

Chesterfield **Growth Strategy** 2026-2030



CHESTERFIELD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



This Growth Strategy sets out a clear and confident vision for the ongoing economic regeneration of our borough, building on strong momentum and a long-standing commitment to growth, jobs and prosperity for local people

Chesterfield Growth Strategy

2026-2030

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Chesterfield already has a lot going for it as a great place to live and a great place to do business

1 Foreword



Councillor **Tricia Gilby**

This Growth Strategy (2026–2030) sets out a clear and confident vision for the ongoing economic regeneration of our borough, building on strong momentum and a long-standing commitment to growth, jobs and prosperity for local people.

This ambition is rooted in the need to respond to the loss of the heavy industries that once formed the backbone of our economy and our communities. Their decline has left a legacy of lower growth and higher levels deprivation – challenges we are already meeting head on and remain determined to overcome.

We have always been clear about the scale of this challenge and have, over many years, prioritised investment to build the solid foundations which can support future economic growth.

A strong example of this is the development of our ‘Enterprise Chesterfield’ network of innovation and enterprise centres, which have acted as a seed-bed for the growth of new knowledge-based businesses. Many of these businesses have gone on to successfully expand out of the centres and establish themselves in larger premises elsewhere in the borough, creating new jobs in the process and contributing to our economic renewal.

Our track record in delivery is evident in the transformation of Chesterfield and Staveley town centres, where high quality public realm improvements and new landmarks such as the Pavilion building and a redeveloped Stephenson Memorial Hall (relaunched as ‘1435’) will help to draw even more people back into our centres.

Chesterfield is already recognised as a great place to live, and to do business – yet there is still more potential to unlock. Realising that potential means building on our role as North Derbyshire’s primary employment and service centre – capitalising on our mainline rail connectivity, our prime location on the edge of the Peak District, and the scale of employment and housing opportunity in the Staveley area.

We must continue to be bold in positioning Chesterfield not only as a driver of growth at the local level, but as a significant contributor to the wider regional economy.

Crucially, we are deeply committed to making sure that all of our residents share in the benefits of growth. No community should be left behind. Working with our partners we must collectively address the challenge of high youth unemployment and strive to make Chesterfield a place of opportunity for all young people, with fulfilling well-paid jobs, a diverse mix of housing and an affordable high quality standard of living.

Finally, it’s important to acknowledge that this strategy is being driven forward against the backdrop of the Government’s planned reorganisation of local council structures in Derbyshire.

Whatever the future holds, Chesterfield’s ambition and potential will continue to be a powerful driving force for our county and our region. We will carry that confidence and momentum into the next chapter.

Tricia Gilby

**Council Leader
Cabinet Member for Economic Growth**



We must continue to be bold in positioning Chesterfield not only as a driver of growth at the local level, but as a significant contributor to the wider regional economy

2 Introduction

This Growth Strategy sets out a clear framework for action to deliver the Council's ambition for Chesterfield to be a thriving, resilient and forward looking borough. It covers the period to 2030, providing continuity and direction during a time of significant change. Although the proposed timetable for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) would see the current local authority structure in Derby and Derbyshire end on 31 March 2028, maintaining a strategic horizon beyond the transition period is essential. The scale and momentum of regeneration activity across the borough requires a stable, long term approach.

The wider economic context remains challenging. Nationally, the UK continues to experience low growth and uncertainty linked to global events affecting security, trade and energy markets. Locally, Chesterfield faces long standing structural issues, including the continued rebuilding of the economic base following the decline of heavy industry, and the need to reimagine town centres in response to falling footfall and rising vacancy rates. Delivering future growth in a way that supports the borough's carbon neutral ambitions will also require shifts in business models, investment choices and the design of the built environment.

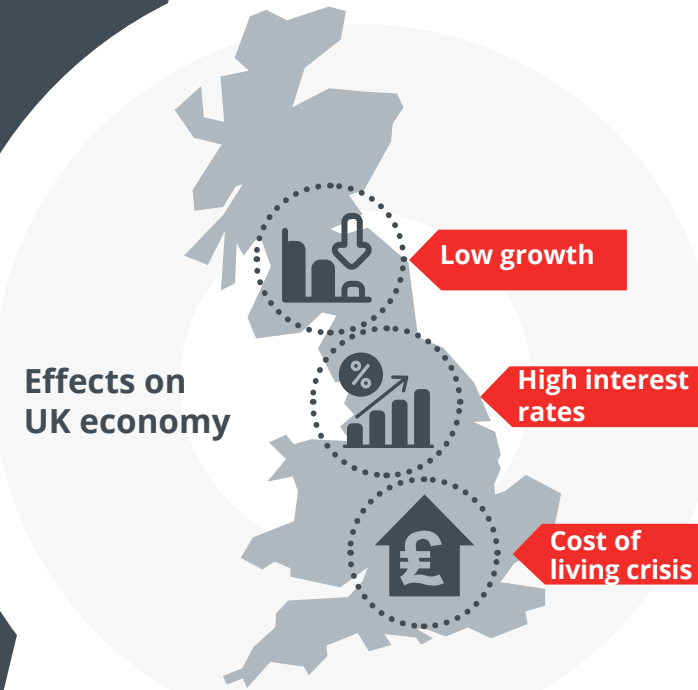
These local challenges are significant, but can be overcome. The Council is continuing to make major investments in economic infrastructure to further diversify the business base and support new job creation. In Chesterfield town centre, the delivery of the Revitalising the Heart of Chesterfield project, including the redevelopment of Stephenson Memorial Hall as a flag-ship cultural venue, will attract more footfall and spend back into the centre. In the east of the borough, the new DRIIve rail innovation and training centre will act as a catalyst to the further development of the rail sector, whilst the 'Staveley 21' scheme has seen major investment in Staveley town centre, including the construction of the Pavilion building (accommodating the library and new commercial space).

The East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) clearly recognises the economic potential of Chesterfield borough and the contribution it can make to driving growth in the northern part of the East Midlands region. The Council is supporting EMMCA to put in place a Chesterfield and Staveley Regeneration and Investment Framework that will guide future development activity. Key sites in the Staveley area have already been designated within the East Midlands Investment Zone (EMIZ), offering financial incentives to attract new investment in advanced manufacturing and green industries.

In pursuing the growth objectives contained in this strategy, the Council will be guided by three over-arching principles: higher-value growth, inclusive growth and sustainable growth. Our ambition is not only to create more jobs, but more skilled, well-paid jobs. Equally, we are committed to pursuing an inclusive approach to growth, so that all our residents are in a position to access meaningful employment and benefit from future job opportunities. With a target of becoming a sustainable borough by 2050, we will pursue growth that supports environmental responsibility and long term resilience.

