

Vision Case studies

- Summary

The following case studies illustrate how Guildford, York, Winchester, Dorchester and Ipswich have each developed a Vision in response to the opportunities and challenges facing their town and city centres. The studies also highlight the value of creating a Vision, the progress each centre has achieved and the lessons that can be learned from their experiences.

These historic county towns and regional public sector hubs have been selected as they present a similar profile to Chichester in terms of the issues they are facing. These include:

- A reliance on a diminishing public sector.
- The need to diversify and create higher value jobs.
- The demand for new housing sites and affordable housing.
- Increased traffic congestion, resultant air pollution and parking constraints.
- A lack of spacious retail and office space.
- The need to protect, enhance and promote the town's heritage and culture.
- The impact of new developments on the character of the town centre.
- The absence of a night-time economy.
- Competition from online shopping, out-of-town retail parks and neighbouring retail centres.

While each town or city may respond to these issues in different ways, what they all agree on is that having a Vision is essential in terms of securing investment and gaining public, political and regional support. A Vision also sets out an ambition for the town and a commitment to its future.

As these case studies show, successful Vision projects build on existing strengths. For example, the development of new hotel facilities in Dorchester and the award of significant lottery funding for two of their historic museums have created a new opportunity for the development of a heritage tourism sector. However, where no such opportunities exist, those centres with a bold vision can drive change and deliver new ideas as in Guildford, where they are opening up the riverside to create a riverside community park, public spaces and new sites for retail and office accommodation. Similarly, in Ipswich, they have a

bold ambition to “turn their town around” to recreate Ipswich as East Anglia’s Waterfront town.

While having a Vision is important, so is delivering that Vision. Ipswich has focused on delivery from the outset, securing the commitment of the leaders of the town’s authorities, key organisations, and the local MP to form a partnership which campaigns for and has delivered an impressive list of projects. These include the redevelopment of the central town square and government funding for a new innovation enterprise island. However, Winchester has adopted a different approach, creating a vision which outlines what the town wants to become for those who have the resources to achieve it.

As well as outlining an economic direction, the purpose of creating vision for each of these places is to determine what sort of place it wants to be. York’s New City Beautiful vision recognised that quality of place matters to businesses making decisions about where to locate and invest; residents as a place to live; and visitors as a destination - to enjoy, learn, experience and return. That’s why protecting the fabric and culture of this world-famous historic city is essential to its economic success. Although York is now focused on delivery, this ethos continues to inspire developments and activities within the city centre.

Finally, the case studies also outline the importance of good communication so that the public, politicians, businesses and all contributors to the Vision, support and understand the changes as they happen around them and are inspired by them.



Courtesy of Ipswich Central BID

The following five pages provide brief summaries of the studies into each of the comparable towns and cities

Dorchester Vision

Heritage Experience and Knowledge Economy

Dorchester is an attractive, affluent and historic county town, the home and inspiration of the author, Thomas Hardy. Three tiers of government are represented in the town including Dorchester Town, Dorset County and West Dorset District Councils. The town has two hospitals, a Land-based college and a number of heritage attractions including Dorchester Abbey, Dorset County Museum and Dorchester's historic Old Crown Court – where the Tolpuddle Martyrs were tried. Recently, these museums have attracted nearly £12 million in National Lottery Funding. Poundbury, Dorchester's famous urban extension, is due for completion in 2025.

Background

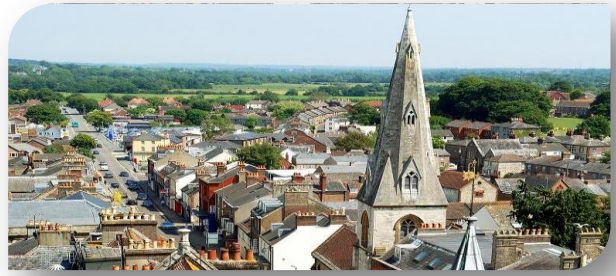
Dorchester's strengths are its heritage, attractiveness as a town centre and low unemployment. However, these strengths are also threatening what makes it special. Dorchester draws a significant proportion of its labour force from the surrounding rural areas and from Weymouth, creating significant traffic flows every day. As such, traffic and parking are major issues for the town centre. The growth in population and the continuing demand for more housing, as well as the potential for retail and tourism growth, are also putting increasing pressure on the town's infrastructure. A key priority is to deliver more affordable housing, balanced by appropriate forms of employment growth to achieve a more sustainable settlement. The public sector, health and education provide 56% of the town's employment; but this also points to a failure to grow in other sectors. While there are clear masterplans for parts of the town, for example Poundbury and Brewery Square, there has not been a coherent vision for the town as a whole to work towards.

