

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Sleaford Strategic Delivery Plan

2018 – 2025



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Introduction

Sleaford is a historic market town situated on the River Slea in the heart of Lincolnshire. It is the main retail, service and employment centre for people living in the town and in the surrounding villages.

Sleaford has experienced significant population growth over the past 30 years rising from 8,000 in 1981 to around 20,000 today with a further 30,000 people living within 10 miles of the town. Growth has largely been the result of people moving to the area attracted by the quality of life, low crime rates, relatively low house prices, good-quality education and its well-connected, central location.

Sleaford has good connections, benefitting significantly from the A15 and A17 as primary routes, and a railway station with direct services to Peterborough, Nottingham, Lincoln and Boston. The opportunities presented by these routes need to be maximised for businesses, residents and visitors.

The quality of life that Sleaford offers, along with its connectivity, means that the town will continue to experience pressure for further growth. Indeed the adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan has identified Sleaford to accommodate around 12% of Central Lincolnshire's growth in new homes (4,500 dwellings) and associated employment land over the plan period to 2036. This represents a continued significant rate of housing and population growth for the town.

Sleaford has very low levels of unemployment and thriving industrial estates with growing companies in the food, manufacturing and engineering sectors. Its employment areas to the north east of the town have seen significant development over the last 15 years with companies attracted by the availability of good quality serviced employment land, competitive labour rates and good connectivity within Lincolnshire and the Midlands.

Sleaford has an attractive and historic town centre with a number of retail, leisure and cultural attractions. However, despite the town's success in attracting new residents and delivering economic growth, the town centre is not performing as well as would be expected. It should act as a service centre for the town and its surrounding settlements but recent retail studies for Sleaford clearly demonstrate that





significant levels of retail and leisure spend is being lost to neighbouring towns such as Grantham, Boston and Newark. This leakage issue is directly undermining the vitality of the town centre.

The retail offer is constrained in part due to the town centre's heritage and charm. Sleaford has a tight urban grain, which provides for mainly small footprint business premises. Whilst this generates an attractive built environment, it results in a shortage of modern, larger retail premises desired by the retail sector, particularly national multiples. Larger and a more varied range of premises are needed to broaden the town centre offer.

A key barrier to enhancing the town centre's retail core is its car dominated environment, as identified by various Sleaford studies and Sleaford residents. The constant circulation of traffic around the one-way system, coupled with the impact of the railway level crossing barrier closures, means that town centre suffers from congestion. This has many negative impacts upon the town centre including a poor environment for pedestrians and cyclists, delays to public transport and problems with deliveries to local businesses. In addition, the extent of vehicle movement in the town centre has been identified as a barrier to investment and regeneration.



Parts of the town, particularly in the town centre, are in need of regeneration. A number of regeneration sites and development opportunities have been identified, including the approach to the town centre from the railway station; the former Corn Exchange (Heart of Sleaford); the former Advanta Seeds Site and the wider Southern Southgate area; and the Grade II* Listed former Bass Maltings complex.

Regeneration, infrastructure investment, and a full realisation of the benefits offered by Sleaford's assets and location could unlock the town's potential as an exemplar living, working, shopping and recreational environment and to enhance Sleaford's role within Central Lincolnshire and beyond.

In response to the issues affecting the town and in order to provide strategic direction a masterplan for Sleaford was commissioned in 2010 and adopted in March 2011. This document outlines a comprehensive 25-year strategy for the town, including a series of projects to unlock the town's potential through environmental improvement and opportunities for the creation of new attractions. The principles of this masterplan remain sound and the document vision and objectives remain valid. Indeed, since its adoption considerable work to progress actions from the plan have been undertaken and others are in progress.

However, the Sleaford Masterplan and Sleaford Transport Strategy, to a large extent, were predicated on the delivery of the South East Sleaford Regeneration Route (SESRR) and the associated closure of the Southgate Level Crossing. Due to national policy changes, such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the decision by Tesco to withdraw its planned new retail store, the construction of the new Link Road is now very unlikely to be delivered. Given this changing environment, coupled with updates to the Sleaford evidence base, it is now considered appropriate to revisit all of the Sleaford documents and distil the key outcomes into a single integrated delivery plan, looking at short to medium term actions.

