

THE BOSTON PLAN FOR 2040

A BOROUGH THAT IS FIT FOR THE FUTURE

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Foreword

The Boston Plan is a document built through an ongoing conversation with residents, visitors and partner agencies with Boston Borough Council. It provides a vision for the entire Borough, whether people here live in an urban or rural environment - all 19 parishes and including the town. This is a Borough that continues to grow, develop and diversify and it is important that we, the Borough Council and partners, as custodians of this important part of Lincolnshire do all that we can to ensure the needs, aspirations and priorities of the people that reside here are met.

The Borough of Boston is incredibly important to many people who recognise and associate with the area, not only locally, regionally and elsewhere in the UK but also internationally. Most notably Boston is the historic area from where, almost 400 years ago, a group of citizens who were central in the founding of its namesake Boston, Massachusetts hailed. Further to this the Borough is also the home to communities from around the world, in particular those from eastern Europe.

The people of Boston are proud and rightly want more for their area, in terms of employment, education, health, community and environmental well-being. It is from that strong desire for a better life for all that the Borough Council has stepped into that important leadership space to work with partners as first amongst equals in order to deliver what is required – together with the people of Boston our commitment is to earnestly strive to ensure that Boston is a **“A Borough that is fit for the future!”**. It is our wish for Boston to be a Borough that is able to withstand the many challenges it faces (both as a people and as a place) and for our area to be a Borough that can seize every opportunity put before it. In order to get there, we are prioritising three main areas for action that Partners and residents have said will make a difference to their quality of life: -

- **Thriving Economy – Enabling Growth and Prosperity in Boston Borough**
- **Community Cohesion and Resilience – An Inclusive and Supportive Boston**
- **A Healthy and Sustainable Borough**

We believe through our collective efforts around these thematic areas, as the Borough Council, working with partners and our communities we can help ensure everyone has a great, long and enjoyable life in our Borough. As the Leader of the Council, I know that our commitment is not an easy one to deliver against but one we are resolute in achieving. Together we will be fitter and stronger and whilst there will always be uncertainty, we know the effort in achieving our ambitions will be absolutely worth it. It is for these reasons I commend to you our 2040 Plan for the Borough of Boston.

Cllr Anne Dorrian
Leader – Boston Borough Council

1. A Sense of Place and Context

a) The Borough of Boston

The Borough of Boston has a population of 70,502 (2021) census. 53,830 of the Borough's residents were born in the UK with 14,099 people within the overall population being born in EU countries. The smaller remainder are from Europe (other), middle east and Asia, Africa and other countries. The diversity of the population is a feature of the Borough.

The population like in many areas faces a number of health challenges such as cardio-vascular disease, childhood obesity and cancer, with an overall life expectancy in the Borough of 82.1 years for females and 77.8 years for males (2016-2018).

The Borough lies at the centre of some of the country's most fertile land. The economy of the Borough is dominated by agriculture and horticulture as a consequence of this. Other businesses are largely ancillary; namely engineering, food processing/manufacturing and logistics (with a few notable exceptions).

Boston is a traditional market town, rich in heritage, character and history and is one of the largest urban areas in Lincolnshire making its economic success important not only locally but also for the County and wider region. The town is the administrative centre.

The Borough borders South Holland to the south, North Kesteven to the west, and East Lindsey to the north. To the east, it has a coast onto the Wash. Across Boston there are 19 parishes.

Boston Borough Council working with Lincolnshire County Council provide key public services to the people of the Borough, alongside other partner agencies such as the police, NHS and the voluntary and community sector.

b) Sub-Regional Context: South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

In 2021 Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District Council joined to form the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (SELCP). The largest three council Partnership in the country. The Partnership consists of 122 councillors. Whilst the SELCP has a shared senior management team each council has retained its sovereignty.

SELCP has an agreed sub-regional strategy which has five sub-regional priorities¹: -

- **Growth and Prosperity** – unemployment, productivity, pay, education, skills and training are all key areas for the sub-region.
- **Healthy Lives** – Health inequalities are a key focus for the sub-region.
- **Safe and Resilient Communities** – fear of crime is a key factor that impacts on the quality of people's lives in South and East Lincolnshire, despite the area being relatively safe.
- **Environment** – Climate Change is acknowledged as the key overall challenge.

