

Huntingdonshire Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030

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Summary

Huntingdonshire's Economic Growth Strategy sets out our vision and ambitions for Huntingdonshire's economy from 2025-2030. It is built upon the latest evidence of what makes Huntingdonshire best in class, where our opportunities are, and the challenges we face.

This data, combined with our conversations with public sector, businesses and community partners, emphasised the strengths of our district. We are a great place to live and visit and have a diverse business economy. Our research has also reinforced the challenges faced by our communities. Some of our residents face significant barriers to accessing employment, and many jobs are poorly paid. At the same time, some of our businesses are struggling to recruit the talent they need to grow.

There are exciting new opportunities in the pipeline, and we must make sure that these drive prosperity in our communities. Our strategy recognises the need for economic growth whilst preserving the strength of our natural assets and reducing our environmental impact.

Huntingdonshire is in an important strategic location, but the evidence has shown we are currently not maximising our potential in terms of economic output. Our Strategy positions us to increase our contribution to national growth and prosperity.

The Economic Growth Strategy provides a framework to guide the action of Huntingdonshire District Council and public, private and community partners across our District.

Our vision is:

A prosperous, resilient and dynamic economy which provides the foundation for Huntingdonshire to be a good place to live, work and visit.

We will be open for business, work collaboratively with partners, capitalise on our opportunities and invest in our people and places.

Our ambitions are:

Our economy is flexible. We have planned for change in our key sectors and contribute to national growth priorities

Enterprise is celebrated and Huntingdonshire is a great place for business

Our residents have the skills they need to participate in the economy

New investment and development is positively supporting our economy

The vibrancy in our rural areas and market towns make our district a desirable place to spend time and explore

Foreword



“

A prosperous, resilient, and dynamic economy is the core vision for the Huntingdonshire Economic Growth Strategy 2025-30.

This vision is the result of long-term collaboration with local partners, businesses, and stakeholders, and is firmly rooted in evidence, research, and engagement. The strategy sets out clear priorities for enterprise, infrastructure, and place-based growth, ensuring that people are equipped with the right skills to prosper in key sectors such as digital, life sciences, and green growth.

Huntingdonshire's market towns and villages are thriving centres of enterprise, each building on their unique heritage and strengths to create vibrant, lasting communities. The district's leadership and commitment to sustainable innovation are echoed in this strategy, which recognises that 89% of local businesses are micro enterprises and that harnessing their growth potential is crucial for our future success. The ongoing reinvigoration of our town centres, designed to embrace history and community, mirrors the approach of this strategy - locally led, ambitious, and designed to leave a long-lasting legacy.

FSB welcomes the commitment to partnership working and the recognition of small businesses as the backbone of our local economy. We look forward to supporting the aims and objectives of the Huntingdonshire Economic Growth Strategy 2025-30, ensuring that our district's businesses and residents can meet their full potential and set the pace for regional growth well beyond devolution and into 2030.

Jade Uko, Chair, East of England, Federation of Small Businesses



Introduction

What is the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030?

The Economic Growth Strategy establishes the direction of travel for our economy over the next five years.

A lot has changed politically and economically since our previous Economic Growth Strategy, “Ready to Recover” was developed in 2020.

With a new Government focused on growth and unlocking the economic potential of regions, now is the time to for an evolution and refresh of Huntingdonshire’s ambition for our economy.

The Corporate Plan 2023-2028 sets out ambitions for the district, and the Economic Growth Strategy provides the detailed economic framework to achieve these aims. To be impactful, this must establish the key shared ambitions for our economy to direct resources over the next five years.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority will play an important role in identifying growth opportunities through the forthcoming Local Growth Plan. However, there is a vital role for District Councils to translate regional growth ambitions into action on the ground.

The Economic Growth Strategy is designed to spark action beyond the council. It has been shaped by the Huntingdonshire Economic Development Team, District and County Council Officers and stakeholders across the district. For maximum impact it should be adopted by, and guide the work of, both the District Council and its partners.

Alongside the Economic Growth Strategy, we are developing an Economic and Employment Needs Assessment (2025). This is a policy compliant

document which provides a robust evidence base on the Huntingdonshire economy to underpin the Local Plan to 2036 review.

How was it developed?

The Economic Growth Strategy is underpinned by the latest evidence on Huntingdonshire’s economy, population and labour market. This has helped us to compare how we are performing to our neighbours, and similar local authorities across the UK.

We have supplemented our data with the experience and insights of stakeholders across our district through 1:1 conversations and group discussions with businesses, business representative groups, community partners and officers who are integral to our current and future prosperity.

We have used this evidence to inform our vision, ambitions and actions.

Over the 5-year time period of our strategy, there is likely to be significant political, economic and social changes. In developing our action plan, we have identified the key uncertainties in our economy, and developed scenarios of what the future might look like. This is designed to future-proof our action plan and ensure adaptability. Our scenario planning work can be found in the evidence appendix.

How will the strategy be delivered?

Huntingdonshire District Council will take the lead role in delivering the Economic Growth Strategy and measuring progress.

The action plan follows the Do, Enable, Influence approach set out in the Corporate Plan:

Do: actions we can directly deliver as a District Council

Enable: actions focused on bringing people together and creating spaces and forums for collaboration

Influence: actions focused on influencing our partners, public and private

We recognise the need to work together with local stakeholders to achieve our goals. Our Strategy seeks to activate the expertise, talents and resources of our key public, private and community partners.

Our role as part of a Combined Authority provides unique opportunities for our district in achieving our ambitions. Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority are developing a Local Growth Plan which sets out economic ambitions to 2035 and provides a direct link between Government growth ambitions and the CPCA region. Huntingdonshire’s Economic Growth Strategy is designed to align with this and identify local priorities and ambitions which compliment and reinforce the longer-term regional aims.

Local Government Reform will impact upon our District within the timeframe of the strategy. We think it is vital to have a medium-long term vision for our district which can be adopted by our partners now and in the future, but to reflect upcoming changes, we have focused our actions on what we can do in the next two years.

The Economic Growth Strategy will be an important part of ensuring that the opportunities in Huntingdonshire are realised despite changing political landscape.

This is Huntingdonshire

A Rich Economic Heritage

Huntingdonshire's history illustrates the district's ability to evolve its economy to meet the needs of residents and businesses.

Huntingdonshire's economy grew from agricultural roots, with market towns like Huntingdon, St Ives and Godmanchester enabling trade in agricultural produce. St Ives gained its first charter establishing a market in 1110, followed by St Neots in 1130, Ramsey at the end of the 12thc and Huntingdon in 1205. The rural economies and market towns still form a vibrant part of our district today.

While agriculture, and rural industries, remain a central part of our economy the Industrial Revolution brought new and emerging industries to Huntingdonshire. Our strategic location enabled the district to flourish as a significant coaching centre, attracting people and trade from across the country.

An Economy of Transition

As times change, our district evolved, and manufacturing became an important piece in the jigsaw of our economy. From brick making in Yaxley, to textiles and aviation in Godmanchester and light engineering in towns including Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots.

Today, Huntingdonshire's modern manufacturing base focuses on advanced technologies, research and development in sectors like automotive, aerospace, medical, and technology. We are home to innovative advanced manufacturing companies who have

located, stayed and developed their products within our district such as Paragraf, who produce industry-ready graphene electronic devices.

We are also a key centre for defence, with RAF Wyton, RAF Molesworth and RAF Alconbury within our District and active bases, intelligence and logistics hubs, academic and R&D institutions located within a 2hr radius.

We have diversified our economy to include professional, scientific, and technical activities, construction, and other business services including professional and consultancy services, legal services, accounting and marketing.

Once again, our economy is at a point of transition and evolution, as we move towards decarbonisation and the next industrial revolution. The Government's focus on growth and the emerging Industrial Strategy presents us with the opportunity to define our economic future for the benefit of our residents, businesses and national economic growth. This is why now is the time to look to the future, updating and refreshing our Economic Growth Strategy to ensure we are well placed to meet the challenges and embrace the opportunities available to us.



Modern harvest at Glebe Farm



Early 20th century Huntingdon Market Day, Huntingdon Heritage



New facilities open at Alconbury Weald

This is Huntingdonshire

A Great Place to Do Business

Huntingdonshire's location has always supported its economic growth and prosperity. From a bridging point in Roman, Viking and Anglo-Saxon times, to a major stop for stagecoaches in the 18th and early to mid 19th Century, and now a key area within the East of England with connections to the rest of the country.

Our location between Cambridge's world-renowned innovation ecosystem and life sciences cluster and Peterborough's manufacturing and logistics specialisms, mean we are strategically positioned to drive both regional and national growth. We have a growing amount of high quality industrial and commercial space to support innovation in our region.

