



For and on behalf of  
**Skegness Town Council**

**ECONOMIC SECTOR, RETAIL, LEISURE AND TOURISM REVIEW**

**Evidence to inform Skegness Neighbourhood Plan**

**Prepared by**  
**Community Resource Planning**

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Prepared by:	Kirsten Ward BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI Associate Planner	Sarah Biggins BSc (Hons) Planner
Checked by:	Alex Roberts BSc (Joint Hons) AssocRTPI Director	
Approved by:	Alex Roberts BSc (Joint Hons) AssocRTPI Director	
Date: November 2019	Office: Sheffield	

**Ground Floor V1 Velocity  
Tenter Street  
Sheffield  
S1 4BY**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report has been prepared as part of the evidence base to inform the development of the Skegness Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to undertake a further review of information prepared by the Greater Lincolnshire Local Economic Partnership (LEP) and East Lindsey District Council (previously identified in Stage 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan process), to identify emerging employment sectors and retail, leisure and tourism potential within Skegness and the surrounding area, and consider how these might be supported through the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.3 As part of this process we have undertaken a review of local economic development and strategy documents, including those prepared by the Greater Lincolnshire LEP, such as the Strategic Economic Plan and the evidence prepared by the LEP to inform the forthcoming Industrial Strategy. As part of this study we also held a meeting with the Greater Lincolnshire LEP to discuss their strategic objectives and how funding available through the LEP might help support the feasibility and achievement of policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.4 For each identified economic sector, this report details the current context and existing evidence in relation to Skegness or, where Skegness-specific evidence was unavailable, draws upon relevant evidence for the wider district (East Lindsey), county (Lincolnshire) or settlements with similar characteristics elsewhere in the UK (northern coastal towns).
- 1.5 The report then goes on to identify potential opportunities, relevant to Skegness, for each identified sector. These opportunities may be carried forward to form the basis of strategic priorities and site-based policies in the Skegness Neighbourhood Plan.



## 2.0 RETAIL

### a) Current context / evidence

- 2.1 Skegness fulfils an important role in East Lindsey as one of the main shopping and commercial centres, supporting a wide range of employment, shopping, education, recreation, health and community services (East Lindsey Retail and Economic Assessment, 2014). In a household survey of shopping destinations, respondents from Alford and the surrounding area identified Skegness as the main retail centre for food and groceries, domestic appliances, electrical goods and books/CDs/toys/gifts (NEMS Household Survey, March 2012).
- 2.2 The retail function of Skegness is further illustrated by the Management Horizons Europe's UK Shopping Index which ranks retail centres across Great Britain based on the presence of national suppliers. Management Horizon's Index ranks Skegness as the main retail centre in East Lindsey and 239<sup>th</sup> in the UK, compared with Horncastle (1,207<sup>th</sup>) and Alford (2,247<sup>th</sup>).
- 2.3 Despite this, however, Skegness still performs far below the larger competing centres outside of the District (Lincoln 34<sup>th</sup> and Grimsby 57<sup>th</sup>). The offer for comparison goods in particular within Skegness is not extensive, although expenditure on convenience goods, particularly by tourists, has continued to grow.
- 2.4 As such, whilst Skegness appears to be performing relatively well as a retail centre within East Lindsey District, with relatively few vacant town centres units recorded in the 2008 retail study, when compared with centres beyond the district's boundary its performance is relatively poor and retail health is skewed by seasonal variations.
- 2.5 Traffic congestion and lack of car parking have been cited as issues that are likely to impact residents' ability to access shops within the town (ELDC Retail and Leisure Study, 2008). There are also noted issues with pedestrian access and wayfinding between the train station and town centre.
- 2.6 As experienced in many areas across the UK, new forms of retailing (such as online shopping) have continued to grow as an alternative to other more traditional shopping facilities, and future demands for retail floorspace are unclear (ELDC Retail and Economic Assessment, 2014). The decline in high street retailers has been accompanied by a continued growth in the charity and discount shop sector, with smaller vacant retail units being less attractive to major high street brands.