With a corporate priority of **Efficiency and Effectiveness** – the need to deliver good quality value for money public services.

¹ South & East Lincolnshire Partnership Sub-regional Strategy (2024/5 – 2028/9)

c) The National Context: The Government's Mission

In producing this Plan we recognise the fit with our ambition and irrespective of party politics the need to align with the national agenda as well as the local and sub-regional agenda. To that end this Plan is provided to contribute to rebuilding Britain by linking in with the themes of “Kick Starting Growth”, “Making Britain a Clean Energy Superpower”, “Taking Back Our Streets”, “Breaking Down Barriers to Opportunity” and “Building an NHS Fit for the Future.”

d) Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

Greater Lincolnshire will elect a Mayor in May 2025 – this is part of a Devolution Deal with Central Government that will see powers / money previously exercised / allocated by Government transferred to a newly formed Mayoral Combined Authority (which the Mayor will be responsible for).

The English Devolution Bill was published on 16 December, 2024, and sets out the Government's policy intention around future Devolution Deals and their ambition for areas where two-tier local government is in place – such as Lincolnshire – to move to a Unitary model of Local Government.

This plan will be updated as the impact of Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) becomes clearer. It is acknowledged that LGR may impact the delivery of the actions.

e) Rural areas

During our consultation with residents and stakeholders, 65% agreed that both rural and urban aspects were sufficiently covered in the plan itself. However, there was also a clear message from the consultation responses that specific rural actions need to be included in the action plan for delivery. By having both urban and rural actions in one place, there will be no need for a separate Rural Strategy.

As these actions are developed, there will be consultation with rural groups, stakeholders and parish councils to ensure that their views are heard. Progress on the action plan will also be reported to the regular parish council liaison meetings.

It was also noted that there are complex issues affecting the rural areas which might be slightly different to the town e.g. with regard to fly tipping, and this is noted and will be taken into consideration when developing the actions.

2) Our Vision, Priorities and Strategic Aims

A Vision for the Borough of Boston

We believe that everyone in our Borough should have a great life and therefore our Vision is that: -

“By 2040 the Borough of Boston will have an increasingly thriving and resilient economy with jobs available for all and a pipeline of skilled workers who are being trained locally. In our Borough people will be able to acquire their own home, raise their family and grow old together in a healthy and safe rural and urban environment that strives to be carbon free and continues to be blessed by the Borough’s many cultural and community assets.”

We are building a Borough that will be fit and strong enough for the future and that is why we have chosen a date that not only coincides with our climate change ambitions (Net Zero by 2040) but also to recognise we need time to make the real progress that we are seeking to achieve.

During our consultation with residents and stakeholders, 71% of all respondents ‘Strongly Agreed’ or ‘Agreed’ with this overall vision.

In order to deliver against this vision we believe we must focus on three main priority areas of work which link to 13 strategic aims: -

- **Priority 1: Thriving Economy – Enabling Growth and Prosperity in Boston Borough**

Strategic Aim 1.1: Enhancing a Vibrant Town Centre and Delivering Regeneration.

Strategic Aim 1.2: Supporting Priority Economic Sectors and Businesses in the Borough.

Strategic Aim 1.3: Developing Skills, Learning and Employment Opportunities in the Borough.

Strategic Aim 1.4: Enabling Economic and Housing Growth in the Borough.

Strategic Aim 1.5: Proactively Attracting Inward Investment to the Borough.

- **Priority 2: Community Cohesion and Resilience – An Inclusive and Supportive Boston**

Strategic Aim 2.1: A Borough that Celebrates Difference and Works Together.

Strategic Aim 2.2: A Borough Where People Feel Safe.

Strategic Aim 2.3: A Borough that Fosters Inclusive Engagement and Collaboration Among Diverse Community Members.

Strategic Aim 2.4: A Borough Where People are Financially Secure.

- **Priority 3: A Healthy and Sustainable Borough**

Strategic Aim 3.1 - A Net Zero community.

Strategic Aim 3.2 - A Flourishing Natural Environment for All to Enjoy.

Strategic Aim 3.3 - A Place that Supports Healthy Lives.

Strategic Aim 3.4 - Ensuring a Boston Legacy is there for Future Generations.