3 Chesterfield's economy

A detailed assessment of Chesterfield's economy has been completed to inform the development of the Growth Strategy. A key points summary is set out on these pages

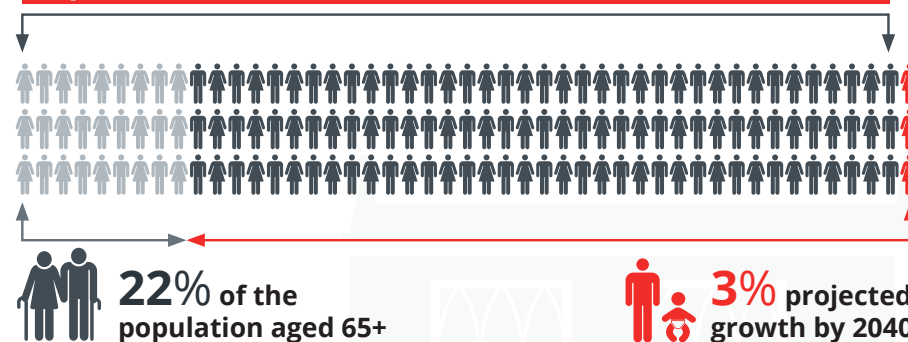


National context

Local economic prospects are closely influenced by the performance of the national economy. Recent data shows that the UK is currently experiencing a period of very low growth, with GDP increasing by just 0.1% in both Q3 and Q4 of 2025. The outlook remains challenging, shaped by a high cost of living, elevated interest rates and continued global uncertainty affecting trade and energy markets. According to the latest Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecast, GDP is expected to grow by 1.1% in 2026, before averaging around 1.6% a year through to 2030.

104,600

Population (2025)



Population profile

Chesterfield has an older demographic profile than the national average, with 22% of residents aged 65 and over compared with 19% across England. Population growth has consistently lagged the growth seen at regional and national scales (reflecting the economic difficulties that the area has faced). Population projections suggest the national population will grow by 6% in the 10 year period 2024-34, with Chesterfield estimated to see a lower rate of growth of 3% (but ahead of the previous 10 year growth rate of 1.7%).

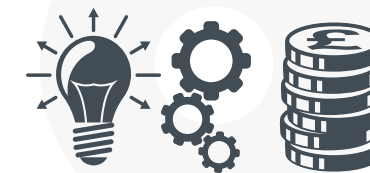
GVA £3,074 million

Chesterfield's economy (2023)



4,115

Enterprises in Chesterfield



Business Base

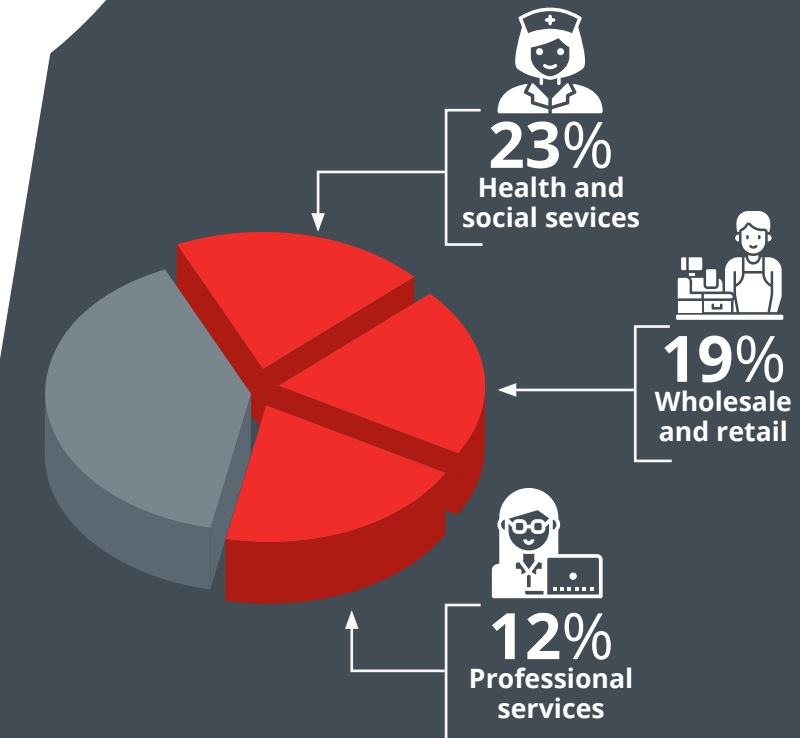
In 2025 there were 4,115 businesses operating in Chesterfield. Over the last 10 years the business base has increased by 3%. Whilst positive, this is below the rate seen at regional (8%) and national (9%) levels. The largest absolute growth has been seen in construction, hospitality and business administration, whilst the retail and wholesale sectors saw a decline in business numbers over the ten year period.

Local economic performance

In 2023, Chesterfield's economy generated GVA of £3,074m, equating to £59,000 per worker, below the national average of £75,000 per worker. This reflects the particular mix of business sectors in the borough which show a bias towards lower value-added activities.

52,700

Employee jobs in Chesterfield (2024)

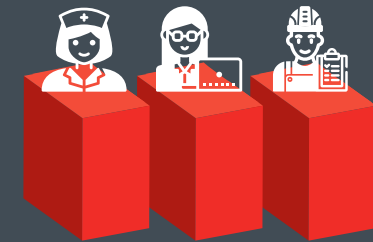


Employment base

In 2024, it is estimated there were 52,700 people employed in Chesterfield (plus approximately 6,000 residents classified as self-employed). Chesterfield has high levels of employment in health & social services (23% compared to 14% nationally) and the wholesale and retail sector (19% compared to 14% nationally), but a lower share of jobs in higher-value private sector services (12% v 19%).

1300

1300 extra jobs by 2035



Projected growth in health and social services, professional services and logistics

2.5%
Growth in employment base

Employment forecast

Chesterfield's employment base is forecast to grow by 2.5% (1,300 jobs) up to 2035, in line with the regional rate, but below the national average of 4.3%. The largest number of jobs are expected to be created in the health & social care sector, followed by transport & storage and professional services. The manufacturing, retail and finance sectors are forecast to see a fall in employment by 2035.



32.5%
Lower skilled occupations



38.5%
'Knowledge workers'

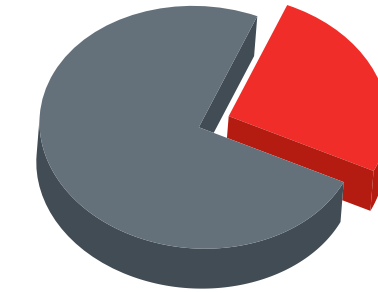
Workforce

The Census 2021 highlights that Chesterfield has fewer 'knowledge workers' (managers, professionals, associate professionals) than the national average (38.5% compared to 46.5%), although the share of knowledge workers has increased by over 4% points since the previous census in 2011. Conversely, Chesterfield has a greater proportion of lower skilled occupations (caring, leisure, sales, elementary occupations) than the national average (32.5% compared to 27.3%) and this is only slightly down on the 2011 figure (32.7%).



26.8%

People qualified at level 4 or above (2021)

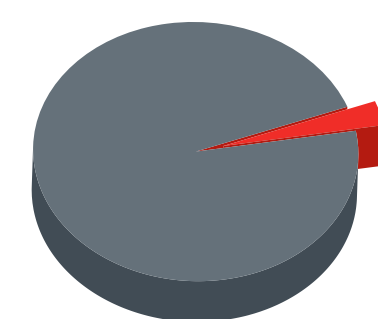


Qualifications

Chesterfield has a lower skills profile (Census 2021) than the national average, with fewer people qualified at Level 4 or above (26.8% compared to 33.9%) and more people with no qualifications (20.2% compared to 18.1%). However, over the last 10 years there has been a notable improvement in the proportion of Chesterfield residents with a Level 3 or Level 4+ qualification, with both increasing by almost 6% points.