We are proactively responding to exciting developments on our doorstep including Universal Studios in Bedford, which is a 30-minute drive from St Neots. The development is expected to create 8,000 permanent and 20,000 construction jobs and our businesses and residents are well placed to support in both the supply chain and operations.

Our district benefits from road and rail links to London, the Midlands, the North and major ports including Felixstowe and have good airport connections. Future infrastructure developments including the A428 upgrade and the East West Rail project will enhance our connectivity even further.

Huntingdonshire's prime location, transport links and affordable locations make us a great place to do business.

A Great Place to Live

Our picturesque towns, villages, and countryside contribute to a strong quality of life for our residents. This is a key part of a successful economy, important for retaining talent, attracting visitors and encouraging businesses to locate here.

As a council, we have invested time in understanding what resident priorities are for the district, what is working and how it can be improved.

Huntingdonshire's Place Strategy (Huntingdonshire Futures) built on hundreds of conversations with residents who told us why they live in Huntingdonshire. Our residents' value the districts network of green spaces, our market towns, the sense of community, our rich history and links to Cambridge and London.

Huntingdonshire Futures sets out an aspiration for an 'inclusive economy' which ***"champions upskilling and provide inspiring job opportunities for residents in a variety of industries. We will nurture start-ups, enable businesses to grow, and build a strong local economy."***

Our approach to this Economic Growth strategy builds on this ambition – delivering economic growth in a way that improves our resident's quality of life and ensures that Huntingdonshire continues to be a great place to live, work, learn and visit.



Godmanchester Bridge



Glass Moor Wind Turbine



St Neots Pocket Park



Huntingdonshire's Economy Today



Merryland, St Ives



A growing population

5% population growth

9,150 more in 2023 than 2018¹

61% working age population

Higher than many rural comparator districts and authorities²



Strategic location

Well located nationally and regionally

Neighbour nationally and internationally significant cities Cambridge and Peterborough, with transport links to the rest of the UK through road and rail

Developments inside and outside the district

Offer exciting opportunities at present and in the future for growth and job creation



Employment growth

5,000 more jobs

7% increase in job counts across the district in 2023 compared to 2018³

81,000 jobs

In total across the district in 2023³



Distinct character

Historic market towns and rural areas

Providing unique opportunities for development and tourism, combined with high standard of living for many residents

1: ONS, UK Population Estimates

2: ONS, Annual Population Survey

3: ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey



Active small business economy

89%
of businesses in
the district are
micro⁴

With numbers
of small,
medium and
large
businesses
growing since
2019⁴

Huntingdonshire's largest sectors⁶

Across the district, the highest employing sectors are:



11,000

Manufacturing jobs



9,000

Healthcare jobs



6,000

Professional, scientific
and technical jobs



6,000

Education jobs

Commercial space breakdown⁵



Office

271,000m²

Of floorspace
spread across
336 premises

Research and
development

333,000m²

Of floorspace
spread across
4 premises

Light industrial

126,000m²

Of floorspace
spread across
51 premises

General
industrial

353,000m²

Of floorspace
spread across
255 premises

Visitor Economy

£371.55M

Economic impact

4.92M

Visitors

4: ONS, UK Business Counts
5: CoStar (2025)
6: ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey; STEAM, 2025

What Partners Told Us:

“

Collaboration is vital for success:

“There is a great sense of community and collaboration...we are in it together.”

“It’s great that communities are doing things to help themselves, but we need to harness that now into a more strategic approach to ensure consistency of support and avoid duplication.”

“

Get skills right:

“We have to take every opportunity to get the skills landscape right; better collaboration on skills plans, avoiding duplication and pooling funds to unlock match.”

“We have to find pathways that work for people, getting knocked back because we’ve asked them to apply for a job that is inappropriate for their skill set doesn’t help people.”

“

Location, Location, Location:

“Our location is one of our biggest assets, we should be aiming to be the place where innovators come to test and develop their ideas.”

“There are opportunities, like Universal Studios, happening on our doorstep which we cannot afford to miss.”

“

Transition provides opportunity

“We cannot ignore Local Government Reform, but we can use it as an opportunity to think differently and be bolder.”

“We need to be ready for what’s coming, that means getting our businesses ready for AI and being ahead of that change.”

Strengths: A growing working age population attracted by our strong quality of life offer

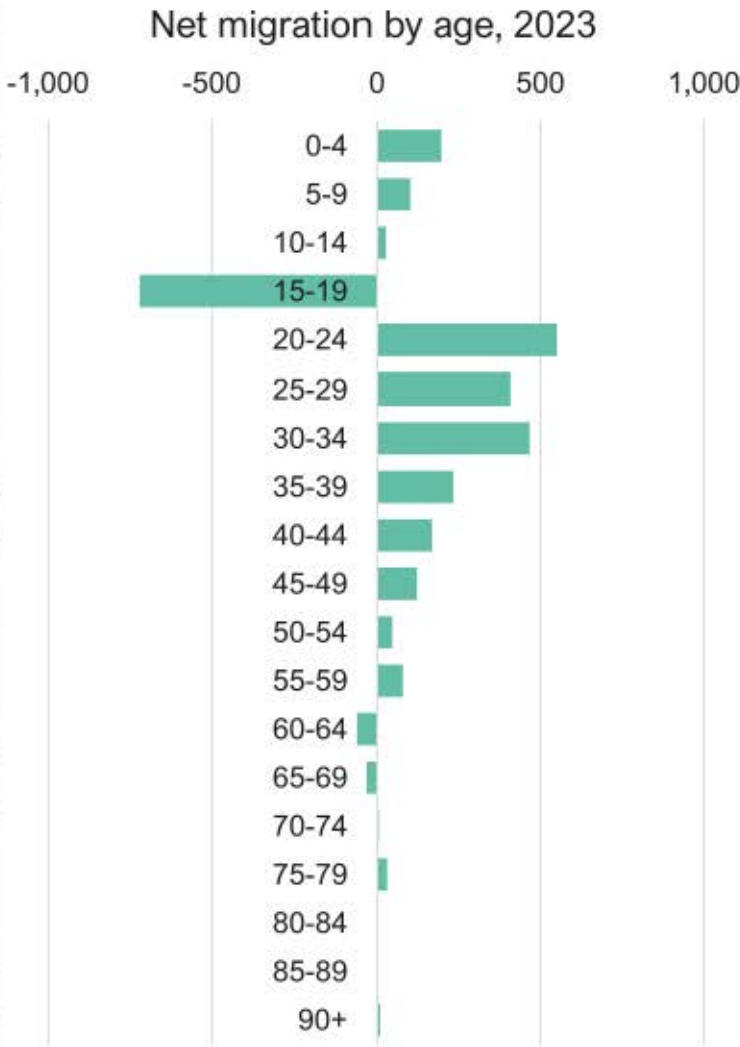
Huntingdonshire is recognised as a great place to live, with high resident health, wellbeing and life satisfaction. Our engagement emphasised the appeal of our market town heritage and natural environment, as well as the district being a relatively affordable place for families. We have growing arts, entertainment and hospitality industries which are supporting our cultural and leisure offer.

Our population is growing, and we are home to over 9,000 more people than five years ago. Many of our new residents have come from neighbouring, often more expensive, local authorities such as South Cambridgeshire, Central Bedfordshire and Cambridge. The 2023 migration patterns show our appeal to working aged people and young families, with high growth in people aged 20-40 and under 10.

In 2023, we had a net outflow of young people, moving to key cities such as Nottingham, Leeds, Norwich and Manchester. It is an important element of our Economic Growth Strategy to create strong opportunities for those who want to remain.

7: ONS Wellbeing Metrics
8: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey
9: ONS, Internal Migration Estimates
10: ONS, House Prices to Earnings Ratios

7.5 average life satisfaction score 2022-2023, compared to 7.4 nationally⁷



14% growth in arts, entertainment and recreation businesses
7% growth in food and accommodation 2017-2023⁸

Local Authority	5 Year average 2019-2024 house price to resident earnings ratio
Cambridge	11.86
South Cambridgeshire	10.09
East Cambridgeshire	9.65
Huntingdonshire	9.28
Peterborough	7.40
Fenland	7.18

Opportunities: new development, specialisms and knowledge to support national growth priorities

Our economy is well-placed to support and drive national growth priorities.

The Government's Invest 2025 Industrial Strategy emphasises the key sectors which will drive national growth. Defence and Life Sciences are national priorities and over the past 5 years, Huntingdonshire has become a growing hub for both sectors.

Huntingdon is home to RAF Wyton, the US Air Force's Joint Intelligence Operations Centre Europe and the NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre and the Headquarters of the USAF 501st Combat Support Wing. There are 15 established defence companies which have an employee growth rate of 30% year on year and GVA per job of £111k.