Dorchester Vision

Dorchester's vision is contained within the **Dorchester Town Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019**. The Town Council has taken the lead in shaping a vision for the long term future of Dorchester in response to:

- the pressure on local government funding,
- the ongoing growth of the town, and
- the diminishing ability of other tiers of government to focus on local issues.

The Vision includes a summary action plan indicating short, medium and long term objectives and will be delivered either as a Neighbourhood Plan or by agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding with its key partners. The most important goal of the Town Council's Corporate Plan is to achieve recognition of its Vision by other parties in order to attract funding and political support.



The Town Council wants Dorchester to have:

- **A more balanced population** – providing opportunities for younger people and young families to be able to live in the town
- **A vibrant community** – supporting all sectors of our community
- **A more varied housing mix.**
- **An important public sector hub** – recognising the traditional role as county town and sub-regional hub.
- **A more diverse economy** – knowledge based small businesses enjoying a high quality of life, a better retail and night-time economy offer, a developed heritage based tourism offer.
- **An infrastructure capable of coping with the demands that economic success brings.**
- **Respecting but taking advantage of our heritage & environment** – a co-ordinated approach to tourism, active engagement to ensure that new developments complement the town's existing heritage.
- **Aware of and in agreement with the long term phases of growth** for the town and the area it serves to achieve the vision we need.

Projects and progress

Since consulting on the Vision, Dorchester has focused on delivering a shared vision for heritage tourism. This is to capitalise on the recent availability of new hotel accommodation in the town centre and the lottery funding award for Dorchester's historic museums. Conscious that each museum will be focused on their individual redevelopments, the heritage tourism vision will deliver a holistic approach to attracting longer staying visitors to the town.

In addition, West Dorset District Council are reassessing the options for the development of Dorchester's town centre in order to secure or improve Dorchester as an important sub-regional hub.

Learning point: Understanding your strengths

- ▶ Dorchester has looked at what its strengths are and is making them work harder for their economy - for example, heritage tourism.
- ▶ The value of having a Vision cannot be underestimated in terms of winning public and political support to address the issues facing the town's future.

Guildford Vision

“The Council will be proactive in building a great town centre which connects to the amenity of the riverside. We will invest in creating a high quality public realm. We will put people above traffic and we will promote new high quality retail and business development.”

Profile

Guildford is the county town and administrative centre of Surrey. This historic town is home to Guildford Borough Council, the County Courts, Guildford Cathedral and county hospital. The town has a thriving education sector including the University of Surrey, the University of Law, Surrey Research Park and Surrey Sports Park. The public sector is the largest employer in the town, closely followed by the finance and IT sector.

Background

Guildford is an affluent area with higher than average incomes but also higher than average housing costs. It's a place where businesses want to locate and grow but face increasing problems, such as lack of affordable housing, traffic congestion and staff recruitment and retention issues. Furthermore, during the past thirty years development in Guildford stalled, despite the high demand for office and retail space, due to a lack of major new sites. Meanwhile, competing centres such as Kingston upon Thames and Woking are undertaking major growth, while local businesses, no longer able to expand, are looking to leave the area. Guildford has reached a tipping point between decline and regeneration. The challenge facing Guildford is how can it achieve its potential as a thriving economic and retail hub without losing its historic charm and attraction as a place to live, work and visit?

Guildford Vision

Guildford's response to these issues has been to create a Vision and Masterplan spurred on by a campaign initiated by the Guildford Society and Guildford Vision Group. Guildford Borough Council's Vision promises to **“protect and build on [its] assets and insist that all new development will be of the highest design and environmental standards”**

“Don't stop at the Vision, create a town centre Masterplan, identify a couple of early projects and deliver on them.”