3.3%

Unemployed in Chesterfield (2022)

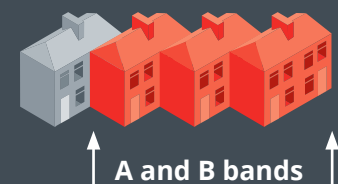


Unemployment

Chesterfield's claimant count unemployment rate was 3.3% (2,150 claimants) in February 2026, below the national average of 3.9%. Chesterfield's unemployment rate has been consistently below the national average since mid-2024. However, Chesterfield continues to have a high rate of youth (18-24) unemployment which currently stands at 8.0% (540 claimants) compared to 5.7% nationally and is one of the highest rates in the East Midlands.



80th
most deprived
district in the
country out of 296



75%
of properties
in council tax
bands A and B



25%
House prices 30%
below national
average



345
new homes
delivered in
2024/25

Deprivation

The Indices of Deprivation (2025) ranks Chesterfield as the 80th most deprived district in England (out of 296 districts). Chesterfield faces particular challenges with the health & disability and employment aspects of deprivation where it is ranked 12th and 44th most deprived district respectively. Chesterfield has 17 (out of 69) local neighbourhoods (LSOAs) ranked in the most deprived 20% nationally, including 8 that are within the most deprived 10%.

Housing market

Chesterfield's housing supply is weighted towards lower and middle market housing with around three-quarters of properties in council tax bands A and B. The average house price in January 2026 was £200,000—around 25% below the national average of £268,000. Housing in Chesterfield is more affordable (5.2 times median earnings) than both the regional (7.0) and national averages (7.6), and is also one of the most affordable districts in Derbyshire. Local housing affordability has improved from a post-Covid highpoint of 6.7 in 2021 to 5.2 in 2025. In 2024/25, 345 net new dwellings were completed, exceeding the annual local build target of 240 new homes a year. However, following national changes to the 'standard method' for assessing housing need, the most recent Local Housing Needs Assessment (2025) now sets a revised target for Chesterfield of 500 new homes a year. Housing delivery at this scale is forecast to lead to a significant increase in the local population, particularly driven by the in-migration of working age people, and this is likely to lead to increased demand for local employment in future years.



Chesterfield town centre

Chesterfield is the largest town in Derbyshire and serves as the main sub-regional centre for the north of the county, whilst Staveley acts as a local service centre for communities in the east of the borough. Chesterfield town centre is classified by CACI as being in the second highest tier of retail destinations (Major Centres), but has a greater proportion of value focused retailers. Chesterfield's core retail catchment is broadly defined by the postcodes S40 to S45, which typically account for 60%-65% of all visits to the town centre. In common with other retail destinations, our town centres face significant structural challenges, including the continued growth of on-line shopping, which has contributed to declining footfall and a steady rise in high street vacancies.



4.2million
Visitors to Chesterfield (2024)

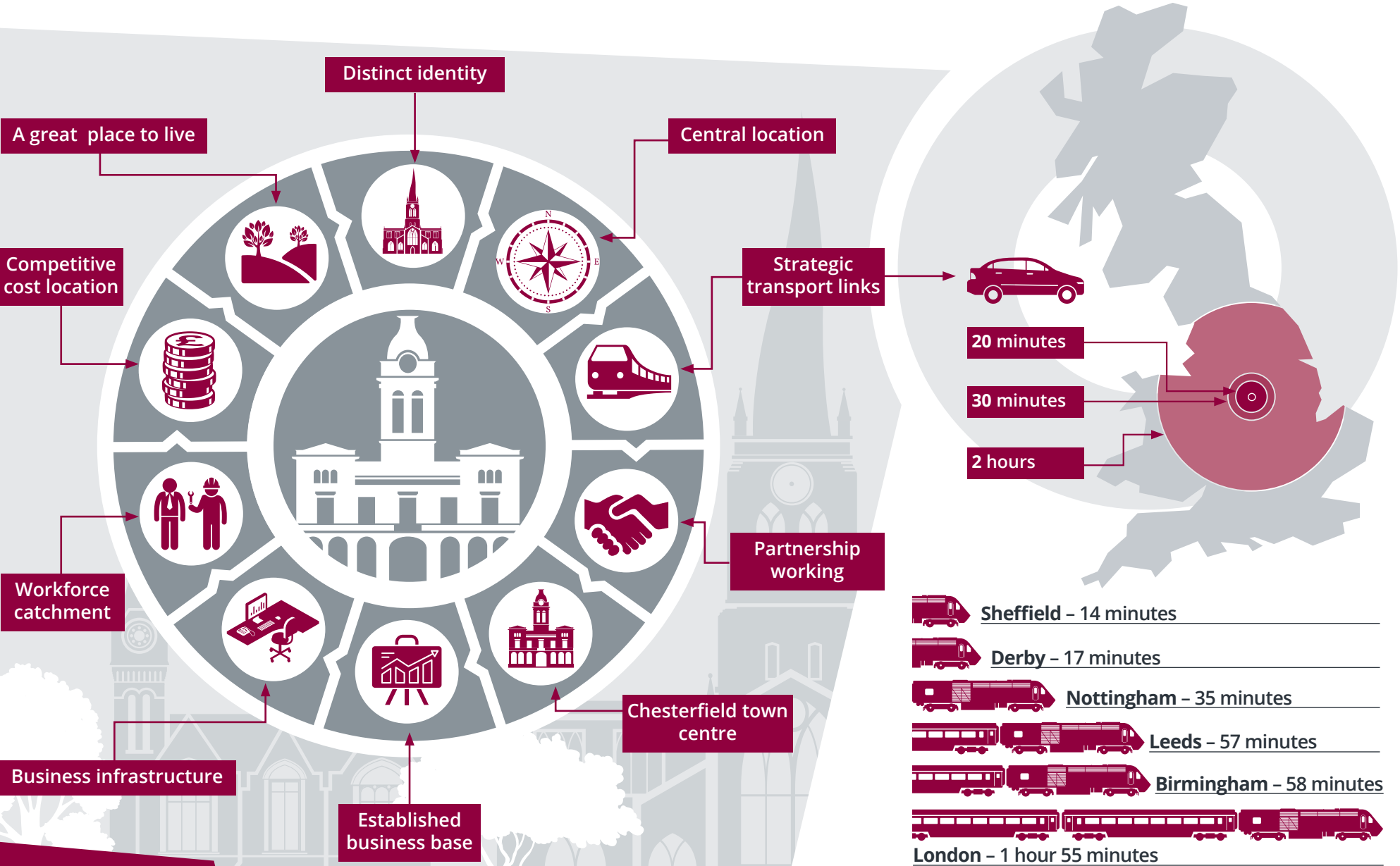
Visitor economy

In 2024, there were 4.2m visitors to Chesterfield borough. Chesterfield is primarily a day visit destination, accounting for 92% of all visitors, with the balance made up of people staying over-night. Total annual visitor spend of £220m directly supported almost 2,000 jobs, plus a further 500 indirect jobs in local supply chains.