Huntingdonshire has seen the development of new landmark housing, commercial and mixed-use sites such as Alconbury Weald Enterprise Zone which have become important economic assets and contributed to the growing amount of commercial space.

In the coming years, a number of strategic-scale pipeline developments make Huntingdonshire well-positioned to accommodate new economic activity in existing and emerging sectors and support government growth priorities. Through this Economic Growth Strategy, we will work with our regional partners and CPCA to ensure that the commercial opportunities within our district are capitalised upon.

10: CoStar (2025)



4% increase
in office floorspace (2019-2024) in line with regional and national averages



12% increase
in industrial floorspace (2019-2024) compared to 7.4% increase across England and 11% in the East of England¹⁰

	Number of jobs 2023	Change 2018-2023		
Sector	Huntingdonshire	Huntingdonshire	East of England	England
Advanced manufacturing	4,000	-20%	-4%	8%
Clean energy industries*	1,500	-14%	-19%	2%
Creative industries	3,000	0%	-3%	12%
Defence	4,000	14%	-1%	9%
Digital and tech	2,500	0%	5%	13%
Financial services	2,500	0%	-3%	10%
Life sciences	7,000	17%	15%	18%
Professional and business	3,000	-14%	-10%	8%

*Wind, nuclear fission and fusion, hydrogen, carbon capture, heat pumps, networks and other critical technologies

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, DataCity definitions of National Industrial Strategy Sectors

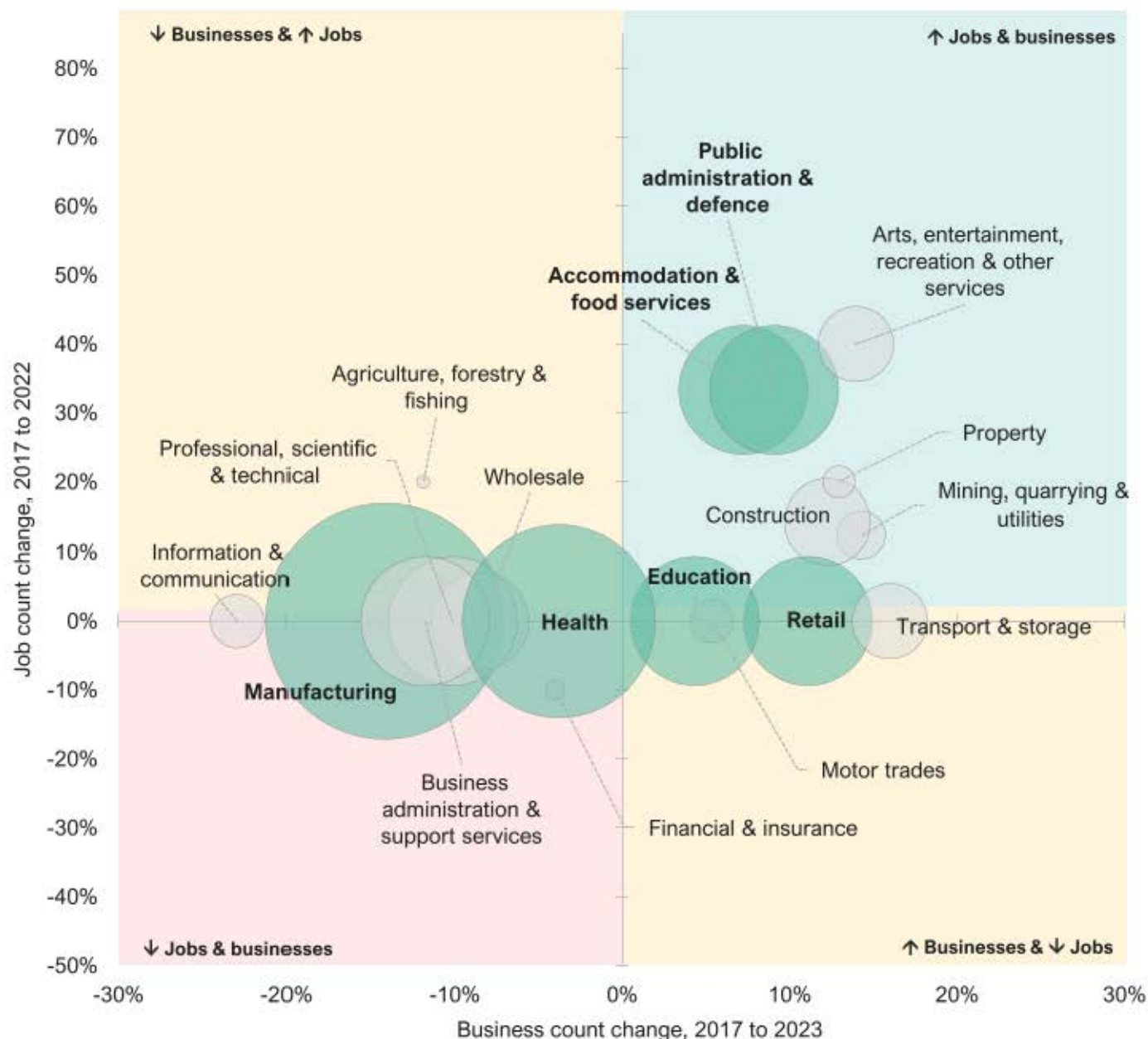
Weaknesses: high number of jobs in traditional sectors at risk of decline

Many of our key specialisms, and high numbers of jobs and businesses, are in traditional sectors such as manufacturing, with a lower proportion of employment in knowledge intensive industries.

Overall, business numbers in the district have declined by 1.3% in the last 5 years and there have been significant declines in knowledge intensive industries such as professional, scientific and technical, finance and insurance and information and communication.

Sector	Business change 2017-2023
IT & Communication	-23%
Manufacturing	-14%
Agriculture	-12%
Business support	-12%
Professional, scientific and technical	-10%

Change in business & job counts by broad sector



Circle size represents the overall number of jobs in the sector as of 2022. The bigger the circle, the more jobs