During our consultation with residents and stakeholders, 75% agreed that these three main priorities aligned with the needs of Boston Borough.

Also from the consultation, the biggest challenges facing Boston Borough were identified as:

- Economy and employment – 74%
- Community Safety – 63%
- Health Inequalities – 51%
- Housing – 40%
- Environmental Sustainability – 33%
- Other – 23%

Specific comments were made around heritage/tourism; immigration; traffic/transport; perception of safety; training/skills; public toilets; agriculture; crime/antisocial behaviour; health/GPs/dentists; retail; small business support; dog fouling. These will all be picked up as part of the development of the actions.

Overall, 53% agreed that the Boston Plan reflects the needs and aspirations of the borough's residents.

3. Our Priorities

Priority 1: Thriving Economy - Enabling Growth and Prosperity in Boston Borough.

The Borough of Boston's business base by VAT/PAYE activity and size is nearly 2,200 with 1,855 falling in the 0 to 10 employee band. However, it also has 15 businesses that are within the 250+ employee band, all creating opportunities in sector related supply-chain management. Other large employers include Boston College and the Pilgrim Hospital. There is a consistently low unemployment rate in Boston (lower than the national average) (source Boston Borough Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024; the percentage of the workforce that is unemployed but actively seeking employment).

The town has a very low level of business births just over 20 per 10,000 population – a third of the England average and has a very 'static' economy with a level of business 'churn' 50% less than the England average (ONS 2021). Boston is 18% points behind the national average when it comes to workers involved in Knowledge Intensive Businesses (KIBS).

The district has levels of working age population 61.2 vs 62.9 (GB) and economic activity 79.7 vs 78.6 (GB) on a par with the GB average. (ONS Population estimates 2022). Wages (2023) are amongst the lowest in Great Britain overall they are £100 per week lower than the GB average £582 vs £683 (GB) with particularly low figures for female salaries: £487 vs £629 (GB). (ASHE 2023). Boston Borough has a higher proportion of people on out of work benefits 4.3% compared to 3.7% for GB (DWP 2023). This figure is different to the unemployment rate in the first paragraph above, as it also includes those unable to work due to health or disability.

The Sub- Regional Growth and Prosperity Plan (2024) sets out principles and priorities for the Council to support a prosperous, productive and creative economy. The Plan captures the commitment to deliver the Government funded programmes within the Borough, ensuring both their outputs and outcomes support the growth and prosperity of the area. Principles of collaboration, enabling, delivery, place-based, sustainable, coordinated and evidence-led are reflected in the Plan.

Boston Borough Council and South Holland District Council have prepared a single, joint Local Plan (2011-2036) to shape the economic and housing growth in the area. The Local Plan ensures that our needs for homes, jobs, shops and infrastructure will be met, without harming the historic buildings, wildlife, villages and large areas of open countryside.

From the consultation with residents and stakeholders, the priority actions for economic growth were identified as:

- Developing the town centre – 35%
- Attracting inward investment – 27%
- Supporting local businesses – 21%
- Enhancing skills and training – 9%
- Improving job opportunities – 8%

Strategic Aim 1.1: Enhancing a Vibrant Town Centre and Delivering Regeneration.

Boston Borough Council is committed to working in partnership with businesses, residents and partners to revitalise the high street and the surrounding public realm and is committed to making the town centre a place to be proud of, a place recognised for its great heritage and a place that is cherished by its diverse communities to work, live and enjoy leisure time in.

The town centre is a key economic hub that supports the vibrancy of this great Borough and that it is also a key focal point for those who reside within the area's local neighbourhoods. A Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2023-2027 entitled "A Town Centre for Everyone" was agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 25th October 2023. It seeks to better align council service delivery with partners, community representatives and the voluntary and community sector in order to lead a programme of work which ensures that Boston Town Centre is clean and safe, open for business, a great place for culture, heritage and events and a place that is on a very real transformation journey that will ensure present and future generations enjoy the very best that Boston's town centre can provide.

