



Harborough District Council Economic Development Strategy

2024-31

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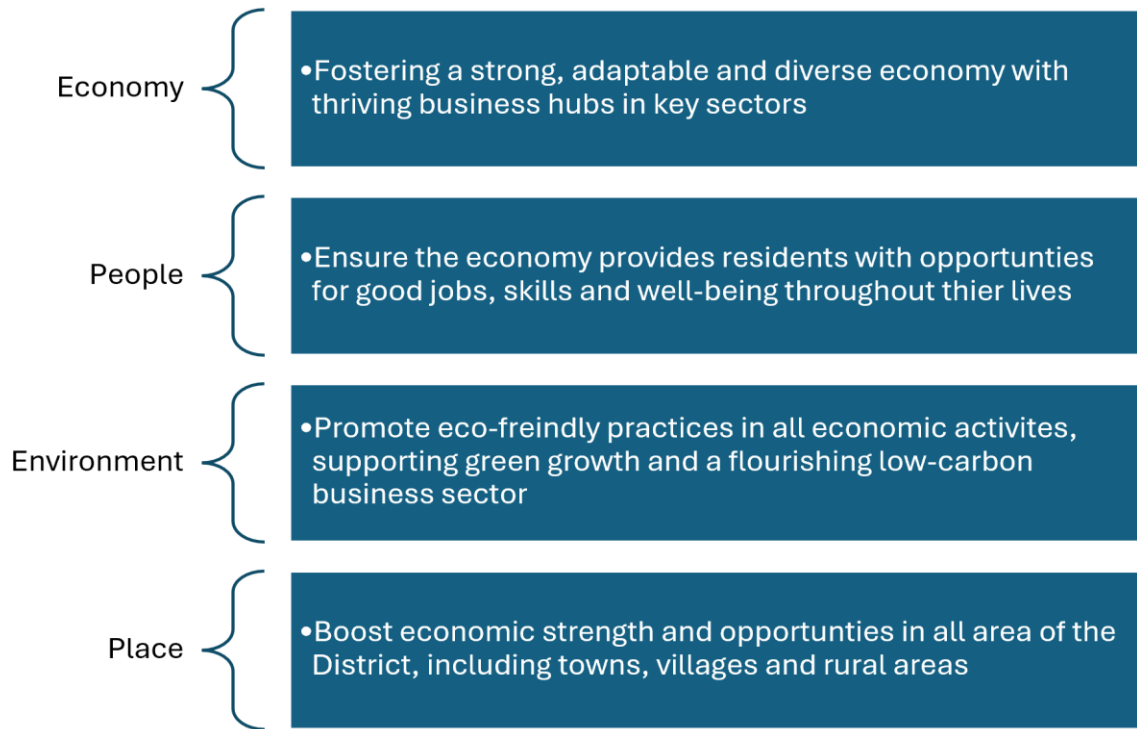
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Executive Summary

The Economic Development Strategy (EDS) for 2024-31 aims to address the district's challenges and opportunities in the mid-late 2020s. The Strategy is based on an Evidence Review and Issues Paper produced in early 2024. Based on the work to date, the vision for the district suggests:

By 2031, Harborough District will be recognised and admired as a distinctive economic jewel of Leicestershire and the Midlands, offering residents, communities, and businesses opportunities to improve their prosperity and well-being in a dynamic and increasingly sustainable environment.

To deliver against this vision, the EDS presents “a strategy and a process for planning, delivering and managing economic change in Harborough District that contributes to the prosperity, well-being and environmental ambitions of the district in a sustainable, inclusive and measurable way.”



In particular, the EDS proposes four strategic goals, each with several priorities, short-term focuses for action, and medium-term ambitions:

The **Economic Goal** aims to boost local productivity, attract investment, and establish the district as an attractive business destination by:

1. Boosting Magna Park's role in promoting nationwide progress towards eco-friendly logistics while enhancing its contribution to overall growth.
2. Helping new industry clusters flourish by leveraging the district's distinctive businesses and brands.
3. Supporting key sectors like tourism, agriculture, and technology.



4. Offering business support, guiding investment in infrastructure and lodging to foster business expansion.
5. Adjusting to changes after the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) transition to ensure that public policies match Harborough District's economic and business needs.

The **People Goal** seeks to:

1. Improve access to advanced skills training in areas without nearby colleges or universities.
2. Tackle disparities by focusing on affordable housing, transportation, and job skills.
3. Utilise the economic advantages of supporting healthy ageing and well-being, including healthcare and related initiatives.

The **Environment** and **Place** Goals aim to:

1. Tap into Harborough District's green economy, focusing on energy storage and achieving net-zero goals.
2. Encourage growth in industries related to ecosystem services by using the district's natural resources and biodiversity.
3. Develop Market Harborough, Lutterworth, and rural villages equally, enhancing their unique strengths, creating jobs, and improving transportation and digital connections.

Measurement and Review: The Economic Development Strategy (EDS) outlines how the Council will measure and review progress across the 2024-31 period. It emphasises a partnership approach, with Harborough District Council (HDC) playing key roles in community leadership, coordination, influence, and implementation.

Consultation and Adoption: The strategy is open for consultation until 10 June 2024. After that, HDC Scrutiny and Cabinet will consider the final draft and consultation contributions before the Council's final adoption in July. Feedback on the vision, mission, goals, priorities, and action plan is encouraged.