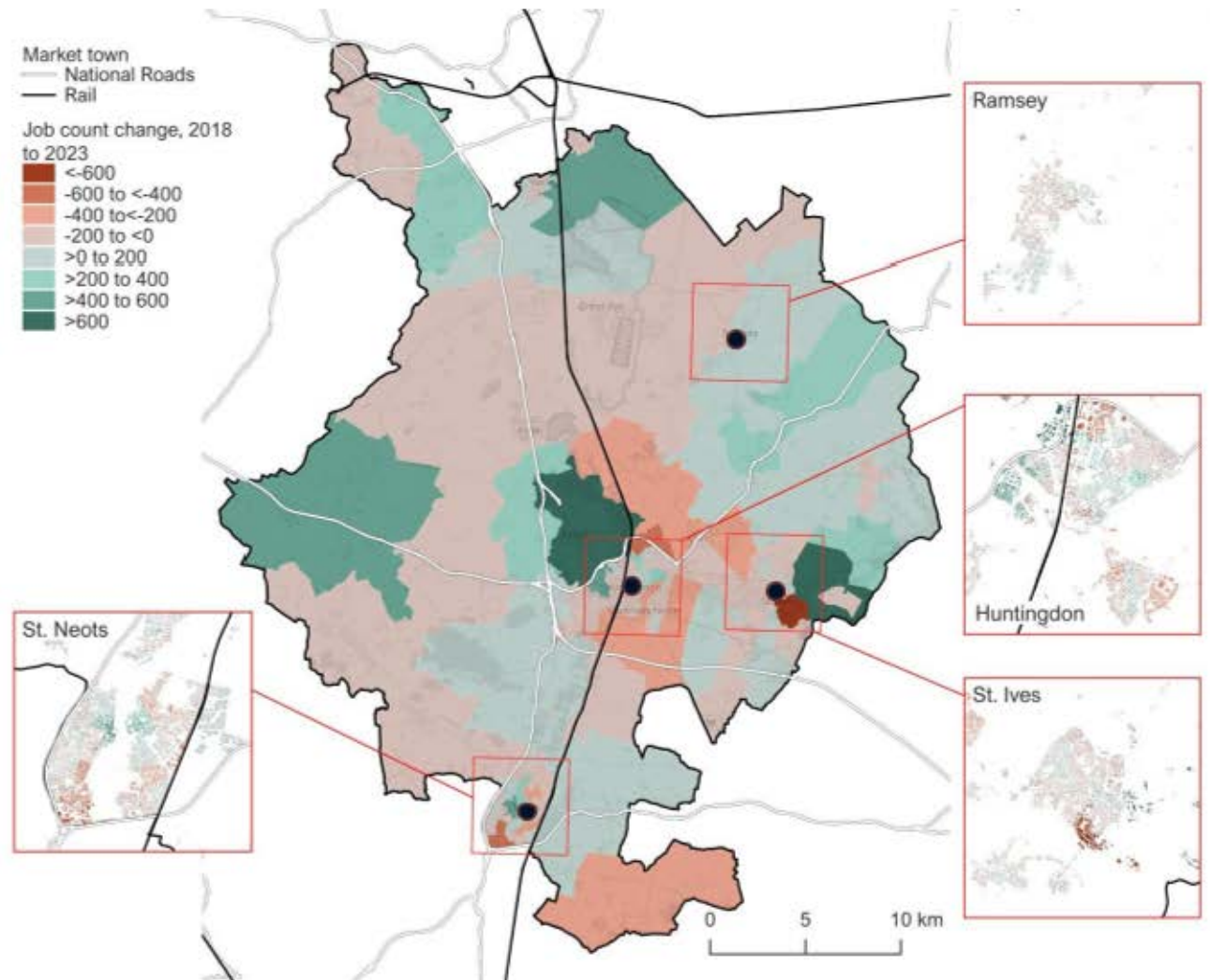
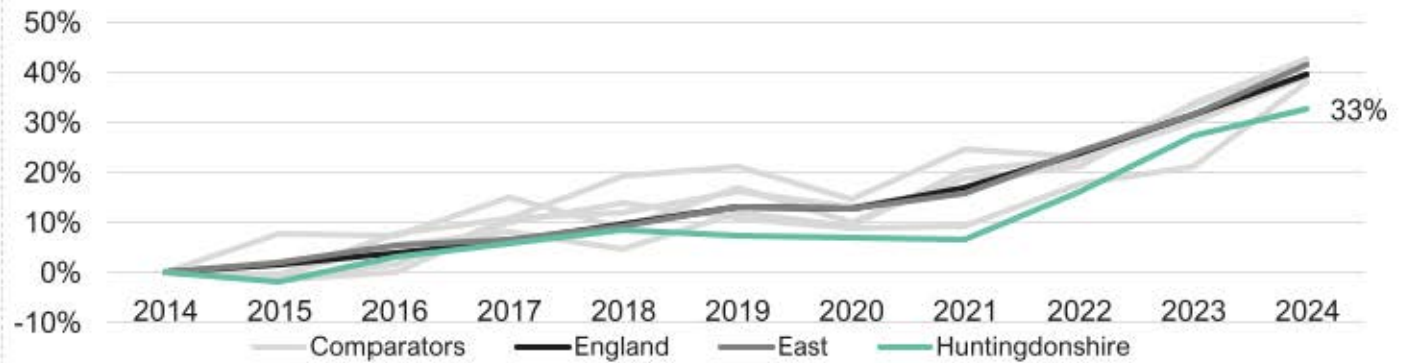
Weaknesses: earnings and opportunities for our residents lag behind other areas

Across Huntingdonshire the number of jobs has grown by 6.6% since 2018, above both the national and regional averages. This has not always translated into a more well-paying new opportunities for residents.

Resident and worker earnings in Huntingdonshire have consistently lagged behind national and regional averages and failed to keep pace with our neighbours. Our residents get paid over £100 less per week on average than those in Cambridge, and £30 less than the East of England.

New employment opportunities have been concentrated outside of our market towns, within our business parks and industrial areas both in new and existing spaces. Across our district we have challenges with public transport and accessibility, and many of our businesses spoke about the need for residents to have a car to access jobs and employment. It is important that new opportunities come alongside active travel and public transport improvements.

Change in gross weekly earnings over time, residents



Threats: changes in our economy will impact the skills our residents need

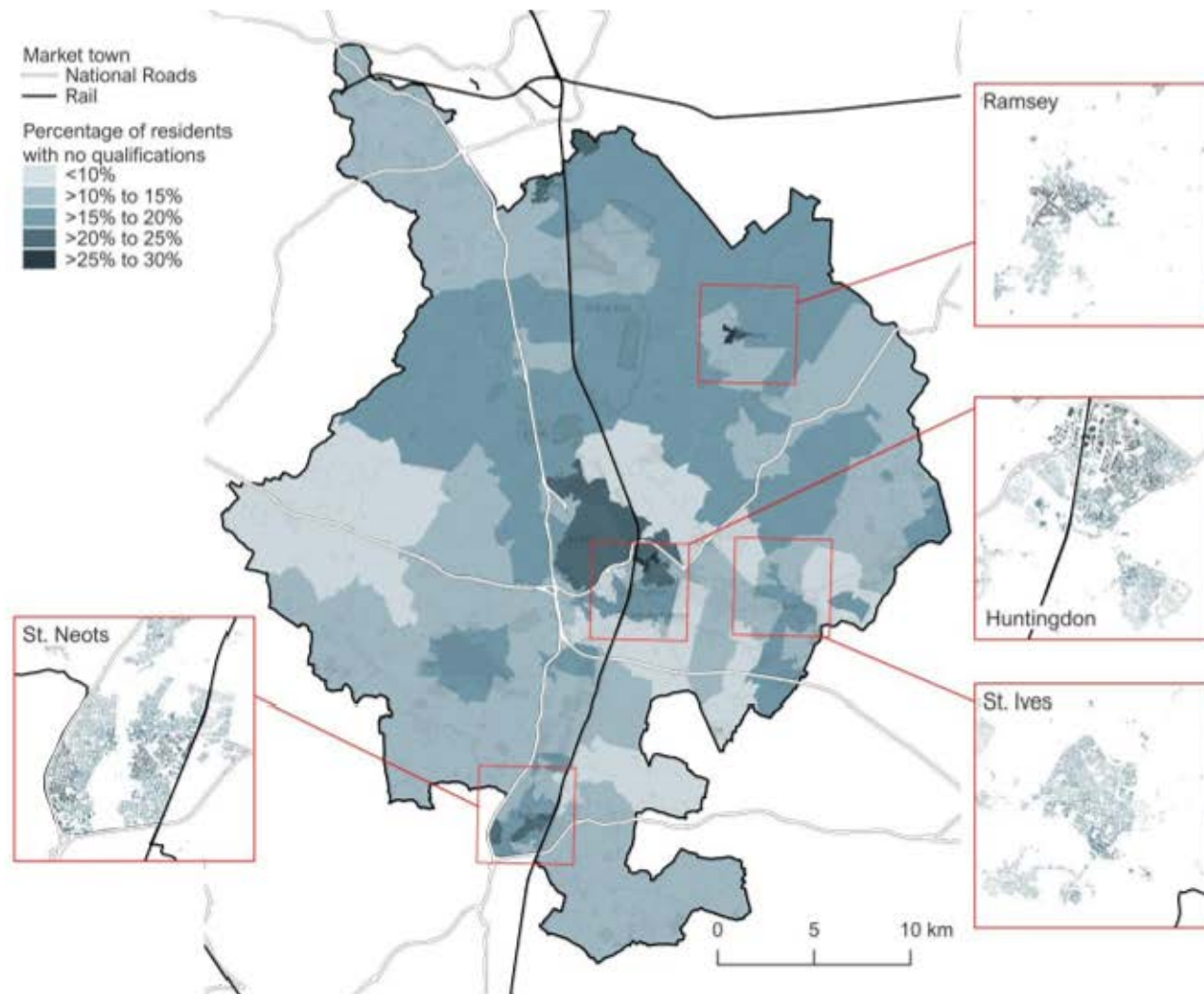
Our Economic Growth Strategy needs to identify and respond to emerging economic changes and threats, and ensure resilience across the whole of our district.

Future trends such as automation and AI have the potential to significantly change the labour and talent requirements for some of our key employers. We also recognise the potential impact macro-economic trends, such as changing global supply chains, could have on our core industries and employment opportunities within our district.

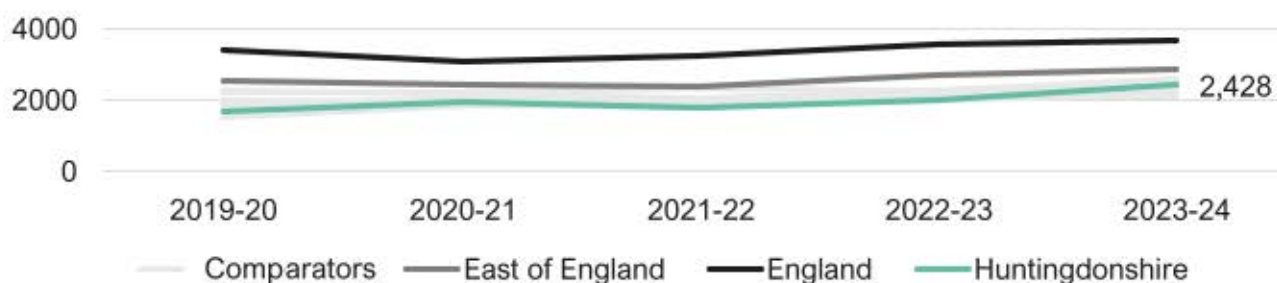
12% of our workforce, almost 9,000 jobs, have been identified as requiring re-training.

