

Marketing & Promotion: Attracting Skilled Workers and Investment to Thetford

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Greater Thetford Development Partnership Officer Group is recommending a paper to the board for discussion on how better to promote the town, with a particular emphasis on *'Attracting Skilled Workers/Talent' to live in Thetford.*
- 1.2 It is important to set any initiatives within the context of broader campaigns and activity. There is ongoing work to promote The East (led by the LEP); Locate:Norfolk (led by Norfolk County Council); the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor (with specific resource to deliver this managed by the LEP) and a more tourist oriented campaign focussed on the "Brecks", within which Thetford is central.
- 1.3 The main focus on these initiatives is to raise the profile of the respective target area to attract investment. An additional benefit partners hope to deliver is to attract key staff to the area, thus raising the skills levels.

2 Promoting Growth Opportunities

- 2.1 Thetford is undergoing a period of extensive growth - providing high quality, well-connected and affordable housing and employment space.
- 2.2 Thetford is the 4th largest settlement in Norfolk, 30 miles from Cambridge, 20 miles from the nearest Norfolk town and 30 miles to the next largest (King's Lynn or Norwich). Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk is nearer at just 15 miles. This proximity to economic centres presents further opportunity for workers and businesses to relocate to Thetford for an improved quality of life, combined with a low cost base, allowing a short commute to work. Businesses can benefit from the low cost per sqft of commercial space, combined with connectivity to London, Cambridge, Midlands and Norfolk from a central location.

2.3 It is hoped that by promoting the growth taking place in and around Thetford, the Greater Thetford Development Partnership can maximise the potential of these growth opportunities, attracting skilled workers and businesses to the area.

3 Housing Growth and Regeneration

3.1 There are major plans underway for growth and regeneration within Thetford – all of which need to be communicated effectively to encourage investment and relocation to the area.

3.2 Kings Fleet (also known as the Sustainable Urban Extension- SUE)

3.3 Kingsfleet will be a significant new development located on the northern edge of Thetford which comprises new homes and new facilities.

3.4 Adjoining the A11 for easy access and convenience, developer Pigeon's vision for Kingsfleet - formerly known as the Thetford Sustainable Urban Extension - is to create a thriving, sustainable community, with a wide range of high-quality new homes.

3.5 The development will include up to 5,000 homes, which will be developed in several phases, alongside an extensive range of community facilities including:

- Three new primary schools and a nursery
- A health centre
- High-frequency bus routes linking Kingsfleet to the town centre
- Generous public spaces and parkland
- Cycle and pedestrian routes
- Allotments
- A sports pitch
- 48 acres of employment land

3.6 Thetford Riverside

3.7 The £8m Thetford Riverside complex will significantly improve the leisure offering in the town for both residents and visitors. It includes a brand new cinema, a hotel, and a series of restaurants. The regeneration of the site will also act as a catalyst for further development in the town and across the district.

3.8 The cinema, run by The Light, has three, fully licensed screens which all boast incredible 2D and 3D visuals with state of the art digital picture and sound. The cinema also has a café and bar.

- 3.9 National hotel chain Travelodge offers 64 attractive, modern bedrooms at the leisure complex. They are good value, making the hotel a good choice for those looking to stay in Thetford as part of a leisure break as well as those travelling to the area for business purposes.

4 Infrastructure

- 4.1 The A11 is fully dual carriageway and the corridor will see some of the largest scale growth planned in the county (at Thetford, Attleborough, Wymondham, Hethersett and the Norwich fringe at Cringleford).
- 4.2 A11 Express Way
- 4.3 Local authorities are currently working with DoT and Highways England to lobby for improved junctions along the A11, including the often congested Junctions at Thetford.
- 4.4 The ambition is for the A11 to become an expressway – a new term classification of road between a motorway and a traditional dual carriageway to show a route that would flow faster than at present.
- 4.5 In the county council's Norfolk Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2017-2027, the A11 Thetford bypass junctions are recognised as key infrastructure needed to deliver economic growth in the county.
- 4.6 Improvement measures to the A11 will also be provided as part of the Thetford Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE). The 5,000 homes development planned for northern outskirts of the town and would be close to the A11 junction with the A1075
- 4.7 Improvement to the road infrastructure surrounding Thetford should be promoted outside of Norfolk, in order to raise awareness in the business community and for those looking to locate near (not in) economic centres.