Conclusion: This Strategy consultation draft outlines growth and development agendas amid global and national uncertainties, aiming to steer Harborough District toward its ambitious vision.

HDC May 2024



Final draft for consultation

Please note that references to Harborough in this document refer to the geography and communities covered by the whole Harborough District Council (HDC) area. Market Harborough is always referred to by its full civic name.

Introduction

Given that the previous Strategy expired at the end of 2023, a new Strategy must be prepared to guide the Council and its partners' success. This document summarises the ongoing exercise to draft that replacement.

It proposes a 2024-31 Economic Development Strategy (EDS). The EDS identifies the significant challenges and opportunities with strong economic dimensions that Harborough District faces and how the Council and its partners will address these. It will run alongside the remaining period of the Harborough Local Plan (2011-31) to better align spatial and economic strategies.

The drafted Economic Development Strategy will be circulated for consultation during Spring 2024. This period will include opportunities for discussion and further development of it. The intention is to feed in the results of this consultation so that Harborough District Council can adopt a final EDS in the summer and launch it thereafter.



Background and context:

The 2020s began with two of the most profound challenges for the UK in recent decades: Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. The pace, severity, and volatility of change have remained the same, with ongoing conflict in Europe, cost-of-living, disruptive national U-turns, and government changes, among others.

These 'big ticket' trends have profound impacts on districts like Harborough. An EDS must recognise those impacts, their interlocking character, and often their lack of definitive solutions.

For Harborough's communities and businesses, essential drivers of strategic change and how these might be recognised in the EDS 2024-31 can be split across four scales. These are:



Global

- Rapid technological change leads to an increased demand for high-level digital skills due to the impact of AI on employment and labour markets.
- The climate emergency necessitates a focus on green economic growth and the decarbonisation of existing businesses and industries, driven by frequent extreme weather events and their impacts on human well-being.
- Geo-political, trade, and investment conflicts create challenges for Foreign Direct Investment and export-led growth, compounded by pressures of international migration impacting local social cohesion.
- Societal challenges include addressing future virus shocks, managing the long tail of COVID-19, and addressing underlying health conditions, which stimulate significant care needs and opportunities in the health economy, alongside demographic ageing pressures and competition for young talent.

National

- The impending General Election and potential significant policy changes introduce uncertainties regarding the longevity of policies addressing critical economic issues such as net zero, inequalities, and well-being.
- Medium-term fiscal austerity is expected to prolong the tight financial squeeze on local authorities, alongside heightened expectations for significant public sector productivity improvements.
- Inequalities and the future of 'levelling-up' suggest that Harborough may not be a high priority for national programs, yet there remains an expectation that Economic Development Strategies will address local disadvantages.

Regional

- There is a necessity to position Harborough prominently in discussions surrounding devolution and local government reform, which includes active participation in debates



regarding Leicester & Leicestershire devolution and post-Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) settlements.

- Highlighting Harborough's significance in key transport corridors, the logistics sector, and discussions about the natural capital and quality of life in the Midlands, it is important to emphasise collaboration with the Midlands Engine and engage in pan-regional partnership efforts.

Local

- See Evidence Review and Issues Paper and relevant sections below.

The above does not claim to provide a comprehensive list of relevant global, national, and regional strategic drivers of Harborough's economy in general and the EDS in particular. However, the scale and pace of change strongly suggest that the 2024-31 EDS should be significantly different from its 2018-23 predecessor.



The purposes of the 2024-31 EDS:

Good practice in EDS today tends to highlight the following key focuses, which have been included in this consultation draft:

Resilience and managing rapid change: The strategy will prioritise resilience and adaptability over traditional economic growth models, aiming to better handle disruption and volatility.

Sustainability and Inclusion: Modern EDS concentrates on promoting sustainability, inclusion, well-being, and creating quality job opportunities, in addition to focusing on conventional indicators like productivity, employment rates, and business growth.

Changing and managing trends: The strategy seeks to influence demographic trends, attract and retain talent, and raise Harborough's regional and Midland's profile through strategic high-profile developments and effective management of existing trends.

Capitalising on Natural Assets: Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the district's natural resources and space can be used to boost the economy. The EDS recognises market towns, large villages, and rural areas in its spatial approach to economic growth.

Moreover, the EDS should be even more explicit than its predecessor, stating that this is not merely the background underpinning of the Harborough District Council (HDC) Economic Development team's business plan. The EDS must:

- Set out the collective ambitions of those interested in Harborough's development and the main opportunities and challenges facing us in progressing those ambitions.
- Lay the foundations and baseline for a 'Team Harborough' approach to working collaboratively to deliver EDS goals and the economic dimensions of accompanying strategies like the Local Plan and Market Town masterplans, Tourism and Rural strategies, Climate Action Plan, etc.
- Build a whole-council approach to the EDS so that HDC influences external agendas and so the EDS makes economic contributions across the whole HDC Corporate Plan.
- Only then can the priorities and headline activities of the HDC Economic Development Team be determined.