### b) Potential opportunities

- 2.7 The relative success of Skegness as a retail destination within the district is likely to be underpinned by its comparatively good accessibility and the fact that it is the closest main settlement for a large proportion of rural East Lindsey. Compared to other towns within the district, for example, Skegness has a relatively 'good' level of accessibility, with regular bus services to Lincoln, Spilsby, Horncastle, Boston, Wainfleet, and Alford. It is also the only main town in the district with a rail link (with stations also serving Wainfleet All Saints, Havenhouse and Thorpe Culvert) (East Lindsey's Core Strategy, July 2018). Improving linkages and wayfinding between the train station and town centre is however identified as a potential opportunity, as these links are currently poor (ELDC Retail and Leisure Study, 2008).
- 2.8 Additionally, the Core Strategy identifies parking as being critical to the vitality of the District's town and village centres. As stated in Core Strategy Policy SP22 'Transport and Accessibility', *'any loss of existing parking facilities must be accompanied by a robust parking survey demonstrating that the loss will not affect the ability of shoppers to access the facilities in town centres'*.
- 2.9 Therefore, as Skegness' comparatively good levels of accessibility have been key to the town's relatively strong performance within the district, improving access to Skegness from beyond the

district, as well as enhancing wayfinding and legibility upon arrival in the town, may help to further augment the visitor experience and boost Skegness as a retail destination (see section 4 below).

- 2.10 Opportunities to support re-use or repurposing of vacant retail units, such as for temporary community, cultural or arts spaces and 'pop-up shops' could be investigated as a means of supporting local independent businesses and extending the tourist season by providing year-round attractions.
- 2.11 Under Strategic Policy 20 ('Visitor Economy') of the adopted Core Strategy, any new retail development must demonstrate that the proposed development would not affect the viability of the existing town centre. This policy will need to be taken account of when developing the Neighbourhood Plan.



### 3.0 LESIURE & TOURISM / VISITOR ECONOMY

#### a) Current context / evidence

- 3.1 Skegness has been identified as the fourth most popular tourist resort in the UK by visitor numbers (GLLEP SEP, 2014-2030) making tourism a major economic sector for Skegness.
- 3.2 The tourism industry in East Lindsey has seen year-on-year economic growth since 2009, with the latest (August 2019) STEAM report, valuing East Lindsey's tourism sector at £699 million; representing a £45 million (7%) increase between 2017 and 2018. A number of new attractions and tourist facilities have recently been developed in the town, including Skegness Aquarium, X-site Skate and BMX Park, and a Premier Inn. The Sky Pier complex is also currently being developed on Grand Parade, which will include a bar, food court, function room, observation deck and museum.
- 3.3 Skegness specifically has also seen a rise in tourism with the total number of visitors to Skegness and Ingoldmells increasing between 2014 and 2015 by 9.2% and expenditure increasing by 10.0% over the same period (East Lindsey District Council STEAM Final Trend Report, 2013-2015). This report also found that between 2014 and 2015 the number of FTEs (Full Time Equivalent) jobs in Skegness and Ingoldmells increased by 6.1% to 2,846 with the vast majority (68.9%) being in accommodation, food and drink, or indirect tourism-related employment. Redevelopment of the Tower Gardens Pavilion site is also underway, which will provide a new community hub including tourist information facilities.
- 3.4 In order to continue on this trajectory, East Lindsey District Council has stated in its Core Strategy that a priority for the district is to ensure *'increased choice in the visitor economy with an extended season'* and the Council are committed to high quality year-round sustainable growth. Accordingly, Strategic Policy 20 ('Visitor Economy') of East Lindsey's Core Strategy states, *'the Council will support development in the Skegness Foreshore that builds on the holiday attractions. In addition to holiday amusements it will support the following uses A3, food and drink, C1, hotels and hostels, D1, non-residential institutions (d, e and g) and D2, assembly and leisure'*.
- 3.5 This is consistent with the Greater Lincolnshire LEP (GLLEP) Strategic Economic Plan 2014-2030, which identifies tourism as a strategic priority for Greater Lincolnshire and notes *'there is potential to use our natural and cultural heritage to promote Greater Lincolnshire as a great place to live and visit'*.
- 3.6 This led to the establishment of the Love Lincolnshire Wolds Partnership in 2016 between the East and West Lindsey District Councils, the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service, Town Councils and various organisations and businesses in the sector, to help increase the profile of the Wolds and establish it as an up and coming visitor destination.
- 3.7 Another key characteristic of Skegness, and the wider coastal area, is the high number of caravans. The Caravan Communities of the Lincolnshire Coast Report (2011) identified that there were over 200 caravan sites and 25,000 caravans along the East Lindsey coast. It was also found that these caravans were used as a primary residence for much of the year, and this longer-term living on East Lindsey's coastal caravan sites has increased over the last 10-15 years partly in response to the rising standards of static caravans.
- 3.8 Much of this population goes unrecorded, and thereby represents a significant issue as population figures drive funding formulas, particularly for grants. Furthermore, residents of these caravans are not required to pay council tax. Nonetheless, the report does identify that the caravans are important as they underpin the holiday trade.
- 3.9 In terms of visitor accommodation, the GLLEP Hotel Fact File (2018-19) identifies that the majority of hotel stock in Lincolnshire consists of 3 star hotels, of mixed quality, and a growing stock of budget