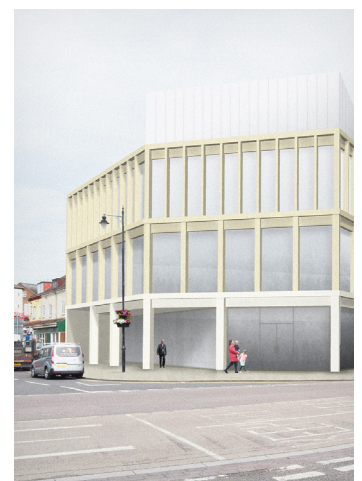
A single delivery plan shared by the Council with other stakeholders ensures investment is prioritised and co-ordinated on addressing the key challenges in the town. It provides clarity and confidence for decision making and investment from both public and private sectors.



Background Studies

A number of studies have been produced for Sleaford in recent years, the key ones informing this Delivery Plan are:

- **Sleaford Masterplan, Gillespies (2011)** – a 25-year strategy for the town. The Masterplan highlights the key challenges facing the town and has two strategic aims to address them: i) to plan positively for future growth by investing in infrastructure and creating well connected communities and ii) to fulfil the town centre’s potential by creating a high quality environment and opportunities for new retail and attractions.
- **Sleaford Transport Strategy, LCC & NKDC (2014)** – transport is fundamental to the success of any town and is at the heart of daily lives of the community, shops and businesses and has a key role to play in regeneration. Providing an efficient and effective transport network and strategy has the potential to create a more prosperous, greener and healthier Sleaford. This Transport Strategy sets out a series of short, medium and long-term solutions to address existing transport and travel issues within the town.
- **A Vision for Sleaford, Kerching (2015)** – building on the Sleaford Masterplan, this study created a vision specifically for Sleaford Town Centre. The report clarified the specific opportunities and challenges facing the town centre including addressing perceptions, reversing leakage and improving the retail mix.
- **Sleaford Traffic Modelling, Mouchel Consulting (2015 – 2018)** – significant traffic modelling work has been undertaken for Sleaford over recent years to assess how the town operates currently and how it might operate in the future based on likely growth, development and network change. A series of actions have been identified utilising these reports.
- **Sleaford Partnership Scheme in Conservation Area (2015)** – a shop front improvement scheme has been implemented within the Conservation Area of Sleaford to offer financial and technical support to retailers/landlords to reinstate original shop fronts to improve the visual attractiveness of the town which in turn impacts positively on its economic performance.
- **Single Local Growth Fund Bid (2016)** – influenced by the Sleaford Transport Strategy (2014) and the traffic modelling reports (2015 onwards) NKDC applied for Single Local Growth funding to deliver a series of highway infrastructure improvements for the town to assist current traffic movements and accommodate growth. This bid was successful, with £2m allocated for improvements to Sleaford’s strategic road network.



- **Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (2017)** – this key strategic document provides the planning framework for the growth and regeneration for Central Lincolnshire (including Sleaford) over the next 20 years.
- **Pop Up Landscape Design Guide (2017)** – the Sleaford Masterplan identified a need to focus on public realm improvements within Sleaford to create better links for pedestrians and improved settings for key attractions and heritage assets. The Pop Up Landscape Design Guide builds on this by identifying specific projects and innovative design ideas that could be trialled in the town to change perceptions and kick start regeneration and investment.
- **Sleaford Growth Housing Infrastructure Fund Bid (2017)** – linked to the growth outlined in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, NKDC applied for Housing Infrastructure Funding to support and accelerate the delivery of the Sleaford West Sustainable Urban Extension. This £2m bid was successful and most of the funding will go towards improvements to the A15 which opens up key development sites to the west of the town.
- **Sleaford Signage Strategy (2018)** – signage has a crucial role to play in making any place accessible and visitor and user friendly. This document sets out a future framework for the delivery of signage in the town, seeking to achieve a standard format for all existing and future signage.
- **Cycling Strategy (2018)** – North Kesteven aims to be a district where everyone is inspired to cycle. This strategy intends to increase participation in cycling by increasing the awareness of cycling and its associated benefits, promoting safer cycling and providing more infrastructure and opportunities for cycling.
- **Sleaford Car Parking Strategy (2018)** – car parking is a fundamental part of a town centre; facilitating its use by customers, workers, residents and visitors. This strategy seeks to ensure Sleaford’s car parking operations work effectively to support the town centre. Specifically the strategy aims to reposition and rationalise parking to strategically locate car parks on the radial approaches to the town centre so that they are within walking distance of the centre and its retail offer. This will reduce unnecessary vehicle movement through the centre of the town, reduce pollution and noise, and allow an improved environment to be created which is more welcoming and pedestrian friendly.





