

# CULTURE, HERITAGE & VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY FOR BABERGH & MID SUFFOLK DISTRICTS 2023-28



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*Note to reader:*

*The document sometimes uses the shorthand of ‘sectors’ refer to culture, heritage and the visitor economy. It can also use ‘culture/cultural’ as shorthand for cultural heritage or culture and heritage.*

*This strategy features a number of ‘insets’ – short case studies and spotlights on key local organisations, and exemplars from further afield. The document takes a similar approach with quotes – from both local stakeholders and relevant regional and national reports and plans.*

**Front cover images:**


Lavenham Wool Town, The Food Museum Stowmarket

**Back cover:** Gainsborough’s House

Commissioned by





A man with a beard, wearing a green sweater and blue jeans, is sitting on a stone ledge by a river. He is holding a sketchbook and a pen, looking towards a white house with a brown roof across the water. The house is reflected in the calm water. The scene is surrounded by trees and a stone wall on the right.

“Our living heritage is rightly valued for its cultural, educational, aesthetic and historical importance but we can now also clearly see that it is an economic driver for inbound tourism to the UK, as well as sustaining domestic tourism too.”

‘The Impact of Heritage Tourism for the UK Economy’,  
Bernard Donaghue, Association of Leading Visitor Attractions

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The gentle 'heart' of Suffolk, Babergh & Mid Suffolk could easily have its identity and distinctiveness lost in the wider Suffolk story, the strong economic appeal of Ipswich, and the visitor pull of Suffolk coast. However, it does have cultural and heritage attributes across its diverse communities that are both strong and distinctive. Inspired by landscape and shaped by industry (especially food & drink), the heart of Suffolk can celebrate its culture and heritage with a confidence that can build a sense of place. This in turn can drive civic pride, local opportunities and the visitor economy.

This Strategy balances the interdependent worlds of culture, heritage and tourism. Some parts of the UK can claim 40% of their visitor economy is driven by culture and heritage. Babergh & Mid Suffolk have the assets and qualities to achieve similar. An initial mapping exercise revealed over 300 place-based assets. Whilst any cultural heritage sector is under threat in current economic conditions, there are reasons to be positive. The Councils continue to build strong relationships across the sector and regionally. The area is close to massive visitor markets in the South-East. New capital developments have successfully launched with more in the pipeline, and local culturally-led forums are getting established. However, it is easy for tourists to bypass the area on the way to the Suffolk coast / Norfolk Broads. Lovely landscapes also means rural isolation, and the strengths of culture and heritage are not yet joined-up through a data-led digital transformation. Furthermore, a potential USP of 'food' does not yet fully deliver from 'field to fork'. There are some wonderful fine dining offers (Michelin star level), excellent gastro-pubs, and

quality farm shops carrying local produce and food products – but only through some businesses and routes to market. This offer can increase its visibility and accessibility to market.

The cross-sector desire to co-design and co-develop is evident. By building creativity alongside robust insights-driven approach will help to develop the narrative for the area – into planning (not least for heritage conservation, access and interpretation) and regeneration, community programmes and destination management.

A clear Vision has emerged from the extensive engagement with stakeholders: Set in a landscape of enduring inspiration, we will work together to create distinctive, welcoming, and vital cultural places and experiences that energise our communities, our enterprises and our visitors to embrace the progressive heart of Suffolk.

To build on this, a short set of themes start to give shape to the Strategy. These are based on building consistency of cultural opportunity and behaviour in every local community, embedding culture into daily life alongside leisure, sport, wellbeing, social life and lifelong education. The Strategy also aims to be a catalyst to building resilience through partnership working, and the use of data, insight & digital transformation. Babergh & Mid Suffolk is full of heritage and culturally-rich places – this Strategy will work to make understood and valued by locals, visitors and other stakeholders.



## SUFFOLK FOOD HALL

Suffolk Food Hall and partners – including engaging with the Food Enterprise Zone – could build a 'foodie' cluster in Wherstead. The Food Hall is a business itself but also provides opportunities for other new businesses to develop, so long as they celebrate Suffolk's sense of place, food heritage and creativity. The Red Poll herd provides quality beef served in the restaurant – a truly field to fork experience. Located in the Suffolk Coast & Heath AONB, there is onsite accommodation providing a total visitor offer.

The strategic priorities – our aims and objectives – are summarised as clear, concise aims:

1. Babergh & Mid Suffolk will support its residents to live full cultural lives, building cultural confidence and civic pride.
2. The culture, heritage and visitor economy sectors will be sustainable, resilient and will champion its distinctive qualities.
3. Babergh and Mid Suffolk's culture, heritage and visitor sectors will work collaboratively with neighbouring organisations, districts and counties to trial new approaches.

The Strategy sets out a framework for implementation. The outline action plan will be fully co-developed with the sector to ensure that a number of critical areas are hardwired into Strategy implementation. These include: increasing opportunities for participation and training; supporting green social prescribing initiatives and place-based cultural forums; modelling for 'pilot & roll-out' initiatives; exploring new visitor markets, e.g. Purple Pound, wellbeing; and exploring cross-sector / -boundary ways of working / commissioning models. All this will be framed within a focus on developing and embedding a place / destination brand personality.

Babergh & Mid Suffolk is diverse – across the two districts, from market town to market town, village to village. The richness of its culture and heritage is a powerful tool in building communities, driving a place-based approach to regeneration and harnessing the potential of responsible tourism.



#### SPOTLIGHT: CREWE'S CREATIVE REGENERATION

The Crewe Cultural Forum is made up of over 100 people and organisations, committed to making culture central to the town's development over the next decade. A working group, including arts, Councils, heritage, education, commerce and young people identified priorities. The 'forum' is very open and welcomes attendance from across the whole community. A strategy identifies goals to support the regeneration of Crewe through culture and heritage, aiming to create an environment where creativity leads the economic growth of the area.





**A. CONTEXT**

Image: Primadonna Festival, Stowmarket

# A1. INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Quiet, pretty, beautiful, tranquil, charming – Babergh & Mid Suffolk’s most obvious associations are of a quintessentially English pastoral scene, with historic towns and villages and rolling countryside. A place where heritage lives and breathes, and which has inspired some of Britain’s most celebrated artists for centuries.

It is Britain’s breadbasket, producing quality food and drink to feed the nation. It’s a key connector between coast and county towns, between Essex and Cambridgeshire.

It’s the Heart of Suffolk.

There is a strong sense of place which carries visitor appeal, despite a relative lack of recognition as a destination. Most visitors headed for the coast will pass through the Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts en route. How do we persuade visitors to stop off, to stay and spend more time and money in the area, and to grow its profile? New, internationally significant cultural heritage assets are adding to the quality and ambition of the local offer, as well as demonstrating significant inward investment into the area. This makes this strategy a timely one, well-placed to capitalise on these new opportunities to create growth and interest for the culture, heritage and visitor economy sectors.

For residents, building pride in place, improving social factors (e.g. health and wellbeing), and increasing community vibrancy, can all be enabled through engagement with culture and heritage. Culture, heritage and visitor attractions must feel

inclusive, affordable and part of the expectations of everyday life of local residents. This will enable the sector to grow the next generation of visitor, staff and volunteers, securing the sustainability of the sector and delivering to wider social agendas.

Babergh & Mid Suffolk are often indivisible from Suffolk as a whole. They are part of the warp and weft. Strong regional partnerships and collaborations already exist, but the understanding and appreciation of the districts’ position within the wider county and region can be increased. Working boundary, cross-sector, and will provide a catalyst to realise all the ambitions of this strategy.

The strategy provides a clear vision and set of priorities which will build the confidence of Babergh & Mid Suffolk as a cultural community and destination, securing and growing the sustainability and resilience of these sectors for the benefit of residents and the economy.

## LOCAL POPULATION

With a combined population of just over 200,000, both Babergh and Mid Suffolk have ‘super-ageing’ populations. Both districts have seen an increase of over 30% in people over the age of 65, amongst the highest growth in the UK for this age group. At the other end of the scale, both districts have experienced a decrease in those aged under 15, at 6% and 7.5% respectively.



## DANCEEAST

DanceEast delivers a number of community programmes, including in residential care homes. By encouraging residents to move and express their creativity, older people can retain their mobility for longer. Interventions such as this can help to prevent falls, delay the onset or development of dementia, and provides valuable social interaction for residents. They also run Mini Movers for toddlers and their grown-ups, and targeted projects for young people. The rural nature of the district means it can be challenging to recruit participants to programmes, so working in partnership with other organisations is essential.

Again, these are amongst the biggest drops in the UK.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst this story is shared by many rural areas across the UK, Babergh and Mid Suffolk's population changes are extreme - and this is not the case within neighbouring districts, where populations are not ageing at the same rate, or actually getting younger<sup>2</sup>. This narrative aligns with the sense of Babergh & Mid Suffolk being somewhere to relax and retire. And whilst those peaceful qualities are attractive, the current trend does not lend itself to innovation, vibrancy or long-term economic growth. Changing perceptions and providing more opportunities for younger people to stay (let alone settle and resettle) in the area will help to mitigate these issues, as well as other challenges - such as the increased pressure placed on healthcare services by ageing populations. Culture, heritage and tourism are useful tools to deploy to help address these challenges.

*"Babergh & Mid Suffolk is the white space of Suffolk."*

Stakeholder comment

### ON THE CULTURE, HERITAGE & TOURISM SECTORS

These sectors were greatly impacted by the pandemic, but is slowly beginning to recover. In Babergh, workforce data shows that the rate of employment in arts, entertainment & recreation is increasing at a much faster rate compared to the East of England or England as a whole. Mid Suffolk is seeing recovery in line with the regional and national average.

Both districts will need continued support to accelerate visitor economy recovery from the impacts of the pandemic, as well as the current economic challenges. (This may be despite some perceptions of seasonal and lower-paid work that may inhibit staff recruitment and retention and career choices.) For Babergh, this is good news. Clearly the trend for domestic travel, driven by factors such as the pandemic and a desire for sustainable tourism, is benefitting the area. The good climate, coastline, landscape, and historic wool towns are already attractors for visitors, and investments in visitor offers such as the Suffolk Food Hall, Jimmy's Farm and the emerging wine industry are providing new offers resulting in new jobs and sector growth.<sup>3</sup>

And the link with culture and heritage is clear, with a focus on the visual arts heritage providing opportunities for growth and recovery. Gainsborough's House's reopening provides a focus around which the sector can collaborate. The rebrand and relaunch of the Food Museum offers similar opportunities. Further transformational investments at Benton End and the John Peel Centre for Creative Arts add to the positive picture. National Trust Flatford is also undergoing a redevelopment process, as is St Peter's Church in Sudbury. As these assets renew in the next few years, and with the right support behind them, this trajectory of growth should continue.