5. Commercial sites and Development Opportunities

- 5.1 As part of Thetford's growth plans, employment sites have been allocated - a large employment area on King's Fleet (SUE) and an adjacent large employment area known as the Thetford Enterprise Park. The two employment sites have a joint capacity for circa. 140,000sq m of B1, B2 and B8 development and potential to create 3,600 jobs.
- 5.2 This is a significant opportunity for developers and businesses to acquire commercial space at low cost, with excellent connectivity. Again, the opportunity needs to be communicated effectively to businesses.
- 5.3 The wider growth plans between Cambridge and Norwich and surrounding areas also need to be communicated in this context, as businesses and

workers relocating can see business and job opportunities near to Thetford as well.

5.4 Figure 1 shows housing growth, infrastructure projects and employment sites across Norfolk.

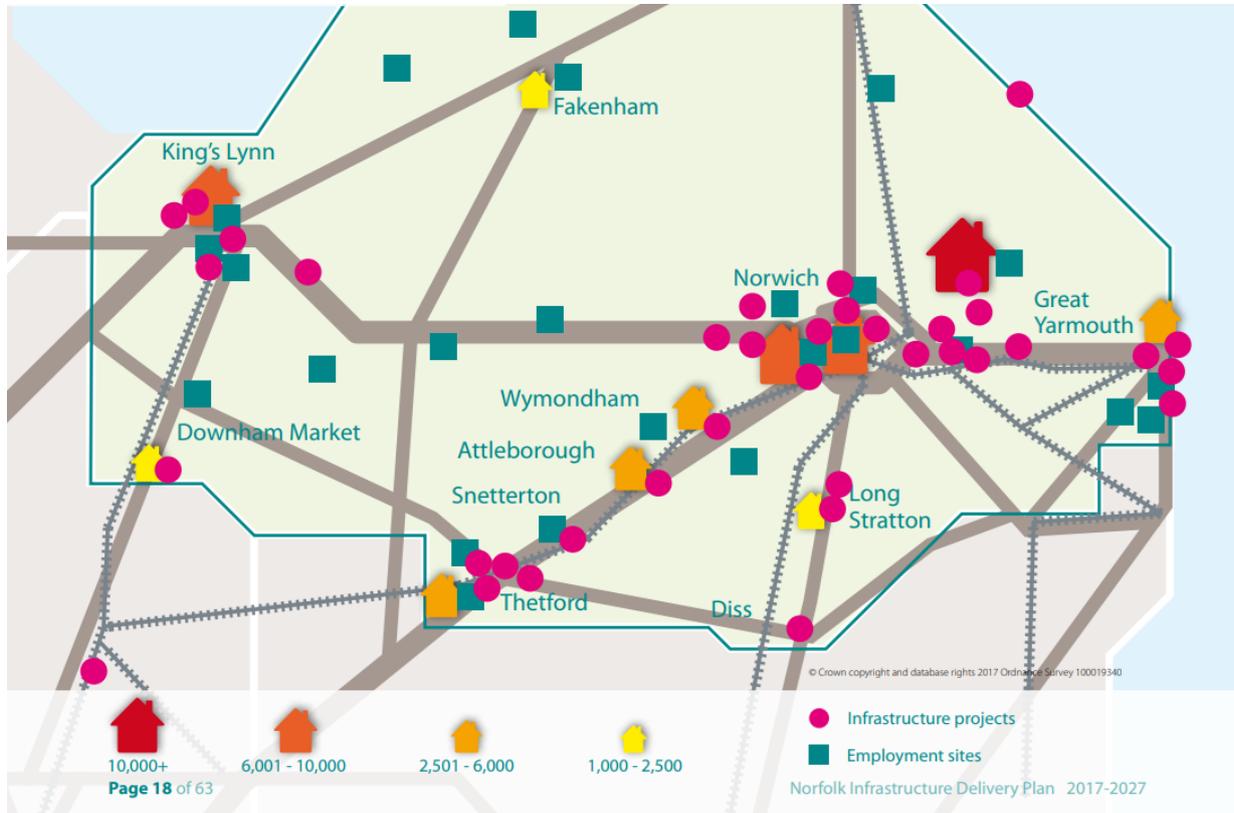


Figure 1 Housing Growth. Norfolk Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2017-27

6 Thetford as a 'Feeder Town' for Cambridge Workforce

6.1 Figure 2 is a map showing 20, 40, and 60km travel distances centred around Cambridge Science Park and Norwich Research Park, in order to illustrate the practical extent of the Greater Cambridge and Greater Norwich functional economic areas in the future.

6.2 Also shown on the map are major housing and employment developments. Any potential location within 30 minutes (about 40km) of Cambridge in particular, which is currently more spatially constrained than Norwich, should be considered an area with extremely strong growth potential.