- **Priority Axis 6 - Green/Blue Infrastructure Bid (2018)** – the Central Lincolnshire Green Infrastructure Study identifies a deficiency in natural green spaces in the Sleaford area, particularly to the east and west of the town. The Sleaford Masterplan proposes an East West Leisure Link running along the River Slea through the town centre and connecting the urban area to the countryside and surrounding villages. This provides a range of opportunities to improve the green infrastructure network, leisure and tourism offer, including improved pedestrian and cycle movement and access, and habitat creation. A European Funding bid has been submitted by NKDC to enhance green and blue infrastructure within the town as identified by these studies.
- **Sleaford Transport Advice Paper (2018)** – this paper reviewed the transport work completed on Sleaford to date and set out a framework of options and advice for movement and accessibility for the town.
- **Sleaford Town Transformation Report (2018)** – building on the advice paper above, this report provides further details on the actions required to improve movement and accessibility within Sleaford.



Issues for the Delivery Plan to Address

Reviewing all of the Sleaford documents and studies, it is clear that the town has a number of continuing challenges that consistently arise. These need to be tackled if the town is to remain a thriving and vibrant sustainable settlement that meets the needs of its residents and businesses as well as accommodating the growth identified in the adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. These challenges can be summarised below:

Growth – up to 4,500 new dwellings and associated employment and community facilities are planned for the town up to 2036. Growth is vital for Sleaford in delivering new investment and services for existing and new residents but ensuring this growth can be accommodated by the necessary infrastructure will be crucial for a sustainable and prosperous town. Key issues are:



- ▶ **Delivery of Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE's)** – Sleaford has two SUEs identified to deliver the vast majority of the housing growth for the town. These sites require significant infrastructure investment.
- ▶ **Delivery of Strategic Employment Land** – new serviced employment land is required in order to facilitate economic growth to ensure Sleaford remains a thriving and sustainable settlement that offers a diverse range of employment opportunities for new and existing residents.

Accessibility – the ability to easily reach your destination, whether for work, leisure or shopping, is a key factor in determining how successful a place will be. However, the historic nature of Sleaford's street system, and the way that people choose to move around the town, often with only one person per car, is increasingly causing challenges and undermining the attractiveness of the town centre. Key issues are:



- ▶ **Congestion** – There are two fundamental options when dealing with congestion; build bigger roads or manage traffic and demand on the existing network. Given the constrained historic nature of Sleaford town centre, the financial and environmental costs of road construction and the fact that it will encourage further private car usage, the option of building new roads within the town centre is undesirable and should only be pursued as a last resort. Encouraging a change in behaviour to reduce dependency on private car use and, providing viable and attractive alternatives is crucial for the future of the town. The aim is simple but ambitious, and has important implications for our streets, public places and future growth as a town.

- ▶ **Encouraging sustainable transport choices** – Sleaford has a car dominated culture, a key challenge is to change the mindsets and behaviours of Sleaford’s residents and business community to embrace alternative modes of transport.
- ▶ **Level Crossings changing** – changes to the operation of rail infrastructure alongside potential enhanced passenger and/or freight journeys will see the level crossings in Sleaford closed more frequently and for longer periods from 2023. These changes pose an opportunity and a threat. On the one hand, the changes could discourage vehicles from entering the town centre therefore making it a less car dominated environment. However, if the town centre is difficult to access and doesn’t have a compelling offer it could lead to increased leakage further impacting the economic vitality of the town centre and its role as a key service centre.
- ▶ **Perimeter car parks** – in order to improve the town centre environment and ensure the town remains accessible a series of edge of town centre, perimeter car parks will be required. These sites in order to be well used and effective need to be located on key arterial routes, appropriately priced, with good signage and excellent pedestrian connectivity to the town centre.