Evidence Review and Issues Paper:

A detailed Evidence Review and Issues Paper was produced in early 2024 and discussed within HDC and with a small group of significant role players. This is attached as an appendix. It thoroughly analyses the local economy and current trends, summarised in this high-level strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats matrix.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Affluent, high-performing district with high quality of life and environment and considerable vitality in many important core economic metrics - skills, occupational employment, jobs and enterprise density, resident wages, and household income	Typical non-metropolitan demographic challenges, major housing market pressures and tensions, lack of major business clusters anchored by global players and a well-defined innovation ecosystem, and no HE or even FE footprint
Well-located for Leicester, other East and West Midlands centres, with good connectivity to London and some regional airports	Not particularly well-placed to command policy attention and prioritisation from Government and LLEP compared to other L&L flagship places and developments
Seemingly not as vulnerable to pandemic, impacts and other potential shocks as many places – with very low levels of multiple deprivation and strong health and well-being	Economic strengths over-reliant on out-commuting and perhaps Magna Park. Local GVA, productivity and workplace wages are low and not growing particularly fast
Opportunities	Threats
Very well-positioned to take advantage of post-COVID premiums for space and quality of life leveraging how well-connected it is to local cities and metropolitan centres	National/regional context pays little attention to Harborough District and low levels of resourcing limit local freedoms, flexibilities, and delivery capacity
Magna Park and its existing consents could offer an opportunity for step-change and transformation in economic profile and performance of the campus and district	Local complacency and resistance to change may inhibit ambition and necessary decisive, radical decision-making and delivery effectiveness
Market Harborough could create a new exemplary post-pandemic market town – together with reconfiguring attractive rural settlements and their hinterlands	Continued increasing demographic pressures and housing market challenges cause loss of dynamism and young talented exodus – leading to stagnation and decline

The SWOT analysis highlights the district's high quality of life, environmental vitality, and positive economic metrics such as skills, occupational employment, jobs, and enterprise density. However, it also faces ageing challenges, housing market pressures, a lack of major business clusters, and no Higher Education or Further Education (HE or FE) footprint of any scale.

The district is well-located. But perhaps because of this, economic strengths are over-reliant on out-commuting and Magna Park. Locally produced gross value added, productivity, and workplace wages are weak. Harborough District appears less vulnerable to potential shocks than many places but is not well-positioned to command policy attention and prioritisation from the government pan-regional and regional bodies compared to City and County (L&L) flagships and priorities.



The district is well-placed to take advantage of post-COVID premiums for space and quality of life. However, low levels of resourcing limit local freedoms, flexibilities, and delivery capacity.

Magna Park and its existing planning consents offers an opportunity for step-change in the campus and district's economic profile and performance. Other high-profile niche businesses, like Joules and some in Market Harborough and Bruntingthorpe, have the potential to anchor wider developments.

The Emerging Local Plan sets a strategy for at least 15 years to shape what can be built and where it should go across Harborough District. Policies will outline the provision of employment land and development that is needed to help the local economy thrive, supporting job creation and business growth with the right infrastructure. Engagement in the development of new Local Plan by businesses is essential so that local needs are considered Market Harborough can position itself as a new exemplary post-pandemic 'middle-England' market town. Lutterworth, Broughton Astley, attractive rural settlements and their hinterlands enhance the district's overall offer.

The **Evidence Review and Issues Paper** presented two broad brush scenarios based on the level of EDS ambition.

At one level, Harborough District could be a quiet, low-key partner, off-pitch of the main Leicester and Leicestershire (L&L) transformers (City, Airport/Gateway, Food Cluster, Professional & Business Services, Hinckley, Loughborough), and just slightly outside the major national Oxford2Cambridge Arc priority. It could focus on retaining its successful quality of life based on out commuting and older residents with reasonable incomes. It could live with Magna Park's expansion and focus on minimising its negative externalities. And that choice requires one type of economic strategy.

At another level, though, the district could want to be known nationally and even beyond as a modern, vibrant district, welcoming talent, offering excellent and affordable quality of life and job opportunities, alongside ease of access to Leicester and major metropolitan centres. In this scenario:

- Market Harborough would be a nationally premier post-pandemic market town – maximising its connections to Leicester, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, and London.
- Lutterworth, Broughton Astley and the villages would progress town centre and neighbourhood plan where available to maximise their offer as high-quality residential communities and visitor economies.
- Magna Park (MP) will be the highest profile pacesetter (nationally) in net-zero logistics as a diversified campus with major innovation and education components.
- The enterprise and innovation focus beyond MP might seek to build on the quirky distinctive brands (like Joules, Bruntingthorpe), green and visitor economy opportunity.
- Major investment would be sought for affordable and market housing to attract and retain young talent.
- Digital investments would create step-change in home and hybrid working and even 'digital nomad' opportunities, whilst also improving local business competitiveness.