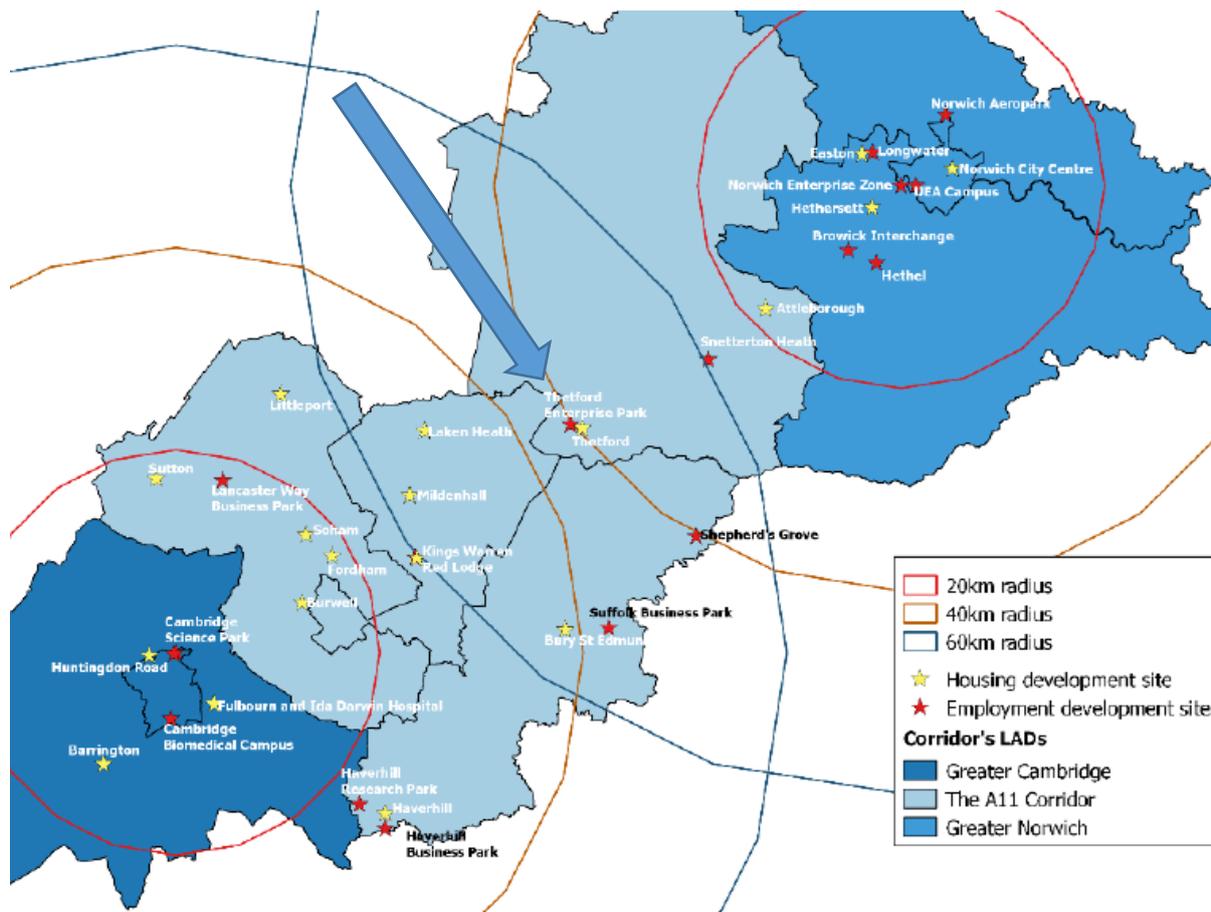


Figure 2 Travel Distances from Cambridge and Norwich, CNTC Report Cambridge Econometrics 2018

- 6.3 Thetford, located at the approximate half-way point, has the opportunity to look in both directions at once, thanks to its prominent position on both the A11 and with rail links to both Cambridge and Norwich.
- 6.4 It is centrally located, offering skilled workers the benefit of high quality, well-connected and low cost housing, with short travel times to Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds or Norwich. Even London and Birmingham are just over an hour away.
- 6.5 The Cambridge Econometrics CNTC report described Thetford as a feeder town for Cambridge for the above reasons.
- 6.6 Cambridge has one of the greatest levels of net in-commuting with the workplace population 52.1% bigger than the resident working population (source: Towns and cities analysis, England and Wales, March 2016, Office of National Statistics).
- 6.7 A marketing campaign highlighting proximity and travel to work times, combined with cost comparisons of nearby centres such as Cambridge,

6.8 Norwich and Bury St Edmunds would help to maximise on the opportunities presented by Thetford's housing growth and infrastructure improvements.

7 Key assets

7.1 As part of a marketing and promotion campaign, it is important to consider Thetford's key assets – what makes it a truly desirable location for workers and businesses.

7.2 Low cost base