Skills attainment is a recognised challenge across our district at all levels from foundational skills to further education attainment and degree level qualifications. Whilst our overall averages are positive, with a smaller proportion of the population with no qualifications and similar educated to degree level than nationally, this masks significant variation within our neighbourhoods.

There are communities within our market towns where over a quarter of residents have no qualifications and our further education achievement levels are significantly lower than regional and national averages.



Further Education and skills achievements per 100,000 people



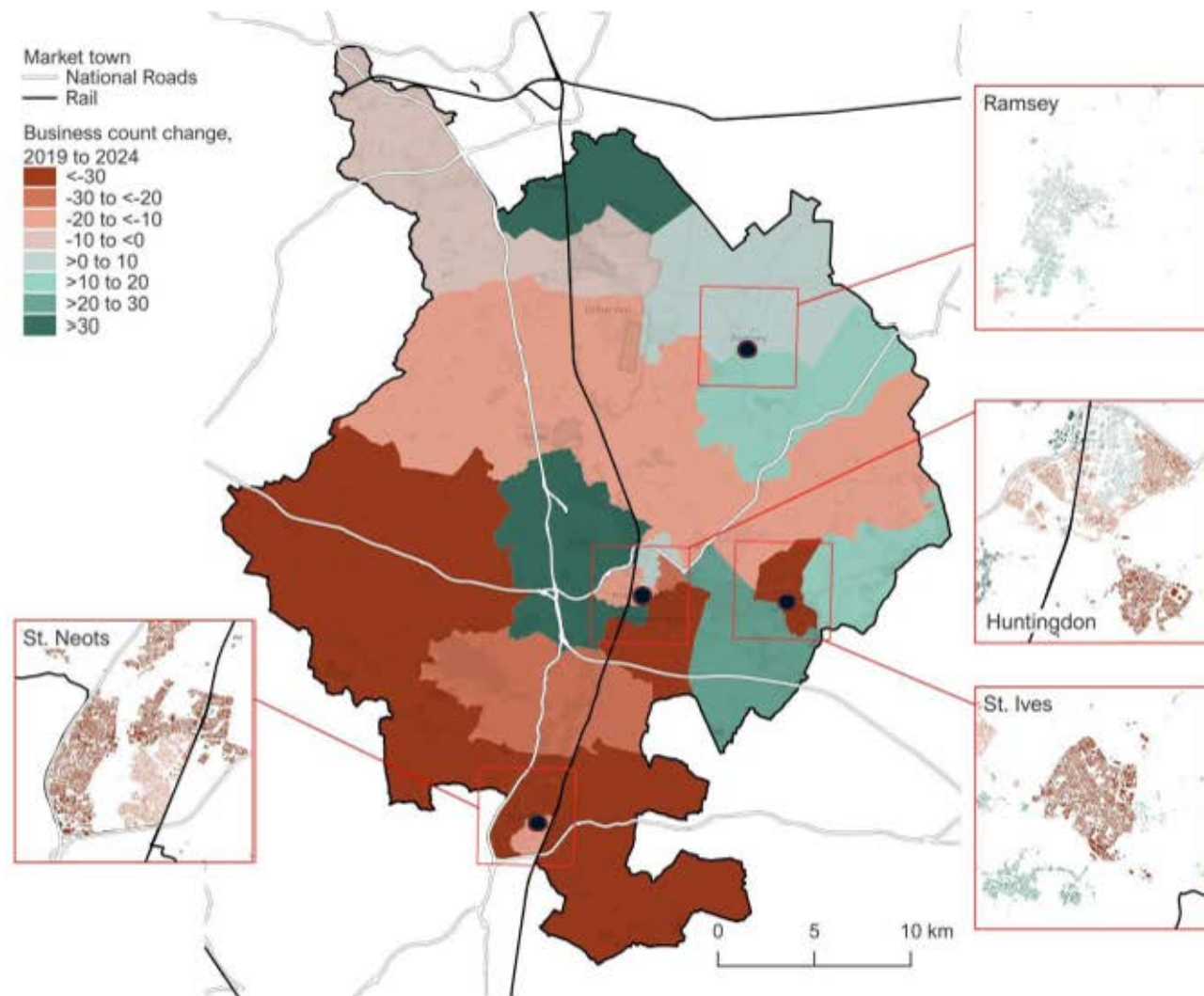
Threats: our market towns are impacted by our changing economy

The experience of our market towns and the rest of the district, including rural and industrial areas is very different. In non-market towns, there has been growth in business numbers, mostly fuelled by areas in the North and East of the district and around successful new developments.

In contrast, in three of our four market towns, Huntingdon, St. Neots and St. Ives, there have been high declines in businesses. In these areas the high street and visitor economy offer, like retail, entertainment and hospitality businesses has stayed relatively stable, with declines driven by professional and office-based sectors.

For example, Huntingdon has experienced a 60% decline (-15 businesses) in finance and insurance, compared to -6% across the rest of the district and a 23% decline in professional, scientific and technical (-30 businesses), compared to -9% across the rest of the district. In St Neots, there has been a 40% decline (-40 businesses) in information and communication, compared to -24% across the district. These declines will be attributed to businesses closing or moving out of the district.

	Huntingdon	St. Ives	St. Neots	Ramsey	Rest of District
Total employment	19080	7645	10940	2155	40480
Employment 5-year change	4.34%	-12.29%	-1.64%	4.88%	11.91%
Total businesses	840	770	1060	380	4710
Business 5-year change	-2.82%	-8.77%	-9.70%	1.33%	1.29%





Huntingdonshire's Economic Growth Strategy

Our vision is:

**A prosperous, resilient and dynamic economy
which provides the foundation for
Huntingdonshire to be a good place to live,
work and visit.**

**We will be open for business, work
collaboratively with partners, capitalise on our
opportunities and invest in our people and
places.**

Vision principles

Our vision for Huntingdonshire's economy....

Places importance on both economic growth and environmental sustainability

Huntingdonshire has made significant progress in decarbonising our economy and maintaining a strong natural environment. We will apply a "green lens" to all our decision making, to ensure that we do not drive economic growth at the expense of Huntingdonshire District Council's net-zero commitments.

Focuses on diversity and good opportunities to create an inclusive economy

Huntingdonshire is home to many different sectors and industries, with businesses ranging from 1 to over 1,000 employees. Our Economic Growth Strategy recognises the importance of having a diverse economy and seeks to maintain the variety of activity within our existing business base. We will focus on attracting businesses which will bring well-paid high-quality opportunities for our residents rather than narrowing our focus on select sectors.

Emphasises Huntingdonshire's strengths in quality of life, place and people

With a large proportion of countryside and the Great Ouse, our district is characterised by the strength of our natural environment. Together with our four market towns, these assets contribute to our high quality of life and strong visitor offer. We recognise the

importance of thriving and unique places across our district, to attract visitors, talent and businesses.

Positions Huntingdonshire as open to investment and growth

Huntingdonshire is a key strategic location in between Cambridge and Peterborough with strong connections across the country through the A1, A14 and wider road network. We are proactively seeking the right kinds of growth and investment which can support national and regional growth priorities.

There are major developments planned and in progress, and we will work to ensure these provide opportunities for our residents and businesses.

Recognises the need for collaboration to drive growth

As a District Council our levers for change and resources are limited, and we must work with partners to achieve our ambitions. The Economic Growth Strategy recognises that active involvement of and collaboration with partners and stakeholders is key to success.

We are also in a time of political change with Local Government Reform and Devolution, making it more important than ever that we align with regional and national priorities. This will future-proof the strategy and ensure the ambitions can be achieved within a changing political landscape.

Vision and Ambitions

Policy Context

National:



Invest 2035: The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy



Get Britain Working

Get Britain Working White Paper

Regional:

Oxford to Cambridge pan-Regional Partnership

Oxford to Cambridge Partnership



The UK Innovation Corridor



Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Economic Growth Strategy



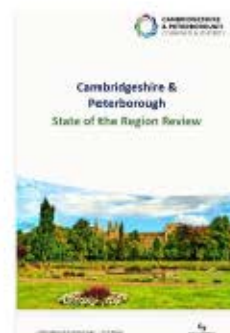
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Local Industrial Strategy

CPCA Local Growth Plan

This will plan for economic growth across the CPCA area



Looking Forward A Shared Ambition for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough



Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority State of the Region Review

CPCA Further Education Cold Spots

Local:



Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy



Huntingdonshire District Council Corporate Plan



Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036



Huntingdonshire Climate Strategy

Economic and Employment Needs Assessment

EENA: A study of the current and future economic and employment landscape in Huntingdonshire (insert link when available).