The paper was discussed within HDC and with significant role players over the January – March period. What came out of this were broadly consistent messages around the following:

- The initial paper presents a recognisable picture of the district and its key issues at a level of detail and with no significant omissions in terms of proceeding to draft the EDS.
- There is a lot of scope to support and grow the business, enterprise, and innovation eco-systems – from the nationally-important Magna Park campus and cluster to niche specialist businesses and brands (e.g. Joules, Royal Enfield) to SMEs and self-employment.
- The EDS needs to be people-focused with strands that enrich young person experience and progression opportunities, healthy ageing, and which builds on the high quality of life and well-being baselines the district already offers.
- Place and community should be addressed differentially and distinctively for Market Harborough, Lutterworth, the larger villages, and rural areas – increasing business and employment opportunity in all; realising major visitor economy, hospitality, and leisure opportunities; and tackling affordable homes and community capacity-building challenges.
- Harborough District has a rich rural environment and already dynamic ‘green’ credentials. The EDS should contribute strongly to natural capital, net gain, green growth, and decarbonisation agendas, and proactively look to accelerate net-zero transitions.
- Improvements to transport, infrastructure and digital connectivity are critical to enabling Harborough District to fulfil its economic potential. Improvements should be supported directly and advocated strongly through HDCs and partners’ influencing and communications activities.
- The EDS needs to be outward-looking – from collaborating with neighbours and influencing county and regional agendas to recognising the opportunities for capturing local value from out-commuting, business networks, and economic and transport corridors.

The findings of the Evidence Review and Issues Paper, and the initial feedback reported above have determined the proposed [Vision](#), [Goals](#), [Priorities](#) and [Action Plan](#) outlined below.



Vision:

The vision of the expired 2018-23 Economic Development Strategy (EDS) was “By 2023 Harborough District’s economy will have established a robust reputation as a dynamic, entrepreneurial, and attractive place to do business. Sustainable employment opportunities and district-wide prosperity will be achieved by developing home-grown enterprises and proactively attracting high-value businesses to the area.”

The HDC Corporate Plan 2022-32 vision is “Working with our communities we will build a future for the people of Harborough District that gives the best life opportunities through community leadership to create a sense of pride in our place; promoting health and well-being and encouraging healthy life choices; creating a sustainable environment to protect future generations; and supporting businesses and residents to deliver a prosperous local economy.”

There is enduring merit in both these visions, and the new EDS will contribute to both. The challenge is to define a relevant and distinctive economic vision for 2024-31 that retains aspiration, motivates, and enthuses local people, communities, and economic role players, and reflects the insights of the development work presented above.

This draft is proposing to consult on and work up the following vision statement:

“By 2031, Harborough District will be recognised and admired as a distinctive economic jewel of Leicestershire and the Midlands, offering all residents, communities and businesses opportunities to improve their prosperity and well-being in a dynamic and increasingly sustainable environment.”

EDS Mission: Neither the 2018-23 EDS nor the Corporate Plan 2022-32 have explicit missions. But given the way EDS have changed in character in the 2020s and moves towards mission-led public policy – not least in the Levelling Up White Paper 2022 (LUWP), there is merit in the EDS having a mission that distinguishes it from the other plans and strategies of Harborough District and HDC.

For this draft final strategy, it is proposed to consult on and work up the following mission statement:

“The EDS is a strategy and a process for planning, delivering and managing economic change and opportunity in Harborough District that contributes to prosperity, well-being and environmental ambitions in a sustainable, inclusive and measurable way.”



Strategic goals and priorities

The EDS has four goals – broadly mirroring the four HDC Corporate Plan themes, and the ‘triple bottom line’ of (in our case) ‘People, Planet and Prosperity’:

Goal 1 Economy: Enable the growth of a resilient, agile, diverse, and entrepreneurial economy, with dynamic business clusters and ecosystems in priority areas of economic activity.

Goal 2 People: Ensure the economy increases health and well-being opportunities for all district residents – from having the education & skills they need to access good jobs and employment to support for activity that assures health and well-being as they grow older.

Goal 3 Environment: Encourage sustainable development good practice in all areas of economic activity, promoting green growth opportunities and a thriving low carbon business base.

Goal 4 Place: Strengthen the economic vitality of and opportunities in and across Harborough District’s towns, large villages, and rural areas.

The major priorities and indicators of achievement for each Goal are outlined below. It is important the EDS has a manageable number of priorities – not everything can be a priority:

Goal 1: Economy

Major priorities

- Strengthening local economic productivity, competitiveness, and entrepreneurialism.
- Growing the local business base and ensuring access to space and facilities to enable that growth.
- Making the most of the Magna Park cluster and campus and developing other niche high-value clusters.
- Ensuring Harborough District is well-positioned for post-LEP economic development policies and support.

Indicators of achievement

- Local GVA, productivity/hour, and local wage rates
- Business start-up, survival & density rates, and self-employment metrics
- Business/commercial property supply
- Cluster and network analyses.
- Access to and take up of Growth Hub and further specialist support.
- Attraction and spending of LED (Local Economic Development) support funds and programmes.
- Ultrafast and Full Fibre to Premises digital access and business take-up rates.

Goal 2: People

Major priorities

- Increase local access to FE, HE, and workforce skills programmes & training, especially in priority skills.
- Encourage increased household income, especially in less affluent people and families.
- Support the reduction of health and skills inequalities through targeted support for priority peoples and communities.



- Grow the local health and care sector, and access to contemporary services like digital health.

Indicators of achievement

- Skills levels in the resident population
- Access to and take up of vocational, technical, apprenticeship, digital and workforce skills programmes.
- Proportion of 'good jobs' employment and Real Living Wage employment
- Gross Domestic Household Income levels for lower-income deciles
- Health inequalities & Index of Multiple Deprivation scores
- Growth in local health & care SMEs (including childcare)

Goal 3: Environment

Major priorities

- Accelerate delivery of decarbonisation and net-zero targets – especially in business-facing activities.
- Realise economic benefits of natural capital and net gain assets and capabilities.
- Grow environmental goods and services sector and 'green growth' cluster and ecosystem.