£220million
Total annual visitor spend (2024)



4 Chesterfield's competitive advantage



Chesterfield offers a strong and competitive environment for business growth.

Central location and accessibility

Central location and accessibility – Chesterfield's position at the heart of the country and excellent accessibility is consistently identified as a key advantage by businesses. Chesterfield is well connected to the motorway and mainline railway, with direct access to London in under two hours.

Established business base

Established business base - with more than 4,000 businesses and 58,000 people working in the borough, Chesterfield is a significant economic centre. Firms benefit from co-location within a critical mass of companies, both as customers and suppliers, and from access to well developed business support services.

Business infrastructure

High quality business infrastructure – Chesterfield provides industrial, commercial and office premises to support new starts and growing businesses. This includes a network of innovation and enterprise centres and business incentives to attract new investment to the EMIZ sites.

Workforce catchment

Strong workforce catchment – approximately 500,000 people live within a 30 minute drive of Chesterfield providing a sizeable labour supply for businesses. Proximity to Sheffield, Derby and Nottingham universities provides access to a large graduate talent pool.

Competitive cost location

Competitive cost location – Chesterfield is a cost effective location with average wages, commercial rents and housing costs below the national average. Its location also helps to reduce logistic and travel costs.

Chesterfield town centre

A vibrant and attractive town centre – Chesterfield provides a range of retail, service, cultural and leisure activities. It has an attractive, pedestrian friendly town centre, featuring a historic market place and the iconic Crooked Spire church.

Business engagement

Strong business engagement – through the Destination Chesterfield partnership, the area benefits from effective collaboration between the public sector and local businesses, helping to shape priorities and support growth.

A great place to live and work

A great place to live and work - as a contemporary market town located on the edge of the Peak District, Chesterfield offers an excellent quality of life. The town has been ranked as the happiest place to live in the East twice by Rightmove's 'Happy at Home' survey.


500,000
People live within
a 30 minute drive
time of Chesterfield


**Cost effective
location**


4000
Businesses in
Chesterfield


**Industrial, office,
commercial
premises**


58,000
Workers in
Chesterfield


**Happiest Place to
Live 2024 and 2025**


Innovation
Growing network
of innovation and
enterprise centres


**Attractive,
pedestrian
friendly town
centre**

5 Challenges and opportunities

Challenges:

- A period of slow national economic growth is creating more difficult conditions for local economic expansion and investment.
- Business and employment growth in Chesterfield continues to lag regional and national trends, reflecting the long term impacts of industrial restructuring and the need to diversify the economic base.
- Shifts in consumer and retailer behaviour, including the growth of online shopping, are reducing footfall in town centres, increasing vacancy rates and placing pressure on long term town centre viability.
- Low market values and high construction costs are affecting development viability, slowing the pace of new schemes. The borough also has a limited supply of employment land that is ready for immediate development.
- Chesterfield is not yet strongly perceived as a visitor destination, and the current offer lacks the critical mass needed to encourage longer stays and higher visitor spend.
- The borough has a weaker occupational and skills profile, with fewer knowledge intensive roles and a higher proportion of lower skilled occupations than the national average.
- Youth unemployment (18–24) remains among the highest in the East Midlands, indicating persistent barriers to labour market entry for young people.
- A significant level of health and disability related deprivation in the borough, as well as several neighbourhoods which are ranked among the most deprived 10% nationally on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

This section provides a summary of the challenges which need to be addressed, and the opportunities that can be built on, in order to secure future growth in Chesterfield.



Opportunities:

- Position Chesterfield as a key growth driver within the East Midlands economy, ensuring the borough's strengths, assets and investment priorities are fully recognised within regional strategies and funding programmes.
- Enhance the resilience and vitality of our town centres, increasing footfall by diversifying uses and working proactively with partners, landlords and investors to bring vacant premises back into productive use.
- Unlock the growth potential of the wider Chesterfield Station area, creating a sustainable live-work neighbourhood and a high quality transport gateway that strengthens the borough's role within North Derbyshire and the wider region.
- Accelerate the comprehensive regeneration of the Staveley Growth Corridor, enabling the infrastructure to support significant residential development and new employment as part of the East Midlands Investment Zone.
- Grow the visitor economy by strengthening Chesterfield's role as a destination in its own right and as a base for exploring the Peak District and wider Derbyshire, increasing both day and staying visits.
- Promote Chesterfield's accessibility, affordability and quality of life to attract entrepreneurs, skilled workers and creatives seeking a well connected and cost effective location.
- Maximise the local economic benefits of major developments through local labour agreements, targeted skills programmes and the promotion of supply chain opportunities for local businesses.

6 Strategic context

National alignment

The Growth Strategy aligns with the Government's Plan for Change (2024), notably the need to 'kickstart economic growth' to help raise living standards in every part of the UK and to 'break down barriers to opportunity' by ensuring that young people can follow a skills pathway that is right for them. The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy (2025) seeks to support the growth of priority sectors including advanced manufacturing and, more generally, strengthen local business environments across the UK.

Regional alignment

The Growth Strategy shows strong alignment with EMCCA's Inclusive Growth Framework, with its focus on building a thriving, green and inclusive economy that will empower residents to shape their places and widen opportunity regardless of postcode. The East Midlands Growth Plan (2025-35) seeks to translate the ambitions of the framework into a set of priorities and actions for the first ten years. The Growth Plan is based on a three pillar strategy of investing in the 'enablers of growth', leveraging 'high impact sectors' and taking a 'place based approach' to growth. The place based approach to growth is set out in more detail in the East Midlands Vision for Growth spatial plan, which defines the regional geography in terms of seven emerging Growth Strategy Areas, with Chesterfield included as part of the 'Canal Corridor'. The Canal Corridor is given prominence alongside the 'Trent Arc' and 'Supercluster' on the basis that these areas offer the most investment-ready opportunities for growth. Specifically, Chesterfield borough contains three of the 14 growth opportunities which are identified as being in the first wave of place based investments in the EMCCA area:

CC2 Markham Vale Enterprise Zone

CC3 Chesterfield Town Regeneration

CC4 Hartington-Staveley (Investment Zone).

The objectives and actions set out in this Growth Strategy are aligned with, and will support the delivery of, strategic plans and initiatives operating at the national, regional and local scales



Local alignment

At the local level, the Growth Strategy directly supports the Council Plan (2023-28), which prioritises making Chesterfield a thriving borough, improving quality of life and building a more resilient council. The Growth Strategy provides the strategic framework for activities that will drive economic growth, support housing delivery, improve public places and address economic inequality. It also aligns with the Council's Climate Change Strategy (2023-30), reflecting a commitment to promoting sustainable economic growth and supporting the transition to a low carbon economy.

The Chesterfield Borough Local Plan (adopted 2020) provides the spatial planning framework for residential and commercial development. It makes provision for 4,080 additional homes by 2035 and allocates 50 hectares of land for new employment uses. The Local Plan supports proposals that strengthen the roles of Chesterfield and Staveley town centres and encourages sustainable tourism development.