<sup>1</sup> Census 2021 data

<sup>2</sup> South Norfolk has one of the highest increases of under 15s nationally, at 11.8%

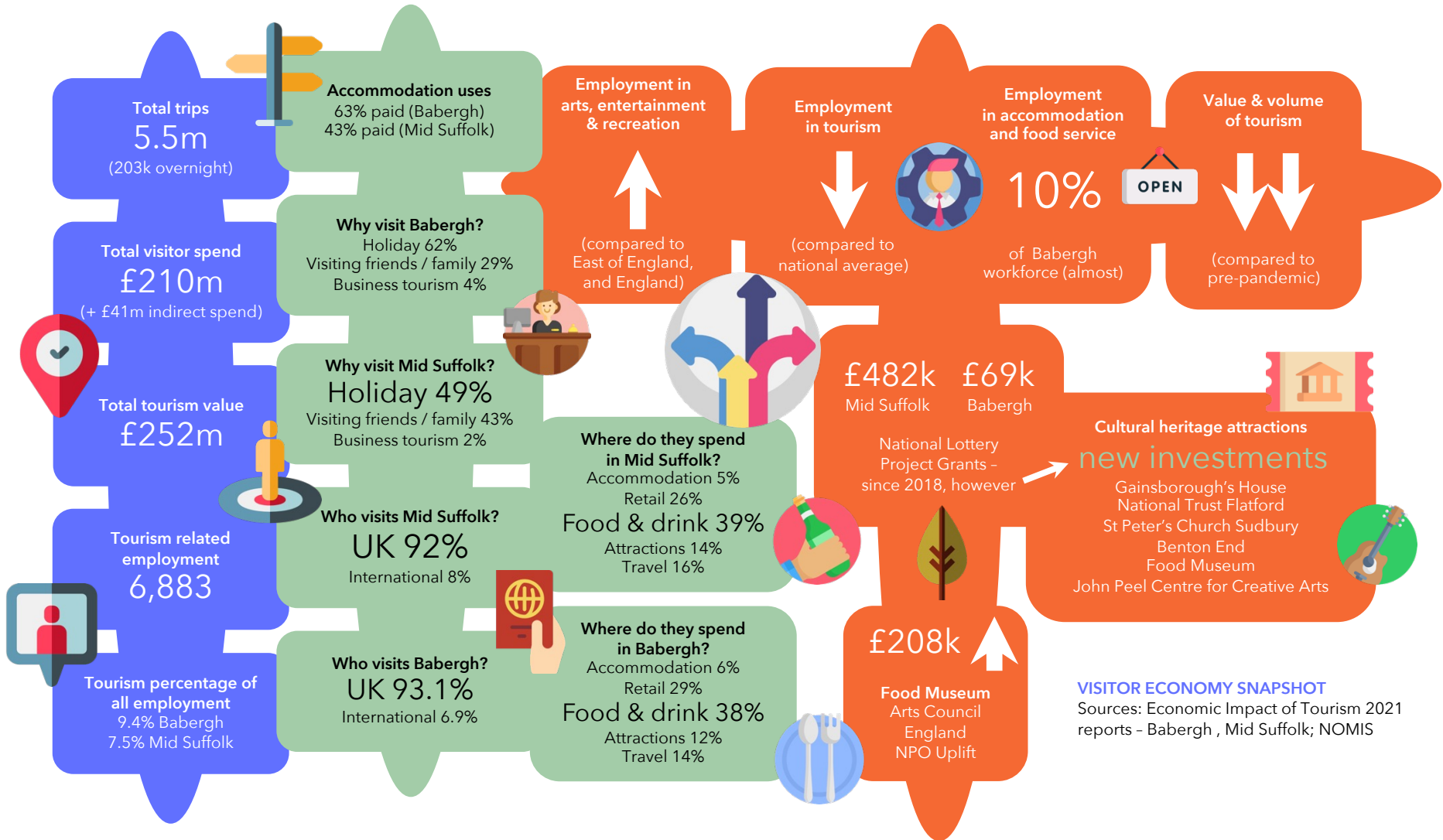
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2022/nov/19/salt-flats-and-autumn-sun-a-car-free-break-on-suffolks-shotley-peninsula>



### JOHN PEEL CENTRE FOR CREATIVE ARTS

Founded in honour of one of Stowmarket's most famous residents, the arts centre provides a community-owned venue for high quality, eclectic live performance. The venue is a mecca for contemporary and emerging performers within the East of England region, with the cache of John's name attracting the likes of 'BBC Introducing' music nights. The Centre is also home to a number of community organisations which offer participatory programmes and classes which support residents' social needs and wellbeing. Plans for expansion will improve its visibility and frontage, as well as help revitalise a unit on the high street.





Mid Suffolk has some catching up to do. Without the coastline, and without as many developed visitor assets, it could be perceived that there are fewer reasons for visitors to go. This is a problem with positioning and investment in the sector. The Heart of Suffolk brand is largely unused, but there is merit in a united voice and offer for the sub-region. There are new cultural and heritage investments. Stowmarket's cultural group is working together to secure grants and integrate culture, heritage and tourism infrastructure in order to help with the town's placemaking priorities.

The rebrand and refocus of the Food Museum will take time to fully reach its potential as a national museum – but it is on the right path and has the right level of ambition. Primadonna Festival brings the highest quality of inclusive programming to the area each Summer, but has not fully integrated with its local communities yet. Beyond Stowmarket, there are individual organisations working hard to do the right thing, but facing challenges in recognition, collaboration and partnership opportunities, and securing investment. The Bank Arts Centre in Eye and Wingfield Barns spring to mind as good examples of organisations with the very best intentions, yet working in relative isolation. There is a lack of critical mass to help create any clustering or agglomeration impacts.

Having said this, Mid Suffolk is leagues ahead of Babergh in terms of securing Arts Council England investment. The only National Portfolio Organisation for the area is the Food Museum, which received an uplift of over £208k this round and more than doubled its previous investment. Looking at National Lottery Project Grants, since 2018 Mid Suffolk organisations and freelancers have secured over £482k compared to Babergh's £69k.<sup>4</sup> This is a significant imbalance which suggests that the cultural workforce as a whole in Babergh is less confident with – or competent at – grant funding applications. However, there are hugely significant success stories as well. Since 2018, Gainsborough's House secured a £5m National Lottery Heritage Fund grant, in addition to further awards from trusts and foundations, and £431k from Arts Council England.

This is a skills gap, which is addressed in this strategy. It could be suggested that the workforce in Babergh is more commercially successful, and therefore there are lessons to be learned in Mid Suffolk about improving earned income.

Both districts are home to a handful of museums and heritage centres, about half of which are accredited. Very few of the museums are of a level which will attract visitors in any great volume, but instead play an important role in preserving local heritage and community life, as well as providing opportunities



#### PRIMADONNA FESTIVAL

Primadonna Festival takes place in July at the Food Museum. Billed as 'the world as it should be' the Festival of books, ideas and inspiration offers a creative programme focused on women, people of colour, working class people, LGBTQI+ and disabled people. The programme could include more community engagement to boost local ownership. Most of Suffolk's festivals are in the bigger towns or on the coast, but Babergh & Mid Suffolk's festival offer could be expanded and used as vehicles for skills development and community engagement.

<sup>4</sup> Data from the Arts Council England website. The funding picture is more complex than NPO awards of course.

for volunteering that promote wellbeing. County and regional players are also very important to the cultural heritage provision across the districts, such as Share Museums East, Suffolk Museums and equivalent arts networks. Suffolk Libraries is an innovative service, playing a highly active role in culture – which Arts Council England recognised when they awarded the service NPO status. Other significant cultural organisations like Eastern Angles and DanceEast bring high-quality cultural engagement, with partnership support from the district councils.

A swathe of stately homes, and historic houses and gardens, support the visitor market and a largely buoyant accommodation, wedding and events industry. Local estate owners combine with national organisations such as English Heritage and National Trust to make an enviable heritage portfolio. The landscape is an asset in general and specifically through a number of key agencies and the access, interpretation and visitor services they offer. Dedham Vale AONB provides this access for residents and visitors alongside RSPB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust reserves, and other facilities such as Alton Water (Anglian Water).

The local built historic environment is highly valued, with listed and non-designated heritage buildings greatly contributing to quality of place. Understanding the value of these buildings, and ensuring their protection and sustainability is of the utmost importance. The Councils have a role to play in supporting owners to find new uses for underutilised sites, in supporting commercial and environmental sustainability, and allowing visitors to better

appreciate and enjoy the significance of the built heritage environment.

All of which connects town and villages to the countryside and riverways of the area. Commercially-run attractions and experiences add breadth and depth to the outdoor visitor offer, including high-quality farm parks – Baylam Rare Breeds, Jimmy's Farm & Wildlife Park and Hollow Trees Farm. Slowing down from the rush of daily life (but still exploring) is well catered for, with numerous packaged breaks, notably for cycling (and now e-cycling). If the Suffolk climate should, on occasion, make outdoor activities less attractive, activity can move undercover with sporting attractions like Suffolk Ski & Leisure Centre and Anglia Indoor Karting.



#### SUFFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST

Suffolk Wildlife Trust utilises creative activities to engage wider audiences and target those who would not traditionally attend. Through activities such as forest and beach schools, art, dance and sound workshops, and a mural trail, they are building care for the environment through creativity. Additionally, they focus on building young people as volunteer activists to take action for wildlife wherever they live.