hotels. The report identifies that in Skegness there are currently seven 3-star hotels (with a total of 273 rooms) and seven 2-star or lower grade hotels (offering a total of 201 rooms). This is the fourth highest number of hotel rooms in Lincolnshire (after Lincoln, Grantham and Grimsby). Although, unlike these other places there is currently no 4-star hotel provision in Skegness. A new Premier Inn was opened on the seafront in April 2019, but this is aimed at the 'budget' market.

**b) Potential Opportunities**

- 3.10 Despite the recent growth in the tourism sector within Skegness, the Skegness Masterplan (December 2018) identifies a need to increase the number of visitors to the Coast outside of the traditional visitor season (November to March) and to extend the visitor season and see more sustainable employment in the visitor economic sector.
- 3.11 As part of the Skegness Masterplan (2018), a stakeholder consultation was held. Some of the key areas identified for improvements within the town included:
- A lack of sense of arrival or direction;
  - No unifying theme of the Foreshore;
  - A need to clean up / restore existing facilities, sites and amenities before new facilities are provided.
- 3.12 In Visit England's 'England's Seaside: What are the opportunities?' Report (2012), it was found that the seaside is seen by the public as a low-cost destination with the main activities identified as:
- A general day out / explore (21%);
  - Visiting friends/ family (13%); and
  - Outdoor leisure activities (11%)
- 3.13 With only 4% of activities involving visitor attractions, there are opportunities to improve and promote such attractions which may encourage enhanced visitor expenditure. There are also opportunities for expanding the visitor offer through events such as themed festivals, open-air concerts and film screenings, and wildlife, conservation and heritage events; particularly those that extend into the evening which would help to encourage longer and overnight stays and further benefit the hospitality sector. A number of these events could also be run throughout the year, thereby extending the tourist season. The Southern Boating Lake area has previously been identified as an area that is currently underused on the foreshore and could provide an opportunity for creating a flexible, outdoor events space.
- 3.14 Increases in summer tourism may be achieved through realignment of flood defences. Such measures may provide environmental, landscape and tourism benefits, although the flood risk impacts of such changes would need to be carefully monitored and assessed.
- 3.15 There is an identified need to diversify the existing tourism sector to provide opportunities for year-round tourism. With regard to increasing year-round visitors, some seaside towns have used new offers to diversify for a year-round audience. A selection of innovative attractions that have recently been developed in other seaside locations across the UK include: British Airways i360 (Brighton): observation tower; Escape Rooms (various); Planetarium (various); Trampoline Park (various); Star Trek – The Exhibition (Blackpool); Dinosaur Isle (Isle of Wight): purpose-built dinosaur museum; and Marina Centre Tropical Pool (Great Yarmouth): leisure hub, pool, play area and sports facilities.
- 3.16 There may be an opportunity to develop a commercial leisure site within the town, such as a larger cinema with bars and restaurants (the existing Tower Cinema has only two screens), although this



would be dependent upon demand and viability. However, part of the reason for operators not locating in Skegness previously was thought to have been due to perceptions of the town, which it may be possible to overcome. It is also unclear whether assessments of town size and potential catchments, which were also cited as reasons why national operators were not looking to locate in Skegness, included the large population of caravan residents, that are excluded from census counts (ELDC Retail and Leisure Study, 2008).