The Council has been successful in securing a significant amount of grant funding from the Levelling Up Fund, Towns Fund and Levelling Up Partnership funding. A range of projects are being delivered by a number of partners within the Town Centre including: -

- Rosegarth Square redevelopment (residential and health uses as well as public realm enhancement)
- Redevelopment and remodelling of the Leisure Complex and its facilities
- New Boston College Mayflower development, including the creation of new shared plaza public realm area
- Refurbishment work at Blenkin Memorial Hall

From the consultation with residents and stakeholders, 54% agreed that the regeneration plans (e.g. Rosegarth Square, new leisure facilities, Mayflower development) will have a positive impact on the borough. The specific comments received will be shared with the relevant project teams.

The recent announcement of Long Term Plan for Towns will provide £20m over 10 years to help address the challenges the town centre is facing today. The Boston Town Board is a stakeholders' forum providing oversight for co-ordination and delivery of all projects in the Town Centre.

Retail, leisure and tourism are the key economic sectors for the town centre. Through the recently established Boston Town Centre Business Forum, work is underway to develop a stronger and more coordinated town centre business 'voice' within Boston. Early conversations are exploring how greater co-ordination between town centre businesses, especially in respect of marketing and promotions, can enable town centre businesses to better drive footfall. The Council is seeking to play an 'enabling' role in this group, supporting the businesses involved to develop their level of influence and local leadership.

The Council has also approved a Cultural Framework that sets out an ambitious vision for culture, connecting heritage and the visitor economy while recognising the health and wellbeing benefits culture brings to people's lives. It is anticipated to open up investment opportunities and support employment in cultural sectors through development of heritage and natural assets as well as festivals and events.

In order to promote the distinct offer and support the visitor economy in the Borough, the Council is preparing a Destination Management Plan (DMP). Boston, once Britain's second largest seaport and a wealthy wool trading town in medieval times, also has a rich history. It has significant visitor assets like St. Botolph's Church, the Guildhall and connections to the Pilgrim Fathers. In 2030, Boston, Massachusetts, will celebrate its 400th anniversary since its founding.

Many organisational structures in Boston, Massachusetts, are based on those of institutions in Boston, Lincolnshire. This anniversary presents an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of historical links, put Boston, Lincolnshire, on the map, and attract more visitors from both the UK and the American/international market.

Strategic Aim 1.2 : Supporting Priority Economic Sectors and Businesses in the Borough.

Whilst the town is a hub for food production and logistics, it does have a relatively low level of economic diversity because of this very significant concentration on food. There is a major challenge to diversify the economy of the Borough as a whole and particularly to drive up the stock of high value enterprises. Boston ranks as the lowest local authority in terms of education and skills in England (IMD 2019) and it has wages which are £100 a week lower than the national average (2021 ASHE data).

Predominating economic sectors (BRES 2022) reflect its role as a service centre with the following sectors having higher percentages of employment than the GB average:

- Manufacturing 13.3% vs 7.6%
- Wholesale/Retail 20% vs 14%
- Administration 15% vs 9%
- Health 20% vs 13.5%

The Council has a strong relationship with the UK Fresh Produce Network; a Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce-led membership organisation which represents the interests of the food production, logistics, horticulture and agriculture sectors. Given the importance of these sectors to the Borough's economy, the Council has utilised its UK Shared Prosperity Funding to support growth of the UKFPN, including strengthening its capacity to lobby government on matters of local importance to our key sectors.

In order to support its agri-food sector, the Borough has utilised Towns Deal funding to support the Centre for Food and Fresh Produce Logistics. This programme has offered fully funded support for businesses in the food and associated supply chain sectors including, agri-food technologies, port and logistics, equipment and technical services, engineering and packaging, manufacturing, and food service (including retailers and restaurants).

In terms of broader sectors, through its UKSPF-funded Advice4Growth and Grants4Growth programme, the Borough Council continues to provide a cohesive package of practical support to businesses. This includes: -

- Grant funding support of up to £25,000 per business to enable investments that support business growth, ranging from capital investment in machinery through to revenue investment in training.
- High quality, dedicated and fully funded business advisory support, including specialist business advisory support in areas including recruitment, AI, automation, sales growth and marketing.

From the consultation with residents and stakeholders, the priority actions for additional support the Council should provide to businesses were identified as:

- Grants and Funding – 72%

- Training and upskilling initiatives – 47%
- Marketing and promotions – 46%
- Other – 11%

Strategic Aim 1.3: Developing Skills, Learning and Employment Opportunities in the Borough.