(Illustration courtesy of Allies and Morrison)

The aim of the Masterplan has been to create a positive environment for investment and identify a supply of sites



for housing, retail, employment and other town centre uses including realistic timescales for delivery.

Proposals include a new riverside community park and 'streets for people' through more pedestrianised areas. Key themes include:

- Creating 'Streets for People' by redirecting traffic away from the town centre and increasing the pedestrianisation of the shopping area.
- Developing a major new riverside community park for leisure, cultural activities and commercial uses.
- Opening up new public spaces and squares throughout the town and along the riverside.
- Supporting a new leisure and entertainment focus at Bedford Wharf, the expansion of the retail offer at North Street and the enhancement of the historic quarter.
- Delivering new town centre housing.
- Providing an integrated transport hub and exchange.

Progress and projects

In 2015, the Council put in place a **Major Projects Unit** to assess delivery development opportunities, potential partners and innovative funding methods. As a result, the Council is actively investing in property, putting together sites to realise the Masterplan, especially in the riverside area. Early initiatives include:

- A new town centre Waitrose store with parking.
- A temporary Pop Up Village (PUV) on unused land to revitalise town centre shopping while awaiting the redevelopment of North Street.
- Traffic modelling and planned traffic trials to redirect traffic flow away from the town centre.
- A £1 million refurbishment and relaying of the High Street's historic paving 'setts'.

Learning point: Vision and political leadership

- ▶ Having a Vision and Masterplan for the entire city centre has created opportunities for inward investment and ensured a cohesive approach.
- ▶ Political ownership and leadership has proven essential in terms of driving the Vision forward and ensuring the Council stands firm in its commitment to the agreed objectives of the Masterplan .

Ipswich Vision

“Turning our town around” East Anglia’s Waterfront Town

Ipswich is the county town and administrative centre of Suffolk located on the estuary of the River Orwell. The town is home to Ipswich Borough and County Councils, the law courts, police headquarters, Ipswich Hospital, two theatres, a small university campus, art school and Ipswich football stadium. The town is famous for its medieval buildings, waterfront, collection of Constable and Gainsborough paintings and 800 acres of parkland. Major employers include the public sector followed by the finance and IT industry, with insurance companies AXA and Willis providing over 1,000 jobs.

Background

As a retail and visitor centre Ipswich faces increasing competition from out-of-town retail and business parks, as well as online shopping and competing locations at home and overseas. Currently, Ipswich is a town of two halves: the main shopping area strung out over narrow streets, with vacant stores and run-down buildings as a result of decades of lack of investment, and the newly developed Waterfront area which attracts more affluent visitors. Central to Ipswich’s economic success is a successful town centre. With the Waterfront and the retail district separated by only 500 metres, the town realised that its economic survival lay in expanding the quality of experience at the Waterfront back into the town.

Ipswich Vision

The Ipswich Vision is a vision for a revived town centre. It’s ambition is to create ‘East Anglia’s Waterfront Town’ by turning the town around from an east-west to a north-south axis, reconnecting the town’s two shopping and visitor centres. It also includes the creation of ten quarters – each with its own unique identity. Proposals include:

- the redesign, rebuilding and repaving of the Cornhill town square;
- encouraging the construction of new large retail units to bring in modern chain stores;
- building 2,000 new town houses and flats creating a community feel in areas to the east, west and south of the traditional town centre;
- linking the historic Christchurch Park and Tower Ramparts area to the Waterfront, and
- improving and promoting the wider town and its unique cultural offer as a visitor destination.

Learning point: Partnership and Delivery

- ▶ The Vision comes with a commitment to make it happen through an embedded Delivery Plan and a highly visible and dedicated partnership.
- ▶ Senior level political and business champions, committed to the future of Ipswich and the Vision, have ensured the success of the project.



The Ipswich Vision is not simply a concept document but also a **Delivery Plan**, with a clear list of nine priorities agreed and signed up to by a partnership of Ipswich’s major stakeholders. These include the **leaders** of New Anglia LEP, Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Ipswich Central BID, Ipswich Chamber of Commerce, The University Campus Suffolk, and the local MP, Ben Gummer. Leading business figures such as Lord Stuart Rose, also support the partnership. As the **Greater Ipswich Partnership** they are collectively committed to delivering the 2015 Vision objectives by 2020. It is intended that the Vision will be updated bi-annually, starting in 2017, to ensure a rolling programme of development.