**Image:** Suffolk Wildlife Trust Youth Board



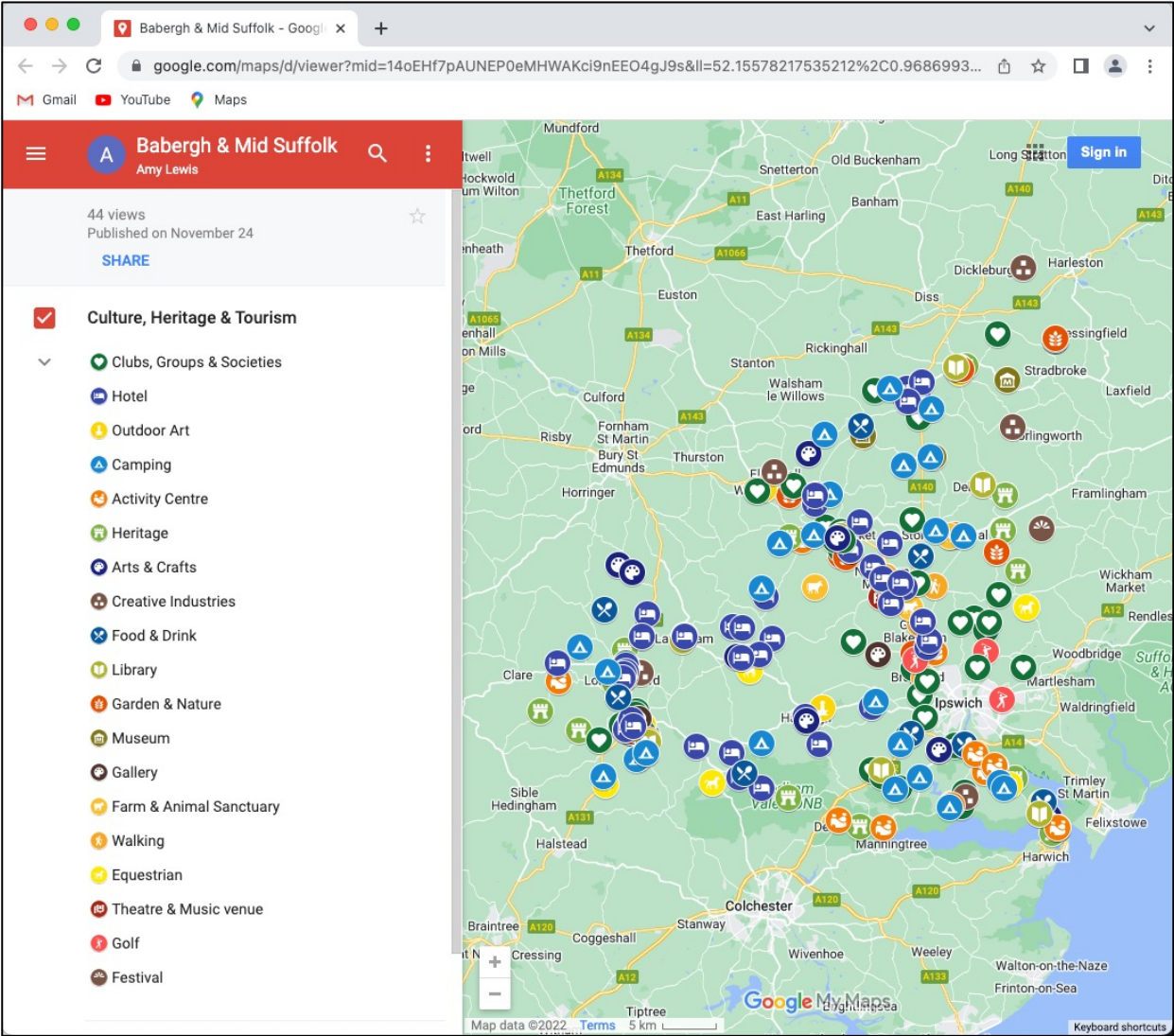
# A2. INSIGHTS

## OVERVIEW

A supporting Insight Report has presented findings from a series of interviews, mini-workshop activity and a series of community and stakeholder engagement workshops (October - December 2022). Individual consultations were conducted with representatives from a variety of culture, creative, heritage, tourism, regeneration and other sectors. Sector workshops were conducted in Eye, Sudbury, Stowmarket and the Shotley Peninsula, attracting c.75 attendees from local organisations. A visitor survey generated 129 responses (12.2022 - 01.2023), which provided valuable insight into domestic target markets and post-pandemic attitudes. Desk research identified recent and current initiatives, helping to define Babergh & Mid Suffolk’s strengths and needs in a local, county and regional context.

A dynamic online map of assets is available to continue to be populated at: <https://bit.ly/3WQvB8M>. With over 300 entries, it includes theatres, museums, heritage assets, arts centres, visitor attractions, creative infrastructure and supply chain, cinemas, events, music venues, community hubs, public art, visitor attractions and active lifestyle offer. This adds to the many useful maps already in use, such as Suffolk Heritage Explorer ([heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/map](https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/map)).

This map is a starting point - to be built up and refined as a tool to identify and understand clusters and therefore how to respond through action planning.



**SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY (ABRIDGED)**

The SWOT analysis is a tried and tested tool but has lost none of its usefulness over the years. By contextualising the internal issues with those external issues that the Council has less influence over, practical routes forward can be derived.

Strengths & Weaknesses assess skills, resources, culture, historical factors, management, communications and so on – internal factors which are within the control and influence of the Council.

Opportunities & Threats cover governmental matters, wider funding issues, other organisations’ behaviour and priorities and so on. These factors are external and normally beyond the scope of direct management and influence.

The chart addresses issues directly relating to arts & culture, heritage and tourism, and some elements will be related to wider policy and management issues, e.g. post-pandemic policy, masterplanning etc. Many smaller issues have arisen, but have not been included here in order to focus on the main topics.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Landscape, environmental heritage; culture as foundation of local life</li> <li>2. Contemporary heritage – visual arts, food &amp; drink production, literature</li> <li>3. Councils’ role and relationships within Suffolk and region</li> <li>4. ‘Naturally’ campaign, sustainable tourism, outdoor pursuits</li> <li>5. Sense of place – relaxing, tranquil, soft, a place to (re)discover</li> <li>6. Demonstrably strong stories and themes, e.g. food, ancient heritage, landscape, nature and pace of living</li> <li>7. Accessibility to large domestic visitor markets</li> <li>8. Investment in ambitious, nationally significant cultural assets e.g. Gainsborough's House, Food Museum</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A lack of cultural capital (e.g. skills, education, knowledge) within resident populations (who lack cultural entitlement / confidence)</li> <li>2. Rural isolation and cultural poverty</li> <li>3. Public transport and road networks slow / inhibit movement</li> <li>4. Data collection and market insight; data-driven market and product development</li> <li>5. Historic infrastructure for attractions to network, collaborate, share (between each other and for residents / visitors)</li> <li>6. Lack of developed (bookable) experiences</li> <li>7. Food and drink heritage flawed if field to table offer not fully realised, e.g. artisan food, markets, dining offer etc.</li> </ol>

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clear appetite to build cultural capital with resident populations</li> <li>2. Change in resident audience and visitor expectations post-pandemic</li> <li>3. Development of a strong, structured regional destination management model</li> <li>4. Development of a strong, structured sub-brand for Babergh &amp; Mid Suffolk destination</li> <li>5. Year round offer, winter offer, shoulder season and linking with residents</li> <li>6. Contributing to managing regional over-tourism</li> <li>7. Valley Ridge: potential game-changing development</li> <li>8. Valley Ridge: place / destination positioning / image impact</li> <li>9. Tap into spirit of piloting and managed risk taking, e.g. 'visiteering' packages</li> <li>10. Emerging locally-driven infrastructure for attractions to network, collaborate, share</li> <li>11. Regional visitor markets (e.g. Essex, London), promoting key themes (e.g. outdoors, cultural heritage, food) and new investments</li> <li>12. Potential role of culture in place ambassadors programme</li> <li>13. Case-making and demonstrable enabling of residents and communities to benefit from visitors, not just absorb the negative impacts (traffic, parking issues, litter, impact of seasonal fluctuations) - a civic pride approach</li> <li>14. Screen tourism</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of collaboration across regional political boundaries, especially within Suffolk, e.g. Explore Suffolk</li> <li>2. Lack of cross-sector working if not continually supported centrally (e.g. by Councils)</li> <li>3. Cost of living crisis and securing a sustainable economic and funding model (even for non-chargeable offer)</li> <li>4. National funding focus in other regions</li> <li>5. Local destination competitiveness and lack of joint branding, marketing, use of data etc.</li> <li>6. Low-wage economy across tourism and hospitality</li> <li>7. Access to green space not being proactively incorporated into new developments, from towns</li> <li>8. Continued challenges of local provision caused by rurality, e.g. lack of public transport and infrastructure, digital poverty, cultural poverty, social and rural isolation, lack of opportunities for young people etc.</li> <li>9. Imbalance between resident and visitor needs</li> </ol>



## CULTURE PLACE WHEEL®

This wheel was populated at the end of the initial consultation phase, presenting a consultancy team view. Whilst subjective and indicative, it presents an assessment of where Babergh & Mid Suffolk is currently (allowing for variances including the pandemic) and where changes could be made and the impacts they could have with current plans and programmes in mind. This is very informative when looking at investment priorities, as well as the audience development potential - by volume, by motivation, by typology.

The Wheel offers a 360° perspective across four categories:

1. *Working Environment* - Good practice all starts with a vision, and the strategic infrastructure to drive that vision forward.
2. *Working Partnerships* - The networks, consortia and shared objectives that will drive progress across a destination.
3. *Product Development* - A strong and diverse offer is the starting point, but it is the whole experience that counts.
4. *Market Development* - Reflecting the strategic development required across partners to support marketing.

The wheel sets out a rating for a number of audience-focused criteria (0-10, where 0 is extremely poor and 10 is perfection). The green line represents the current level of performance and the orange line presents the possible uplift from a successful development cycle in c.5 years' time post-investment or shift in approach - e.g. a new cultural strategy.

The white arrows highlight where marked changes - more transformational - are seen as achievable targets within the current plans. This is a districts-wide analysis. Clearly some programmes, venues and plans have a notable influence, but the (subjective) ratings seek to present a balanced view. The Insights Report carries further analysis, but in summary:

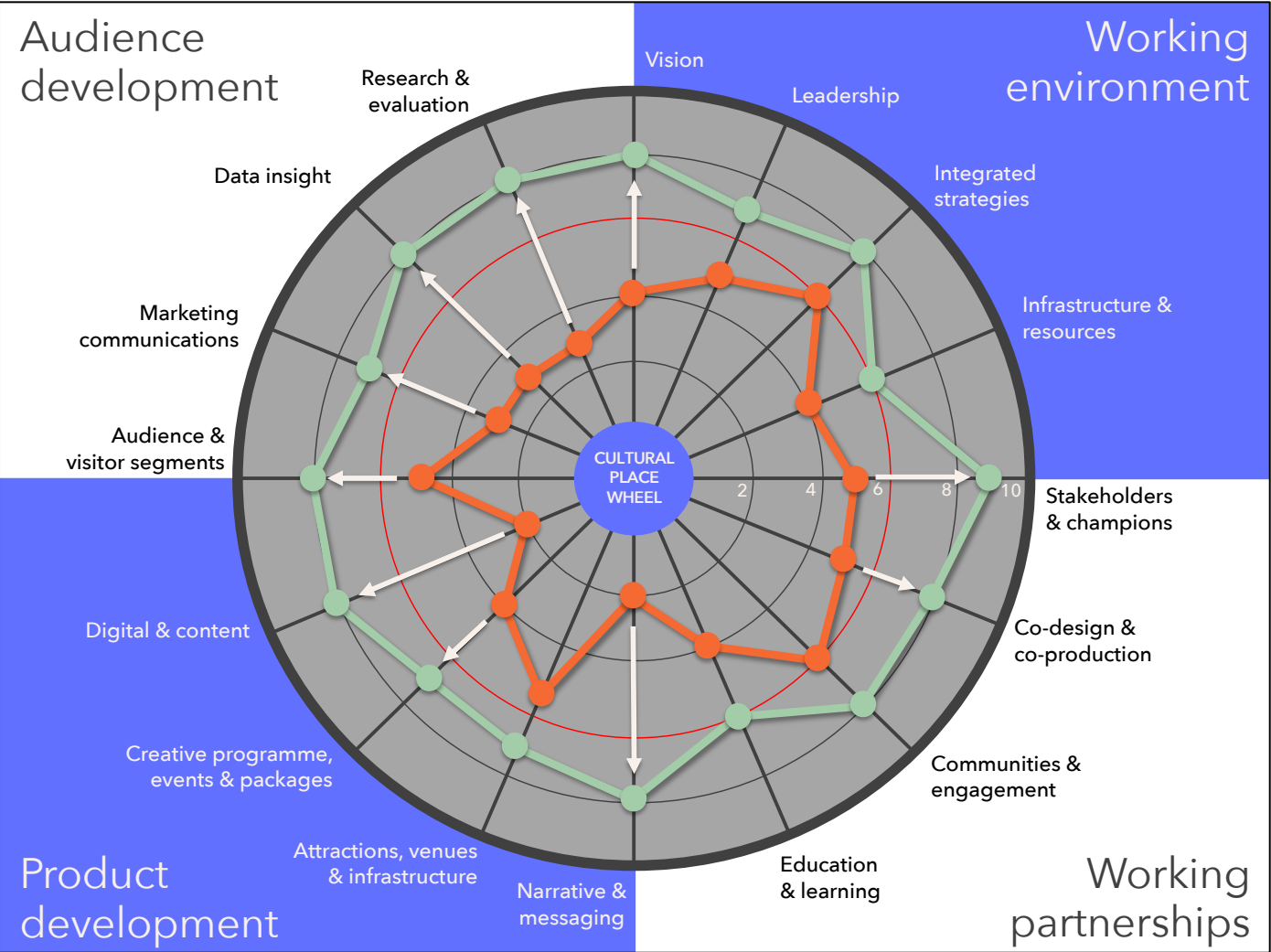
1. *Working Environment* - A lack of a unifying vision and clear forward plans should be able to be addressed through this Strategy, connecting to cross-cutting social and economic priorities.
2. *Working Partnerships* - There are some strong voices locally and regionally, but we need more. The emerging destination management organisation for the East of England is encouraging, but it is early days. Local culture-led groups - Stowmarket and Sudbury for example - are also welcome and should be supported.
3. *Product Development* - The districts (names) are political constructs, and lack the resonance and visibility that the county and individual towns and areas do. This should inform branding and marketing, as well as product development and packaging. This is just as important online and offline.
4. *Audience / Market Development* - Every marker can make a notable step forward during the next period. The offer is stronger than visitor performance historically suggests, and more can be done to respond to the large numbers that typically head of the coast. Data is weak, and a collaborative approach should be able to quickly accelerate improvements.