- 3.17 Further 'small scale' or temporary retail or leisure opportunities could be investigated, including those that make use of underutilised public spaces, such as those along the foreshore, or vacant retail units e.g. pop-up bars and shops or 'Boxpark'-type retail units, and an outdoor cinema (as suggested in the Skegness Masterplan Refresh, 2018).
- 3.18 There may also be opportunities for 'green' tourism, including through enhanced promotion of the existing natural assets in the areas surrounding Skegness, such as Gibraltar Point Nature Reserve, the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB and coastal footpaths, that could be used to attract visitors. The Natural England: Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (2015) report states that, *'The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB has an extensive network of public rights of way including the long distance footpath the Viking Way, Sustrans Cycle Route and other promoted trails. Many of the footpaths, bridleways and country lanes appear to be seldom visited and this sense of rural isolation is arguably one of the Wold's biggest appeals, and thus should be protected. Improved wayfaring and linking between the Wolds and the shoreline could capitalise on the area's natural resources'*. As such protecting these areas and creating links, such as footpaths, could help to attract tourists to Skegness.
- 3.19 Proposals for a Lincolnshire Coast Access Trail between Skegness and Mablethorpe (Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007-2012), as well as circular walking routes and horse-riding routes may be another aspect of coastal tourism that could be further exploited.
- 3.20 As well as capitalising on the area's natural assets, the Skegness Masterplan (2018) also identifies potential opportunities for expansion of visitor markets into areas such as wind sports, cycling and coastal heritage.
- 3.21 Subject to feasibility assessments, the development of a leisure centre in the town would assist with tackling the issue of obesity (child and adult) in the area as well as drawing people from rural areas into the town and creating activities for all weather/seasons.
- 3.22 As the above paragraphs highlight, the opportunities for expanding the tourism offer within the town are extensive and varied. It is therefore recommended that opportunities that are promoted are selected in the context of a wider, cohesive strategy for expanding the tourism offer within Skegness with a focus on particular markets, as recommended in the Greater Lincolnshire Destination Management Plan (2013-2020), rather than attempting to develop the sector as a generic whole.
- 3.23 Opportunities for expanding the provision and quality of hotel accommodation (including 4 star and boutique hotels serving good quality food) in the town may also help to increase the visitor economy, particularly during the winter season. The Skegness Masterplan (2018) identifies the Festival Pavilion and Suncastle sites as offering potential for future hotel developments.
- 3.24 It is further recommended that any future place-making or development proposals within the town take account of how these developments will contribute towards enhancing the wider visitor experience. It is hoped that by improving Skegness's tourism industry and increasing the viability and sustainability of the area, this will lead to the retention of more young people, the enhancement of existing businesses, and the encouragement of new businesses through the creation of more jobs and increased visitor numbers.



#### **4.0 ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENABLING DEVELOPMENT**

##### **a) Current context / evidence**

- 4.1 Tourism and agriculture represent the two primary industry and employment sectors for the district, both of which are seasonal sectors. This therefore has led to high levels of seasonal unemployment, which creates issues of low income and poor job prospects.
- 4.2 East Lindsey Council recognises that coastal communities such as Skegness should not be allowed to decline through lack of action. Therefore, reinvigorating and diversifying the economy of the town to improve quality of life, provide opportunities and overcome deprivation is a key priority. To that end, the Council will place significant weight on proposals that support economic growth and the creation of year-round jobs in coastal communities.
- 4.3 Under Core Strategy Strategic Policy 17 ('Coastal East Lindsey'), for example, the Council states that it will give high priority to development that extends and diversifies all-year round employment opportunities, contributes directly to the local economy, infrastructure or extends and diversifies the tourism market.
- 4.4 These policies are in line with the ambitions of the Greater Lincolnshire Coastal Vision (2016) that are to sustain and grow coastal businesses and the economy with the aim of reducing unemployment and deprivation.
- 4.5 Poor strategic transport networks within and around the town have also been identified as presenting a barrier to economic growth, inward investment and commuting (The Future of Seaside Towns Select Committee Report, 2019). In particular, there is a lack of connectivity between Skegness and other towns in Lincolnshire, especially by public transport. This is particularly significant as 33% of households in Skegness do not have access to a car (ONS Census 2011), compared with a figure of 18.3% across East Lindsey District as a whole. Many of the bus services cease operating during the winter months, which provides instability for local residents that permanently reside in the town (The Future of Seaside Towns Select Committee Report, 2019).