The Council is an active partner in supporting the skills, learning and employment agenda across the Borough of Boston. Activity in this area includes: -

- **Relationships with education providers and businesses.** Utilising the dedicated resource of the Economic Growth team's Investment and Skills Officer, the authority has excellent working relationships with its local school and further education institutions; relationships which the authority utilises to ensure strong connectivity between the education sector and local businesses.
- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund.** During 2024/25 the authority has invested £383,280 in UK Shared Property Funding into local skills initiatives, including those aimed at supporting upskilling the local workforce, and supporting the long term unemployed in accessing the labour market.
- **F1 in Schools.** The authority has actively supported the F1 in Schools programme, promoting engagement locally. The programme supports school-aged learners with access to STEM-based activity. In 2023 the regional final was held in Boston, with Boston Grammar School reaching the 2024 national final.
- **Future Fest.** The authority (as part of the wider SELCP) leads on the annual 'Future Fest'; an annual careers festival to connect school aged learners with career opportunities on their doorstep.

Strategic Aim 1.4: Enabling Economic and Housing Growth in the Borough.

The Local Plan is a key driver for housing and economic growth in the Borough. Sites for delivering homes and employment are allocated in the plan, with associated infrastructure requirements. The targets set for the number of homes to be delivered per year are being met generally within the area.

The Government has consulted on changing the way housing need is calculated. The decision on this is awaited but it is likely the target will be higher than the local plan target. With other budget changes there is a risk that developers will slow down their output owing to higher costs and a downturn in the market as buyers become reticent to commit to the financial outlay.

The Local Plan has a target of 20% of the dwellings provided should be affordable. However, provision is almost 40% over the plan period, exceeding the targets.

The Local Plan allocates 43h of employment land in the Borough. Up to 2023-24 about 7h has been completed. The Council works with Government departments as well as site owners, developers and investors to ensure delivery of the allocated sites.

Strategic Aim 1.5: Proactively Attracting Inward Investment to the Borough

The area is a major food processing and wholesale hub and part of the nationally significant cluster of activity in this context which spans Boston and South Holland. The Council takes a

proactive approach to supporting business investment and growth, both in terms of investment from within the Borough but also external investment into the area. Under the banner of the SELCP, for the past two years the authority has had a visible presence at the annual UK Real Estate and Infrastructure Investment Forum (UKREiIF); the largest business, property and infrastructure investment 'expo' in the UK. The authority will also be represented at the 2025 event, where the focus will remain on raising the profile of the Borough of Boston as a location to invest.

A wider 'investment proposition' for Boston Borough is currently in development, in tandem with work to continue to strengthen the Borough's approach to business engagement. The Council, working with the partner organisations represented on the Boston Town Board, is keen to 're-position' Boston as an attractive and safe place to live, work, visit and invest in.

This would build on successful examples of inward investment e.g. Marks & Spencer; Jaguar Landrover; and the steel distribution centre for the UK automotive industry at the Port of Boston.

Priority 2: Community Cohesion and Resilience – An Inclusive and Supportive Boston

Community Cohesion

The population of the Borough has significantly grown between 2001-2020, a 27% increase with an additional 15,035 residents. From 55,802 in 2001 to 70,837 in 2020. It is understood that this above average increase is driven by international inward migration with people coming to Boston from outside the UK for work. Because of this the Borough benefits from a range of cultures residing in the area. It is worth noting that in the 2021 census 79.29% of people selected English as their first or preferred language, 5.68% Polish, 5.04% selected Lithuanian, 2.2% selected Romanian, 1.65% Latvian and 1.6% Bulgarian².

Whilst Boston benefits from the experiences shared from living amongst diverse communities, a survey by Social Change UK in 2022 found that many people in Boston feel disconnected from other nationality groups and have negative opinions of each other. The reasons for this included: -

- “They have different values”
- “They think they make Boston a worse place”
- “They speak different languages”
- “They have different attitudes and perspectives”
- “This negative viewpoint is the norm”

Our work in this area will look at the facts around immigration, migrant work and the value that can be brought from living amongst people from different cultures, including how communities can be enabled to support each other. Not only will it consider the positives it will also follow key lines of enquiry that will seek to tackle concerns about illegal immigration and illegal working, whilst recognising the challenges there can be in looking for the potential threat of hidden economies.

