in Cromwell Road, along with other local investment in this expanding business corridor.

• A large part of the Nene Waterfront Site has been sold to local developer which will create 70 homes, including 24 affordable properties.

• Operation Pheasant was successfully delivered, positively changing the lives of many migrant workers and attracting national praise and awards for effective partnership working.

• 94 affordable new homes have been built and let in Wisbech and surrounding villages, with a further 69 properties planned for 2015/16.

• 9 previously empty properties have been brought back into use in the Wisbech area.
WHAT CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE WISBECH 2020 VISION?

Regular summit meetings have been held to update key stakeholders on the progress of the project since October 2012. At the 3rd Wisbech 2020 Summit, held in March 2015, partners and key stakeholders cited skills and education in the area and how we, as partnership, are addressing health and wellbeing needs as key priorities for the future. As a result of this input, this action plan included in this revised Wisbech 2020 Vision includes a dedicated focus on skills and education, and health and wellbeing (please see pages 7 to 13). We also plan to continue enhancing the infrastructure in the local area, which will help to promote growth, and drive improvements to the town centre. And all these success stories need to be shared with the local community to help increase civic pride and raise aspirations. Therefore communications will be improved, including the increased use of social media.

Partner agencies will work together to deliver these actions, and regular updates will be included on the Wisbech 2020 Vision website. We also plan to increase the number positive press releases issued, and look to use social media to reach a wider and more varied audience.

HOW IS THIS WORK FUNDED?

The resources used to deliver the majority of the actions identified in this document are provided by the partner agencies identified as the action leads. However, in these austere times, many partners find that they now have reduced capacity to deliver local projects. This reinforces the need for partners and the community to work even more closely together and to look elsewhere for additional funding and resource streams.

The Wisbech 2020 Vision project has already been positively received by sources of external funding as it demonstrates the real drive and passion of local partners to work together in addressing local issues. It is hoped that this latest revision of the Wisbech 2020 Vision can be used to access additional funding to deliver some of the actions and projects described on the following pages.
THE 2015 – 2020 ACTION PLAN

The revised Wisbech 2020 Vision action plan for 2015 – 2020 has now been agreed. It includes some of the outstanding actions from the previous vision document as well as new actions with a greater focus on improving skills and education and health and wellbeing in the Wisbech area.

Partners, stakeholders and the local community will be working together to deliver these actions. Regular progress reports will be shared on the Wisbech 2020 Vision website and we will work together to celebrate and promote our successes.

The action plan is divided into 5 key areas:

- Infrastructure and Growth
- Town Centre
- Skills and Education
- Health and Wellbeing
- Communication

Each of the key areas includes a number of actions which will help to drive change and improvements. The organisations responsible for leading on the actions are shown, along with the other partners who will be helping to achieve each of the aims. However, this list of partners is not exhaustive, and we have witnessed how similar projects evolve to include many other community groups as the work progresses. If you would like to get involved in any of the actions listed below, please email w2020vision@fenland.gov.uk for further information.
Infrastructure and growth

The actions around infrastructure and growth aim to improve access in and out of the town, creating opportunities for business growth, helping to develop vacant sites and also improve access to open spaces.

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| 1   | We aim to reinstate the Wisbech to Cambridge rail link (via March) through the Infrastructure for Growth coalition | • To improve access in and out of Wisbech  
• To reduce travelling times and support business and employment in Wisbech  
• To open up employment opportunities outside of Wisbech for local residents  
• To provide better access to an affordable choice of housing and commercial property for the wider area | • Cambridgeshire County Council (Graham Hughes/Bob Menzies)  
• Anglian Water (Russell Beale) |
| 2   | We will continue to lobby for improvements to the A47 in and around the Wisbech area | • To improve access in and out of Wisbech  
• To reduce travelling times and support business and employment in Wisbech | • Cambridgeshire County Council (Graham Hughes/Bob Menzies)  
• Fenland District Council (Gary Garford/Wendy Otter) |
| 3   | We will continue to investigate opportunities to improve key junctions and routes around the town in line with those identified in the Market Town Transport Strategy | • To reduce congestion  
• To improve bottlenecks in the transport network  
• To remove unnecessary street clutter  
• To enable housing and economic growth | • Cambridgeshire County Council (Jeremy Smith)  
• Fenland District Council (Wendy Otter)  
• GCGP LEP (Adrian Cannard) |
| 4   | We will actively encourage the development of the Nene Waterfront site | • To regenerate a key site in the town  
• To boost economic regeneration in the area  
• To improve the appearance of the area around The Boathouse conference centre  
• To provide additional affordable housing | • Fenland District Council (Gary Garford/Justin Wingfield) |
| 5   | We will support urban developments, in line with the Local Plan, to provide additional housing and commercial premises | • To provide additional housing and jobs for local residents and newcomers to the area  
• To provide a choice of commercial properties for new and existing businesses | • Fenland District Council (Gary Garford)  
• Local land owners and developers |
| 6   | We will assess the potential for a Country Park on the outskirts of the town | • To provide additional access to open spaces  
• To create an additional visitor attraction | • Fenland District Council (Gary Garford)  
• Local voluntary groups |
We will continue to develop plans for an Enterprise Park to the South of the town