7.3 Although well connected, Thetford has a significantly lower cost base than neighbouring areas – and this does give it an edge as a commuter town. The low cost base makes it a desirable location for people working in major economic centres (such as Cambridge, Norwich, Bury St Eds or further afield). Younger workers in particular, who do not yet have the income to afford to live where they work.

Figure 3

Average House Price	Location
£228,348	Thetford
£462,872	Cambridge
£323,795	Bury St Edmunds
£268,693	Norwich

Source: Zoopla 2018

7.4 Figure 3 shows the average house in Thetford, compared to that of Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds and Norwich. As shown, at £228,348, Thetford offers housing at less than half the cost of Cambridge.

7.5 Economic Strengths

7.6 Thetford has a number of economic strengths, which should be promoted as part of a marketing campaign:

- Location and connectivity – Thetford is central to a number of large economic centres including Cambridge, Norwich, Bury St . Edmunds. Thetford is also not far from London Stansted and Birmingham.
- Low cost base- low housing prices
- Low unemployment rate
- Manufacturing and engineering cluster
- Available employment sites
- Development opportunities

- Growth – Infrastructure and housing. Thetford has plans for 5,000 new homes and nearby Attleborough a further 4,000. In Greater Norwich 40,000 additional homes are expected to be built by 2026
- Tourism – this is a unique offering and brings many tourists to the area each year. Thetford has the largest lowland forests in the UK, a beautiful river and many heritage attractions. The Lifestyle offer for residents is particularly high.