### SPOTLIGHT: BROOKLYN BRAINERY - TEACHING ANYONE ANYTHING... SUGGESTIONS WELCOME

The Brainery is a space for accessible, community-driven, and crowdsourced education. Their slogan is "classes on anything and everything in NYC" with sessions ranging from personal development ("How to set goals") to practical skills ("Sourdough making from scratch") to the more obscure and specific artistic sessions ("Drawing Animals of the Renaissance") and informative lectures, ("The History of the Scottish Highlands"). All of the course topics are dreamed up and suggested by the public, with the teachers being drawn from around Brooklyn and the whole city.

How can culture fold into wider crafts, food & drink, digital and other education and training? Who could be a partner?



**SPOTLIGHT: ROCHE DALE UPRISING MURAL FESTIVAL - CONNECTING ART, HERITAGE & PLACE**

*"One of the core motives for running a mural festival in Rochdale is to inspire and engage the young people through direct visible action... turning the streets into a gallery that only inspires imagination. If someone had told me that I would have a career in muralism that would find me travelling all over the world... and having some of the richest life experiences I could imagine I never would have believed it... but the power is leading by example, seeing that in action and knowing it exists. Rochdale's famed pioneering spirit, heritage and people deserve to be celebrated in a vibrant and fitting way and we believe that these murals, workshops and events will encourage the community to feel a renewed pride, sense of ownership, inspiration for change and economic growth via tourism."*

Hayley Garner, street artist, Nomad Clan

# A3. THEMES

## DEFINING THE THEMES

Articulating universal themes across culture, heritage and tourism can prove a challenge. It is people, place and their stories make the connections.

The aims, objectives and action plan will define each of the sectors and how they inter-relate. These three themes are important to frame the scale, scope and ambition of the Strategy. They speak directly to the need to build on successes and strengths, working together to make sustainable and progressive changes both district-wide and at local level.

**Theme 1**  
Building cultural habits – improving the everyday experience of residents and visitors.

**Theme 2.1**  
Accelerating progress – developing the sector and its resilience.

**Theme 2.2**  
Accelerating progress – data, insight & digital transformation.

**Theme 3**  
Driving collaboration to evolve cultural heritage places and destinations.

### THEME 1: BUILDING CULTURAL HABITS - IMPROVING THE EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

The idea of making culture and heritage an everyday occurrence is not a new concept. Raymond Williams published his essay ‘Culture is Ordinary’ in 1958, and Cultural Education Partnerships in the UK have been delivering schemes to this effect since the late noughties. But if children do not grow up feeling confident and entitled to visit heritage sites and participate in cultural activities, then the ‘habit’ won’t pass down to the next generation. Communities then develop where culture and heritage is for ‘other’ people to conserve, engage with and enjoy. They miss out.

*“Mid Suffolk lacks heart because it doesn’t make culture part of people’s everyday lives.”*

#### Stakeholder comments

This can have a distancing effect on the tourist offer, separating the people, stories and cultural heritage from the visitor (and therefore the value of the visitor economy). This is a critical interdependence.

It is commonly understood that participating in culture, heritage (and by extension, visitor attractions) has many benefits – it helps to create understanding and build pride in the local community, it provides opportunities for social interaction, it improves health and wellbeing, it develops skills and so on. Making heritage



### THE BANK ARTS CENTRE, EYE

The Bank Arts Centre is a not-for-profit community hub which prioritises creative opportunities to improve health, wellbeing and skills for locals. In addition, the digital hub in The Vault enables young people to develop digital creative skills sought after by local employers. On offer is a gaming hub, a sound recording studio, classes in visual and media arts, and a café. The newly appointed Arts Director will continue to grow its programme. There are no facilities of this type for miles around, meaning The Bank services the creative needs of a wide range of residents and provides a lifeline for residents with social and wellbeing needs. Supporting the development of The Bank Arts Centre will improve the cultural infrastructure of Mid Suffolk and increase its ability to deliver.



'everyday', making culture 'ordinary' - can help to deliver against all of these agendas which in turn builds resilient, successful people, places, economies and communities.

*"Lots of beautiful and historic towns and villages, and lovely green countryside."*

*"Beautiful towns and villages, full of character and charm. Full of history - so much to do and see - something for everyone."*

Public survey comments

In a largely rural area, a lack of cultural habits becomes a more acute issue. Rural isolation can often equate to cultural poverty due to lack of access to assets, poor public transport infrastructure and so on. Babergh & Mid Suffolk are not areas of focus for national, strategic development, missing out on Government's Levelling Up funding schemes, and on the likes of Towns Fund and Arts Council's Creative People & Places programmes.

The Rural Creative Industries Forum estimates that rural creative industries contribute £2b to the UK economy<sup>5</sup>, largely without the strategic investment cited. Without strategic investment, finding ways to rebalance access to cultural experiences becomes more difficult, and more creative solutions must be found in order to realise the economic potential of the sector.

*"The UK City of Culture has too narrow an [urban] focus... [it is] demonstrably clear that there [is] also a need to support rural, semi rural, and seasonal economies. Such places are home to about 50% of taxpayers, the ultimate funders of our public art bodies."*

Yes to the Rural Cultural Economy? The UK City of Culture ... [has] too narrow a focus. Phil Redmond, Chair UK City of Culture panel, The Guardian, 2019

How do young people in rural communities develop their interest in these sectors? What latent creative potential is lost - and what is the social and economic cost of this loss, to the individual and to the place? Helping young people to build their cultural capital, and develop habits of engaging with these sectors, is key.

Just as young people living in rural communities will have fewer opportunities to develop skills which may result in creative careers, people of all ages will have fewer opportunities to participate in creative activities which could positively impact their health and wellbeing. The pandemic has exacerbated feelings of loneliness and isolation which may already be present for individuals living in rural communities. Babergh & Mid Suffolk

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ruralculture.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/The%20New%20Creative%20Rural%20Economies.pdf>



### HELMINGHAM HALL

Helmingham Hall, owned by the Tollemache family since 1480, has expanded its popular garden attraction into the winter months by developing an Illuminated Garden Trail which runs from mid November to mid December. With annual visitors now reaching 25,000, the event has reached maximum capacity in order to protect the Grade I listed gardens. This shows the demand for quality cultural events in the winter months. Haughley Park has also begun a Spectacle of Light event taking place in February. With Suffolk benefitting from the most clement climate in the country, increasing the outdoor events offer into the shoulder and off season could help ease visitor pressure in the summer and enable more local residents to enjoy local culture and heritage experiences.

District Council's Residents Survey (2022) demonstrates that those residents who more regularly engage with their local sports, leisure, parks and open spaces offer correlates with those residents who experience better health and wellbeing, and feel proud of their communities.

Fortunately, Suffolk is a pioneer in creative health agendas, with Suffolk Artlink working with Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Partnership on social prescribing. They both sit on the Creative Wellbeing All Party Parliamentary Group.

*"There are no excuses for leaving talented people behind or for failing to back the full talent pool."*<sup>6</sup>

*"You can whip up a huge amount of enthusiasm in schools, but it needs to be embedded at home."*

*"Those small interactions provide structure to the week and reduce isolation. Local regular things are just as vital as bigger venues."*

Stakeholder comments

The NHS and Natural England are now championing 'green' social prescribing, again this is already being implemented in Suffolk through organisations such as the Green Light Trust. This great local approach should continue to be nurtured to enable as many

residents as possible to benefit from these schemes.

Volunteering is another vehicle for improved wellbeing. Within the culture and heritage sector volunteer roles are usually undertaken by older or retired people as it providing social interaction, intellectual stimulation and renewed sense of purpose. They also have more free time. Many museums have 'volunteering for wellbeing' schemes and this could be an area

*"There's a built-in resistance to change within schools. The staff are from the local area, and they grew up with the same insular attitudes which then reimposes itself within the education landscape."*

Stakeholder comment

of opportunity for local culture and heritage organisations to explore, which aligns with the outcomes cited in the Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils' Wellbeing Strategy. This strategy seeks to put culture, heritage and tourism on the menu for residents in Babergh and Mid Suffolk; to change the expectations of everyday lived experiences.

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<sup>6</sup> Culture Drives Impact - The Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board Manifesto



#### SUFFOLK LIBRARIES

In 2012, Suffolk County Council made the bold decision to create an independent charity to run the library service. This has enabled the service to attract additional funding, and it became an ACE NPO in 2018 in recognition of its excellence in cultural programming. Across 45 sites, there are 48 trained cultural ambassadors who programme gigs, theatre, exhibitions, workshops and classes for their communities. The service understands its role in being a trusted cultural venue - embedded within and unique to its individual communities.

*“The Covid-19 pandemic has brutally exposed fragility in every area of society, causing immense suffering and exacerbating social and economic fragility. This shifts the focus for social, economic, educational and health policy and re-frames the role and value of culture in society.”<sup>7</sup>*

*“Covid has provided a fresh canvas. Audiences are behaving differently. It’s time to try new things.”*

Stakeholder comment

#### **THEME 2.1: ACCELERATING PROGRESS - DEVELOPING THE SECTOR AND ITS RESILIENCE**

By eroding the gap between ‘residents’ and ‘visitors’, communities will build that vital pride in place, sense of belonging and value of their heritage. By building cultural habits, the foundations of the culture, heritage and visitor sector will be reinforced. This will ensure that residents value, appreciate – and critically, use – their local assets. And, wider social agendas around skills development, improved health and wellbeing, and rural / social isolation will be helped too. As individuals and their communities become better ambassadors for local culture and heritage, these interconnected sectors will collectively benefit from more confident, vibrant and better-informed communities.

*“There’s a reticence, a modesty here. We don’t big up what’s special, we downplay things. It’s part of the personality. You have to dig to find pride in place. It’s not arrogant to be proud. We know why we like it here, and if you want to like it too, that’s great. But you don’t have to.”*

Stakeholder comment

The visitor survey (conducted as part of strategy research) shows a clear brand perception of the Heart of Suffolk that is cosy, pretty and gentle, influenced by its big skies, built heritage environment and rolling countryside. Whilst this is a positive perception, it will have limited appeal for certain audiences, and is difficult to communicate as a point of differentiation, especially to international visitors who will perceive this as a typically English experience. The proximity to London, Gatwick and Harwich, and the associations with Gainsborough and Constable, provide touchpoints for international visitors to create impetus to visit. However, there are several areas which Babergh and Mid Suffolk could better exploit to generate a broader appeal to more audiences and diversify the visitor offer.