##### **b) Potential opportunities**

- 4.6 Whilst attempts to extend the tourist season should remain an objective of the town, this may be more difficult to achieve in practice. Therefore, in order to overcome some the issues associated with seasonal employment in the tourism and visitor economy sector it will also be necessary to consider ways of encouraging greater economic diversification towards other sectors.
- 4.7 The growth in the IT and electronic communication sector, for example, presents an opportunity that could be further expanded for small, 'footloose' (does not have a permanent base) and home-based businesses. There may be opportunities to promote the development of flexible workspaces, such as coworking space that could help offer affordable accommodation to support different types of newly formed, small businesses and that may also have flexibility for other uses, such as adult skills lessons in the evening.
- 4.8 However, East Lindsey's Core Strategy recognises unreliable broadband as a barrier to the growth of this sector, and therefore improvements to this should be seen as a priority. Work is currently being undertaken by Lincolnshire County Council as part of its 'OnLincolnshire' project to expand broadband provision throughout the county. There may be opportunities for the Neighbourhood Plan to support the installation of superfast fibre broadband within any new developments that take place within the town, as standard; particularly employment or housing developments.
- 4.9 Another sector that may present potential opportunities for expansion within the town include the creative industries sector, which if encouraged, may help to expand the tourism season, for example



through arts-led regeneration programmes. It may be possible to capitalise on the Lincolnshire Coastal Destination Business Improvement District (BID), that encompasses Skegness, to support programmes, projects and developments within the town, including environmental, street scene and wayfinding improvements.

- 4.10 Under Core Strategy Strategic Policy 21 ('Coastal Employment'), the Council has assessed the need for additional employment land through its Employment Land Review. This document indicates that the anticipated demand in Skegness over the Plan period can be met through safeguarding the existing employment site on Wainfleet Road (approx. 30ha) and a site on Burgh Road (approx. 9.5ha). Both sites have the benefit of planning permission and access roads have been provided. There may be opportunities for the Neighbourhood Plan to identify additional sites that might be suitable and available for employment land development.
- 4.11 Agriculture is one of East Lindsey's main industry sectors. As such, in the Core Strategy (2018) East Lindsey states, '*Agriculture continues to play a significant role in the economy of the District. Protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land (that of grade 1, 2 and 3a) is an important part of supporting this industry. In selecting sites for development, the preference should be to seek to utilise lower grade land to that of a higher grade*'. The LEP's Strategic Economic Plan identifies the agri-food industry (along with the visitor economy) as one of the four key economic sectors in Greater Lincolnshire.
- 4.12 There may be opportunities to improve linkages and supply chains between the agricultural sector, food and beverage manufacturing, and the tourism/hospitality industry within Skegness.
- 4.13 There may also be opportunities for further farm or agricultural diversification, as has already happened in some areas, including for example plant nurseries, fishing lakes or wind and solar farms. There may also be the opportunity to investigate partnerships between nearby universities, such as Lincoln and Sheffield, which have research interests in agriculture and food security, to establish a research base and provision of fields for use in research trials. Whilst these activities themselves would need to be located outside Skegness town, their establishment would help to encourage population growth / retention amongst economically active and they may be able to locate some facilities (such as offices) within the town itself, as well as helping to diversify the town's economy.
- 4.14 Other potential expansion sectors that have been identified by the LEP include the low carbon sector, and manufacturing and engineering sectors. Whilst expansion of these particular sectors is perhaps less suited for Skegness, there may be potential opportunities for supporting growth of these sectors through the delivery of larger employment sites on the outskirts of the town.
- 4.15 The health and care sector is also identified by the LEP as a potential area growth sector, particularly in light of the ongoing demographic changes occurring across Lincolnshire in particular, as well as across the wider UK, and an associated need for greater employment and skills in the social care sector. The development of vocational skills in this sector, including through apprenticeships and adult training programmes, may be a further opportunity for Skegness.
- 4.16 The diversification of existing employment sectors presents the opportunity to create year-round employment opportunities, address demographic imbalances through the retention and attraction of a larger working age population, and hopefully creating a skilled work force that encourages further inward investment into the area.



