

## For publication

### Draft Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy 2021-2026

<b>Meeting:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2021
<b>Cabinet portfolio:</b>	Town Centres and Visitor Economy Economic Growth
<b>Directorate:</b>	Economic Growth
<b>For publication</b>	

#### 1.0 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To consider and approve the draft Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy (2021-26) for wider consultation.

#### 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet considers the draft Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy (2021-26) and subject to further comments, approves the document for wider consultation.
- 2.2 That delegated authority is given to the Service Director Economic Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Town Centres and Visitor Economy, to make amendments and corrections to the Draft Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy and associated supporting material to make it ready for consultation.
- 2.3 That following public consultation, the final version of the Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy is presented to Cabinet and Council for consideration and approval.

#### 3.0 Reason for recommendations

- 3.1 To progress the adoption of the Chesterfield Visitor Economy Strategy (2021-26).

## **4.0 Background**

- 4.1 The Chesterfield Growth Strategy (2019-23) sets out the role of the Council in supporting the economic growth and regeneration of the borough. The strategy includes the objective 'support the growth of Chesterfield as both a visitor destination and hub', reflecting the Council's view that the visitor economy has the potential to make a more significant contribution to the economic success of the borough.
- 4.2 The Council currently plays the lead role in delivering visitor economy services at the local level, including the operation of a purpose-built Visitor Information Centre and cultural venues, undertaking marketing activities, delivering a programme of events and the wider management of the town centre.
- 4.3 Whilst visitor spend already supports a number of jobs in the borough (notably in the retail and hospitality sectors), the current visitor offer could best be described as 'low key' and is primarily based on Chesterfield's role as a historic market town. However, there are a number of developments either proposed or underway, the successful delivery of which will provide a significant boost to the visitor economy. These include the Northern Gateway, Revitalising the Heart of Chesterfield and Connecting Chesterfield projects in the town centre, the private sector-led development of PEAK Resort, and in the longer-term, the arrival of high speed rail services at Chesterfield rail station.
- 4.4 In order to capitalise on these initiatives and identify other opportunities for the further development of Chesterfield's visitor economy, consultant's Team Tourism have been appointed (via an open tender process) to prepare a Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan that will guide Council activities in this area over the next five years.
- 4.5 A Steering Group has been established to oversee the preparation of the Visitor Economy Strategy, with the political lead provided by the Cabinet Member for Town Centres and Visitor Economy. The Steering Group has met with the consultants on a regular basis and has been fully engaged in the process of developing the strategy.

## **5.0 Draft Visitor Economy Strategy**

- 5.1 The development of the draft Visitor Economy Strategy has been underpinned by the preparation of a 'Situation Report' which summarises where Chesterfield currently stands as a visitor destination (attached as Appendix 1 to this report).
- 5.2 The Situation Report is based on a review of available policy documentation and secondary research (including the Council's own baseline analysis of the visitor economy), primary consumer research, consultation with key stakeholders (both Council and external) and site visits.
- 5.3 The report highlights key strengths relating to accessibility (both road and rail) and scale of catchment population, with 23 million people living within a two hour drive time. However, within the regional catchment, the consumer research undertaken suggests that Chesterfield is not strongly established in the marketplace as a visitor destination, with only 30% having visited for the day or an overnight stay in the last five years. Equally, and reflecting a future market growth opportunity, 37% of respondents (who had not previously visited) would consider visiting Chesterfield in future.
- 5.4 The strongest consumer association with Chesterfield was the Crooked Spire, with over half of respondents associating this very strongly with Chesterfield. Other strong associations were geographical factors, with Chesterfield being considered close to the Peak District, easy to get to, having a variety of attractions in the surrounding area and close to Chatsworth House.
- 5.5 The analysis identifies the main opportunities for market growth over the next five years as being a result of: the potential to increase penetration in Chesterfield's existing markets, particularly day visitors from home and visitors to the Peak District; the plans that are being actively progressed to revitalise Chesterfield town centre, making it a more attractive place to visit; the current staycation boom as the country emerges from the Covid pandemic; and the development of PEAK Resort with the market opportunities this will create.
- 5.6 The overall purpose of the Visitor Economy Strategy (attached as Appendix 2) is to attract more visitors to Chesterfield, generating additional visitor spend that will support existing employment and create new jobs in the local economy. It seeks to achieve this by making Chesterfield a great place to be; a place that people enjoy visiting and

spending time in. As such, the Strategy is underpinned by a focus on quality place making, seeking to reinforce a distinctive Chesterfield identity that differentiates us from other destinations. Quality places will provide the setting for the further development of an experiential and leisure based offer that attracts new visitors to Chesterfield and encourages a high level of repeat visits.

- 5.7 The core proposition, which seeks to encapsulate how Chesterfield will position itself in relation to the development of the visitor economy, is as follows:

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

The aims of the Strategy are:

- Aim 1: To raise the profile of Chesterfield as a place to visit.
- Aim 2: To generate direct visitor spend which will create and support jobs in the local economy.
- Aim 3: To support and accelerate the revitalisation of the town centre and the wider borough.

- 5.8 Whilst the Strategy will have a particular focus on Chesterfield town centre (reflecting the fact that this is where the key visitor assets are located and also where the Council is best placed to make a difference), it will support sector partners in taking forward key opportunities across the borough, including PEAK Resort, Chesterfield Canal developments and projects in the Staveley Town Deal programme.