Our outcomes framework:

To achieve our Vision, our data analysis and engagement showed we need to:

Make sure we are ready to respond to changing macro economic trends

Attract and support businesses which are providing good, well-paid opportunities for our residents

Respond to the skills gaps

Make the most of our development and investment

Maintain our high quality of life and strength of place

In response to this evidence, we have identified five ambitions:

Our economy is **flexible**. We have planned for change in our key sectors and contribute to national growth priorities

Enterprise is celebrated and Huntingdonshire is a great place for business

Our residents have the **skills** they need to participate in the economy

New **investment** and development is positively supporting our economy

The vibrancy in our rural areas and market towns make our district a desirable **place to spend time and explore**



Delivering our vision and ambitions

Delivering our vision and ambitions

Our vision and ambitions will be used to shape our activity over the next 5 years and track progress

Against our five long-term outcomes, we have used our evidence base to identify the rationale for change and what progress will look like. We have linked each outcome to principles in the Corporate Plan, to show how they will support priorities across the District Council, and what the outcomes will be if we achieve each ambition.

Our actions are categorised into:

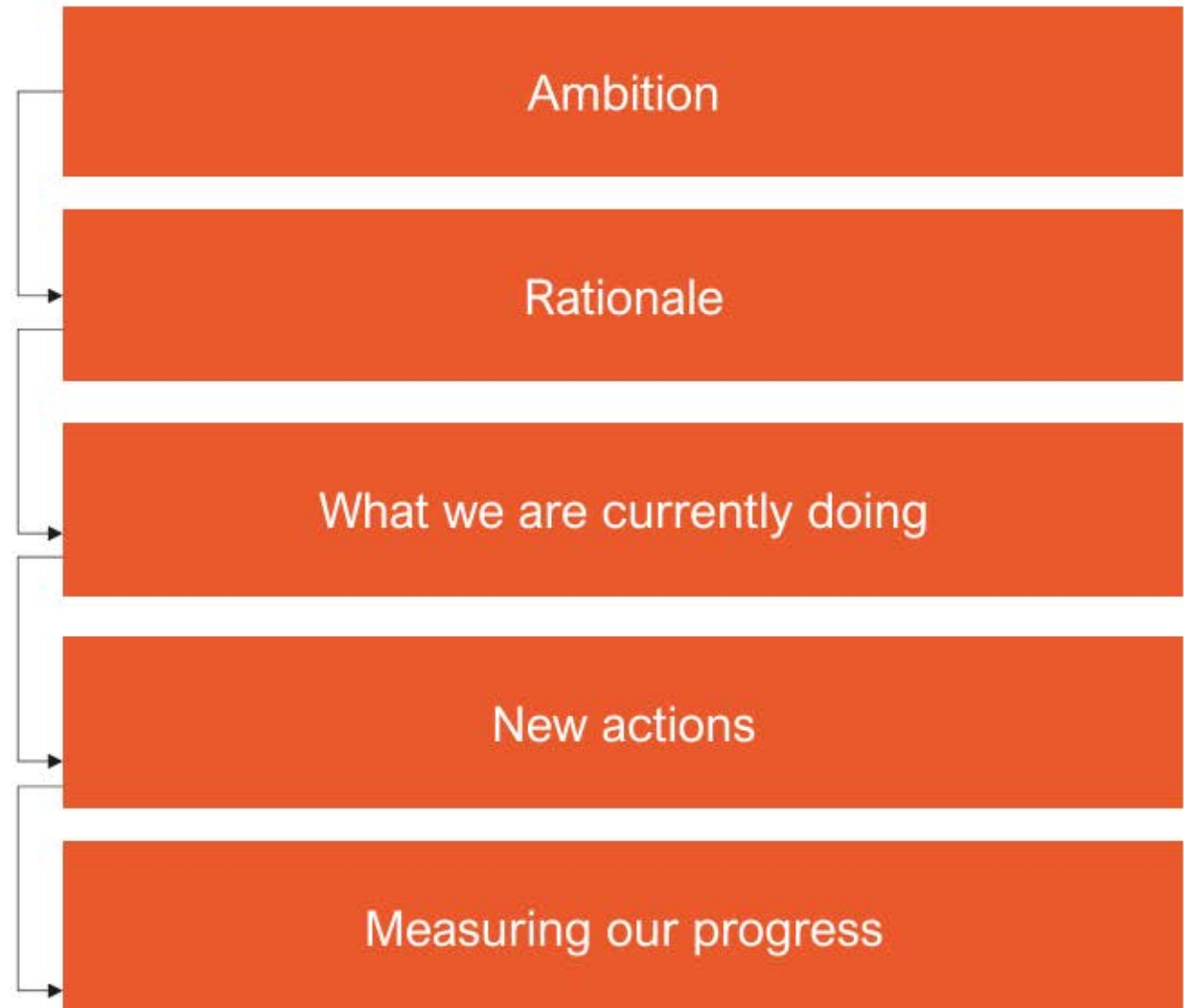
Do: actions we can directly deliver as a District Council. The Economic Development Team will lead the action, with partners specified.

Enable: actions focused on bringing people together and creating spaces and forums for collaboration. Huntingdonshire's Economic Development team acting as a convenor

Influence: actions focused on Huntingdonshire District Council influencing our partners, public and private

We are confident that this approach will enable us to focus our resources on the tasks which will have the biggest impact on our long-term vision.

Structure of this chapter:



Ambition 1: Rationale

Our economy is flexible. We have planned for change in our key sectors and contribute to national growth priorities

Why this is important:

Our economy is changing rapidly in response to macro economic and political shifts, adoption of new technology, impact of climate change and carbon reduction.

This will affect businesses within many of our key sectors such as manufacturing, retail, construction, business services and agriculture and healthcare.

We are home to industries and businesses which are driving growth in national priority sectors and are well placed to respond to new opportunities at this scale.

Link to the Corporate Plan:

The Corporate Plan is focused on improving the quality of life for Huntingdonshire residents. The aspiration of “forward thinking economic growth” sets out that Huntingdonshire should have a local economy that is “a place where businesses chose to start-up grow, and there is investment in high-value jobs”. This can be delivered by ensuring change is proactively planned and prepared for, our ambitions align with national growth priorities and we can adapt as the economic landscape changes.

What does success look like?

- We will have an adaptable and responsive approach to how we support our economy.
- A diverse and growing economy with a mix of established and emerging sectors.
- The environmental impact of the economy is reduced, and we are meeting our decarbonisation targets.
- Changes in our economy are monitored and tracked, to ensure that we can respond to them.
- Huntingdonshire is contributing to regional and national economic growth, with increased GVA per worker.

Ambition 1: Our delivery priorities

What are we currently doing?

Huntingdonshire District Council prioritises the changing needs of businesses, and the Economic Development Team are the first call for business support, advice and guidance across the district.

We are working with professional service networks, investors and developers to understand the health of the economy, develop responses and attract

investment in our economy, as set out in our Corporate Plan.

We are also working closely with our regional partners and neighbours, to ensure our activity aligns with and complements relevant regional and national priorities and to identify and unlock opportunities for funding and investment.

2025-2030 Actions

Action	Outcome(s)	Do/ Enable/ Influence
Establish an incentive funding pot and application criteria to support businesses looking to grow or expand in our district	Our businesses are growing	Do
Support businesses to improve their net zero ambitions through green tools and resources	Our businesses have reduced their emissions and we have tracked progress towards net zero	Do
Work with Data and Insights team at Huntingdonshire District Council to establish yearly monitoring of key economic indicators	We are tracking the changes in our economy	Do
Establish a Huntingdonshire Business Leaders Group focused on identifying and understanding regional challenges and opportunities	In depth understanding of trends in key sectors, our role within Cambridgeshire, business performance and survival	Enable
Initiate collaborative working groups to drive action in potential growth sectors for example defence and green / clean tech	Partners are empowered and resourced to develop a collaborative approach to responding to identified growth sectors.	Enable
Work with regional partners and businesses to understand the changes, challenges and opportunities within the agricultural sector	Increased resilience of the agricultural sector	Enable

Ambition 2: Rationale

Enterprise is celebrated and Huntingdonshire is a great place for business

Why this is important:

We have a strong small business base and a diversity of activity. We are well positioned as a business location through physical proximity to Cambridge & Peterborough and key road infrastructure.