The Council has commenced preparation of a new Local Plan (expected to be adopted by May 2028). The new plan will need to allocate land to respond to a significantly increased housing target of approximately 500 new dwellings a year. This level of housing growth is expected to be accompanied by an above trend increase in population and therefore an increase in the economically active population. Future housing provision will also be shaped by a requirement that EMCCA prepare a 25 year Spatial Development Strategy covering housing, infrastructure and land use across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

7 The council's ambition for growth

Our ambition

The Council's ambition is not only to make Chesterfield a thriving borough, but also to realise its full potential as a driver of growth in the context of the East Midlands' economy. Chesterfield functions as the primary employment and service centre for North Derbyshire, and can further build on this role by making the most of key assets such as its mainline rail connectivity and bringing forward large-scale development sites in the Staveley area. In doing so, Chesterfield can act as a counter-balance to the weight of economic activity (and opportunity) that is located along the Derby-Nottingham axis in the south of the region (the Trent Arc), helping to secure EMCCA's objective of an inclusive approach to growth that benefits all parts of the East Midlands. Given its locational advantages, Chesterfield is also ideally positioned to host a future North Derbyshire Authority, should this be the outcome of the LGR process.

Over many years the Council has made major investments in infrastructure and place making to rebuild the business base and support new job creation. This has included the development of new industrial sites and the large-scale construction of business premises. The Council has acted as a catalyst to the growth of new knowledge-based activities through the development of its Enterprise Chesterfield network and the provision of larger scale office accommodation such as One Waterside Place. In Chesterfield town centre recent investments include Northern Gateway, the Revitalising the Heart of Chesterfield scheme and the redevelopment of Stephenson Memorial Hall. In the east of the borough, Town Deal funding has been utilised to construct the DRIIVe rail innovation centre in Barrow Hill and the Pavilion building in Staveley town centre, alongside enhanced public realm in the market place and on the high street. Delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Programme over the period 2022-26 has supported a wide range of community, place, business and skills related projects across the borough.

Our long term commitment

The Council's long term commitment to economic regeneration is delivering tangible results, with real progress evident across several headline indicators:

- The number of jobs in the borough has increased by 2,750 (+6%) since 2015.
- There are 120 more businesses operating in the borough (2015-25).
- The number of Chesterfield residents with a level 4 or above qualification has increased by 6% points, whilst the proportion with no qualifications has decreased by 7% points (Census 2011-21).
- Household disposable incomes have increased from 86% to 94% of the regional average (2013-23).
- The median weekly wage for jobs based in Chesterfield has been above the regional average in 2024 and 2025 (£724 v £704).
- Chesterfield's unemployment rate has been consistently below the national average since mid-2024.
- Anecdotal evidence of improving quality of life, with Chesterfield ranked as the happiest place to live in the East Midlands (2024 and 2025) on Rightmove's 'Happy at Home' index.

In addition:

- Approximately £70m of regeneration funding secured via the delivery of the Revitalising the Heart of Chesterfield, Staveley Town Deal, UKSPF and Pride in Place programmes.
- Over the last 3 years our commercial property advice service has dealt with 1,800 enquiries for business premises.
- 600 business interventions and almost 400 people receiving skills related support from the UKSPF programme.
- The Council's commercial property portfolio currently supports an estimated 2,500 jobs in over 550 units.

Over many years, we have prioritised significant resources in pursuit of our aim of making Chesterfield a thriving borough. This long term commitment is starting to yield results, with real progress seen in a number of headline economic performance measures. Whilst we clearly recognise our interventions are only one part of a bigger picture, it is reasonable to state that the services we provide and the schemes we have delivered, have made a positive contribution to performance.



2750
Increase in jobs since 2015

The number of jobs in the borough has increased from 49,750 to 52,500



120
More businesses

There are 120 more businesses operating in the borough (2015 - 25)



6%
Points increase
in residents with a level 4 or above qualification



2500
Jobs supported

The Council's commercial property portfolio currently supports an estimated 2,500 jobs in over 550 units.



£70m
Regeneration funding
has been secured for projects in the borough.



Chesterfield ranked as the happiest place to live in the East Midlands (2024 and 2025) on Rightmove's 'Happy at Home' index.



£724
Increase in median wages
The median weekly wage for jobs in Chesterfield has been above the regional average



600
Businesses supported
and 400 people receiving skills related support from the UKSPF programme



1800
Business enquiries
Over the last 3 years our commercial property advice service has dealt with 1,800 enquiries

Fully focused

Despite this progress some key challenges remain, notably: slower rates of business and employment growth than regional and national averages; fewer businesses and jobs in higher-value sectors; the increasing number of vacant premises in our town centres; a high level of youth unemployment; and persistent deprivation in some neighbourhoods.

In response to these on-going challenges the Council will remain fully focused on its core ambitions of: building a more resilient economy that can create and sustain a range of quality employment opportunities; and ensuring that local people have the right mix of skills to progress in the labour market and benefit from the new jobs which are created.

The Council will continue to play a lead role in local place making, ensuring that key infrastructure is in place to facilitate new business and housing development. We will seek to create the best possible environment in which to establish and grow a business. We will invest in those wider quality of place factors which make Chesterfield a great place to live and an enjoyable place to visit.

We will enable the transition to a higher value added economy, generating more well paid jobs for local people. Increased prosperity will drive more footfall and spend in our town centres, reducing the number of vacant premises on the high street. Our inclusive approach to growth will see more people moving into employment, with reduced levels of economic inactivity and significantly fewer young people who are unemployed. Our future growth will be delivered in an increasingly sustainable way, as we seek to become a carbon neutral borough by 2050.

In relation to service delivery, we will continue to focus our resources on activities where we can genuinely add value, working proactively with partner organisations and the private sector to secure the best possible outcomes for Chesterfield. Significant public sector funding will remain critical to supporting the rebuilding of our economy and we welcome EMCCA's recognition of the key role Chesterfield can play in helping to deliver their regional growth ambitions.



Headline indicators

Progress will be monitored against the following headline indicators:

- The number of jobs (annual)
- The number of businesses (annual)
- The number of visitors (annual)
- Earnings (annual)
- Town centre vacancy rate (monthly)
- The unemployment rate (monthly)

8 Growth strategy framework

The growth strategy framework comprises an overall aim, three guiding principles and five strategic objectives.

Overall Aim

The aim of the Growth Strategy is:

‘To make Chesterfield a thriving borough, delivering sustainable and inclusive growth that benefits local people.’

Strategic objectives

The strategy sets out five inter-linked objectives that provide the framework for the delivery of economic growth activities by the Council, either directly or in conjunction with partner organisations and the private sector. Progress reporting on key activities and measures is undertaken via the Council Plan Delivery Plan monitoring process.

- 1 Help businesses to grow and secure new business investment in the borough.**
- 2 Build a competitive place infrastructure that accelerates employment and housing growth.**
- 3 Strengthen the distinctive character and vibrancy of our town centres.**
- 4 Develop Chesterfield’s role as a visitor destination and as a base for exploring the surrounding area.**
- 5 Ensure local people have the right skills to support progression in the labour market and benefit from future employment opportunities.**

The following section sets out the rationale for each objective and the key activities that will be delivered to 2030.