## 5.0 SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

### a) Current context / evidence

- 5.1 Closely linked to prospects for economic growth, are the issues of skills, education and employment.
- 5.2 Skegness is currently facing a significant skills shortage, with around 40% of the town's population aged over 16 having no qualifications (ONS Census 2011). This is compared with an average of 9.8% across East Lindsey and 10.7% across Great Britain as a whole.
- 5.3 The Lincolnshire Visitor Economy Skills Report (2012) recognises a 'micro-labour market' on the East Lindsey seaside strip, where skills gaps provide a significant barrier to growth for individual businesses and the wider economy. This is particularly due to the lack of younger, student populations, which provide a valuable source of part-time, skilled, casual labour in other locations throughout Lincolnshire that are more accessible. Coastal businesses report particular challenges in recruiting and retaining trained chefs and professional cooks, and also often report poor attitudes towards work amongst young people which are particularly critical in customer-facing roles. There is a need for enhanced 'work-readiness' amongst young people, rather than a shortage of applicants.
- 5.4 There are also issues in recruitment within general management or higher specialist professional roles in Lincolnshire's coastal communities (Lincolnshire Visitor Economy Skills Report, 2012). There is also an issue of perception, with employment in the tourism sector often seen as offering a short term 'job' rather than a long term 'career'.
- 5.5 The population of Skegness has grown slowly over the past 20 years and the town has experienced a high outward migration of young adults and high inward migration of those in the 50 to 80 year age group. Therefore, the proportion of the population that is economically active is below the national average, with 59.5% of people in Skegness aged between 16 and 64 compared with 64.8% across England as a whole (ONS Census 2011). According to projections in the East Lindsey Baseline Economic Assessment, over 65s are set to increase in number, and 16-64-year olds are expected to decline.
- 5.6 There are low numbers of full-time employees in Skegness compared to regional and national figures, and a high number of residents classed as non-economically active (39.24%). However, there is also higher than national average self-employment in the town. As noted previously, there is a strong reliance on seasonal employment in the tourism industry.
- 5.7 Average wages for full-time workers in East Lindsey have improved and now exceed Lincolnshire levels. However, part-time workers in East Lindsey earn on average £20 a week less than the national average. Given the high number of part-time workers in East Lindsey, this has implications for household incomes in the District.
- 5.8 There is a notable lack of higher or further education provision in the town and in the wider East Lindsey District. In terms of higher education provision and skills development in the town these are limited to:
- The Skegness TEC, which is a college with a focus on Training, Education and Careers (TEC). It offers courses electrics, plumbing, health and social care, hair and beauty; and
  - The Grimsby Institute, which has a community learning centre in Skegness, based at the Skegness TEC, which provides training in English, maths and IT for learners aged 14 and over and those providing home-schooling.
- 5.9 The DCLG report, England's Seaside Towns: A Benchmarking Study (November 2008) identifies that low-grade manual jobs account for 50% of Skegness's resident employment (in other seaside towns the average figure is 40%), and as previously mentioned, there are skills shortages within the resident



population. This lack of skilled workers can deter inward investment.

- 5.10 The area also experiences high levels of deprivation, with East Lindsey in the top 25% of the most deprived districts in the country, with severe pockets of deprivation and high levels of unemployment in Skegness.
- 5.11 This issue is further exacerbated through the demographic imbalance; East Lindsey's Core Strategy (2018) identifies that the district has a high inward migration of elderly and economically inactive people, and this imbalance is further exacerbated through the high outward migration of young adults.
- 5.12 A government Select Committee report, 'The Future of Seaside Towns' published in April 2019, raised concerns about the effectiveness or appropriateness of national skills initiatives for seaside towns. Apprenticeship schemes, for example, are designed to be run over 12 months, and therefore face difficulties being implemented by coastal businesses that are only able to offer seasonal work.
- 5.13 This review also identified that in Skegness, in particular, there is a lack of easily accessible and flexible further education opportunities for training in the hospitality sector (with the nearest FE institutions being in Lincoln, 42 miles away, or Boston, 19 miles away). Therefore, local employers, such as Butlins, find it difficult to recruit and retain local, skilled employees.