Indicators of achievement

- CO2 emissions per capita
- Trends in energy efficiency and renewable sources by AEA
- Environment net gain tracking of EDS development measures
- Size and network participation of Low Carbon Environmental Goods and Services business cluster

Goal 4: Place

Major priorities

- Progress Market Harborough and Lutterworth masterplans and improve town vitality scores.
- Ensure large villages and rural communities offer diverse business and employment opportunities.
- Support growth of the visitor economy, leisure, and hospitality industries
- Improve intra-district transport, digital services and infrastructure whilst influencing developments on major transport corridors to city regions and London.
- Encourage supply & diversity of affordable homes.

Indicators of achievement

- Market Harborough & Lutterworth town vitality
- Visitor numbers and spend, leisure and hospitality sector growth.
- Quality and availability of road and public transport links to and between Harborough District town and villages and major employment centres
- Increased housing affordability for groups excluded from market sector.



Measuring and reviewing strategic progress

The EDS adopt a manageable number of measures to track strategic progress against the goals and priorities above. Between 5-6 measures to be chosen per goal, this will give the EDS, HDC and partners a set of +/-20 outcome measures in a bespoke index which can be periodically measured (annually) in a traffic light system to denote progress and areas for concern. However, Harborough District performance should also be compared and benchmarked to provide a fuller picture of how well the district is performing.

There are several ways of doing this. At least three types of benchmarks should be considered:

Neighbours, regional and national aggregates: Routinely the EDS strategic measures of performance should be compared to the average of Leicestershire districts, and the East Midlands and the UK/England average excluding London.

Statistical neighbours: Statistical neighbours form LA geographies with similar socio-economic characteristics to Harborough District. The two looked at for this version of the EDS are both on LG Inform and include the Experian Mosaic and the CIPFA statistical neighbours' cohorts. District local authorities (LAs) in both HDC cohorts are Bromsgrove, East Hampshire, Stratford-on-Avon, Test Valley, Uttlesford and Wychavon. It is recommended that in addition to geographical neighbours, these six LAs are included in the EDS benchmarking performance monitoring system.

'Peers in prestige': The most difficult of the three classes of comparator are geographies that Harborough role players admire and look to for models of change and inspiration. There is some case regionally for Rutland, and for Stratford-upon-Avon from the statistical neighbours. However, it might also make sense to explore one or two international comparators for insights from European and even global comparator regions with ambitions or context to which Harborough District aspires – for instance, a Scandinavian region for social contract type of contexts or a US one for competitiveness. This is not necessarily a detailed exercise, but 'peers in prestige' are a useful way of thinking about Harborough's own ambitions and performance.



Implementation and delivery:

The EDS is an overall economic narrative for the whole of Harborough District, which requires the contributions of many partners to deliver and progress. However, HDC recognises its strategic and community leadership role as the primary owner of the narrative, convenor and enabler of many organisations who are key contributors to the district's economic success.

To discharge these roles, HDC shall use both its influencing and direct delivery roles. This section outlines the key steps and considerations for successful EDS implementation. In particular:

Strategic Leadership and partnership working

HDC will look to build the 'Team Harborough' leadership team:

- We will convene either a formal or an informal "Growth Board" type arrangement to oversee planning, delivery, and review of the EDS and associated economic plans and programmes.
- Collaborate and look to influence Leicester & Leicestershire (L&L) partners, neighbouring, regional, and national bodies, to ensure successor Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) arrangements work well for the district, and that other joint working facilitates resource-bidding and sharing, joint initiatives, and alignment of strategies.

Data Collection and Analysis

HDC will collect relevant data on the local economy, including employment trends, industry sectors, infrastructure, and skills to inform decision-making, help identify and lobby for growth opportunities, and to fill any gaps left by the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) and its annual district-based economic profiles.

Stakeholder Engagement

HDC will engage with key stakeholders, including local businesses, community organisations, educational institutions, and residents through:

- Regular consultations, workshops, and forums to gather insights, identify priorities, and build consensus.
- Keeping under review and participating in national, regional, and local key account management systems with important businesses and major employers.

Infrastructure Investment

HDC will prioritise our influencing roles and even, where resources allow, direct investment contributions and other resources to:

- Progress priority infrastructure projects that enhance connectivity (e.g. road improvements, broadband expansion, and public transportation),
- Improve business accommodation and facilities (e.g. grow on accommodation, local hybrid working facilities).
- Increase supply of homes – especially affordable housing.
- Support priority growth sectors including tourism and visitor economy, agriculture and land-based, logistics; niche clusters (like energy storage/net zero) and technology, enhance natural capital and ecosystem services provision, and education, skills, and innovation eco-systems.
- Signpost, leverage, and build capacity for accessing philanthropic and other community funding (like the Magna Park Community Fund) with economic purposes.



Business Support:

HDC will provide tailored support to local businesses, including signposting and assistance to access funding, training, and other benefits from future Growth Hub and specialist business, enterprise, and innovation support services. Harborough Innovation Centre (HIC) and any Innovation Centre established in and around Magna Park will nurture startups and SMEs and connect both tenants and wider networks into national and regional business growth communities.