Function of town centre – town centres are changing rapidly both nationally and internationally and responding to these changes will be fundamental to the success of Sleaford going forward. In order for Sleaford to compete, the town centre needs to be attractive and fulfil the needs of the community. It needs to be robust and flexible such that it can accommodate change. Key issues are:



- ▶ **Retail and leisure leakage** – in order for Sleaford to compete as a service centre it must have a compelling retail and leisure offer. Sleaford currently leaks 77% of its catchment area spend to other areas, this substantial loss impacts the economic vitality and viability of the town centre.
- ▶ **Regeneration** – there are parts of the town in need of regeneration, these have been identified in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan as ‘Opportunity Areas’ for public and/or private sector investment. Bringing forward these sites to enhance the town and enable it to fulfil its function as a service centre will be a priority.

Town Centre Environment – Sleaford, like many other similar sized historic market towns, is currently car dominated which undermines the economic performance of the town centre. The challenge is to create a people-focused town centre that places priority on the needs of pedestrians and cyclists while being robust enough for vehicular access. By changing the appearance, space allocation, signage, car park positioning, provision of cycle facilities and treatment of the roads in Sleaford's town centre there is the potential for the environment to improve, assisting the vitality and economic viability of the town. Key issues are:



- ▶ **Public Realm** – linked to the above, Sleaford's public realm is car dominated and this undermines its attractiveness to pedestrian and cycle use. Changing and enhancing the public realm to support the town centre to be a place where people meet, socialise, relax, enjoy and engage will be vital if the town is to compete effectively going forward.
- ▶ **Exploiting the heritage of the town** – the centre of the town exhibits a fine range of buildings along its main historic roads (Southgate, Northgate, Westgate, Eastgate and Carre Street) and benefits from a number of listed buildings and is designated as a conservation area. This historic character adds value and is being invested in through the Shopfront Grant Scheme as well as projects such as Heart of Sleaford. The town's heritage is an asset and it needs to be protected and utilised in attracting people and investment into the town centre.
- ▶ **Town Centre Development Opportunities** – the town centre contains a variety of sites that present opportunities for regeneration and/or renewal – some of these sites will be already known with others yet to become available or to be identified. This includes both vacant sites and those in current use where the redevelopment of the site will help deliver environmental enhancement to the quality of the built and/or natural environment of the town centre, contributing to bringing associated economic benefits through new uses/activities adding to the vitality and vibrancy of the area.

Aims and Objectives

The Sleaford Masterplan had the following vision:

“In 2036 Sleaford is a bigger, better, more confident place with a thriving retail centre, a keen sense of history and a clear idea of where it is going.”

This vision remains valid today and has been supplemented by a town centre vision:

“Sleaford: An attractive, compact and family-friendly market town. Dominated by pedestrians, entertainment and natural/cultural sights. Home to popular national retail and restaurant brands and high quality unique independents. Whether you seek daytime or evening entertainment, Sleaford has a lot to offer.”

Taking these visions together, along with the key challenges identified for the town, this Delivery Plan is aimed at supporting Sleaford to achieve a regenerated, vibrant town centre that is people-focused offering a welcoming environment and place to visit, shop, do business or simply to meet to enjoy quality time with family and friends. It places importance on sustainable travel, especially within the town centre, alongside utilising the existing infrastructure to its best potential and investing where necessary to support the growth and development of the town.

In order to achieve the above, this Delivery Plan looks to fundamentally change the way people move around, into and through Sleaford given that past trends of reliance on the car are increasingly challenging and restricting the growth and success of the town.

Therefore, Sleaford must become a town where walking, cycling and public transport become the most appealing and practical choices for many more journeys. These active and sustainable transport choices not only support the health and wellbeing of the people of Sleaford, but also the town as a whole by reducing congestion and providing the most efficient use of valuable street space

Acknowledging the above, the focus of this Delivery Plan, within the town centre, is placed on creating active streets where people can relax and enjoy walking, where the environment supports and responds to people, such that there is greater potential for people to appreciate, engage with and enhance the town centre. This footfall attracts business and supports regeneration.

Outside of the town centre, whilst sustainable travel options are encouraged, it is recognised that due to the rural nature of the area, that private car use will remain important. Given this, the Delivery Plan focuses investment on the existing infrastructure to create the capacity required to facilitate growth and respond to change as well as promoting initiatives around perimeter car parking.