**b) Potential opportunities**

- 5.14 As such, it appears that there are a number of key issues with industry and employment in the area, namely:
- Demographic imbalance with high inward migration of elderly people (no longer in the economically active age category) and outward migration of young adults leaving a small working population;
  - Lack of skilled workforce deterring investment;
  - The main industries in Skegness are tourism and agriculture, both of which are seasonal.
- 5.15 There are a number of potential ways to tackle these issues, but the enhancement of skills is a key opportunity. However, it is important that this is undertaken in conjunction and with input from local employers, to ensure that the skills being developed are those most required by the local employment sector, including practical, on the job training to ensure increased 'work-readiness'.
- 5.16 It may be possible to investigate the potential for delivering additional further education or vocational skills development opportunities in Skegness town centre, particularly those offering training in the hospitality or tourism sector. This could be undertaken in partnership with an existing FE institution (such as the University of Lincoln, the Grimsby Institute or Lincoln College) or through the development of a new University Technical College (UTC).
- 5.17 Although perhaps not something that can be dealt with directly through a Neighbourhood Plan, the Town Council may wish to investigate opportunities for skills development in older populations (e.g. over-25s) to encourage retraining and the take-up of apprenticeships amongst local businesses.
- 5.18 As well as utilising the town's tourism and visitor economy sector as a basis for encouraging new skills development and training opportunities, there may also be the potential for developing further educational opportunities linked to the agricultural sector, which is another major employment sector within the wider Lincolnshire area. Establishing links to higher education institutions in the north of England that undertake research into agronomy and soil science, agricultural practices and crop trials (such as the University of Sheffield), may also provide an additional opportunity for increasing investment into the area.



## **6.0 GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE LEP**

6.1 A meeting was held with James Baty (Policy and Research Manager) at the Greater Lincolnshire LEP on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

6.2 The purpose of the meeting was to acquire an update from the LEP on their ongoing and forthcoming programmes, strategies and objectives, and to see where there might be any crossover or opportunities that could be drawn out through the Skegness Neighbourhood Plan.

6.3 The discussion centred around the key sectors that form the basis of this report. The main outcomes of the discussion are summarised below.

### **a) Retail**

6.4 East Lindsey District Council is currently collating information to feed into a bid for a share of the government's £3.6bn Towns Fund, for which Skegness and Mablethorpe have been shortlisted as potential candidates. Expressions of interest are due by mid-December.

6.5 If a subsequent bid is successful, there may be opportunities for this funding to contribute towards delivering some of the objectives contained within the Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Council may wish to liaise with ELDC to understand any opportunities for informing the bidding process.

### **b) Tourism and Visitor Economy**

6.6 Research undertaken by the LEP, and discussions the LEP has held with others experienced in the tourism sector across the wider UK, has revealed that there is no 'quick fix' solution to trying to extend the tourist season outside the summer months, and the winter break is often desired by many of those that work in the sector. Instead, the more feasible option may be to consider how employment sectors may be diversified in the long-term.

6.7 In considering ways of diversifying the tourism offer it might be useful to consider what has been successfully undertaken elsewhere in the UK, for example in Margate. However, the types of diversification that are likely to be feasible in Skegness will be different given the different demographic make-up of the town.

6.8 The LEP has prepared a range of evidence assessing the contribution of and opportunities for tourism and the visitor economy, which is one of the key economic sectors in Greater Lincolnshire. This evidence is reviewed in section 3a of this report.