The outdoor pursuits offer is present, but at the moment is largely unmanaged and can cause issues for local residents and the

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<sup>7</sup> Culture Drives Impact - The Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board Manifesto



#### **CREATIVE WELLBEING ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP (APPG)**

Suffolk Artlink and Britten Pears Arts sit on the Creative Wellbeing All Party Parliamentary Group alongside the local Integrated Care Partnership. Britten Pears Arts also hosts regular think tanks on this topic, such as singing for chronic pain. Given the local leadership, excellence and expertise in social prescribing and creative health, it would be sensible to explore ways to invest in and expand their programmes in order to address the health and wellbeing needs of more residents.

<https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>

Image: Suffolk Artlink



environment. Paddle sports and wild swimming in the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley have become very popular, especially on sunny days and weekends. However, the volume of river traffic is creating conservation concerns, as well as a lack of management over licensing, which can create friction amongst residents with concerns over traffic, ASB and litter. These concerns can be mitigated by increased information, communication, planning and management.

Additionally, finding ways to encourage access on weekdays or in the cooler months would help disperse visitors in a way that becomes more manageable and mitigates the negative impacts. The proposed flagship Valley Ridge development, when

*“We have too many visitors, so we want to improve experience and engagement rather than attract higher numbers. Capacity is an issue.”*

*“For slow travel, we do it on Suffolk time.”*

*“Huge number of visitors have expectations about sustainable visits, which is currently a niche market.”*

*“Babergh and Mid Suffolk feels like you discovered it. Visitors want to keep feeling that sense of authenticity.”*

Stakeholder comments

launched, will cement the reputation for outdoor and adventure activity throughout the year and bring new visitor markets to the region.

There are dark histories too, especially linking with Essex. The infamous Witchfinder General Matthew Hopkins was born in Great Wenham and worked across the Eastern region profiting from the deaths of suspected witches. Fascination with him and his practices still invoke fear and horror today – and therefore, potential dark tourism. The popularity of Scaresville at Kentwell Hall evidences the demand for this type of grisly event.

*“Quintessentially English, thatches, cottage gardens, coloured plasterwork, peaceful.”*

*“An area that is steeped in tradition, with modern additions. Picturesque views and buildings, with modern shopping facilities in the larger towns and cities. Plenty of unique places to visit and explore.”*

Public survey comments

Screen tourism is already a good business in Babergh, especially with Lavenham featuring in the hugely popular Harry Potter film franchise. In East Anglia screen tourism can be worth up to £4.3m per site per annum.<sup>8</sup> The upcoming Apple+ TV series Masters of

<sup>8</sup> Visit East of England Destination Development Plan



**SPOTLIGHT: THE NATIONAL FOREST**

In 2016, The National Forest decided to use culture and events to magnify and contemporise the message of its vital mission. After planting literally millions of trees, with millions more to go, it wanted to re-engage with its local communities and visitors in a way that communicated everything that they did and stood for. A rather pedestrian Wood Fair was replaced by a celebratory new festival – *Timber* – delivered in partnership with award-winning festival makers Wild Rumpus. The impact on local community engagement in this black-field part of the UK (former mining region) has been marked, and wider awareness, perception and interest in the National Forest has grown markedly as a result.

Air, produced by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg, will provide further impetus for visitors, especially those from North America. When Band of Brothers aired, northern France saw a 40% increase in visitors. Babergh and Mid Suffolk must work collaboratively across its historic airfields, USAF and heritage sites to maximise the tourism potential of this major television series.

Sustainable tourism is another trend, already fuelling an increased domestic visitor market looking to reduce flights and car use. A recent YouGov survey shows that 32% of 'sustainable travellers' are aged 25-39 and have the disposable income to spend whilst travelling. They like to be active and 'off the beaten track'. This is a ripe opportunity for Babergh and Mid Suffolk; the good cycle and walking paths, as well as the local train services, enable a slow-paced and car-free visit<sup>9</sup>. The perception of 'Sleepy Suffolk' can be reframed into 'Sustainable Suffolk'.

Food production as both heritage and contemporary practice provides huge opportunity for tourism, and for sustainable tourism. The idea of the '15-mile meal' can be a reality in Suffolk.

The burgeoning wine industry, especially around the Shotley peninsula and all along the Stour Valley, allows for new visitor markets to explore the produce that is almost unique to this region within the UK. Suffolk Food Hall and Jimmy's Farm both work to promote quality local produce and 'field to fork' experiences. As visitors explore the Food Museum in Stowmarket, they can taste and experience how food is made, and understand the heritage of production.

*"You can't move for cheese-mongers round here, everyone is producing something."*

*"We all eat. Food is culture and is an avenue for everyday creativity. Our collection is rooted in East Anglia and we use it to tell broad and inclusive stories."<sup>10</sup>*

*"You can't walk out your door without falling over a new vineyard."*

Stakeholder comments

There are relatively few destination restaurants in the region, but the sheer volume of artisanal producers is the point of differentiation. Provenance, and quality, matters. Just as Cumbria has become a destination for fine dining, and the Ribble Valley is Lancashire is known for its gastro-pubs, Babergh and Mid Suffolk could become a destination for sustainably sourced food tourism. The area is ripe for a campaign for restauranteurs, hoteliers, local producers and visitor attractions to work collaboratively to promote the quality of local produce combined with low food mileage, with an events and activity programme running alongside. Small changes could have a big impact, and support a circular food economy. The home of the national Food Museum clearly would benefit from further developing a complementary food offer.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2022/nov/19/salt-flats-and-autumn-sun-a-car-free-break-on-suffolks-shotley-peninsula>  
<sup>10</sup> <https://foodmuseum.org.uk/about/>



## FOOD MUSEUM

A bold rebrand from the former Museum of East Anglian Life, the new and refreshed Food Museum is set in 84 acres with access from Stowmarket's town centre. As the UK's only museum which focuses on food, a visit to the Food Museum is a full sensory experience: crops, animals, tastings, demonstrations. The museum is community-focused with a variety of partnerships with other arts, culture and community organisations. There are a dynamic range of events and activities linked to food, environment and nature. The Food Museum is taking all the right steps to become the nationally significant museum it aspires to be.

*“You don’t get big collaborative ideas between the heritage sector here, there’s never a joined-up offer.”*

Stakeholder comment

Another threat to this sector is the current economic crisis. With less disposable income, people will more carefully consider their leisure spending. ‘Trips and treats’ will become harder to justify as purse strings tighten. The sector has responded well to asks around becoming ‘Warm Spaces’. However, heritage buildings are notoriously difficult to heat and the sector operates on low incomes and grants already. The increase in costs will not only affect visitor consumption patterns, but also increase operating costs.

Some sites around the country have already had to close, such as Nottingham Castle and Eastleigh Museum, and many are making redundancies or closing more areas to the public. This fundamentally affects the cultural fabric of the UK, in both the short and long term. There are plenty of ways to respond to this challenge, none of which are a silver bullet but must be part of an overall response. Heritage buildings and landscapes must be able to easily install sustainable infrastructure (e.g. solar panels, EV charging points) without facing huge costs and challenges from planners. In order to protect the future of cultural audiences, providing free entry on certain days throughout the year could enable visitors to attend who otherwise would not be able to afford to visit.

The combined impact of national circumstances such as Brexit, the pandemic and the cost of living crisis means that there is a shortage of skilled workers, especially in tourism. In the culture and heritage sectors, volunteers tend to fill roles such as front of house. The recent Kickstart scheme managed by the Association for Suffolk Museums was a great example of providing paid employment for young people interested in pursuing a career in heritage. In the visitor economy, young people have traditionally filled these roles. But they are no longer willing or able to afford to run a car (public transport being unavailable, especially for evening or weekend shifts) and live on the low pay offered. A seismic shift is necessary – to improve pay and conditions for workers, to improve job stability and career progression opportunities, and to improve perceptions of careers within these sectors – which are often thought of as ‘stop gaps’ rather than aspirational. Schemes such as the pilot VENI programme at West Suffolk College will start to tackle these challenges through partnerships between educators and employers, to develop skilled workers in the visitor economy.

*“Why don’t young people go into the trade? Because they’re boring jobs, badly paid, not enough buzz, working with older visitors.”*

Stakeholder comment

All of these factors will help to develop and build resilience within these sectors, which are disproportionately affected by external challenges but can also disproportionately contribute to other



#### THE PIN MILL STUDIO

A lovely facility on the stunning Shotley peninsula, The Pin Mill Studio offers photography and painting courses as well as a commercial photographic studio for commissioned work.

The location also offers a photography art gallery and cafe with constant inspiration for professionals and amateurs alike as well as contributing to the visitor offer - for example, through the Arthur Ransome walking trail. The studio was established by two photographers moving out of London for a better family life; demonstrating the attractiveness of Suffolk for creatives looking to establish their practice and businesses.

agendas around regeneration, economic growth, improved health and wellbeing and vibrant communities. Investment into schemes which improve, build and grow these sectors will realise benefits not only for the sectors themselves but for the economy and community as a whole. Culture-led regeneration is a well-known tool and driver for inward investment, and forms the basis of New Anglia LEP's 'Culture Drives Impact' strategy for inclusive and sustainable growth. The opportunities provided through the newly announced Rural England Prosperity Fund allocations, especially in relation to rural tourism, can help Babergh and Mid Suffolk capitalise on opportunities identified in this strategy and address issues such as lack of (diverse) accommodation in the area.

*"If you support creative industries then it will pay back for the long term and will generate ancillary spend."*

*"Culture-led development is the only game in town. Retail is not the future. Experiences are."*

Stakeholder comment

*"A rural quite traditionally English area with many olde world villages to explore. Some have many beautiful buildings and churches to enjoy walking around in the peace and quiet these places afford away from the hustle and bustle of larger busier towns."*

Public survey comments

## THEME 2.2: ACCELERATING PROGRESS - DATA, INSIGHT & DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Throughout the engagement process, we heard over and over again that these sectors have issues with promoting their activities and residents struggle to know what's on. Some of this is due to the older population and rural nature of the districts creating digital poverty, meaning that many people will still want newspaper adverts and posters on village notice boards. But much of it is due to an overly complex, underfunded and ineffective destination management system. The former Heart of Suffolk brand had merit in trying to create a cohesive identity for the region. Many towns have closed their visitor information centres (a national trend), reducing the infrastructure to promote activities and events. The likes of Love Lavenham and Visit Hadleigh provide excellent local information and bring together local businesses, but cannot reach beyond relatively local audiences. Visit Suffolk is under resourced, and sits under Visit East of England, which also runs the Head East brand. There are also other town-based destination management initiatives

*"Babergh and Mid Suffolk is clunky, it doesn't have a cohesive identity."*

*"As a resident I've always thought that there isn't enough promotion of existing assets on our doorstep."*

Stakeholder comments



### FLATFORD (NATIONAL TRUST)

Flatford is one of the biggest visitor attractions in the region, preserving and celebrating Constable's famous views and the artistic heritage of the Stour Valley. The National Trust site welcomes over 150k visitors pa. The new development at the Granary will enable an enhanced visitor experience and understanding of the Constable story. However, like many places in the Dedham Vale AONB, there are issues with over-tourism at times. Finding ways to better spread visitors across the week and year would enable a better visitor experience as well as ease conservation and environmental issues for Flatford and the surrounding areas.



of varying quality and reach (through no fault of their own). But it can be confusing for prospective visitors and spreads impact too thinly. Independent commercial voices are not prominent.