Skills Development:

HDC will collaborate with educational institutions, including remote HE and FE, to address higher level skills gaps, apprenticeship programs, vocational training, and lifelong learning opportunities – including making the most of education and skills opportunities arising in and out of Magna Park.

Place-Making:

HDC will use its planning powers and influencing roles with partners, town forums, parish councils and others to enhance the district's attractiveness by investing in public and green spaces, cultural amenities, heritage preservation, and town and village centres' economic vitality and social infrastructure efforts.

Marketing and Promotion:

HDC will work with EDS partners to actively promote the district as an investment and visitor destination. Marketing campaigns, events, showcases, and trade events will raise awareness for investors (public and private), and grow the visitor economy.

Monitoring and Review:

HDC will agree EDS performance indicators with the 'Team Harborough' Forum to track EDS progress. Regular reviews and adjustments will ensure the strategy remains relevant and effective.

Implementation and delivery of the EDS requires structures and processes in each of the nine areas outlined above. HDC will play a key role in ensuring that all nine are addressed. But buy-in and co-ownership from other public, private and community role players cannot be understated. The consultation and workshops on this draft strategy will be an important part of this co-design process.



Action Plan:

An initial high-level action plan for delivering these agendas is outlined in Appendix One. Both short-term interventions and medium-term ambitions are phrased to be consistent with either high ambition or incremental change scenarios outlined in the Evidence Review and Issues Paper. Under either scenario, the EDS agenda is broad and requires capacity well beyond the HDC Economic Development Team. When the high-level plan goes to its next more detailed iteration, tasks and accountabilities will need to be allocated across the whole Council, and on occasion to 'Team Harborough' partners. This is the case with any contemporary EDS.

The Plan also suggests a small number of big ticket 'missions' should the Council and partners wish to adopt a high ambition, disruptive change scenario, and if they have some confidence this can be resourced. Possible transformational missions include Magna Park's wider roles, seeking a local HE/FE presence at scale in the district, or even a single-minded focus on green growth, natural capital, and biodiversity net-gain. Whether to go down one or more of these routes will be discussed further during the consultation phase on this document.



Monitoring and Review (M&R):

The monitoring and review process has already been referenced above. It is essential to ensure the strategy's effectiveness and alignment with the four economic goals the EDS proposes. The framework needs to be light touch, but robust enough to ensure that the EDS remains dynamic, responsive, and effective in driving sustainable economic growth and prosperity across the whole district.

The M&R framework below outlines key components for monitoring and evaluating the EDS:

Performance Indicators: A set of key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned with the EDS goals and priorities will be agreed from the longlist in the goals and priorities section. The final EDS will establish the baseline for the preferred basket of KPIs, track and analyse data on them no less than annually – akin to the former LLEP district profiles.

'Team Harborough' and Stakeholder Engagement: HDC will convene periodic Team Harborough forums to discuss progress and issues arising, alongside more focused dialogue with stakeholders on specific issues and opportunities as they arise during the EDS implementation period.

Annual Progress Reports: An annual progress report providing an overview of EDS implementation, highlighting achievements, new opportunities, challenges, and areas of concern will be prepared, presented, and discussed with Team Harborough and other relevant stakeholders.

Benchmarking and Comparison: As stated above, the EDS will benchmark the district's performance against neighbouring districts, regional averages, and national indicators, and also compare progress against statistical neighbours and peers in prestige to identify areas of strength and areas needing attention.

Review Mechanism: HDC will consult with Team Harborough on conducting periodic reviews of the EDS to evaluate its relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with changing economic landscapes and priorities.

Adaptation and Continuous Improvement: In the light of 1-5, the EDS will remain flexible and adaptive to changing circumstances, continuously seeking opportunities for improvement, innovation, and collaboration to enhance the EDS's impact on the district's economic development.



Next steps:

This is the draft final EDS for consultation. It has been formulated following an Evidence Review and Issues Paper, and initial discussions on this preliminary document.

This consultation draft suggests vision and mission statements to shape the EDS overall, four goals, sixteen priorities, and a range of possible short- and medium-term interventions. It outlines how EDS progress can be measured and how it can be kept relevant and 'live' over the 2024-31 period. It proposes a 'Team Harborough' partnership approach, with HDC delivering its community leadership, convening, influencing and direct delivery roles. The Council's Economic Development Team will major on several priorities and actions to be decided at the final stage of the EDS process. However, EDS is a whole-district strategy, entailing a whole council approach with partners.

The strategy will be open as a consultation draft until 10 June 2024 following which it shall be considered by HDC Scrutiny and Cabinet prior to final adoption by the Council during July and a formal launch thereafter.

We are also available for bespoke online and face-to-face meetings. You may wish to join one of our themed workshops in early June focused on Economic and Green Growth (essentially Goals 1 and 3), Place and Tourism (essentially Goal 4), and People and connectivity (essentially Goal 2 and particularly PL04) – although all the workshops will enable participants to contribute to co-design of the whole final strategy.

We welcome comments and suggestions on anything presented in this document. We would like your response to the vision, mission, goals, priorities, and high-level action plan. What areas of the EDS do you strongly endorse, where are your concerns, and is anything missing? How do you think EDS progress should be measured and reported? What are the KPIs that matter most in this endeavour? And finally, who needs to be in the Team Harborough grouping? And what should HDC's specific economic priorities be in general and the Economic Development Team's in particular?