7.7 Business Clusters

7.8 Thetford has several key sectors, but particularly the advanced manufacturing & engineering, and agri-tech sectors. Multimatic's HQ is located in Thetford, and other international names such as Baxtor, Trox and Eastern Attachments base themselves in or near Thetford.

7.9 These business clusters are supported by the nearby Hethel Engineering Centre and business networks such as the New Anglia Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Group, and Greater Norwich Manufacturing Group.

7.10 Academic

Thetford businesses also benefit from a pipeline of engineering graduates from the University of East Anglia, and apprentices from the University Technical College Norwich, combined with:

- Thetford Grammar – 95% attainment in A-C grades, one of the best private schools in the UK
- Thetford Academy – state of the art facilities, swimming pool
- Wymondham College
- Cambridge University and the University of East Anglia both an hour away, public transport available

7.11 Leisure and Heritage

7.12 Thetford has a number of unique leisure and heritage offerings, which offer a fantastic quality of life to residents with these facilities on their doorstep. A marketing campaign should also including:

- The Brecks are home to unique Pingo lakes. They are the most distinctive feature of the Brecks landscape and give the impression of acacia trees on the African savannah.
- Thetford Forest is the largest lowland pine forest in the country, at 19,000 hectares (47,000 acres),
- Thetford Forest is also home to High Lodge - a recreational site set in the heart of Thetford Forest offering extensive play areas, walking trails and cycling trails. There is a cafe, bike shop and hire, Go Ape Tree Top Adventure.
- The forest is also home to Elveden Center Parcs.
- Concerts are also held in Thetford forest – it attracts shows from big names, such as Gary Barlow, Olly Murs, Kasabian, Simply Red, Rick Astley, Keane and the Script.
- the remains of the 12th century Thetford Abbey.
- Whilst walking through the market town of Thetford, it is impossible not to notice the beautiful historic infrastructure and many listed buildings.
- Scenic canoe trips to Brandon. Current scoping is taking place, focusing on the River Little Ouse and the reinvention of its riverside area could help attract more tourists to Thetford.
- Thetford offers a retail destination (and nearby shopping destinations in Cambridge, Bury St Eds and Norwich)

8 Proposal

8.1 Considering the significant growth and associated opportunities, the GTDP Officer's group would like to recommend a targeted marketing campaign is launched, with the focus of attracting skilled workers to live in Thetford. It is anticipated many will live in Thetford to commute to larger economic centres, but we will also promote the job opportunities in and around Thetford, with the ambition to attract more talent to work for local businesses.

8.2 The opportunities associated with great connectivity, allocated employment sites with development opportunities, combined with existing business clusters and networks also presents Thetford as an investable location for businesses. It is important that Thetford's connectivity, low cost base and development opportunities are communicated effectively to potential investors as part of the campaign.

8.3 The marketing campaign will need to be targeted to ensure impact. It is suggested the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor is used as the lead brand for the campaign, as an established brand with wider support, although this can be assessed as part of a full business case for the campaign.

8.4 In order to focus the campaign, 5 main messages need to be promoted:

1. Location – proximity to economic centres, travel to work time
2. Low cost base and housing growth – cost comparisons, housing in Thetford
3. Lifestyle offer – Thetford forest, Center Parcs, heritage offer, educational institutes, facilities, Cinema, river, amenities – rail & bus networks etc
4. Business Clusters, networks and business hubs
5. Development opportunities – employment sites

8.5 Potential vehicles for promotion of the campaign will need to be assessed as part of the business case, but are likely to include:

- Business networks – NAAME, GNMG, Cambridge wireless
- Business Ambassadors – businesses in Thetford can support the campaign and communicate the key messages to their networks and supply chains
- Recruitment sites – job adverts
- Academic institutes – It is beneficial to promote Thetford as a low cost location to graduates, who may be looking for their next home and have flexibility as to where they can live

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