Covid-19 has accelerated changes in consumer behaviour that have been building in recent years. It has driven more consumers online. Travel providers and distributors have been forced to explore new product categories, audiences, marketing channels, skills and working practices, policies, technologies, and even business models.

Research indicated that while many experienced suppliers are aware of the need for digital transformation, they are being held back by underpowered booking systems and websites, and also by gaps in digital content, knowledge, skills, and budgets.

The failure to adopt online distribution to connect with markets is making operators less efficient and making it more difficult for to measure and optimise performance. These weaknesses also affect the customer experience - by limiting the ability of consumers and the travel trade to discover, book, and bundle live inventory through internet-connected channels.

We can summarise barriers to digital transformation under four main headings:

1. **Capacity:** businesses lack digital assets such as people (especially staff with digital skills and knowledge), properties such as websites, booking and distribution platforms, performance data, and digital processes or policies. Without these digital assets, businesses do not have the capacity to scale up, to increase efficiency, or to meet changing customer needs. Digital transformation depends on finding these capacity gaps or traps, and on finding ways to plug or release them. Outside direction, support, or funding may be required to kickstart the digital transformation process while promoting a diverse and high-quality culture, heritage and tourism offer.
2. **Capability:** Some providers and distributors have no specialist digital staff, no online systems, no websites, and are not delivering any online marketing or communications. These gaps are relatively easy to identify. Others already have basic digital assets in place - a staff member who manages social media, for instance, or an online appointments system, or a brochure-style website. Whether the businesses are aware of it or not, however, their assets may not be fit-for-purpose in terms of changing customer needs and behaviours or of a changing competitive landscape.



### (MORE THAN) WOOL TOWNS

These historic towns are quintessentially English. Some of the best-preserved mediaeval settlements are here. Grand timber frames and colourful paintwork charm residents and visitors alike. Lavenham, an archetypal Wool Town has over 340 listed buildings, leading to it becoming 'Godric's Hollow' in the Harry Potter film series. The screen tourism industry is growing. Location scouts are attracted by the wealth of natural and built heritage. The heritage offer plays a vital role in the celebration of local stories, building pride in place. Openness to filming and screen tourism provides a contemporary relevance for wider audiences - but the Wool Town story should not be lost in the limelight!

3. **Cost:** Most businesses, before they spend their own money on digital advertising, content, or resources, may first want to see evidence that those investments will deliver a positive return. As they carry on with under-powered websites that do not represent the quality of their products and that do not convert users into customers, businesses risk losing revenue to more digitally-capable competitors. Or in the case of tours, activities, and attractions visitors may simply experience less of Suffolk on their trip - resulting in reduced economic impact and (because visitors are less satisfied) lower rates of retention and referral. In order for a programme of digital transformation to become sustainable, it needs to ensure that industry can obtain data that demonstrates the impact and financial value of transformation efforts.

4. **Culture:** Digital transformation is about changing culture. It's about looking at the qualities that are valuable to customers and using digital systems and processes to reinforce and enhance these qualities. Digital transformation is about changing how organisations work. Support programmes will need to provide oversight and direction, to ensure that businesses are able to frame their digital transformation ambitions in ways that reflect changes in consumer behaviour, travel markets, and technology.

*"I know I need to sort out my website, but I don't have time. I would love to have an online ticketing system, integrated mailing lists, digital transformation. We're stuck in the past but it's expensive and time consuming so I would need to contract someone to deliver it for me, and I can't afford that."*

*"We direct our marketing to Essex, because they invest in and support the culture, heritage and visitor economy. I don't bother with Suffolk."*

Stakeholder comments

These issues are regional (in fact global) and a programme to address them should be looking at at least county level, if not to East Anglia. However, Babergh and Mid Suffolk is more vulnerable to these challenges than its neighbours, since it lacks urban conurbations or natural clusters which might create collective interest from prospective visitors (e.g. Suffolk Coast). Without the brand recognition of a destination, and without a prominent digital presence, it is hard for visitors to find out about Babergh and Mid Suffolk and inspire them to book a visit. If Babergh and Mid Suffolk were to lead a programme like this in partnership with other districts, centred around the cultural and heritage sector, it would potentially have the most to gain.



#### JIMMY'S FARM

Jimmy's Farm & Wildlife Park is a visitor attraction which promotes farming, conservation, and field to fork food. As well as exotic species, the Farm is home to a variety of rare breeds, for example, the Suffolk Punch horse which is so rare it is classed as Critically Endangered. A full range of workshops are available which are directly related to the curriculum, from nursery to further education, and for a variety of subject areas. The Farm is building an events programme which includes cultural experiences such as jazz music, ballroom dancing and wellness walks.

### THEME 3: DRIVING COLLABORATION TO EVOLVE CULTURAL HERITAGE PLACES AND DESTINATIONS

Babergh and Mid Suffolk do not have a strong identity in destination terms. There is a relative lack of infrastructure, especially compared to the Suffolk Coast. It lacks a strong destination brand. Babergh and Mid Suffolk is a relatively anonymous, blank canvas. Rather than perceiving this as a negative thing, it can be seen as an advantage. This strategy proposes that Babergh and Mid Suffolk take an approach of being a 'good neighbour' and refute the reputation of being a 'poor cousin.' The district councils and local partners work across geographical boundaries to deliver their plans. Developing this collaborative mindset further with neighbouring districts and counties will allow Babergh and Mid Suffolk to realise more potential for its assets and communities.

For example, Mid Suffolk will never compete with the popularity of the East Anglian coast. But most visitors must travel through Mid Suffolk to get to the sea. By working with neighbours, and creating joined up itineraries and visitor offers, value can be created.

There are themes ripe for development which would support cultural tourism. The visual arts heritage, as already mentioned, is rich and links to the uniqueness of place. The landmark reopening of Gainsborough's House, the upcoming developments at

National Trust Flatford, and the planned reopening of Benton End, provide a more cohesive visitor offer which will allow the very best of British painting to be understood and enjoyed within a manageable weekend break. Crossing district boundaries again, developing the partnership with Colchester & Ipswich Museums service is a natural one, given their huge collections of Gainsborough and Constable. The connection between Benton End and the Ipswich Art School is another good example.

And there are further angles to be taken: the liberal, radical queer history of the East Anglian School and its students; and local, contemporary visual arts practice and how it is influenced by place.

The exploitation of these through packages, trails and itineraries would diversify the visitor offer and therefore create more resilience within the sector. There are other ways to support this as well, which will be necessary to fully realise the potential of these interconnected sectors. Creating the infrastructure for networking and collaboration will generate more partnerships, deepen understanding and share best practice. Given the large geographical footprint and challenges of public transport, networking events may have to include online and in-person options. Some individual towns have recently started their own collaborative networks, notably Stowmarket Culture Forum and Sudbury Culture Group. But these are in larger conurbations



#### GAINSBOROUGH'S HOUSE

This represents a jewel in the area's heritage and tourism crown. Now it has been boosted by a major capital investment - a superb extension and redisplay elevates its anchor attraction for Sudbury and the surrounding area. It also reconnects with the strong visual art heritage alongside Constable, Benton End and other places/

The challenge now is to make the connections that enable visitors to plan a cultural itinerary visit, and for locals to access the creative and social resources that the venue now offers to a national standard.

*“There is an artistic heritage worth celebrating.”*

*“Many artists and writers have lived and worked here over time, but they are seen as individuals, but not as a cluster or movement. We should be championing the region as a centre of landscape to abstraction art.”*

Stakeholder comments

where there is more critical mass of culture, heritage and creative businesses. Ensuring that rural organisations are part of the conversation is important. Additionally, working across geopolitical boundaries within the county and across county lines will be essential in order to help Babergh and Mid Suffolk realise its full potential, where itineraries and partnerships align. For example, no tour of Constable Country can ignore Christchurch Mansion, despite it being in Ipswich; and the local visual arts heritage should include Alfred Munnings, despite the Munnings Art Gallery being located in Essex.

The infrastructure of culture, heritage venues and visitor attractions is growing. Until recently, it has been largely volunteer-run groups, very small organisations, and then very commercial attractions and historic properties run by major players like the National Trust. The subsidised sector, usually the tier which has both the capacity and the agenda to progress sector

development and new initiatives, is only just beginning to reach a level at which it can have impact.

There are smaller venues, such as the John Peel Centre for Creative Arts, The Bank Arts Centre in Eye and Wingfield Barns, which have the right ambition to step into this tier, but require organisational development to do so. Looking across the region, there could be venues in neighbouring districts and counties which could provide peer support, ‘buddying’ or mentoring to help accelerate the development of these organisations which show potential. Similarly, working cross-sector would help to build an experience economy.



### WINGFIELD BARNS

The majority of their audiences either come from within a 5 mile radius, or from over 20 miles away; this demonstrates the quality of their programming is enough to encourage people to travel whilst also serving a hyperlocal audience. They see rural isolation as no reason to experience cultural poverty. Wingfield makes the most of their beautiful location through new partnerships, such as writing residencies with HighTide Theatre. However, the rural location makes profitability difficult, which discourages risk-taking or programming new work. This is indicative of how the cost of living crisis intersects with rural isolation and can curtail cultural opportunity.



*In memory of Lee Dunford*

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**B. VISION**

Image: LeeStock Festival, Long Melford

# B1. VISION STATEMENT

## 1.1 TOWARDS A POWERFUL CULTURAL VISION

This agenda for what cultural leadership needs to look like in Babergh & Mid Suffolk reflects the views of key stakeholders all across the Districts (and wider county and region), including the Councils. The essence of what we have heard from everyone we spoke to, who are all heavily invested in Babergh & Mid Suffolk’s future cultural, heritage and visitor economy success, was the vital importance of these dominant interlocking values:



Celebrate the offer, connect it, care for and preserve the cultural heritage, with common purpose, and do it all collaboratively. And crucially, these values are a clarion call for the development of a clear long-term vision and accompanying set of ambitions.

Ambition not for grand new cultural institutions or international marketing campaigns, as nice as those would be. But rather clear ambitions for how culture, heritage and the visitor economy can combine in order to enrich the lives of people who live in Babergh & Mid Suffolk, and enrich the experiences of those who visit. The Strategy aims to create new connections and opportunities as a means to generate positive social and economic impacts for and with communities, businesses and stakeholders.

Engagement with culture, heritage and creativity is the soil out of which new ideas, jobs, innovative practices, movements and moments can grow – professionally, personally, as individuals and as place-based communities.

Therefore, the vision of this Cultural, Heritage & Visitor Economy Strategy is:

**Set in a landscape of enduring inspiration, we will work together to create distinctive, welcoming, and vital cultural places and experiences that energise our communities, our enterprises and our visitors to embrace the progressive heart of Suffolk.**

This draws on the landscape that has defined the culture, food and arts of the region for millennia. It makes it clear that this project is a joint one – across districts, towns and villages, but also sectors and agendas. The Suffolk pace and perspective on life is an influence, creating a warm welcome, time to renew and space to be creative.

The vision strikes a balance between local residents, businesses and organisations – who may associate much more with their town or village than a district or region – and the visitor economy which should be complementary to communities, supporting the economy and local services.



### SPOTLIGHT: CREATIVE ‘HUB’ COLCHESTER

Creative Colchester is all about progress through partnership and sector leadership – across culture, digital and creative industries. As a hub, they share, promote, consult, signpost, review, recommend, advocate. And most importantly they seek to follow through as a partner on delivery projects and other initiatives. Colchester has strength in depth: 4 NPOs and over 3,500 creative businesses, 2021’s Art Fund Museum of the Year (Firstsite). Advocacy and collaboration works. Colchester is recognised as the Creative, Cultural and Digital Hub for North Essex, by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) and as a creative cluster, as well as being recognised in the government’s Industrial Strategy Sector Deal for the Creative Industries.



