Since the original Norfolk Rural Development Strategy was published in 2013, the UK has voted to leave the EU, the government introduced the National Living Wage in 2016 and technology has advanced rapidly and is affecting every area of how we live and work. All of these changes will have major impacts on the economy in rural Norfolk.

The Norfolk Rural Strategy Steering Group therefore commissioned a refresh of the strategy to identify the priority areas on which we think the Norfolk rural community, businesses and the agencies which support rural Norfolk, will have to focus between now and 2020.

The consultations informing this Strategy, and the discussions of the Steering Group, show a strong consensus on the main challenges facing rural Norfolk by 2020. Our focus on these challenges has informed our five identified priorities which are:

- **Vision and Lobbying for Support**
- **World Class Environment**
- **Technology Driven**
- **AgriFood Competitiveness**
- **Enablers of Growth**

One further, cross cutting issue was seen as essential by consultees – rural Norfolk has relatively low qualification levels, which particularly at a time of rapid change could restrict its ability to embrace future opportunities.

If we are to deliver new environmental programmes, embrace the potential of technology, improve agri-food competitiveness or find new ways to deliver modern infrastructure, we will all, young and old, have to learn new skills. Upskilling our existing workforce and making rural areas attractive to highly skilled young people is therefore essential if these areas are to fulfil their potential.

The Norfolk Rural Strategy Group cannot action all these areas on its own as it has neither the time or resources to do so. Instead we look forward to working with others to drive all five priority areas forward for the benefit of rural Norfolk.

Rural Norfolk is a good place to live, work and visit, but like other areas is having to respond to rapid change. If this change is embraced, rural Norfolk can continue to grow its economy, build on recent successes and thrive in the future.

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Supported by:

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For more information, please contact emma.taylor@norfolk.gov.uk
Enablers of Growth

To facilitate growth in rural Norfolk through modern water, ICT and energy infrastructure and an enabling planning system:

At a time of unprecedented change, there needs to be even more emphasis on having an approach to rural development which is open to change, encourages business investment and facilitates growth through modern infrastructure.

An enabling planning system which prioritises affordable housing and business premises supported with modern power, water and communication infrastructure is essential to rural Norfolk’s future growth.

Vision and Lobbying for Support

To promote a clear vision for Rural Norfolk’s future growth and to lobby for the support needed to facilitate sustainable rural development:

Brexit will change the funding landscape for farming, the environment and rural development and change Norfolk’s trading relationships. The government is focused on an Industrial Strategy prioritising investment in high growth sectors with global potential.

World Class Environment

To attract visitors, workers and investors through investments in the environment which align with Norfolk’s specific needs:

Norfolk has a growing and successful tourism sector built on a diverse, attractive environment. Changes in environmental funding, farming and rising tourist expectations create an opportunity to re-imagine Norfolk’s rural environment to benefit the economy.

There needs to be more focus on developing links between distinctive Norfolk landscapes and tourism, food and cultural development to make rural Norfolk an attractive destination for high value tourism and talented new workers.

Technology Driven

By using technology to transform the Norfolk rural economy and lifestyles through digitalisation, automation and innovation:

The National Living Wage will increase many rural workers’ wages, but this will also increase the wage costs of many employers in the public and private sector, creating challenges for business viability and putting major pressure on public sector budgets (e.g. in social care). At the same time Brexit will potentially restrict labour supply for rural employers. Developing innovation in technology and improving connectivity also bring opportunities to create new industries.

Rural Norfolk has to focus on using new technology to improve labour efficiency in both the public and private sector. This includes a focus on raising skill levels, improving rural career prospects and creating more rewarding rural jobs so that careers in rural Norfolk are attractive to young people and people moving to Norfolk.

AgriFood Competitiveness

To help Norfolk’s agrifood industry to compete by focusing on productivity, supply chain efficiency and through responding to consumers’ needs:

Agricultural policy and support is expected to see its largest change in over 40 years and many current farm business models may become unviable. However, global demand for food is rising strongly and the UK’s expertise in adding value beyond the farmgate is in growing demand around the world.

Norfolk’s agrifood sector has to become more competitive to thrive in the global market with less support. This requires a focus on: adding value to farm output to embrace growth food markets; delivering productivity growth in farms and food companies; and, through more efficient supply chains.

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