Progress and projects

With a focus on delivery, the Greater Ipswich Partnership has several new initiatives already underway including:

- The **redesign and redevelopment of the town’s main square, The Cornhill**. The project has secured over £3 million in funding from the County and Borough Councils and New Anglia LEP. Designs are currently out for consultation.
- A “Norwich in 90, Ipswich in 60” campaign which aims to **speed up services to London** on the Great Eastern Main Line.
- **New car parking** in the town centre funded by Ipswich Borough Council.
- The completion of the **£4m re-vamp** of Ipswich’s Tower Ramparts Shopping Centre, renamed ‘Sailmakers’, which has attracted major new stores to the town and over 5 million visitors.
- Government go-ahead and funding for a **new wet dock crossing** to help cut traffic gridlock and create an ‘Enterprise’ island. This scheme will be a catalyst for economic growth worth more than £8billion to the local economy.
- **Funding secured** from the Coastal Revival Fund to help regenerate the derelict sites adjacent to the Waterfront.

“The most important factor about the Vision is that, firstly, the town centre has one. Secondly, the organisations that will deliver it are all signed up to it.” Paul Clement, CEO, Ipswich Central

Winchester Vision

**“to be a thriving county town,
worthy of its name.”**

“It’s not a plan, it’s a guide – a vision for the things we want to achieve. Its aim is to guide policy makers, planners and all who can and will shape our town¹.”

Profile

Named as the best place to live in Britain, Winchester is the county town and administrative centre of Hampshire. The city is renowned for its history, heritage and setting and is home to Winchester Cathedral, theatre and museum. The University of Winchester and Winchester School of Art are also based in the city, as are Winchester City and Hampshire County Councils, the Crown and County Courts, the Police Headquarters, Prison and the local NHS Healthcare Trust. The Winchester BID began its second term in April 2013.

Background

The challenge for Winchester has been and remains the ability to ‘absorb and manage change without losing its special character.’² New development proposals to meet the demand for larger retail/office space and city centre housing have sparked extensive public debate, legal interventions and opposition. The Council has been criticised for not having a clear vision for developments such as Silver Hill, and for not clearly communicating its vision internally and with the public - as a result losing the public’s trust. However, Winchester faces many challenges including: traffic congestion; a decline in funding of the public sector; competition from other regional centres; the threat of businesses relocating due to a lack of suitable office space and the need to diversify its economy to create higher value jobs. Therefore the issue of how to evolve Winchester for the future and secure its economic prosperity while still retaining its essential character lies at the heart of the Winchester Vision.

Winchester Vision

The Vision is owned and championed, but not implemented, by **Winchester’s Town Forum**. It is intended as a guide and reference document for policy makers at the City Council and elsewhere. The Town Forum uses it to influence debate and decisions regarding the town centre. It is not an action plan or a masterplan; its aim is to encourage those organisations with budgets and the ability to achieve change to do what is set out in the Vision.



The Vision was last updated in 2012 and sets out eight themes or aspirations for the town centre together with 70 actions:

1. encourage people to create economic prosperity;
2. care for our history, heritage and setting;
3. be a natural destination for visitors and shoppers;
4. provide new and affordable housing;
5. improve transport, infrastructure and air quality;
6. be a regional centre for creativity and culture;
7. create a green and environmentally friendly city; and
8. be a town that supports safe and stable communities.

Progress and projects

The 2012-2020 Vision points to the following initiatives influenced by the publication of the 2007 Vision:

- The opening of the Discovery Centre.
- A new athletics stadium developed in partnership between the City Council and the University of Winchester.
- The relocation and building of the new Trinity Centre.
- A new centre for an Emmaus project.
- Major new facilities on the University of Winchester campus.
- Repaving of the High Street and the Square in the city centre.
- New retail and community service provision in Weeke.
- The opening of the South of Winchester park and ride.
- Major new facilities at the Royal Hampshire County Hospital.
- 800 homes built within the town wards.

