

DEWSBURY TOWN BOARD – SEPTEMBER 2020

ITEM 5

Dewsbury Town Vision foreword

“Dewsbury is our town and a town to be proud of, both for its past and its potential for the future. We are a town made up of diverse communities, entrepreneurship, creativity and beautiful architecture – these are assets that, working together, are greater than their individual parts”.

In ten years’ time: The revitalisation of the town has been shaped by its proud manufacturing heritage. Its historic buildings have been maintained and repurposed for use in creative and digital industries primarily, they also provide attractive venues for music and the arts. The town’s heritage is brought into the modern era through new advanced manufacturing, engineering and logistics businesses. This has been spurred by dynamic investment and local entrepreneurial spirit, alongside improved transport links and increased flexible working post-Covid. Sustained improvement in further and higher education settings, with their strong links to local employers, has led to a stream of young people feeding into the increasingly vibrant town. This has been complemented by an expansion of housing provision for existing communities and the new cohort of professionals. The town has retained impressive green spaces and seen a boost in cycling and walking around the town, accompanied by a reduction in crime. Taken as a whole, Dewsbury can proudly boast a young, dynamic and diverse community.

We look to achieve this as through the Town Investment Plan, Strategic Development Framework and the Dewsbury Blueprint to foster greater diversity, vibrancy, opportunity, connectivity and accessibility over the next 10 years.

A vision of Dewsbury in 2030 in full

- **A diverse and vibrant place**
- **Opportunities for all**
- **Connected and accessible**

Building on its unique manufacturing heritage and legacy of Victorian buildings, the town has reinvented itself as a sought-after place for its young and diverse communities, a location of choice to set up in business; to live, work and play. Its location as a main stop on the upgraded Transpennine rail route linking Manchester-Huddersfield-Leeds and beyond, along with good links to the M1 and M62, have strengthened links with wider housing and labour markets. The success of the town’s re-surgency has been supported by the rise of flexible working and Dewsbury’s appeal as an attractive home town, offering excellent links to key economic centres across the North.

A revitalised and diversified town centre is at the heart of this transformation. Building on the ‘Blueprint’ adopted a decade ago, the town centre serves as a multi-faceted cultural, learning, business and community hub. The town has a renewed confidence in itself, a place, residents are proud to call their own.

The presence of Kirklees College, Springfield Sixth Form Centre and a wider University Offer have transformed Dewsbury's role as a centre for further and higher education, generating increased footfall and activity throughout the town centre during the day and supporting its burgeoning evening economy. Local students now regularly achieve above average attainment for GCSE and A levels and have greater access to vocational and academic learning pathways. The College has continued to have well established links with key employers within Kirklees and West Yorkshire which means the number of young people living and working in and around the town has increased significantly over the past decade.

Many town centre buildings have been repurposed to provide high quality workspace for digital, creative and other businesses – some created by local entrepreneurs and some attracted by Dewsbury's high quality, affordable location with beneficial proximity to both Leeds and Manchester. The town's focus, post Covid, on flexible and connected space has created a new generation of talent in Dewsbury. Many of these businesses have a digital component and have been started by former Kirklees College students which has further fostered the link between the College and the business community. The town centre offer is complemented by the strategic employment site at Chidswell which has attracted a number of world class advanced manufacturing, engineering and logistics businesses.

Dewsbury is a place well known for its creativity and experimentation in art, music and creative industries. Achieving UNESCO Creative City of Music status in 2022 has further enhanced Dewsbury's reputation as a music hub with its many year-round festivals and programmes featuring a full spectrum of music genres that represent its thriving melting pot of cultures.

Establishing itself as a world class music brand has enabled Dewsbury and Kirklees to attract creative industries in the area which has further enhanced the vibrancy of the town, the health and well-being of residents and provided employment opportunities in a range of careers linked to music and the creative industries. New creative industries have complemented and built on Dewsbury's textiles heritage offering a range of opportunities in music, fashion, design, performing arts, media and gaming.

Dewsbury and the wider Kirklees district is a place where the best urban design and public art thinking and practice has been at the heart of ideas and designs for new developments and regeneration plans. Its buildings and spaces have been repurposed with the arts at the forefront in contributing to the town's ambition and story. Dewsbury Town Hall retains a diverse mix of programming, complemented by new live music venues, gallery and studio spaces occupying our historic buildings and a range of outdoor events bringing life to our main civic spaces and parks.

There has been a significant increase in the number of local independent retailers and the town centre has adapted successfully to changes in the retail sector. The famous Dewsbury Market and The Arcade have been transformed into flexible space for commerce, shopping, leisure and cultural activity shopping.

Despite the revolutionary changes made to the retail sector over the past decade, the town has seen a significant increase in footfall, including more flexible workers - with both residents and visitors enjoying the diverse range of eating and drinking establishments along with the many events that are held within cultural spaces within the town.

The town centre is an attractive place to visit with its restored iconic Victorian buildings that tell a story of Dewsbury's industrial past. This restoration of old buildings including opening them up for alternative uses has been part of the pull factor for businesses attracting customers and has encouraged new businesses into the town centre. The new Town Park which incorporates Memorial Gardens offers a tranquil place for residents and visitors to enjoy a high-quality green space in the heart of the town.