There is nothing new in this Delivery Plan, rather it is the place where all the various studies and strategies come together as a single thread and where a range of individual projects and proposals can be seen in the context of delivering strategic change and regeneration to the benefit of the town as a whole.

The key elements of the Delivery Plan can be summarised as:



Supporting the town centre and its regeneration



Encouraging sustainable travel including enhancing walking and cycling experiences and making alternative transport modes more attractive



Encouraging edge of town centre parking to release the town centre of traffic and improving the car parking experience for all users



Investing in the existing strategic infrastructure to create capacity for growth whilst utilising the existing town centre infrastructure more efficiently and effectively to support regeneration



Improving the town centre environment through enhanced public realm, better signage and reduced congestion



Monitoring and reviewing

Delivery Plan Actions

The following tables outline the key actions to be delivered in the short (0- 3 years) and medium (4 - 7 years) of this Delivery Plan:



Actions	Timescale	Delivery Partner(s)	Funding Status
1 Sleaford Maltings – continue to work with the private sector to bring forward a viable mixed use scheme	Ongoing	NKDC, LCC & Private Sector	Private Sector to fund
2 Lincolnshire County Council Offices Site - explore alternative options for this site including the safeguarding of a possible link road between Boston Road and Eastgate	Short	LCC, NKDC & Private Sector	Public funding committed
3 Heart of Sleaford - progress a viable mixed use development including retail, leisure, commercial and residential development on the land between Market Place and Money's Yard including the former Corn Exchange	Short	NKDC & Private Sector	Public & Private Sector funding committed in principle
4 Advanta Seeds – promote the delivery of a viable mixed use scheme incorporating retail, leisure and residential development	Short	Private	Private Sector to fund
5 Grammar School Sites - explore alternative options for the existing grammar school sites, in the event that the schools relocate, to support the future of the town centre	Short	NKDC, LCC & Private sector	N/A
6 National Centre for Craft & Design - Explore opportunities for capital investment in the building to improve footfall and programme offer	Short	NKDC, STC & Private Sector	Public funding committed

Sustainable Travel

Actions		Timescale	Delivery Partner(s)	Funding Status
1	Explore options to improve the viability of the Into Town bus service	Ongoing	NKDC, LCC & Private Sector	Public & Private Sector funding committed in principle
2	Upgrade the existing footpath from West Banks to A15, along the northern bank of the River Slea, to encourage increased usage by improving connectivity between development sites to the west and the town centre	2019 -2022	NKDC, Environment Agency & Private Sector	External funding bid submitted
3	Upgrade footpath links throughout Lollycocks Field to create a safe and attractive link between housing areas and local schools/employment areas	2019 -2022	NKDC & Environment Agency	External funding bid submitted
4	Audit existing and proposed footpath/cycle infrastructure and identify required improvements both into and within Sleaford town centre	Short	NKDC & LCC	Funding required
5	Improve the provision of cycle parking facilities within Sleaford town centre	Short	NKDC	Public Sector funding committed in principle
6	Provide information on sustainable travel choices for new and existing residents	Short	NKDC & Private Sector	Funding required
7	Introduction of interactive app/online map to assist pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users in their sustainable travel choices	Short	NKDC	Funding required
8	Promote car sharing within Sleaford	Short	NKDC	Funding required
9	Introduce a cycle Sleaford event	Medium	NKDC	Funding required



Car Parking

Actions		Timescale	Delivery Partner(s)	Funding Status
1	Explore perimeter car parking opportunities to improve the town centre environment and accommodate growth	Ongoing	NKDC	N/A
2	Introduce flexible payment options at all Council managed car parks to improve the service to users and encourage longer dwell within Sleaford town centre	2019	NKDC & STC	Public Sector funding committed in principle
3	Introduce new car parking tariffs to all Council owned car parks to improve availability of parking for different types of town centre users e.g. shoppers, workers, visitors etc	2019	NKDC & STC	Public Sector funding committed in principle
4	Improve signage within and from Council managed car parks to Sleaford town centre and its key attractions/facilities	Short	NKDC & STC	Funding required