A recent design competition and procurement plans to develop the Station Approach site in Winchester have been abandoned following complaints leading to a review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Learning point: Communication and Ownership

- ▶ The City Council’s reputation is now damaged as a result of two failed design proposals.
- ▶ Residents and politicians are demanding developments that express the character of Winchester.
- ▶ As the Silver Hill independent review reported - having an overall agreed vision, political buy-in and good communication with the public will be key to Winchester’s future growth.

¹ A Vision for Winchester 2012-2017

² Future of Winchester Study WCC June 1999

York Vision

“a **vision** beyond traditional economic or urban design development strategies – one demonstrating future economic success and well being **through investment in the city’s quality of place.**”

Profile

Topping a recent poll as the most beautiful city in Britain, medieval York has a wealth of historic, cultural and sporting attractions. These include: York Minister, the Jorvik Viking Centre, York Art Gallery (recently re-opened after an £8 million redevelopment), the National Railway Museum and York racecourse. As the county town and administrative centre of Yorkshire the city is home to York Council, the County and Crown Courts and York Hospital. In addition, it has a thriving education sector with two universities and a science park hosting businesses in the creative, digital media, bioscience and IT technology sectors. In 2014, York became a designated UNESCO City of Media Arts and aims to become the UK’s first Gigabit city by 2017.

Background

Despite having the highest skill levels of any city in the North, York’s wages fall below the national average due to the predominance of low value sectors such as tourism and retail. Furthermore, the lack of spacious Grade A office accommodation together with severe traffic congestion, has limited business expansion and opportunities for inward investment from companies offering higher value jobs. Increasing demand for larger retail space has led to a rise in out-of-town retail development and competition from centres such as Leeds, Harrogate, Newcastle and Manchester. York’s response and ambition is to become bigger economically by ensuring the availability of city centre sites to meet the demand for high quality business space, retail development and housing. However, York’s heritage is both an asset and a challenge. The danger is that if new developments are carried out badly and affect the city’s character, it could deter those businesses it wishes to attract.

York Vision

‘York – New City Beautiful – toward an economic vision’, was a study created in 2010, which examined the economic potential of the city. It also considered how various major development projects at different sites across the city could be pulled together into a coherent strategy.

Learning point: Protecting the past – inspiring the future

- ▶ York recognises that protecting the fabric and culture of this world-famous historic city is essential to the city’s economic success.
- ▶ Although developed in 2010, the New City Beautiful Vision continues to influence and inspire York’s Local Plan, Economic Strategy and the masterplan for York’s new urban quarter, York Central.



The Vision reflected that quality of place:

- matters to businesses making decisions about where to locate and invest;
- matters to residents as a living place and a place to live; and
- matters to the visitor - to enjoy, to learn, to invest and to return.

The Vision also outlined an economic direction for York, as a pioneer and innovator in culture, conservation, media arts, bio-science and agriculture and knowledge based industries.

Proposals included:

- Ensuring that York’s portfolio of development sites and areas including: Castle Piccadilly, University of York, British Sugar, Nestle South, Terry’s and Monk’s Cross were developed in keeping with York’s aspiration to become a New City Beautiful.
- Redefining York’s transportation infrastructure in order to get York moving.
- Ensuring that York Central (a major brownfield site around the railway station) was carefully developed as a new piece of the city.
- Reconnecting the University of York and the countryside to the walled city – The Great Street.
- Making more of the two city’s rivers.
- Creating a connected system of parks to transform the ways in which people used and experienced the city – A City of Parks.
- Enhancing the quality of the city centre’s public realm order to remain attractive and competitive.

Progress and projects

- In 2012, York City Council approved a £3.3 million investment across six city centre locations in order to enhance the quality of the city’s public spaces. Three out of the six projects were completed prior to a change of administration.
- The Council also launched the Tremendous initiative which involved planting 50,000 trees to enhance the city environment.
- Plans to develop an out of town retail centre and Community Stadium at Monk’s Cross were also approved. However, with out-of-town floor space now exceeding that contained within the city, the focus has turned to the renaissance of city centre retailing and the development of its largest brownfield site, York Central. This project represents a unique opportunity to deliver new housing, business accommodation and modern retail units in York, as well as an enhanced National Railway Museum.
- In November 2015, the York BID was established with a fund of £4 million assuring continued investment in the city centre