Community Resilience

We believe that all communities need to be resilient and by resilience we mean being able to feed their families, heat their homes, feel secure and to be able to access services and support. We want our residents to be financially secure to ensure they have resources to meet their needs, achieve their goals and deal with changes to their circumstances.

It is important to recognise that people may be living in **poverty** if they lack the financial resources to meet their needs, whereas **deprivation** refers to any ‘unmet need’.

A household is considered to be in relative poverty if its income is below 60% of the national average income. Data from the Department of Work and Pensions suggests that a third of children in the Borough of Boston are living in low-income families³ and Boston has a higher percentage of households at risk of fuel poverty than the national average⁴.

In terms of ‘multiple deprivation’, Boston is ranked at 102 out of 317 Local Authorities (the lower the number the more deprived) and is ranked 1 out of 317 Local Authorities for ‘Education and

² ONS Census 2021

³ DWP Households Below Average Income

⁴ Department of Health & Social Care, Fingertips Public Health Data (accessed 2024)

Skills deprivation' (this means Boston is considered *the* most deprived Local Authority for the Education and Skills domain in England)⁵.

From a crime perspective Borough is ranked relatively low nationally, yet people can at times feel unsafe in Boston. We want our residents to feel safe and secure.

Community Leadership

The Council recognises the important role it plays within the local community in ensuring it supports and empowers local community leaders. We want to foster collaboration between community members to ensure a sense of community so that local issues are addressed effectively. We want all our communities to feel they are included in key decisions, bringing varied and different viewpoints to ensure we meet the needs of all our communities across the Borough.

A strong, vibrant and effective Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) is a critical component of a healthy and resilient community. We will continue the development of a sub-regional partnership approach between SELCP and the Voluntary and Community Sector that empowers our communities through community leadership. We will continue to support the VCS in a number of ways including identification of funding, identifying and supporting access to appropriate space, and advice and support to ensure a strong sector that supports the delivery of our sub regional priorities.

From the consultation with residents and stakeholders, 40% agreed that Boston supports diverse communities.

The priority actions that would help foster better community cohesion were identified as:

- Improved communication between communities – 53%
- More cultural events – 45%
- Education on diversity and inclusion – 42%
- Other – 26%

To galvanise our efforts with partners around the issues presented here, we have developed the following strategic aims: -

Strategic Aim 2.1: A Borough that Celebrates Difference and Works Together.

As a society we are stronger together. We see community cohesion is important for enjoying a great quality of life in our area.

We want to do more to see how this negative reflection can become a positive one.

Strategic Aim 2.2: A Borough Where People Feel Safe

We believe nobody in the Borough of Boston should feel unsafe or at risk.

Through this plan we want to make a positive impact on any concerns that relate to community safety.

⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019)

From the consultation with residents and stakeholders, 46% feel safe living in Boston. The comments received will feed into the action plan for this aim.

Strategic Aim 2.3 : A Borough Where People are Financially Secure.

Financial resilience helps people feel secure, helps them engage in society and improve their wellbeing.

We want to support Boston residents to maximise their income to meet their needs and achieve their goals.

Also from the consultation, the most important step the Council can take to support residents facing financial challenges was identified as:

- Providing affordable housing – 34%
- Offering financial education programs – 29%
- Increasing access to benefits and support services – 23%
- Other – 14%

Strategic Aim 2.4: A Borough that Fosters Inclusive Engagement and Collaboration Among Diverse Community Members.

Promoting inclusivity and collaboration with communities builds trust and understanding supporting the needs of Boston Borough residents and significantly contributing to stronger community cohesion.

Developing local networks enhances the ability to respond to the needs of the community.

Priority 3: A Healthy and Sustainable Borough

Our health and our natural environment are intrinsically linked and it is for these reasons we are determined to make our area known for being “**a healthy and sustainable Borough.**”

Strategic Aim 3.1: A Net Zero Community.

Reducing carbon emissions through positive action with only the offsetting of remaining residual emissions is not only part of our local climate change commitments but contributes to national Net Zero targets.

Tackling carbon emissions across the Borough will also have positive benefits such as improving air-quality and reducing fuel poverty.