Strategic Infrastructure

Actions		Timescale	Delivery Partner(s)	Funding Status
1	Continue to explore the opportunity and feasibility for Southgate to become a Pedestrianised street	Ongoing	NKDC & LCC	N/A
2	Seek to safeguard the route of the possible link road between Boston Road and Eastgate to facilitate potential pedestrianisation	Ongoing	NKDC & LCC	N/A
3	Sleaford Moor Enterprise Park – deliver serviced employment land	Short	NKDC	Public Sector funding committed in principle
4	Explore shared space operations on Southgate and Market Place	Short	NKDC & LCC	N/A
5	Upgrade Holdingham Roundabout to increase capacity	2020/21	NKDC, LCC & Private Sector	Public & Private funding committed in principle
6	Upgrade the A153/A17 (Rugby Club) junction to increase capacity and improve safety	2020/21	NKDC & LCC	Public & Private funding committed in principle
7	Delivery of a new roundabout on A15 (Sleaford Bypass) to open up the Sleaford West Sustainable Urban Extension and potential Grammar School site	2020/21	NKDC, LCC & Private Sector	Public & Private funding committed in principle
8	Update of Sleaford Traffic Model to provide the evidence for a place/route based Sleaford Transport Strategy	2021	LCC	Public Sector funding committed in principle
9	Produce a new Sleaford Transport Strategy	2022	LCC	Public Sector funding committed in principle

Town Centre Environment

Actions	Timescale	Delivery Partner(s)	Funding Status
1 Implement Phase 1 Pop-up/Temporary public realm scheme to trial new seating, planters and lighting within Southgate and wider town centre	2018/19	NKDC, LCC & Private Sector	Public & Private funding committed
2 Implement Phase 2 Pop Up/Temporary public realm scheme to recover loading bay(s) on Southgate for cycle storage/seating	Short	NKDC & LCC	Public & Private funding committed
3 Audit usage of loading bays and taxi ranks within Sleaford town centre to ascertain if any of this highway space could be put to pedestrian public realm	Short	NKDC & LCC	N/A
4 Linked to the above, undertake a trial to widen the pedestrian dedicated space on Southgate by reducing the space dedicated to highway use	Short	NKDC & LCC	Funding required
5 Environmental enhancements to the River Slea and its environs making it more attractive visually and improving its habitat for wildlife therefore raising the profile of this asset for the town	2019 - 2022	NKDC, Environment Agency & Private Sector	External funding bid submitted
6 Undertake an audit of directional signage, healthcare & neighbourhood facilities and tourism signs	Short	LCC	N/A
7 Removal of all non-essential directional signage, informational boards/wayfinding signs, tourism and leisure signs and short term and private car parking signs	2018/19	LCC	Funding required
8 Develop a design/brand for informational/wayfinding signs to ensure consistency across the town	Short	NKDC	Funding required
9 Install new essential signage for long stay parking, key tourism attractions and transport hubs e.g. Sleaford Station	Short	NKDC, LCC & STC	Funding required
10 Install new essential information boards/wayfinding signs including information to encourage sustainable travel	Short	NKDC & STC	Funding required
11 Develop a delivery/servicing strategy for the centre of Sleaford	Medium	NKDC, LCC & Private Sector	Funding required
12 Explore the introduction of full or part pedestrianisation on Southgate	Medium	NKDC & LCC	Funding required

Monitoring

Continually monitoring and reviewing the success of this Delivery Plan is vitally important to ensure progress is being made that supports the aims and objectives.

Monitoring and reviewing this Delivery Plan will take the form:

- Regular reviews of the individual actions to monitor delivery
- High level monitoring and data collation to assess the impact of intervention on the performance of the town

The regular reviews will be overseen by the governance structure outlined in the next section.

Delivery & Governance

The implementation of this Delivery Plan will be led by North Kesteven District Council working in partnership with Lincolnshire County Council and Sleaford Town Council. However, the success of the implementation of this plan relies on all partners and the community working together to achieve its aims.

Elements of this Delivery Plan can be achieved at minimal cost such as the community opting to use sustainable travel as an alternative to the private car. However, other elements of the plan will require funded interventions, some of which have already been secured utilising both public and private funding, such as infrastructure investments on the town's strategic road network and public realm improvements within the town centre. The Council, working with our partners, will identify and secure funding from a range of sources for the remaining elements.

The Sleaford Strategic Delivery Plan will be overseen by the Sleaford Growth Project Board supported by the Sleaford Growth Project Team. The Sleaford Regeneration Group will act as a sounding board and advocate on specific project deliverables.



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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