Concluding remarks:

Crafting and adopting the EDS in a period of such uncertainty and in the shadow of a general election might be considered substantial risk. But it is also entirely appropriate and a sensible approach to managing and mitigating the risks of major global, national, and local changes.

Harborough District needs to set out its stall in the face of the changes outlined. This EDS is a best endeavour approach to doing this sensibly and flexibly in Spring 2024. It also sets out how the EDS can adapt and evolve over the coming period.

In this spirit, the consultation draft is presented to you, and we look forward to your contributions to bringing a final fit-for-purpose EDS to fruition.

HDC

May 2024

Harborough District Council

Economic Development Strategy - Appendices



Appendices

Appendix One: EDS Action Plan 2024-31 – April 2024

Goal and Priority	What are we trying to achieve
<p>Economy 1 – Strengthening local economic productivity, competitiveness, and entrepreneurialism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prosperity, competitiveness, enterprise are fundamental building blocks for economic success and prosperity. ➤ Increasing convergence with high-performing comparator districts ('peers of prestige'). ➤ Increase local opportunity alternatives to out-commuting. ➤ Develop Harborough District positioning and investment-ready propositions for accessing future public support for growth and development. ➤ Harborough District has highly valued niche economic roles in Midlands Engine and is the location of choice for investment and services in those roles.
<p>Economy 2 – Growing the local business base and access to business accommodation and facilities that enable business growth locally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide credible alternatives to out-commuting. ➤ Enable local businesses to grow locally. ➤ Harborough District seen as a dynamic, innovative place with a supportive environment where businesses can achieve their ambitions. ➤ Exploration and feasibility analyses of grow-on accommodation options. ➤ Increase understanding of business demand of space requirements for business growth. ➤ Proactive account management. ➤ Major rises in the rankings of business density, business growth and propensity to innovate metrics. ➤ Harborough District is known for its 'open for business' ethos.
<p>Economy 3 – Making the most of the Magna Park (MP) cluster/ campus and developing other niche high-value clusters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Magna Park (MP) is nationally significant & provides major business multipliers both on the campus itself and more widely throughout the district. ➤ Other niche businesses that can anchor new high-growth clusters identified and propositions developed that leverage and grow the impact of these high-value niche businesses (e.g. Royal Enfield, Joules, TGW, etc). ➤ Agree delivery of additional MP Campus innovation & skills provision ➤ Identify and develop propositions for 2-3 other priority niche clusters and networks (not necessarily those mentioned in the previous cell). ➤ MP as the premier and an exemplary net-zero Logistics Part in the UK and Europe. ➤ Harborough District is known for its successful niche industries and purposeful cluster-building strategies.

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<p>Economy 4 – Ensuring Harborough District is well-positioned for post-LLEP economic development policies and support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Raise Harborough District's influence and priority compared to other L&L flagships to influence coming public policy changes to Harborough's benefit. ➤ Attract new resources and services to drive Harborough District's growth & development. ➤ Contribute proactively to LLEP successor arrangements. ➤ Advocate EDS priorities locally and nationally post-general election. ➤ Attract new and increasing investment resources for EDS priorities. ➤ Increasing business take-up of public support for business growth.
<p>People 1 – Increase local access to FE, HE, and workforce skills training, especially in priority growth areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Find solutions to redress the absence of local HE and FE at scale in the district. ➤ Deliver step-change in local access to higher-level skills. ➤ Attract, retain, and develop the local talent that businesses need. ➤ Define and deliver the MP opportunities for skills development. ➤ Dialogue with sub-regional HE and FE providers about local provision. ➤ Ensure future Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) understand and address Harborough skills priorities. ➤ The district is known as a place where you can fully develop and deploy your talents.
<p>People 2 – Ensure programmes consider improving household incomes, reducing health and skills inequalities when prioritising interventions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support the reduction of Harborough District's high levels of inequalities and poverty by providing employment opportunities, work readiness, and other relevant support for poorer groups. ➤ Increase understanding of inequality & poverty to better design interventions to enable less-advantaged communities are better able to participate in and benefit from Harborough District's economic success. ➤ Ensure Harborough District can credibly claim to be a leading rural district in delivering inclusive growth policies and practice. ➤ Increase understanding of the needs of priority groups in order to design and promote interventions to assist them.

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<p>People 3 – Grow the local health and care sector, with access to new services like digi-health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improve scale, local offer and productivity of the large local health and care sectors. ➤ Deliver healthy aging and agendas like digi-health for both well-being and economic vitality purposes. ➤ Support life sciences, health & care cluster work in district/ L&L. ➤ Identify proposals for local investment. ➤ Harborough District is known as a good place for healthy aging, with access to valued relevant private and community services.
<p>Environment 1 – Accelerate delivery of decarbonisation and net-zero targets – especially in business-facing activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Demonstrate tangible progress towards meeting statutory targets, regional and local ambitions, and expectations of local authorities with regards to net zero. ➤ Realise the green growth economic and business dividends locally from national, regional and L&L green growth policies rather than through external businesses delivering them locally. ➤ Understand and build on energy storage & net-zero mini-clusters. ➤ Participate in regional and national green growth & net-zero programmes. ➤ Build a credible green growth cluster. ➤ MP as premier net-zero logistics park. ➤ At the forefront of L&L and Midlands Engine (ME) rural decarbonisation performance.
<p>Environment 2 – Realise economic benefits of natural capital and net gain assets and capabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Build the green credentials of Harborough District's quality of life and as a visitor destination by leveraging the considerable natural capital and biodiversity assets as one of Harborough's unique selling propositions (USPs). ➤ Develop relations with Midlands Nature & other partners to understand better the potential for natural capital/ biodiversity economic programmes. ➤ Harborough District's rural offer is well-managed and environmental stewardship is a core part of the values of residents and businesses.