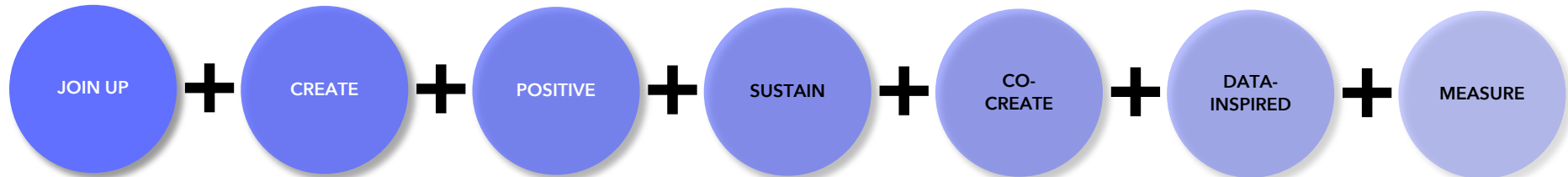
A close-up photograph of a young child with blonde hair, smiling slightly, holding a large, overflowing basket of fresh vegetables. The child is wearing a light-colored t-shirt. The basket is filled with various produce, including several large, dark-skinned potatoes, several bright orange carrots with their green tops still attached, and some leafy greens. The background is a soft-focus field of green plants, likely a vegetable patch or farm. The overall lighting is bright and natural, suggesting an outdoor setting during the day.

Set in a landscape of enduring inspiration, we will work together to create distinctive, welcoming, and vital cultural places and experiences that energise our communities, our enterprises and our visitors to embrace the progressive heart of Suffolk.

## B2. SHARED PRINCIPLES

### OUR SHARED PRINCIPLES

In taking forward the development and delivery of this Strategy, we commit to work together, across places, districts, agendas and sectors to:



Embed **collaborative practices** as all partners work together in developing the new initiatives and responses required by this strategy.

Identify, recognise and support the **potential for creativity** and talent to transform lives and places.

Adopt a **strengths-based approach** in all we do, seeking to foster and empower both established and untapped talent and resources across our districts.

Foster **sustainable development** in Babergh & Mid Suffolk, defined in terms of net carbon neutrality and the creation of sustainable jobs and employment firmly footed within the region.

Ensure **co-created processes** shape how we deliver against key priorities, embedding agency and insight from local communities, audiences and artists.

Be **data informed**, combining local knowledge with a careful analysis of relevant data and other local sources of cultural & creative industry, heritage, visitor economy and wider regeneration-based evidence.

Commit to measurable change, framing our action plans in ways that will allow **effective progress assessment** in short, medium and long-term.

*"If cultural activities are to play a strategic role in supporting urban regeneration initiatives, many new kinds of partnership will be needed - between departments and disciplines, between the public and private sectors and, critically, with the voluntary sector and community organisations."*

The Art of Regeneration: Urban Renewal through Cultural Activity, Charles Landry, Lesley Greene, Francois Matarasso, Franco Bianchini.



# B3. STRATEGIC AIMS & OBJECTIVES

**AIM 1:**  
**BABERGH & MID SUFFOLK WILL SUPPORT ITS RESIDENTS TO LIVE FULL CULTURAL LIVES, BUILDING CULTURAL CONFIDENCE AND CIVIC PRIDE.**

## OBJECTIVES

1. Develop initiatives which enable residents to form connections, experience their local area, and relate to its identity better more fully.
2. Babergh & Mid Suffolk Councils will provide development and support services for cultural and heritage organisations which enable them to realise their potential.
3. Support the LCEP, increasing opportunities for school pupils to learn from local practising artists and creatives, and supporting teachers to develop their professional experience.
4. Increase opportunities for participation and training in cultural and heritage activities, particularly for residents without a background of cultural engagement.
5. Building as standard an approach to cultural programming which includes skills development and work experience opportunities.
6. Support green social prescribing initiatives which enable residents to better connect with landscape, culture and heritage, and including better training and support for organisations hosting prescribed patients.
7. Explore 'volunteering for wellbeing' schemes.
8. Support burgeoning place-based cultural forums to develop and deliver their ambitions.
9. Support and facilitate the development of an events strategy which is 'of place' and grows local talent.
10. Improve facilities, communications and activities which enable marginalised groups to participate in culture and heritage activities (e.g. Changing Places secured funding for accessible toilet facilities).



## PERISCOPE LCEP

Periscope is the Local Cultural Education Partnership working across Babergh, Mid Suffolk and Bury St Edmunds, which aims to build connections between schools and arts, culture and creative industries. Tiny Plays, Big Ideas was a project where school students worked together to develop plays, which were then performed by professional actors on stage at the Theatre Royal. This was a great project for the students, but it also invited parents & guardians into the theatre to see their children's work, thereby building cultural engagement across the family unit.

## AIM 2:

**THE CULTURE, HERITAGE AND VISITOR ECONOMY SECTORS WILL BE SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT AND WILL CHAMPION THE REGION'S DISTINCTIVE QUALITIES.**

### OBJECTIVES

1. Embed Babergh & Mid Suffolk's 'sense of place', brand values and personality - with a new singular destination brand name based on the 'heart of Suffolk' that more local places can use to present the variety of the visitor offer. This then can provide a gateway to more specific sub-brands, like Constable Country, and Wool Towns.
2. Develop new brand-led marketing communications to drive effective and consistent messaging, growing its appeal as a destination to visit and stay, aligning with East of England planning, research and campaign delivery.
3. Position, empower and support the cultural, heritage & visitor economy to harness opportunities for investment, innovation and growth.
4. Develop programmes which manage overtourism, including educating visitors on how to treat the environment, and finding ways to disperse visitors by time and place, e.g. peak periods, congested 'honeypots'.
5. Find new uses for empty or underutilised (heritage) buildings, for meanwhile and more permanent uses.
6. Support all venues, but particularly heritage and listed sites to improve their environmental sustainability.
7. Support venues and organisations to improve their accessibility (physical, attitudinal, marketing and communications) for a range of audiences and visitors.
8. Explore new visitor markets, including but not limited to the Purple Pound, wellbeing markets (including leisure cycling and outdoor activity breaks).
9. Ensure clear (sector and public-targeted) information provision and data capture are effectively managed, including a structured annual research programme.
10. Harness digital as a transformative 'growth and innovation' tool for sector and individual business development.
11. Support diversification of the local visitor offer, especially accommodation infrastructure and proactively support new developments.
12. Research ways to encourage culinary innovation and entrepreneurship to boost the eating out / evening economy.
13. Provide quality improvement and business development advice regarding existing schemes and peer support.



### SPOTLIGHT: GENERATING DIGITAL REACH - GENERATING IN NEW WAYS

It's not news to say that the Internet can reach (global) audiences in ways that traditional media cannot. Quirky and surprising viral stories can capture the imagination, but they can also be supported. People who could never visit The Gamble could become users, even fans. In 2019, nearly half a million people tuned in online to watch a live stream tour of the Village Museum in Ruddington, Nottinghamshire. Feixue Huangdu, a Chinese-national Masters degree student made the webcast and built a huge audience back home during her time studying in the UK.

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-48758680](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-48758680)

**AIM 3:  
BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK'S CULTURE, HERITAGE AND  
VISITOR SECTORS WILL WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH  
NEIGHBOURING ORGANISATIONS, DISTRICTS AND COUNTIES  
TO TRIAL NEW APPROACHES.**

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Develop a distinctive approach to sustainable tourism, inspired by the local food production heritage.
2. Develop an experience economy driven by culture and heritage which is visible in towns and communities.
3. Explore cross-sector and cross-boundary ways of working, especially innovative commissioning models, trails and thematic packages, e.g. food, visual arts heritage.
4. Develop and test brand offer, and market via travel trade / media trips through experience-based offer.
5. Utilise sub-regional infrastructure to the best effect for Babergh & Mid Suffolk's residents, businesses and visitors.
6. Work outside of comfort zones, employ a spirit of piloting and risk taking, with an understanding that models must be agile and evolving.
7. Commit to a faster rate of sector innovation which includes the commercial and subsidised sectors working collaboratively.
8. Support development of niche 'getaway' opportunities in the business tourism conference market.
9. Support the newly invested signature attractions as audience / visitor drivers and experience to fully develop potential as gateway experiences to the wider area, e.g. Shotley Peninsula, Sudbury etc.
10. Review and explore modelling for 'pilot & roll-out' initiatives, such as the wayfinding strategy in Stowmarket.
11. Identify and develop entrepreneurial opportunities and training partnerships to upskill the workforce and encourage the retention of hospitality students, notably working with the Further and Higher Education institutions.

Local partnerships and communities will become strong partners and leaders in increasing cultural participation – inspired by place, contributing to civic pride, environmental, educational, skills development and health & wellbeing goals. The sector will be supported with targeted and place-specific development programmes to better celebrate Babergh & Mid Suffolk's resident and visitor offer through its creative businesses, culture, heritage, and natural environment partners, telling our stories in a way that builds the local economy through strategic partnership.



**CENTRE FOR CULTURE AND HERITAGE**

The University of Suffolk continues to develop this Centre, building a cross-faculty team including arts & culture, creativity, history, law, architecture and English. In seeking to be the 'hub' for Creative Suffolk, CCH's aims include:

- Being a hub of creative excellence for research and creative projects;
- Connecting history and culture through events, exhibitions, research, education & outreach;
- Working with communities, individuals, and organisations in order to support the region's culture and heritage;
- Engaging with international partners.