6.9 A refresh of the Lincolnshire Visitor Economy Review (originally published in 2014) is also due to be prepared by the LEP in the near future. The outcomes of this review may be fed into any future review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.10 In June 2019, the government announced a Tourism Sector Deal, which would enhance performance within the industry in terms of productivity, jobs growth, skills and places. In order to enhance places, the government introduced the concept of 'Tourism Zones', which would be established to help support areas with a dominant tourism-based economy. A Tourism Zone Bid for Greater Lincolnshire is currently being prepared by the LEP, although the timescales for this have not yet been defined.

### **c) Economic Diversification, Infrastructure and Enabling Development**

6.11 The Skegness Western Gateway site (Skegness Countryside Business Park site) received LEP funding in order to unlock development of this brownfield site, but it is currently facing some issues, so it is unclear when this will be fully delivered (construction was due to commence early 2020, with Phase 1 funding applied for by LCC).

6.12 LEP funding could be an option for Skegness Town Council to deliver other brownfield sites within



the town, although it should be noted that the bidding process is relatively resource intensive, so undertaking this process jointly with the support of ELDC or LCC may be of benefit, should the Town Council wish to pursue these sources of funding in the future. The next call for bids for LEP funding has yet to be announced.

- 6.13 The 'Go Skegness' project, led by investment from the GLLEP, has recently concluded. The aim of this project was to undertake highway improvements and encourage and enable greater use of sustainable travel modes in Skegness. The outcomes and impacts of this project are still to be fully assessed.
- 6.14 The majority of infrastructure projects in Greater Lincolnshire are being led through County Council.
- 6.15 The previous Conservative Manifesto for Coastal Lincolnshire considered opportunities to enhance connectivity from the A1, including A51a junction improvements.
- 6.16 Skegness Western Relief Road (referenced in the County Council's Lincolnshire Local Plan Tool, 2015) is understood to no longer be considered a viable project by LCC.
- 6.17 The Lincolnshire Broadband Programme ('OnLincolnshire') is currently ongoing and is being led by LCC. The programme identified that areas of Skegness, in particular, are currently not well-served (although many of these areas were caravan sites).
- 6.18 The GLLEP Strategic Infrastructure Plan is currently being refreshed and should be completed in early 2020.

#### **d) Skills and Employment**

- 6.19 Evidence gathered by the LEP identifies that even in the more traditional employment sectors, there is a need for enhanced skills development amongst existing residents, particularly as the population continues to age and the size of the working population shrinks. The LEP is currently overseeing a number of skills development programmes across the County with the aim of delivering the following two main skills priorities:
  - To inspire and support young people to stay and work in the area; and
  - To train and support people who are already working, or seeking jobs, so that they gain the skills needed to take up future job vacancies.
- 6.20 In terms of youth retention, evidence gathered by the LEP identifies that retaining young people is not just about creating jobs, it is about creating a quality of life and a place that young people aspire to live in – this is particularly true in the case of Skegness where accessibility and travel to other larger service centres (e.g. for shopping/leisure) is somewhat constrained.
- 6.21 In terms of skills development, there may be opportunities to build-on or expand existing provision offered through the Skegness TEC, or through new partnerships with other higher education providers in the County, such as the University of Lincoln, Lincoln College or the Grimsby Institute.
- 6.22 It is worth bearing these priorities in mind when developing policies within the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### **e) Other Relevant Strategies**

- 6.23 An Industrial Strategy is currently being prepared by the LEP. A draft of this strategy has already been agreed internally by the LEP and Greater Lincolnshire Local Authorities, although as this strategy is being 'coproduced' and published by central government, its final adoption has been delayed due to purdah and the current timescales for publication are unknown.
- 6.24 A Planning for Growth Strategy is currently being prepared by Local Planning Authorities across the GLLEP area and the County Council. This will be a non-statutory spatial framework, focusing on 'non-

economic' strategic issues, such as housing delivery.

- 6.25 The LEP is currently reviewing whether an update or full review of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) is required. The latest version of the SEP was published in 2016.
- 6.26 Progress on these strategies should be monitored in order to identify any potential opportunities or synergies that might be achieved through future revisions of the Skegness Neighbourhood Plan.



 0845 568 5555  
 [enquiries@crp.uk.com](mailto:enquiries@crp.uk.com)  
 [www.crp.uk.com](http://www.crp.uk.com)