Climate Change is widely considered to be one of the greatest challenges facing our society. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the main greenhouse gas (GHG), accounting for 80% of GHG emissions in the UK in 2019 with methane, nitrous oxide and fluorinated gases also notable contributors to overall emissions. Data published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (formerly BEIS) on an annual basis provides the latest estimates of end-user GHG emissions, expressed as CO₂ equivalent, for local authority areas in the UK.

In Boston Borough, emissions reduced by 39.4% between 2005 and 2022 and we need to do more to improve on this reduction. Transport and domestic properties are the main two contributors with emissions from industry also coming in the top three. The transport sector is the largest contributor to the carbon footprint of the Borough accounting for 37% of total emissions. A large number of businesses, particularly in the agri-food supply chain across Boston rely on the road network to support their operations to ensure timely delivery and dispatch of produce.

An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) currently exists at Haven Bridge and Boston Borough Council coordinates an Action Plan which includes steps that will achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

The rural nature of the Borough means there is limited travel connectivity and the area is poorly served by public transport and safe cycling routes compared to areas that are predominately more urban – an issue felt widely throughout rural Lincolnshire and one that will only be tackled through working in partnership and monitoring technological advancements and opportunities.

Boston Borough Council has a commitment to reduce its own operations to Net Zero by 2040 and alongside partners in the South and East Lincolnshire Climate Action Network delivering the sub-region’s Climate Change Strategy, has committed to be Net Zero in advance of the UK Government (2050). The key themes of the document focus on actions related to the Built Environment, Business, Energy/Renewables, Transport, Agriculture/Food, Nature-based Solutions, Water Resources and the Visitor Economy.

From the consultation with residents and stakeholders, 38% agreed it is important to them that Boston achieves its Net Zero target by 2030.

The priority actions the Council should focus on to reduce carbon emissions were identified as:

- Improving energy efficiency in homes – 49%
- Promoting public transport – 46%

- Encouraging businesses to adopt greener practices – 42%
- Other – 25%

Strategic Aim 3.2: A Flourishing Natural Environment for all to Enjoy.

Our environmental assets are important in helping make Boston Borough a healthier place to live and work and through good stewardship they will also contribute towards our net zero ambitions. We can do more to deliver a more resilient Borough and commit to ensuring everyone is within 10 minutes of accessible, well-managed green space with barriers to access removed wherever possible. This will improve health outcomes for local residents and enhance biodiversity for the benefit of our wildlife.

The Borough is blessed with a variety of beautiful green spaces including Central Park in the town, a number of Boston Woods Trust sites and two country parks; Witham Way and Havenside, which are both Local Nature Reserves. Boston is the only town in the UK with 8 country parks within 5 miles of the town centre: <https://boston-england.co.uk/business-directory/category/things-to-do/nature-reserves-green-spaces>

The Borough also neighbours the internationally significant Wash Estuary. These spaces are important habitats for nature and provide many benefits including encouraging healthy outdoor activities, flood protection and carbon sequestration. They create a sense of community, provide safe spaces for play and recreation, walking, cycling and many other outdoor pursuits. In addition, the natural environment also acts as a valuable carbon sinks that support us, alongside other initiatives, in meeting our climate change objectives. Habitats such as saltmarsh and grasslands can, when in good condition, easily absorb as much if not more carbon than trees and woodlands.

Green spaces save the NHS over £110 million per year from fewer GP visits alone⁶. In Boston Borough, data shows that whilst 80% of Boston’s population are within a 10-minute walk of green space, 14,709 residents are not. The East of England is particularly poor for access to nature, largely due to vast areas of high-grade farmland and limited footpath access⁷. Boston Borough has been highlighted as one of the ten most nature access-poor local authorities in England⁸. Whilst provision of green space is key, it is not necessarily an indicator that people are able to access it and a variety of barriers may also exist for example: anxiety associated with a lack of facilities such as toilets and benches, physical barriers such as stiles or busy roads and perceived concerns around safety and anti-social behaviour.

From the consultation with residents and stakeholders, 77% agreed that they have adequate access to green spaces within a 10-minute walk from their home.