- To provide additional opportunities for businesses
- To attract inward investment, jobs and raise aspirations

Fenland District Council (Gary Garford/Wendy Otter/Gareth Martin/Justin Wingfield)
- Local land owners
- GCGP LEP (Adrian Cannard)

**Town Centre**
This part of the action plan focusses on making improvements to Wisbech town centre, including addressing dilapidated buildings, developing the £2m Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid for improving parts of the High Street, promoting and engaging local retailers in the Healthy High Street campaign and enhancing the town centre environment.

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| 8  | We will further improve the appearance of derelict buildings in and around the town centre | • To improve the visual appearance of the town  
• To increase pride in the area  
• To bring empty properties back into active use | • Fenland District Council (Gary Garford/Richard Cassidy)  
• Cambridgeshire County Council (Graham Hughes)  
• Wisbech Town Council (Terry Jordan)  
• Wisbech Society (Ray Johnson/David Crouch) |
| 9  | We will further develop and submit the 2nd stage bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to improve parts of the high street | • To improve the visual appearance of the town  
• To increase pride in the area  
• To bring properties back into use  
• To develop and deliver an activity plan to engage stakeholders and the wider community to promote and embed heritage within the town | • Fenland District Council (Gary Garford)  
• Cambridgeshire County Council (Graham Hughes)  
• Wisbech Town Council (Terry Jordan)  
• Wisbech Society (Ray Johnson/David Crouch)  
• HLF Project Team  
• Local community and voluntary groups |
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<td>We will engage with local retailers through the Healthy High Street campaign to improve and enhance the retail offer in the town</td>
<td>• To increase footfall  • To reduce vacant retail properties  • To attract new investment  • To create additional employment opportunities  • To raise the profile of the town and promote local events</td>
<td>• Fenland District Council (Jo Blackmore/Isabel Edgington)  • Wisbech Town Council (Terry Jordan)  • Business in the Community (BITC)  • Local retailers  • Ingham Pinnock Associates</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>We will identify and address potential environmental enhancements to the town centre area</td>
<td>• To improve the appearance of the local retail area  • To improve and enhance the retail shopping experience for the local community and visitors</td>
<td>• Fenland District Council (Jo Blackmore/Isabel Edgington)  • Cambridge Holding Authority  • Business in the Community (BITC)  • Local retailers</td>
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**Skills and Education**

Having the right skills and education is incredibly important. It can affect whole communities in relation to business growth and the aspirations of local residents. By focussing on skills and education, we aim to help provide a keen and well-equipped workforce for local employers who are then able to boost the local economy.
| 13 | We will help provide additional skills and employability training using local resources and external funding | • To improve access to local jobs  
• To cater for local business needs  
• To improve wage levels | • Anglian Water (Russell Beale)  
• College of West Anglia (Mark Reavell)  
• Peterborough Regional College (TBC)  
• Skills Service (Sue Addison)  
• Local LEPs |
| 14 | We will continue to run local job fairs and cafés | • To improve access to local jobs  
• To provide school leavers and other residents with additional information on the skills needed for local employment opportunities | • Anglian Water (Russell Beale)  
• Fenland District Council (Gary Garford) |
| 15 | We will support the ‘Wisbech Reads’ project | • To encourage more adults to get into reading and help their children enjoy books  
• To improve literacy levels in local school pupils | • Library Service (Louise Aldridge/Brenda Mead)  
• Cambridgeshire County Council (Rosemarie Sadler)  
• Wisbech Town Council (Terry Jordan)  
• Fenland District Council (Gary Garford)  
• College of West Anglia (David Promfret)  
• Local community groups  
• Local businesses |
| 16 | We will apply for additional funding to increase skills and educational attainment | • To deliver local projects  
• To assist other local groups in increasing skills and educational attainment | • Cambridgeshire County Council (Lynsi Hayward-Smith)  
• Fenland District Council (Gary Garford)  
• Skills Service (Sue Addison)  
• Other partner groups |
**Health and Wellbeing**

Health and wellbeing focusses on a range of factors that are known to influence the health of individuals. These factors include the physical, mental and social aspects of life. The following actions aim to support all of these factors in the local community.