Workplace earnings are lower than in other areas and there are few well paying jobs.

Providing and improving accessibility and visibility of opportunities is important to keep talent and enterprise within Huntingdonshire.

Link to the Corporate Plan:

The Corporate Plan has a priority to create “a better Huntingdonshire for future generations” which includes an outcome to deliver a “forward thinking economic growth.” Being open for business and celebrating entrepreneurship will be fundamental to delivering this outcome. This will include building on the successful work set out in the Corporate Plan including evolving the Invest in Huntingdonshire website as a comprehensive portal for businesses and investors, and the role of the Local Plan in ensuring the district continues to be a great place to do business.

What does success look like?

- Huntingdonshire's economy is a hub for new and growing business across a variety of sectors.
- Our commercial property vacancy rates are low.
- Huntingdonshire's local businesses are expanding, creating more jobs and opportunities for residents.
- Huntingdonshire has a well-connected eco-system, and an increasing number of businesses are engaging with networks, funding opportunities and advice services.
- The number of businesses in high-value and knowledge economy industries has increased.
- Workplace and resident earnings have increased.

Ambition 2: Our delivery priorities

What are we currently doing?

Huntingdonshire District Council are actively engaging the business community. We host well attended events, such as CEO breakfasts, bringing together businesses and leadership across the Council.

We are working to strengthen our relationship with our business community and have appointed a Business Development Officer. This enables us to

understand the challenges businesses are facing on the ground and identify new opportunities. We are working with our partners the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses, and Huntingdon First BID. The Chamber of Commerce hosts engagement events within the District, including round tables and summits, to understand challenges and opportunities. Raising the profile of Huntingdonshire is important, and we have an active social media presence and Invest in Huntingdonshire website.

2025-2030 Actions

Action	Outcome(s)	Do/ Enable/ Influence
Establish formal collaborations with the business community and partners such as the Chamber of Commerce to address shared challenges and pursue opportunities for growth	Formal collaborations foster the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and resources. Strong partnerships build trust and confidence. Businesses and the organisations can identify and tackle challenges collaborative. Establish clear roles and responsibilities for addressing challenges, leading to more effective and sustainable solutions. Valuable insights inform the regional and local decision making.	Enable
Establish the Invest In Huntingdonshire website as the primary online directory for business investment opportunities, resources, and resident support within the district	Businesses, investors and residence have an increased understanding of the opportunities available to them. Improved efficiency of information sharing.	Do
Initiate a District Business Awards program to champion the achievements of our local business community and recognise their work which directly supports our Corporate Plan ambitions	Local business are celebrated and showcased. Best practice is shared across the district. A strengthened relationships between the District Council, partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and FSB and businesses.	Do
Carry out a yearly survey of business satisfaction within Huntingdonshire	We are tracking and can respond to changing business sentiment	Do
Work with CPCA to ensure revised bus transport network responds to needs of Huntingdonshire's economy	Better links between residents and opportunities.	Influence

Ambition 3: Rationale

Our residents have the skills they need to participate in the economy

Why this is important:

Businesses have highlighted difficulties in accessing talent with the appropriate skills locally.

There is low participation in further education and training compared to regional and national averages.

Reskilling will be an important consideration for residents currently in the workforce, both to access new opportunities and adapt to changing requirements of their current roles.

Link to the Corporate Plan:

The Corporate Plan explicitly sets out that “local people should be able to develop their skills to take advantage of these opportunities, with businesses and education providers working more closely together to deliver an inclusive economy.”

What does success look like?

- The number of businesses reporting skills shortages has declined.
- There is growing participation in further education and vocational learning.
- The number of residents who are NEET is reduced.
- The economic activity and employment rate remains high.
- The offer of local providers such as Cambridge Regional College's Huntingdonshire Campus and ARU Peterborough meets the needs of Huntingdonshire's residents and businesses.

Ambition 3: Our delivery priorities

What are we currently doing?

Working with partners is essential for this priority and we have built relationships with our local stakeholders including DWP and CPCA. We use our platform to promote skills development and training opportunities available within our area.

We are actively developing initiatives where we can lead by example as an anchor employer. Recognising a gap in opportunities for young people and

the need to lead by example as an anchor institution, we arranged a work experience programme in partnership with local schools for 100 school children from the local area who were without a placement.

We worked with the CPCA and partners to review of the future demand for Further Education (FE) provision in the St Neots area and developed the Local Skills Improvement Plan, prioritising connections between FE provision and local employers aligned to core growth sectors.

2025-2030 Actions

Action	Outcome(s)	Do/ Enable/ Influence
Develop a strategic alliance with ARU Peterborough and Cambridge Regional College to establish a responsive program delivery that directly addresses the evolving needs of our key sectors	Reduction in the skills gap. Increased innovation in the local curriculum. Access to industry expertise and resources. Improved pathways into work for students. Prepare strategically for the post SPF employability and skills landscape.	Do
Embed skills and training requirements for local people within public sector planning policies, procurement processes (including the application of social value frameworks), and other relevant mechanisms. Initially explore the use of CIL to secure improvements to training opportunities.	All major development includes an employment and skills strategy. S106 and CIL payments are targeted and directly address local need.	Enable
Work with CPCA to establish a Huntingdonshire equivalent of the Fenland Education, Skills and Training Provider Partnership	Clearer pathways from education into employment across the district Increased uptake in T-Levels, apprenticeships and work experience placements Alignment of resources and reduction in duplication	Enable
Work with anchor employers to encourage coordinated ESG funding into local skills provision	Increased capacity and funding for local skills provision Directed and targeted resource which avoids duplication	Influence

Ambition 4: Rationale

New investment and development is positively supporting our economy

Why this is important:

There are proposed large scale new developments in Huntingdonshire and close by. These will provide significant opportunities for our residents and businesses both throughout construction and operation phases. Our new developments will also provide the commercial spaces needed to drive growth in our area.

We need to work with partners to unlock investment in our strategic infrastructure – road, rail, water, energy. This is vital to facilitate our major schemes, but also to support the greening of our economy. Currently, limits to public transport and active travel infrastructure means there is heavy reliance on cars to access opportunities.

Link to the Corporate Plan:

The Corporate Plan puts economic growth in the context of “creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations.” This ambition links to the priority on how large-scale development in Huntingdonshire and across the region can be a catalyst for economic growth. It builds on the Corporate Plan's actions to influence, and contribute to, the devolution deal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and to influence the delivery of including East West Rail, A428, A141 Strategic Outline Business Case and future Transport Strategies.

What does success look like?

- We become a natural choice for new investment and development and inward investment within the district is increased.
- Huntingdonshire is recognised as a “can do” area, where opportunities for economic growth are considered proactively.
- Huntingdonshire's businesses are connected to local supply chains supporting new development.
- Increased office, industrial, R&D and light industrial commercial spaces.

Ambition 4: Our delivery priorities

What are we currently doing?

It is important to be at the table early in conversations around new development. We are working closely with partners to identify opportunities associated with major schemes such as Universal Studios. We are actively marketing Huntingdonshire as a place for investment, attending major conferences and promoting the opportunities available through [Invest in Huntingdonshire](#). We are working with central Government to showcase our defence specialisms and opportunities.

In addition, we are continuing to influence delivery of infrastructure including East West Rail, A428, A141 Strategic Outline Business Case and Alconbury Railway Station.

2025-2030 Actions

Action	Outcome(s)	Do/ Enable/ Influence
Continue to work with commercial developers and agents to build relationships, understand demand and identify gaps with an initial focus on light industrial premises	Evidence based decision making enables targeted development. Investment is attracted to and benefits Huntingdonshire. Existing assets are optimised to enable economic growth.	Do
Collaborate with developers and local businesses to understand supply chain needs for new projects and proactively match these with the capabilities of district-based suppliers	Stronger local supply chains Increased business opportunities for district-based suppliers Local and regional development benefits local business and supports their growth and expansion. Increased sustainability through local sourcing.	Enable
Create working group/s to identify and strategically plan for significant regional opportunities for example Universal Studios	A comprehensive understanding of direct and indirect opportunities. A coordinated and unified approach to engaging with potential opportunities.	Enable
Actively lobby government bodies, regional authorities, and other relevant stakeholders to prioritise and fund essential infrastructure projects identified as crucial for Huntingdonshire's economic development	Travel and transport infrastructure is developed for the benefit of our residents and businesses. Huntingdonshire is involved with discussions about EWR and other developments.	Influence

Ambition 5: Rationale

The vibrancy in our rural areas and market towns make our district a desirable place to spend time and explore

Why this is important:

Our market towns, rural areas and natural assets are all important aspects of our uniqueness and identity and pride in place.