The number of people cycling, and walking has increased significantly over the past decade due to the new pedestrian and cycle routes that have been installed.

A wide range of housing, meeting new and existing community needs at all life stages is enabled through the Local Plan being delivered. Daisy Hill has benefited from being a Heritage Action Zone and become the coveted location to live for professionals with disposable incomes looking for high quality apartments drawn by the vibrant and diverse town centre offer. Chidswell and South Dewsbury Riverside have been transformed by new and improved housing, new community facilities and responsive local service provision. Entrepreneurial, active community organisations are ensuring that our growth is inclusive and sustainable.

Perceptions of Dewsbury have changed. Dewsbury is a town with the confidence to compete locally, regionally and nationally providing better life outcomes for all its residents.

The genesis of the Dewsbury vision

Considerable work has already been undertaken with regards to establishing a vision for Dewsbury. The Strategic Development Framework (SDF) in 2018 set out a 25-year vision for the town supported by a delivery programme. It was recognised that Dewsbury town centre has a critical role to play in the priorities of the North Kirklees Growth Zone vision which are to:

- Increase housing and economic growth
- Develop the area as a recognised strategic employment location within West Yorkshire
- Build on the fantastic links on both road and rail (M1, M62 and Transpennine rail)
- Develop a town centre that is fully utilised through increased housing and leisure provision, with a consolidated retail and commercial core.

Following on from the SDF, the Dewsbury Blueprint sets out a 10-year plan that seeks to honour the heritage of Dewsbury and build on recent investments. It aims to

bring more activity into the town centre, make it more attractive and improve accessibility. The Blueprint sets out its ambition against the following themes:

- A Growing town
- A Business town
- A Learning town
- A Leisure town
- A Shopper’s town
- A Living town
- A Heritage town
- A Greener town
- A Creative town
- A Connected town

Distilling the themes

These themes have been taken and distilled into a vision of what Dewsbury will be in 2030, which is underpinned by three pillars. These are:

- 1) A diverse and vibrant place
- 2) Opportunity for all
- 3) Connected and accessible

A DIVERSE AND VIBRANT PLACE	OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL	CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE
<p>People value the town centre benefiting from its thriving heritage, culture, artistic and entrepreneurial spirit.</p> <p>Residents and visitors have good quality public realm and green spaces, an attractive retail and leisure offer supported by cultural spaces and events that reflect its character.</p>	<p>Building on Dewsbury’s history as a diverse, industrious and entrepreneurial town, our residents will have access to high quality education and value-added jobs.</p> <p>Capitalising on the rise of flexible working post Covid – Dewsbury offers local hubs, connectivity and amenity to support flexible workers.</p>	<p>Dewsbury will be digitally connected with more sustainable access, physically linking the town with pedestrian areas, cycle routes and future travel options.</p> <p>With improved transport infrastructure (rail and road), Dewsbury is a highly connected hub both as a business / employment base and as a place to live.</p>

A DIVERSE AND VIBRANT PLACE	OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL	CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE
A town that offers high quality, sustainable housing that is affordable, with a town centre that is vibrant, where people want to live and spend time in.	Investment in skills and digital infrastructure will support the creation and attract more successful businesses into Dewsbury.	Easy in / easy out and flexible shared office makes Dewsbury an attractive satellite location for city office working.

Dewsbury's key priorities within these three pillars are:

A DIVERSE AND VIBRANT PLACE	OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL	CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE
<p>Improving the Market</p> <p>Developing the creative and cultural sector offer with music and arts at the forefront (Bidding for UNESCO Creating City of Music status)</p> <p>Attracting and improving an eclectic mix of retail, leisure and community facilities that are fit for purpose and succeeding in the digital era.</p> <p>Increasing the range of dining establishments and cultural events in the town centre</p> <p>Bringing vacant buildings back into use</p>	<p>Supporting businesses to create jobs</p> <p>Improving access to quality education and skills</p> <p>Improving the connection between education / skills providers and employers in Dewsbury and the wider region.</p> <p>Embracing the digital era and encouraging a vibrant creative economy around the town by providing a creative hub for start-up businesses to thrive.</p> <p>Capitalising on post Covid shift to flexible working through developing</p>	<p>Improving gateways to the town</p> <p>Improve key ring road junctions and vehicular routes</p> <p>Improving pedestrian and cycle routes / network</p> <p>Improvements for public transport and increasing the use of sustainable methods</p> <p>Full fibre connectivity across the town centre that will help to support business growth.</p> <p>Connecting the town centre with the residential and commercial communities at Dewsbury</p>

A DIVERSE AND VIBRANT PLACE	OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL	CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE
<p>Improving the appearance of buildings</p> <p>Developing Daisy Hill which will offer town centre living and increase footfall in the town centre</p> <p>Facilitating businesses and institutions to move into the town centre (in addition to Council relocation and College) and increasing footfall</p> <p>Improving and creating new public spaces with more green space for people to encourage dwell time</p> <p>Improving perceptions</p>	<p>greater “satellite town” amenity (e.g. shared office, connectivity, networking, etc)</p>	<p>Riverside and Chidswell</p> <p>Supporting safety</p>