[www.uos.ac.uk/content/centre-culture-heritage](http://www.uos.ac.uk/content/centre-culture-heritage)





**C. STRATEGY**

Image: Pin Mill, Chelmondiston. Courtesy, Anthony Cullen



# C1. A ROUTE MAP - CONVERGING COMMON PURPOSE ACROSS BABERGH & MID SUFFOLK

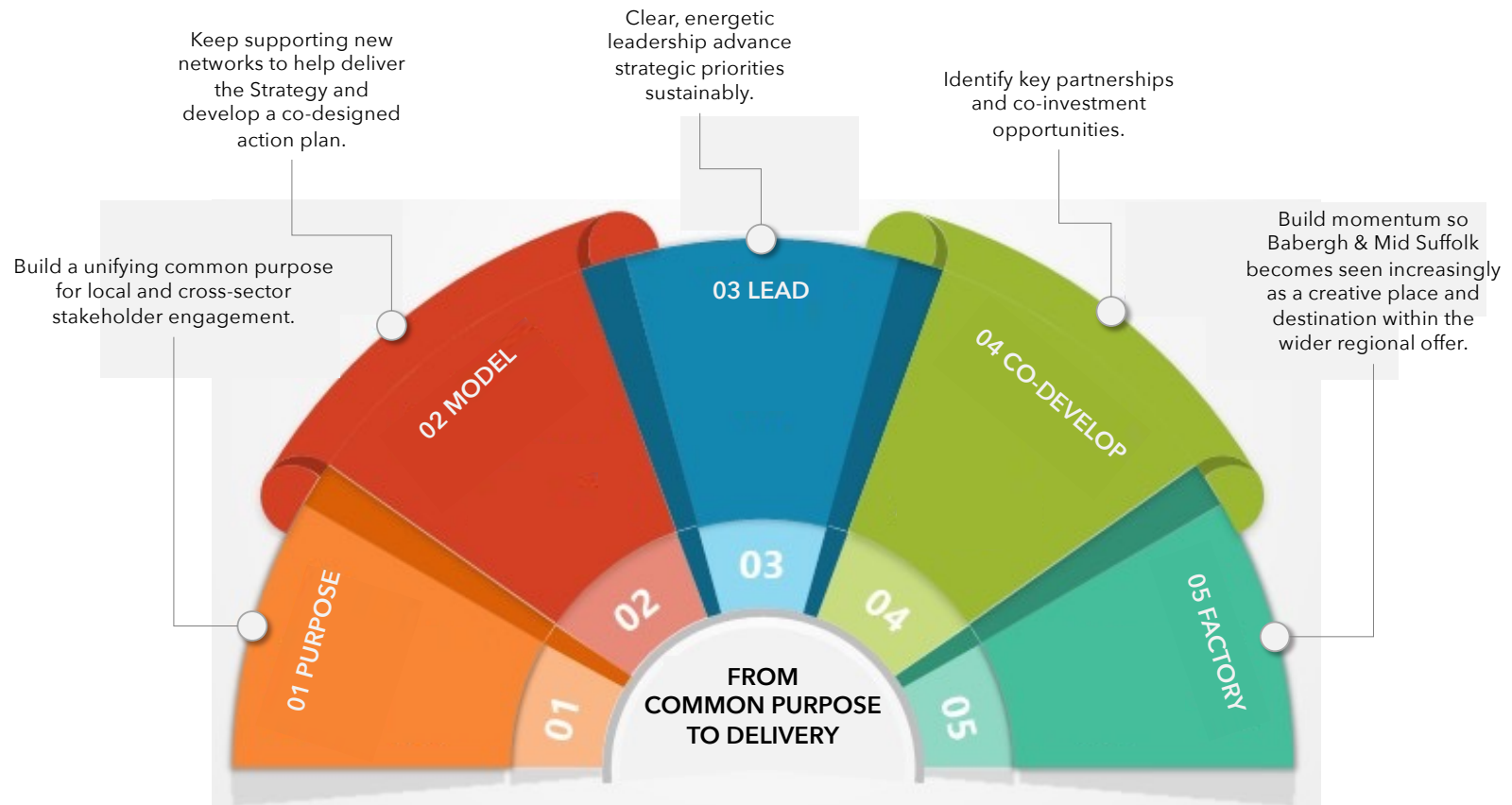
The cultural, heritage and visitor economy sectors will look to the Councils for strategic leadership (and guidance and advice for regional connectivity, funding and advocacy of course).

## FROM COMMON PURPOSE TO DELIVERY

A strategic process to drive implementation of the Strategy.

In viewing the cultural, heritage, creative industries and tourism sectors as regenerators, social and economic value creators, the Council can respond with tools, expertise and support to drive demonstrable impacts, including through nurturing cultural partnership and entrepreneurship.

The Council can be a fulcrum for cultural development, co-designing (across departments and with external partners) and deploying local and hyperlocal responses and programmes, as well as districts-wide.



# C2. ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK

## C2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Action Plan covers an initial 2-year period, with annual reviews and updates through the duration of the period covered by the Strategy. It is designed as a live, transitional plan to guide actions and build capacity over this period. It should be seen and used as an iterative document, being updated on a regular basis (at least annually, but ideally much more often), as impacts, insights and opportunities present, through programme investment and evaluation.

The Action Plan is structured according to strategic priorities and their underlying objectives. Specifically, where possible, it:

- Sets realistic targets;
- Identifies the actions needed to achieve the target;
- Allocates responsibility to task leaders and supporters;
- Defines timescales;
- Identifies methods for evaluating the success rate and impact of each activity against the relevant target;
- Suggests indicative costs where possible.

While every attempt has been made to allocate responsibility, timescale, and resource requirements for each action, implementation of the Action Plan depends on a clear locus and structure for cultural development leadership being agreed / achieved.

## C2.2 PROGRESSIVE FOCUS

The Year 1 focus in is to get up and running. Year 2 is more about implementing plans, building on Year 1 activities. As lessons are learnt, and new circumstances and opportunities emerge, proposed actions should be reviewed and refined.

## C2.3 CO-PRODUCTION OF AN ACTION PLAN

The development of the action plan will be a fully collaborative process. As such this sample framework is very much a starting point only.

OBJECTIVES TO ACTIONS	Priority	Timescale	Lead / partners	Resource	Evaluation
<b>Aim / Objective</b>					
Action...					
Action...					

## C3. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This Strategy is all about making Babergh & Mid Suffolk a more attractive and dynamic place for residents and visitors alike.

Babergh & Mid Suffolk aspires to be one of the UK's greenest, most welcoming, most liveable places, with residents and visitors inspired by its culture, heritage, food & drink, landscape and the diversity and quality of its accessible experiences and opportunities.

This Strategy sets out a visitor economy vision of a more integrated year-round offer; a unified presentation of the districts (and the distinctive places that make the whole) as a timeless yet contemporary destination.

This Strategy also sets out how more effective delivery partnerships can help Babergh & Mid Suffolk realise its ambitions to become more visible, connected and competitive as a place to be and a place to visit through its unique and rich culture and (natural and built) heritage. This can make a compelling case to build civic pride and participation, attract and retain visitors, continue to develop place-based and thematic partnerships and appeal to funders and investors.

In support of these aims this Strategy seeks to improve the quality, reach and effectiveness of Babergh & Mid Suffolk's cultural, heritage and visitor offer. Locals can discover and rediscover 'their' part of Suffolk, and visitors can find their own brand of ownership of a special place that is full of hidden and not-so-hidden gems.

The Strategy also seeks to be a vital foundation of wider economic development efforts for Babergh & Mid Suffolk, enabling the key partners to come together in more effective working structures that will allow them to compete successfully for the necessary supporting investment vital to future product, service and infrastructure development and promotion.

Babergh & Mid Suffolk's vision is to create a tourism offer that is:

- **Diverse** - The range and quality of opportunities and experiences accessible from Babergh & Mid Suffolk is second to none in the region.
- **Differentiated** - Babergh & Mid Suffolk is recognised and promoted as a vital cultural heritage hub for Suffolk and the region - a distinctive, welcoming, and captivating place.
- **Dynamic** - An enriched, joined up, cultural heritage-led tourism-friendly offer driving community and visitor growth, sustainable social and economic success.

What comes next is the important bit. It is all about continuing to build the local, district and regional partnerships that can help to deliver the ambitions of this Strategy for Babergh & Mid Suffolk's communities, visitors, businesses and partners. This starts with an action plan, and a clear, collective response to both the exciting opportunities and challenges in meeting them with the energy, resources and capacity they deserve.



### BENTON END

The philosophy of the art school was an informal, holistic education with a sense of the avant-garde and a radicalism which enabled creativity across disciplines spanning painting, literature, botany, cookery, horticulture, environmentalism and more. Recently acquired by the Garden Museum, a project is underway to reopen the site to visitors, artists and creative practitioners, and the community, all in the spirit of the School's founders. Due to reopen in 2027, it will be an important addition to the wider artistic heritage offer as well as a resource for contemporary practice. More significantly, Benton End will be vital for the community through a full education, wellbeing, and environmental programme.





**D. ADDENDUM**

Image: John Peel Centre for Creative Arts, Stowmarket



# D1. LIST OF CONSULTEES

Role	Organisation
Executive Director	Visit East of England
Innovation and Sectors Manager	New Anglia LEP
Co-Director	Suffolk Art Link
Chief Executive	MENTA
Arts Development Manager	Suffolk County Council
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Business and Entrepreneurship	University of Suffolk
Operations & Business Development Manager	Screen Suffolk
Head of Creative Programmes	DanceEast
Growing Places Fund Senior Coordinator	New Anglia LEP
Director	The Food Museum
Director	Gainsborough's House
Development Officer	Gainsborough's House
Events & Theatre Manager	The Regal Theatre and Cinema
Manager	Wingfield Barns
Development Officer	St. Peter's Church / Arts Venue
Project Founder, Painter	Pasture Place
Owner	Helmingham Hall & Gardens
Manager	Flatford Mill
Co-Owner	Suffolk Food Hall / Shotley Tourism Action Group
VE Strategic Lead, AONB Officer	Suffolk County Council
Strategic Lead for the Visitor Economy	Suffolk Growth Partnership
Brand Manager	Visit Suffolk
Chair	The Bank Arts Centre, Eye
Founder, CEO, Strategic Management Coordinator	Kinetic Science
Head of Engagement	Suffolk Wildlife Trust
	Stowmarket Stories

**One-to-one consultations** were conducted with representatives from a variety of culture, heritage, tourism creative and other sectors. The tables below set out who has responded to consulting approaches to date, from a larger database of over 150 contacts, which also served the workshops.

Role	Organisation
Administrative Officer	High Tide
Author	Easterly Artists, Suffolk Open Studios
Co-Director	Suffolk Artlink
Marketing and Digital Communications Officer	Eastern Angles
Director	Folk East
Secretary	Association for Suffolk Museums
CEO	Suffolk Libraries
Head of Primary Care Partnerships; Deputy Director of Partnerships and Alliance Delivery	East Suffolk CCG; Ipswich and East Suffolk Alliance
Chair	Mid Suffolk Disability Forum
Project Director	Benton End
Chair	Periscope LCEP

Organisations	
All About Ipswich	Frinfings
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils	Gainsborough's House
Churches Conservation Trust	Hadleigh Town Council
De Vere House Accommodation	Haughley Park Ltd
Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Heat Design
Dream On CIC & Blossom Charity	Hintlesham Hall Hotel
EA Festival	Jimmy's Farm & Wildlife Park
East Anglian Festival Network	John Peel Centre for Creative Arts
East Bergholt Parish Council	Little Hall Museum, Lavenham
Eye Heritage Group	MENTA
Eye Magazine	New Anglia LEP
Eye Town Council	Oakmere Solutions Ltd
Eyes Open Community Interest Company	Orchestras Live
Footprints Theatre Company	Rattlesden River Valley Network
Freelancers	Rectory Manor Hotel

A series of [stakeholder engagement workshops](#) were held. These workshops tested some early and emerging themes developed from the desk research and one-to-one consultations already undertaken, through use of stimulus questions and facilitated discussions. Attendees included community, cultural, heritage, tourism, hospitality, leisure and voluntary groups and organisations; businesses; creative practitioners; and Council officers, with representatives from the following organisations:

Organisations	
River Stour Festival	The Banks Arts Centre
SCC1	The Bridge Project
Screen Suffolk	The ERD Connection
Stow Stories	The Food Museum
Stowmarket Town Council	The Hotel Folk
Sudbury Common Lands Charity	The Kinetic Science Foundation
Sudbury Museum Trust	The Offshoot Foundation
Sudbury Town Council	The Old Rectory, Kettlebaston
Suffolk Artlink	The Pin Mill Studio
Suffolk Chamber of Commerce	The Quay Theatre
Suffolk County Council	Thomas Gainsborough School
Suffolk Growth Partnership	Visit Hadleigh
Suffolk Libraries	Wingfield Barns

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This is a representative rather than exhaustive list. A number of other articles, databases, academic and other studies and other reports will have been used in addition to this selection.



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