Strong quality of life is important for our residents and businesses, and our assets form the basis of the visitor offer. We have a growing culture, leisure and hospitality offer.

Supporting diversification of rural areas and changes in our town centres will provide new economic opportunities.

Link to the Corporate Plan:

Thriving high streets and vibrant market towns are pillars of the Corporate Plan's priorities. The plan highlights the Market Towns Programme, which has delivered investment in St Neots and Ramsey, and set out that Huntingdonshire "will be a place which attracts employers and visitors and somewhere residents are proud to call home".

What does success look like?

- Footfall and spending within our market towns increases.
- We have a diverse offer on our highstreets for the whole community and vacancy is low.
- The role of leisure, art and culture plays in contributing to our economy is understood and celebrated.
- There is an increase in visitors in our rural areas and market towns for leisure, tourism, and day trips.
- Decline in businesses and jobs within our town centres is reversed.

Ambition 5: Our delivery priorities

What are we currently doing?

As a District Council we have recognised the importance of visitors and tourism as part of our economy. We have appointed a Visitor Economy Officer, are developing our Destination Management Plan and are tracking performance of our tourism economy. We are promoting the district through our [Discover Huntingdonshire](#) website.

We value our natural assets, and are developing a Business Case for the River Ouse to be a dedicated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and are investing

in Hinchbrook Country Park.

We are exploring how we can continue the Market Towns Programme having delivered a range of interventions including the Future High Street projects in St Neots, development of new Retail Hub in Ramsey, and various other funded projects within the four market towns. The District Council has commenced feasibility work on new projects to enable them to be brought forward when funding is available.

2025-2030 Actions

Action	Outcome(s)	Do/ Enable/ Influence
Create retail forums or high street business community groups within our market towns without a BID	Stronger partnership with business and third sector community.	Do
Establish a District Tourism Partnership bringing together our tourism, hospitality and retail businesses and wider stakeholders	Coordinated working with partners to improve tourism and visitor offer	Enable
Explore use of High street Rental Auctions to tackle vacant properties	Reduction in vacant properties in our Market Towns. Increase spaces for entrepreneurs	Do
Work with partners to respond to recommendations within the Tourism Growth Plan	Huntingdonshire's visitor offer is improved	Do
Play an active role in the Local Visitor Economy Partnership alongside regional partners	Strong local leadership on tourism and strategic relationship with national agencies such as VisitEngland and DCMS	Do

Inspiration

Our strategy and action plan takes inspiration from successful projects in places across the UK....

Hackney Central Impact and Ideas Fund

Business grant fund for Hackney Central using Additional Restrictions Grant funding the council had received from central government. The scope of the fund was shaped by the Hackney Central town strategy and aimed to support local businesses to deliver new projects in the town centre. There were 200 applications and the council awarded £600,000 in grants. Projects included free retail space for emerging fashion designers, a festival, a 3D printing process and a walking map showcasing Hackney's history.

Learnings for Huntingdonshire: grants to support enterprises and businesses to adapt their processes and contribute to a thriving borough. Criteria shaped by locally relevant priorities.

Devon County Council Green Innovation Fund

Competitive grant scheme which has invested £800,000 into innovative projects and technologies, driving green growth and supporting local enterprises. Funded through £6 million in Recovery Programme, the fund forecasts to save around 100,000 tonnes of carbon over the next ten years.

Learnings for Huntingdonshire: specific focus on greening and net zero transition with emphasis on wider benefits such as green skills development.

UCL and Islington Council Strategic Partnership

In 2023 UCL and Islington Council formed a strategic partnership via a Memorandum of Understanding with the aim of working together to make Islington a fairer and more equitable place to live. This has enabled knowledge exchange and allows Islington Council to convene with experts. So far, the focus has been on climate change.

Learnings for Huntingdonshire: formal partnership between a University and Council for knowledge exchange and innovation.

Liverpool City Region Supply Chain Support

Single platform with supply chain and procurement guidance for businesses across Liverpool City Region.

Learnings for Huntingdonshire: easily accessible resource for businesses to understand more about the supply chain process.

Bathscape Landscape Partnership

A Bath & North East Somerset Council led partnership delivering a 7-year programme

supported by National Lottery Heritage funding. The aim is to ensure Bath and its setting is better recognised, managed and experienced with the rural landscape and heritage sites enjoyed by all.

Learnings for Huntingdonshire: focuses on supporting and maintaining the rural and heritage elements of the local offer, improving access and telling a joined-up story for visitors and residents.

Bristol Vacant Commercial Property Grant Scheme

Businesses and organisations can apply for funding from £2,500 to £10,000 to bring a vacant commercial property back into permanent or temporary use. This is part of the Bristol City Council City Centre and High Streets Renewal Programme and funded through Bristol City Council, West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and UKSPF. They aim to support small businesses and sole traders, charities, community organisations and creative and cultural groups. The grant is designed to help organisations get up and running in a new property.

Learnings for Huntingdonshire: tackles challenges of vacant and poor-quality properties on high streets and supports businesses to locate in town centres.



Measuring our progress

Our Economic Growth Strategy will support progress towards wider Council Ambitions

The role of the Economic Growth Strategy is to provide a framework for action. The aims and ambitions within the Corporate Plan and Huntingdonshire Futures provide the overarching goals and priorities for the district. The Economic Growth Strategy has been developed as a more detailed plan to drive the economic progress needed to support our wider ambitions.

Our evidence led priorities and actions ensure that the resources of the Economic Development Team and partners are focused towards tackling the most important challenges and targeting the key opportunities which will drive our economic growth.

Success against the Economic Growth Strategy's five ambitions will lead to improved performance against economic metrics, such as GVA and business and jobs growth, but it will also drive success across the District Council's strategic priorities.

How the Economic Growth Strategy will drive change:

Quality of life and strength of place are key areas of focus of the Economic Growth Strategy. We will enhance our visitor and tourism offer within our town centres and rural areas.

We have adopted inclusive economy principles and will prioritise growth and investment that will benefit our residents and businesses. We have identified the current barriers residents face to accessing opportunities and developed actions to respond directly to these. We will also prioritise supporting our businesses to access the supply chain of new developments.

We will focus on attracting good employers and celebrate businesses adopting good employment practices and paying fairly. We will also work to improve the pathway from school into work.

A key principle is ensuring that we continue to decarbonise our economy and prioritise environmental considerations in decision making. We will support our businesses to green their operations.

We have included a focused action on improvements to the bus network to reflect resident, business and visitor needs and recognise the need to lobby for improvements to travel infrastructure across our district.

Strategic priorities it will support:

Huntingdonshire District Council, Corporate Plan 2023-2028

Priority 1: Improving Quality of Life for local people

- *Happiness and wellbeing of residents*
- *Keeping people out of crisis*

Priority 2: Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations

- *Forward thinking economic growth*
- *Lowering carbon emissions*

Huntingdonshire 2050 Place Strategy:

Journey 1: Pride in Place

Journey 2: Inclusive Economy

Journey 3: Health Embedded

Journey 4: Environmental Innovation

Journey 5: Travel Transformed

Our vision and ambitions are designed to be measurable. It is important that we can track progress against our aims, identify what we are doing well and where we need to focus our efforts.

Included on the following page are indicators we will use to do this. Where possible, these are publicly available data sets.

Indicators

Ambition	Indicator	Source	Update Frequency
All	Healthy Life Expectancy	PHE Fingertips	Yearly
All	Resident Life Satisfaction	ONS 4	Yearly
All	Carbon Emissions	Huntingdonshire District Council	Yearly
1	Business Counts overall and across our sectors	ONS, UK Business Counts	Yearly
1	Jobs Counts overall and across our sectors	ONS, UK Business Register and Employment Survey	Yearly
1	GVA per worker	ONS	Yearly
1,2	Resident and workplace earnings	ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings	Yearly
1	MtCO2 associated with economic activity	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, BEIS	Yearly
1,2	Business rates income	Huntingdonshire District Council	Yearly
2	Business demography changes	ONS, UK Business Counts	Yearly
2	Business start up and survival rates	ONS	Yearly
3	Further Education Achievements	DFE	Yearly
3	% of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)	DFE	Yearly
3	% of residents with no qualifications	ONS Annual Population Survey	Yearly
3	% of residents economically inactive	ONS Annual Population Survey	Yearly
4	Quantity of commercial space delivered	Huntingdonshire District Council	Ongoing
4	CIL funding secured through investment	Huntingdonshire District Council	Ongoing
5	Number of visitors	STEAM	Yearly
5	Economic impact of visitors	STEAM	Yearly



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