Guiding principles

Three high-level principles will guide the delivery of activities set out under the strategic objectives:

1 Higher-value growth

Our ambition is not only to grow the local economy, but to promote the development of higher-value businesses (in manufacturing and service based sectors) that can deliver higher-skill and higher-wage jobs, increasing prosperity for Chesterfield’s residents. Key initiatives to support higher-value growth include: the Council’s Enterprise Chesterfield network; the opening of the DRIIVE rail innovation and training centre; workforce skills development; and the East Midlands Investment Zone.

2 Inclusive growth

As a ‘post-industrial’ town, Chesterfield continues to experience the legacy impact of the loss of traditional industries, with higher levels of health & disability, economic inactivity and youth unemployment in the resident population. Eight (out of 69) local neighbourhoods are ranked in the most deprived 10% nationally on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2025. In response, the Council is committed to pursuing an inclusive approach to growth, ensuring that all communities have access to, and benefit from, future growth opportunities. Key activities to support inclusive growth include: leading the work of the Chesterfield Employment and Skills Partnership; maximising the training benefits of the Construction Skills Hub and DRIIVE centre; and securing local labour and training clauses on new developments.

3 Sustainable growth

The Council has committed to becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030 and for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2050. To support the transition to net zero, this strategy seeks to promote a sustainable approach to growth, balancing economic ambition with environmental responsibility. Key measures to support sustainable growth include: encouraging higher density urban growth to maximise the use of existing infrastructure, public transport and options for active travel; delivering new build development to high energy efficiency standards; promoting green business initiatives via the Council’s Innovation Support Programme; and developing Chesterfield’s role as a sustainable visitor hub for visits to the Peak District.

9 Strategic objectives

1 Help businesses to grow and secure new business investment in the borough



Key activities

- Deliver an Innovation Support Programme and seek to maximise local business engagement with business support programmes.
- Manage the Enterprise Chesterfield network as a focus for the growth of higher-value businesses.
- Work with Destination Chesterfield on a range of place marketing campaigns to raise Chesterfield's profile as a contemporary live, work and business location.
- Encourage inward investment and business expansion by providing key account management and a comprehensive commercial property service.
- Work with partners to attract investment to Chesterfield's EMIZ sites.

Chesterfield needs a stronger, more diversified and higher-value business base to drive quality employment growth in the future. The Council seeks to achieve this through a range of measures including: delivering a competitive place infrastructure to support business growth; providing targeted business support services; and attracting new investment to the borough.

The Council generally pursues a place-centred approach to growth, focusing on making Chesterfield the best possible location in which to establish and grow all types of business, rather than concentrating narrowly on a small number of priority business sectors. However, it does seek to facilitate a move up the value chain across the range of business activities, for example, through its Innovation Support Programme and its flagship Enterprise Chesterfield network.

The Innovation Support Programme provides one-to-one advisor support to local businesses, seeking to maximise the potential for the introduction of new products, processes and services to deliver business growth. The advisor works closely with partners across the business support ecosystem and will be proactive in enabling local business take-up of services provided by the newly established East Midlands Growth Hub.

The Enterprise Chesterfield network comprises three innovation and enterprise centres - Tapton, Dunston and Northern Gateway - which provide a managed office environment for a range of service based activities. The network acts as a catalyst to small firm growth, with a number of businesses successfully 'graduating' from the centres and taking larger premises elsewhere in the locality.

The Economic Development Team provides a comprehensive commercial property advice service, covering the Council's own premises and those provided by the private sector, to ensure the effective functioning of the local property market and increase the prospects of new businesses locating themselves in the borough. Officers in the Team regularly meet with local businesses, developers, landowners and inward investors to strengthen relationships and facilitate new business investment.

Place marketing is delivered by 'Destination Chesterfield', a public/private partnership that provides a coherent narrative and co-ordinated approach to promoting the town as a contemporary living, working and visitor destination. Current marketing campaigns include: 'A Place to Call Home', to raise the profile of Chesterfield as a place to live with target audiences; 'A Place to Experience', to encourage more people to stay / spend their leisure time in the borough; and 'Made in Chesterfield', to attract new investment and showcase the range of careers in the manufacturing and engineering sectors. Future activities will include developing a campaign to support town centre regeneration and promoting key industrial sites in Chesterfield as part of the newly designated EMIZ. The Economic Development Team works closely with Destination Chesterfield on developing and delivering inward investment campaigns and leads on responding to investor enquiries.



2 Build a competitive place infrastructure that accelerates employment and housing growth

Key activities

- Enable new employment and housing growth through the planning framework and work proactively with public partners and the private sector to bring forward new infrastructure and site development.
- Manage the Council's commercial property portfolio and identify potential investment opportunities that can act to facilitate new employment and housing growth.
- Support the development of the wider Chesterfield Station area, creating a vibrant new community and key gateway for North Derbyshire.
- Work with partners to develop options and proposals for the re-opening of the Barrow Hill Line.
- Seek to secure the comprehensive regeneration of the Staveley Growth Corridor, enabling the infrastructure to support significant residential development and new employment as part of the East Midlands Investment Zone.
- Further develop the housing offer and work to accelerate the delivery of residential sites across the borough.

The Council has a central role to play in making Chesterfield both a competitive location to do business and a great place to live. We seek to enable new employment and housing growth through the planning framework and by working proactively with public and private sector partners to bring forward new infrastructure and site investment. We are also a major investor in business premises, managing a significant portfolio of industrial, office and retail units, including the most recent development of new office space (One Waterside Place) adjacent to the rail station. We will continue to explore investment opportunities that can act to facilitate new employment and housing growth.

Chesterfield borough is the location of three of the 'growth opportunities' identified in EMCCA's 'Vision for Growth' spatial strategy:

- **CC2** Markham Vale Enterprise Zone
- **CC3** Chesterfield Town Centre
- **CC4** Hartington and Staveley Investment Zone

Whilst Markham Vale is in its final stages of development, the wider corridor linking Chesterfield Town Centre (CC3) to Hartington and Staveley Investment Zone (CC4) is recognised as a regeneration opportunity of regional significance. EMCCA is developing a 'Chesterfield and Staveley Regeneration and Investment Framework' to guide its future development (supported by the Council).

This wider corridor broadly comprises three development areas:

- Chesterfield town centre (considered under Strategic Objective 3 of this strategy)
- Chesterfield Station area (including Chesterfield Waterside)
- The Staveley Growth Corridor.



The Staveley Growth Corridor (SGC) covers over 150ha of former industrial land in the east of the borough and has the potential to accommodate over 5,000 jobs and 1,500 houses, alongside a local service centre (supporting convenience retail, leisure and community services).

The Staveley Growth Corridor (SGC) covers over 150ha of former industrial land in the east of the borough and has the potential to accommodate over 5,000 jobs and 1,500 houses, alongside a local service centre (supporting convenience retail, leisure and community services). Key to delivering the full regeneration potential of the SGC will be improved site access and this includes the construction of the Chesterfield Staveley Regeneration Route (CSRR). The CSRR is a long standing development proposal which is currently the subject of further site investigation works to help establish the final costs. Initial feasibility studies have also been undertaken into improved rail accessibility to the SGC, with the potential extension of the Sheffield tram-train network to Chesterfield via the Barrow Hill line, providing stops in New Whittington and Barrow Hill. Employment sites in the east of the SGC (Hartington Commerce Park, Hartington Business Park and the former Staveley Works site) now form part of the EMIZ, offering financial and other business incentives to attract new investment in green industries and advanced manufacturing sectors.