The priority improvements they would like to see in Boston’s green space were identified as:

- Enhanced safety and cleanliness – 75%
- Increased accessibility (e.g. paths, benches) – 47%
- More recreational facilities – 38%
- Other – 15%

⁶ Fields in Trust, Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces (2018)

⁷ UK Onward, Walk on the Wide Side (2024)

⁸ Wildlife and Countryside Link, Mapping Access to Nature in England (2023)

Strategic Aim 3.3: A Place that Supports Healthy Lives.

We believe the Borough Council has a role to enable and influence healthy lifestyles. We have a great leisure offer and our natural environment is one that many others would envy.

By harnessing these assets and by working together we believe we can help people stay healthy for longer and help prevent poor health and improve quality of life.

Boston Borough faces some challenging health statistics⁹ that put us as an outlier compared to the rest of the region and country. Some examples include: -

- **Adults who are obese/severely obese** 17.3% compared to an England value of 11.4%
- **Year 6 children who are obese/severely obese** 29.6% compared to an England value of 22.5%
- **Male Life expectancy** 77.7 years compared to an England value of 79.3 years
- **Female Life expectancy** 82.1 years compared to an England value of 84.9 years
- Admission episodes for **alcohol-related conditions** 673 per 100,000 people compared to an England value of 475 per 100,000 people. This trend is increasing and getting worse.
- Proportion of the total population who are **smokers** 23.9% compared to an England value of 14.7%.
- Hospital admission rate due to **liver disease** 551.7 per 100,000 people compared to an England value of 194.8 per 100,000 people.
- Percentage of 5-year-olds with experience of visually **obvious dental decay** 32% compared to England value of 23.7%.

Through the work of the Healthy Living Board within the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership we are seeing actions coming forward that will help residents live longer, healthier lives. We are prioritising the health of residents in our Borough in order to make the difference required to improve these statistics. For us this is all about prevention, whilst recognising the important role the NHS has in treating people when they become poorly.

Our Healthy Living Board provides a platform for local health, government and third sector organisations to come together to reduce health inequalities and improve health outcomes. Local health partnerships support and oversee the preparation and development of the District Healthy Living Strategy, identifying local priorities and need.

From the consultation with residents and stakeholders, the priority health challenges for the Council were identified as:

- Combating alcohol and substance abuse – 61%
- Supporting healthy lifestyles – 56%
- Improving mental health services – 54%
- Reducing obesity rates – 41%

⁹ Department of Health & Social Care, Fingertips Public Health Data (accessed 2024)

Strategic Objective 3.4: Ensuring a Boston Legacy is there for Future Generations

In better linking health with our “environment” we believe we can achieve a greater positive impact across the generations and indeed in doing so we want to ensure those who come after us, inherit the great place we know as Boston in an even better condition than when we came to it.

Boston Borough is a special place for so many people. That sense of local identity is a driver that keeps people connected to the area and it is one that boosts community well-being on an individual level and at a wider scale of population. This is where the urban environment is just as relevant to the rural environment, recognising the Borough is a place that holds so many cultural assets such as the Boston Stump and the Guildhall. This really is about promoting “pride of place” that breeds behaviours that support clean healthy environments that promote mental and physical well-being and safeguards what is important to local people for future generations to come.

One of the key events coming up that will bring the community together is ‘Boston 2030’. In 2030 Boston Massachusetts will be celebrating its 400th anniversary and Boston Borough Council will be using this as an opportunity for a year of celebrating all things Boston Lincolnshire.

4. Tracking Progress and Reporting Back

It is proposed that the three priority areas of focus that are set out in this plan are considered by multi-agency working groups that agree key actions against each thematic/priority area and their associated strategic aims. The actions are to be incorporated into the Annual Delivery Plan for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.

It is also proposed that key indicators will also support performance reporting against these priority areas of focus.

Feedback from the working groups against delivery on their workstreams and the overall Plan will be made available to the Cabinet (and Scrutiny as appropriate) for their consideration at twice yearly intervals.

Progress will also be reported to the parish council liaison meetings.

5. Consultation and Democratic Decision Making

The draft Borough Plan has been provided for consideration as follows: -

- a) Public consultation – 15th January to 16th February 2025.
- b) BBC Corporate and Community Scrutiny Committee – 6th March 2025
- c) Cabinet – 26th March 2025