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| 17 | We will cater for an aging population and improve local extra care facilities for older people | • To ensure that the older members of our community receive the care and social interaction they need  
• To help reduce the need for medical intervention  
• To ensure the relevant benefit payments are being received  
• To reduce the number of hospital admissions of older residents due to accidents or limited access to food/medication at home | • Fenland District Council (Dan Horn)  
• Cambridgeshire County Council (Richard O’Driscoll)  
• Local voluntary and community groups |
| 18 | We support mental health services for young people | • To reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues  
• To signpost young people to the help they need | • Fenland District Council (Dan Horn)  
• Cambridge and Peterborough Foundation Trust - CPFT (TBC)  
• Cambridgeshire County Council (Meredith Teasdale/Helen Phelan)  
• East Cambs and Fenland Area Partnership  
• Wisbech Local Commissioning Group |
| 19 | We will help to build community resilience, to support and deliver local projects | • To help communities to help themselves  
• To help communities to design and deliver projects in line with their needs  
• To build community capacity and aspirations | • Fenland District Council (Richard Cassidy)  
• Cambridgeshire County Council (Sarah Ferguson/Lisa Faulkner/Dr Liz Robin)  
• Wisbech Town Council (Terry Jordan)  
• CP Learning Trust (Gaynor Cooper)  
• Local Voluntary and Community Groups  
• Rosmini Centre |
Now that we have a list of actions that we will deliver to address some of the issues in Wisbech, we need a way of communicating these changes, opportunities and improvements to the public and other partner agencies. The communication actions focus on ‘getting the message out there’ through new and more traditional methods.

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| 20 | We will create and maintain a Wisbech communication plan, including electronic media | • To encourage ownership and promote the ‘Wisbech 2020’ brand  
• To engage and share information with the community  
• To promote positive stories about Wisbech  
• To raise the profile of the town  
• To highlight forthcoming events  
• To highlight all the great things Wisbech has to offer (including local businesses and retailers)  
• To provide easy access to other relevant websites, including those of local voluntary and community groups  
• To increase civic pride  
• To help attract additional funding  
• To reach a larger and more varied audience | • Fenland District Council (Carol Pilson)  
• Cambridgeshire County Council (Mark Miller)  
• Wisbech Town Council (Terry Jordan)  
• Local voluntary and community groups  
• Wisbech Society (Ray Johnson/David Crouch)  
• Ingham Pinnock Associates |
| 21 | We will produce a short film showcasing Wisbech and the Wisbech 2020 Vision to be used for funding bids and to be shown at local cinemas | • To reach a larger and more varied audience  
• To help attract additional funding | • Fenland District Council (Carol Pilson)  
• Anglian Water (Russell Beale)  
• Cambridgeshire County Council (Mark Miller)  
• Local cinemas |
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Partner agencies will work together to deliver the actions outlined in the Wisbech 2020 Vision document following its launch in June 2015. Regular updates will be shared with the public on the Wisbech 2020 Vision website (www.wisbech2020vision.co.uk) other partner or Wisbech focussed websites.

A local meeting held in November 2014 highlighted the great work being carried out by local community groups and voluntary organisations. These organisations will be contacted in order to further promote the great work they are doing and how this relates to the Wisbech 2020 Vision itself.

BEYOND WISBECH 2020 – TELL US YOUR VIEWS

As part of the Wisbech 2020 Vision evolution, there is a need to now collectively engage on the development of a comprehensive long term vision with defined economic objectives and clarity of strategic direction. A vision that offers a scale of growth that is aligned to business, leisure, environmental and community aspirations. A bold and ambitious vision for delivering sustained economic prosperity for future generations.

Over £150m has been invested in the town during the last few years resulting in:

- New out of town retail shops, cinema and restaurants
- The largest frozen food storage facility in the country
- Improvements to the Thomas Clarkson Academy
- A new technology centre at the College of West Anglia
- New County Council offices
- A new large business and conference facility
The level of this investment demonstrates the confidence that is starting to build in the local area. Further technical appraisal work and funding applications are continuing to gain momentum:

- Increasing support towards a direct rail service between Wisbech and Cambridge
- Market place regeneration
- Route planning and prioritisation of A47 road improvements
- Wisbech Enterprise Park
- Skills development programmes and educational attainments
- Enhanced community facilities

The above are all significant steps forward and this is seen as the ideal time to now create our long term vision – Wisbech: beyond 2020. This project will include elements of ‘blue-sky’ thinking, particularly around the scale of growth that offers the maximum economic and social benefits. It will look to find ways to change perception and it will also include learning from other town concepts. It will aim to ensure all opportunities are explored and aligned to deliverable expectations.

**Consultation is due to take place over the summer of 2015 (with a deadline of 31 August 2015) and will ask the following questions:**

1) What should Wisbech look like by 2040?
2) What potentially would enable real transformational change?
3) How bold and ambitious do we want our long term vision to be?

Responses from the consultation will be shared on the Wisbech 2020 Vision website once collated.

**Need any further information?**

If you have any questions about the Wisbech 2020 Vision or would like further information on how you can get involved, please visit www.wisbech2020vision.co.uk or email: w2020vision@fenland.gov.uk