EMMCA's East Midlands Stations Strategy highlights the region's four mainline rail stations - including Chesterfield - as key regional assets capable of catalysing growth in their surrounding areas. In the case of Chesterfield, this growth potential has already been demonstrated with the construction and successful letting of the One Waterside Place office scheme. There are currently a number of vacant brownfield sites in the wider Chesterfield station area (including the former Chesterfield hotel site and Chesterfield Waterside sites) offering opportunities for new residential and employment growth. Master-planning has been undertaken to guide the future development of the area as a sustainable live-work community and vibrant gateway to Chesterfield and the Peak District.

Ensuring the borough has the right housing offer not only addresses the needs of the local population, it also supports economic growth by accommodating workers and attracting people to live in the area, helping to sustain local services. The Government has recently revised the Council's house build target from 240 to 500 new homes a year. To help achieve this target, the Council will continue to: positively engage with developers and landowners to ensure a clear understanding of site development issues in the borough; support housing investment on surplus land owned by the Council; purchase new council houses to address local housing need and enable the development of stalled or marginally viable housing sites; and secure on-going place-making investment to create quality places where people want to live.

3

Strengthen the distinctive character and vibrancy of our town centres



Chesterfield town centre plays an important role as the main sub-regional employment and service centre in North Derbyshire. This role will continue in the future, with its designation as a 'growth opportunity' in EMCCA's spatial strategy providing a solid foundation for future development activity.

However, in common with other retail destinations, the town faces significant challenges in relation to changing patterns of consumer and retailer behaviour. These have resulted in a steady decline in town centre footfall and a vacancy rate which has more than doubled in the last seven years and currently stands at 15%. Without intervention, there is a clear risk of a self reinforcing cycle of reduced footfall, business closures and further decline.

Increasing footfall is therefore considered critical to supporting the future viability of the town centre. Concerted effort is required to redefine the role of the town centre, broadening the range of services and activities which take place there, effectively giving more people more reasons to visit the centre more often. Chesterfield must position itself as a truly multi-functional town centre, with opportunities to strengthen its role in several ways:

- **A Retail Hub** – public consultation shows that shopping is still the main reason for people visiting the town centre, therefore the aim should be to maintain the share of retail activity at the highest level that is realistically achievable. This will involve proactive working with property owners to secure new uses for vacant premises, with an increasing share of independents likely to form part of the retail mix.
- **A Cultural and Leisure Hub** – the transformation of Stephenson Memorial Hall as a destination cultural venue; the provision of new outdoor event spaces in Market Place and New Square; the delivery of public art works as part of the 'Animate' project; and the establishment of a new creative business hub in the former Derbyshire Times building represents a significant investment in Chesterfield's cultural infrastructure and offer. This provides a spring-board to raise the value of cultural activities in the local economy, both in terms of direct employment in the creative business sector and through increased visitor numbers and spend. The town centre is also seeing an increase in private sector led leisure activities (for example escape rooms / gaming venues) and a strengthened food & beverage offer.
- **A Visitor Destination and Hub** – further development of key visitor assets (Crooked Spire, Stephenson Memorial Hall, historic markets, events spaces etc) increases the appeal of the town as a day visit destination. Chesterfield is also perfectly placed as an overnight base from which to explore Derbyshire and the Peak District.
- **An Employment Hub** – Chesterfield functions as a sub-regional office location, and the successful letting of new office space such as the Council's Northern Gateway Enterprise Centre and One Waterside Place, demonstrates sustained demand for high quality floorspace in and around the town centre.
- **A Public and Community Services Hub** – there are further opportunities to increase the presence of public (for example health-related services) and community facilities in the town centre. Options are currently being explored for the future development of the Pavements shopping centre, including the potential to accommodate these type of activities.
- **A Residential Location** – residential development in and around the town centre creates additional demand for convenience goods and services, as well as increasing footfall for more hours during the day, improving overall safety and supporting the evening economy. To broaden the appeal of the town centre to a wider demographic, interventions will need to be considered at the neighbourhood scale to provide high quality urban environments with a diverse housing mix. Reflecting this approach, the Council will work with partners to bring forward the development of the Spire Neighbourhood, creating a vibrant residential area in the heart of Chesterfield.

Key activities:

- Seek to establish a broader mix of retail, leisure, employment and community service uses in our town centres, working pro-actively with partner organisations and property owners to secure investment and find new roles for vacant premises.
- Deliver an ongoing programme of place making investment that increases the quality, character and accessibility of our town centres.
- Enable more opportunities for town centre living, including delivery of the first phase of the Spire Neighbourhood development.
- Provide a welcoming environment through the effective co-ordination of town centre management services, maintaining the street scene and ensuring people have a safe and enjoyable experience at all times of day.
- Support the work of the Chesterfield Pride in Place Town Board in delivering the Pride in Place programme and seek to bring forward town centre projects which address the programme's priorities.
- Put in place a Chesterfield Town Centre Framework to guide the future development of the town centre.
- Support the further regeneration of Staveley town centre, guided by the Staveley Vision Masterplan.



Diversifying the mix of uses will be facilitated by wider place making activities to improve the effective functioning of the town centre and deliver a high quality environment. Great public spaces are not only attractive in their own right, but create the setting for complementary experiential activities such as outdoor leisure and hospitality. Quality place making provides the opportunity to reinforce a distinctive local identity, something which sets Chesterfield apart from competing destinations and provides an experience which can't be replicated on-line.

A significant programme of public realm investment (the Revitalising the Heart of Chesterfield scheme) is nearing completion, focused on key public spaces and the connections between them, including Corporation Street, Spire Walk, Rykneld Square, Market Place and New Square. These works are complemented by the 'Animate' project, which is seeing new community based artworks delivered across the town centre, including a large mural at the Pavements shopping centre and the 'Sense of Chesterfield' sculpture trail.

Town centre management functions also play a crucial role in delivering a positive town centre experience, particularly in maintaining a clean, safe and welcoming environment. While these factors may not be primary attractors, failure to get the basics right can significantly damage perceptions and deter future visits.

The 'Pride In Place' programme is a £20m funding opportunity that runs from 2026 to 2036 and will have a primary focus on Chesterfield town centre. A Chesterfield Pride in Place Town Board has been established to oversee the programme which includes both capital and revenue funding. The Council will act as the accountable body and will work closely with partners to develop and deliver future projects.

Reflecting the broad range of activities currently taking place, a Chesterfield Town Centre Framework will be completed to ensure the alignment of these activities and to provide the overall strategic direction for the future development of the town centre. This will include highlighting future development opportunities such as the Spire Neighbourhood, the Pavements shopping centre and the town's Northern and Southern Gateways.