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<p>Environment 3 – Grow environmental goods & services sector, ‘green growth’ cluster and ecosystem(s)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A dynamic green growth sector with distinctive, nascent niche clusters (e.g. net-zero/energy storage) and new niches in ‘green tourism’ and ecosystems industries. ➤ Increase understanding of the nascent sub-sectors and help them participate fully in regional and national initiatives. ➤ Having several ‘green growth’ clusters of excellence able to provide services regionally and beyond. ➤ Recognisable L&L & Midlands Engine (ME) niche roles.
<p>Place 1 – Progress Market Harborough and Lutterworth masterplans and improve town vitality scores.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Both market towns are perceived as locations of choice for living and working, welcoming significant visitor numbers & spending – with Market Harborough as an exemplary ‘middle-England’ market town and Lutterworth as a growing town and service provider for its wide catchment. ➤ Progress the Town Masterplans. ➤ Feasibility of development & investment options in both towns. ➤ Support proactive town centre management in both towns. ➤ Market Harborough as an exemplary dynamic market town with national profile and reputation. ➤ Lutterworth accommodates housing growth with increasing pride in place.
<p>Place 2 – Ensure large villages and rural areas offer diverse business and employment opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Vibrant large villages and living rural communities with good access to employment opportunities and public services spread the district’s growth spatially and make the most of Harborough’s rural offer. ➤ Explore opportunities to repurpose community spaces (e.g. village halls, libraries) for hot-desking, public services access & employment uses. ➤ High quality of life and employment offers in all major settlements – supporting growth of the visitor and leisure economy.

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<p>Place 3 – Support the growth of the visitor economy, leisure, and hospitality industries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An expanding visitor and leisure sectors offering diverse and all-year services sustainably. ➤ Improving the depth and breadth of Harborough District’s offer, especially for overnight visitors. ➤ Build Tourism & Hospitality Forum(s). ➤ Strengthen/Coordinate events programme. ➤ Increase Visit Leicester, the local visitor economy partnership. ➤ Increase visitor numbers and spend on high-value and sustainable visitor economy and leisure products & services.
<p>Place 4 – Improve intra-district transport, digital services, and infrastructure, influencing developments on major corridors to city regions & London</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Make the economy of the district more cohesive and connected through increasing intra-district transport options, especially east-west for local labour markets. ➤ Improve digital infrastructure, making more of quite high provider density capabilities in the district. ➤ Realise economic and business digital dividends from higher qualities and bandwidth of digital infrastructure improvements. ➤ Participate proactively in L&L Transport and Digital partnerships. ➤ Support local employers, transport, and digital service providers to identify connectivity solutions. ➤ A well-connected district physically with high-quality digital infrastructure and services that allows Harborough District to realise the benefits of digital and AI transitions.
<p>Place 5 – Increase the supply and diversity of affordable homes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase in housing choices – especially for poorer and younger families – to reduce the district’s housing affordability ratios – currently the widest in L&L. ➤ Deliver Local Plan housing numbers. ➤ Identify and bring to market new sites for mixed-use development, intervening directly when appropriate. ➤ Harborough District is known for delivering Local Plan housing targets and providing good homes across the breadth of its population and communities.

Appendix Two: Evidence Review and Issues Paper – January 2024

[EDS Evidence Review and Issues Paper 2024 - 31.docx](#)



Appendix Three: The Business Offer

HDC has set out its roles and responsibilities for leading and enabling delivery of the EDS in the Implementation chapter of the document. With regards to businesses and employers, we shall:

Your participation in the district's growth and development is absolutely critical. HDC's open door objective in *Economy 2* is always available, and we hope you shall use it. We value periodic discussions with single or groups of businesses about issues that are important to you, changes you are confronting or wish to make.

Please also feel free to take advantage of these specific collaboration opportunities:

Support	If you need assistance navigating business operations, visit www.investinharborough.com/advice for tailored support and resources.
Events	Share details and images of your events with us at www.visitharborough.com/events to be featured on our events calendar.
News	Sign up for our business bulletin at www.harborough.gov.uk/businessnews to receive updates, insights, and announcements relevant to the local business community.
Funding	Explore external funding options at www.harborough.gov.uk/grantfinder to support your business ventures.
Recruitment	Let us know about vacant roles or your interest in taking on apprenticeships and we can promote these via www.investinharborough.com/harboroughjobs to connect with potential candidates.

Participate in local business initiatives and events to embrace the spirit of collaboration and community engagement. Whether through the Harbs Collective, Lutterworth Town Team, Heritage Open Days, Leicester Comedy Festival—Harborough's Big Weekend, Big Green Week, or Harborough Job Fairs, there are myriad opportunities to connect, learn, and grow together.

Your participation is vital in creating a thriving business environment and vibrant community. We appreciate your support and involvement in our shared endeavour for progress and prosperity.