In Staveley, Town Deal funding has supported a significant investment in the town centre (the Staveley 21 project), which has seen the redevelopment of the market place (including the construction of a new Pavilion building to bring the library into the town centre) and upgraded public realm and shop front improvements on the high street. These works have been informed by the Staveley Vision Masterplan which will guide the future development of the centre.



4

Develop Chesterfield's role as a visitor destination and as a base for exploring the surrounding area

Key activities:

- Work in partnership to deliver a range of marketing activities that raise the profile of Chesterfield both as a visitor destination and as a base for exploring the Peak District and Derbyshire.
- Complete the refurbishment of Stephenson Memorial Hall to significantly enhance Chesterfield's cultural, heritage and visitor offer.
- Deliver a programme of speciality markets, events and festivals to attract more visitors to Chesterfield borough, working in partnership with the Chesterfield Town Board and supported by the Pride in Place programme.
- Work with partners and the private sector to support the further development of the borough's visitor offer including Peak Resort, an enhanced Crooked Spire experience, the re-opening of Chesterfield Canal and the provision of additional visitor accommodation in the borough.

There is a significant opportunity to make more of Chesterfield's visitor potential, both as a destination in its own right and by positioning it as a high quality base for exploring the Peak District and wider Derbyshire. Attracting more day and staying visitors will generate additional spend in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, supporting local employment and contributing to the vitality of our town centres.

Whilst Chesterfield's current visitor offer is probably best described as 'low key', there are a number of strengths which can be built on to increase visitor numbers. These include: consumer research which demonstrates strong recognition of Chesterfield as the location of the Crooked Spire and a consumer perception that Chesterfield is close to the Peak District and that the town is easy to get to; the revitalising investment taking place in Chesterfield town centre; and future market opportunities linked to the development of PEAK Resort.

In terms of positioning, the Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy identifies Chesterfield's core proposition as follows:

'A lively market town with the iconic Crooked Spire Church, Chesterfield inspires day and staying visitors with its unique mix of independent shops, markets, events, festivals and borough-wide attractions, providing a great base from which to explore Derbyshire and the Peak District.'

Major place making investment is currently taking place in Chesterfield town centre, upgrading the overall quality of the public realm and creating the setting for the further development of a distinctive experiential offer that attracts new visitors and encourages a high level of repeat visits. Central to this is the Council's transformation of Stephenson Memorial Hall into a flagship cultural venue (now relaunched as '1435' paying tribute to George Stephenson's introduction of the standard gauge rail track), bringing together an extended Pomegranate Theatre, a reconfigured museum, new gallery space, café bar, education and community facilities. These works are complemented by the redeveloped Outdoor Market and provision of new events spaces in Market Place and New Square. Capitalising on this investment, the Council is now able to deliver an enhanced programme of speciality markets, festivals, events and regular animation (part funded by the Chesterfield Pride in Place Town Board), adding vibrancy to the centre throughout the year and encouraging repeat visits.



'A lively market town with the iconic Crooked Spire Church, Chesterfield inspires day and staying visitors with its unique mix of independent shops, markets, events, festivals and borough-wide attractions, providing a great base from which to explore Derbyshire and the Peak District.'

The Council will work with partners and the private sector to facilitate the further development of the visitor offer across the borough. This includes: proposals for PEAK Resort, a 300 acre gateway site on the edge of the national park, with planning permission for a mix of visitor accommodation, hospitality, leisure, wellness and experiential retail; the on-going restoration of Chesterfield Canal; the development of the 'Crooked Spire Experience', to make the most of Chesterfield's iconic landmark; a proposal by EMCCA for the establishment of a long distance circular walking route (The Loop), which would connect waterways across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, beginning and ending at the Crooked Spire in Chesterfield; and securing additional hotel capacity to support an increase in overnight stays.

Raising awareness of our strengthened visitor offer and Chesterfield's potential to be an attractive and sustainable hub for visits to the Peak District will be essential to driving visitor growth. The Council will work with Destination Chesterfield and the Local Visitor Economy Partnership 'Visit Peak District and Derbyshire' to deliver a range of marketing activities to increase both the number of day visitors and overnight stays.

A man with glasses and a beard is working on a keyboard in a workshop. He is wearing a dark blue t-shirt and a watch. The background shows various tools and equipment on a workbench.

5

Ensure local people have the right skills to support progression in the labour market and benefit from future employment opportunities

Key activities

- Take a lead role in the Chesterfield Employment and Skills Partnership, seeking to ensure a co-ordinated approach to skills delivery that evolves in line with future job requirements and regional growth ambitions.
- Seek to secure the further development of higher and technical skills provision in Chesterfield.
- Facilitate local business access to workforce training programmes.
- Work with partners to identify and deliver specific skills initiatives including training via the DRIVe rail innovation and training centre and the Construction Skills Hub.
- Foster links between businesses and young people to ensure they are aware of future career pathways, including apprentice opportunities.
- Work with partners and employers to ensure that work readiness, skills and employment support programmes are effectively targeted at priority groups and communities.
- Maximise the local benefits of new development which takes place in Chesterfield through the agreement of local labour clauses and promotion of supply chain opportunities.

A skilled workforce is vital to the long term economic success of the area, supporting the shift towards a higher-value and higher-wage economy. Equally, it is vital that local people have the right mix of skills to enable participation and progression in the current labour market, as well as being in a position to benefit from new job opportunities that are created in the borough.

The Council takes a lead role in the Chesterfield Skills and Employment Partnership which oversees the delivery of skills related activity across the borough. The Council's activities are guided by the Skills Action Plan which currently runs until 2027, but will be updated to 2030, to bring it in line with the Growth Strategy.

Through the work of the Skills Partnership, and wider partner engagement, the Council will seek to influence future skills activity, particularly in relation to the development of higher and technical skills provision. For example, funding from the Staveley Town Deal Programme has enabled the construction of DRIVe, a rail innovation and training centre located in Barrow Hill. The Council has secured additional funding from EMCCA to pump-prime specialist training provision at the DRIVe centre, targeting the rail industry, its supply chain and individuals seeking employment in the sector.

The Council will work to facilitate local business access to workforce training programmes, including undertaking 'skills brokerage' to understand training requirements and connecting businesses with appropriate training provision.

Chesterfield faces particular challenges relating to youth unemployment, health related factors limiting people's participation in the labour market and high levels of deprivation in some local neighbourhoods. We will work with partners to ensure work readiness and employment support programmes are targeted where they are most needed. For example, the Council has made use of grant funding to deliver an integrated health and employment support pilot project (positioning Chesterfield to maximise the benefits of regional programmes such as Connect to Work) and has established the Construction Skills Hub at Mastin Moor, an on-site training facility particularly targeting young people at risk of exclusion. The Construction Skills Hub has received an Association of Colleges' Beacon Award for its innovative approach towards developing skills for careers in the construction sector.

A pipeline of major housing and regeneration schemes across the borough presents significant opportunities for employment, training and supply chain benefits during the delivery phase. To maximise the benefits of this new investment, we will continue to take a pro-active approach in securing local labour clauses and promoting local supply chain opportunities both in terms of our own procurement processes and through the negotiation of Section 106 agreements on planning applications. We will also work closely with end-users and inward investors to support local staff recruitment campaigns.



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