- 5.9 The Strategy will strengthen Chesterfield as a visitor destination by focussing on seven main priorities and these priorities will provide the strategic framework for the delivery of Council-led, or partnership related, activities in the Action Plan (to be completed). The strategic priorities (which are not listed in any order of priority) are as follows:

SP1: Quality Place Making – enhancing the overall quality of place to make Chesterfield a great place to visit and spend time in.

SP2: The Crooked Spire Experience – to build a stronger USP (Unique Selling Point) for the town and increase visitor dwell times.

SP3: PEAK Resort – supporting the development of PEAK Resort as a major new driver of visitor demand in the borough.

SP4: Speciality & Festival Markets and Events – a year round programme of markets and events to fully capitalise on the future investment in the Market Place and New Square.

SP5: Culture and Heritage - enhancing Chesterfield's cultural and heritage offer through: the further development of the Stephenson Memorial Hall as a cultural venue; the development of a series of 'inspired' artworks and architectural features that will reinforce a distinctive identity for Chesterfield; a year round programme of cultural festivals; and the roll-out of an interpretation plan to bring Chesterfield's heritage stories to life.

SP6: Hotel Development – seeking to secure further investment in hotel development to increase Chesterfield's capacity to attract more staying visitors.

SP7: 'Chesterfield Inspired' Marketing - to raise awareness of Chesterfield as a place to visit, targeting the key visitor markets.

- 5.10 In relation to targets and aspirations, the Visitor Economy Strategy sets out both recovery and aspirational growth scenarios to the end of 2025. Under the recovery scenario, the visitor economy (reflecting the national picture) shows full recovery from the Covid pandemic by 2024 and some additional growth by the end of 2025. In the aspirational growth scenario, the visitor economy grows its day visitor market at a rate of 15% above the recovery scenario (generating an additional 720,000 visits a year by the end of 2025) and a further 10% for staying visitors (generating an extra 44,000 staying visits by end of 2025). Combined these markets will generate over £30m of additional visitor expenditure, supporting the creation of 350-400 jobs.
- 5.11 Separately, work is also underway to review current delivery structures in relation to visitor economy services. Whilst this work is on-going, the Strategy notes the potential for the further strengthening and integration of delivery structures, notably in relation to destination marketing (a role currently delivered by the Council, Destination Chesterfield and Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire).

## **6.0 Next Steps**

6.1 Stakeholder engagement has already taken place as part of the process of preparing the Situation Report, including a workshop with Scrutiny Project Group and a presentation to (and survey of) Chesterfield Champion businesses. Subject to comments by Cabinet, it is proposed that a further round of consultation takes place on the draft Visitor Economy Strategy (including stakeholders, businesses and the public), with a view to reporting back findings and Cabinet (and Council) signing-off the final version of the strategy at a future meeting. This will also include presentation of the Action Plan and any recommendations following the review of service delivery options.

## **7.0 Alternative options**

7.1 The alternative option would have been to not develop a visitor economy strategy and action plan and continue with current arrangements whereby the Council's Growth Strategy provides the broad strategic framework and activities are guided by different team service plans. However, the preferred option, as covered in this report, delivers the action 'to prepare a Visitor Economy Action Plan to help realise opportunities to grow both the number and value of visits to Chesterfield' which has previously been agreed and is included in the Economic Programme of the Growth Strategy.

7.2 The preferred option will better support economic growth and job creation by providing an independent and evidence-based review of where Chesterfield currently stands as a visitor destination. And, leading on from this, identifying a focussed series of priorities that set out where the Council is best placed to add value to support the growth of the visitor economy in future.

## **8.0 Implications for consideration - Council Plan**

8.1 The development of the Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan supports the achievement of the Council Plan aim of 'making Chesterfield a thriving borough' including each of the objectives 'Chesterfield borough - a great place to live, work and visit', 'vibrant town centres' and 'building a stronger business base'. It also supports the aim of 'improving the quality of life for local people', for example, through a focus on high quality place making in the town centre and borough. We have also considered the implications around the Council Plan action for the Commemorations

review, in particular maximising our cultural and industrial heritage with activity such as interpretation boards.

## **9.0 Implications for consideration – Financial and value for money**

9.1 The procurement of consultants to prepare the Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan has been funded via retained business rates funding. The development of the Action Plan (to be completed) will result in the identification of new initiatives and activities and consideration will need to be given to whether these actions can be delivered through the careful targeting / re-allocation of existing resources, or whether additional funding will be required.

## **10.0 Implications for consideration – Legal**

10.1 There are no legal implications highlighted in this report.

## **11.0 Implications for consideration – Human resources**

11.1 There are no human resource implications highlighted in this report. However, the review of service delivery options could have implications for human resources and this will be reported at a future Cabinet meeting.

## **12.0 Implications for consideration – Risk management**

Description of the Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigating Action	Impact	Likelihood
There is a risk that the Council's approach to supporting the growth of the visitor economy will be less focused and more fragmented in the absence of the strategy	L	M	The Visitor Economy Strategy provides an evidence based and coherent framework / programme for the future delivery of Council activity	L	L
Further Covid waves could result in a	H/M	M/L	Continue to implement actions	M	M/L

disproportionate impact on visitor economy businesses (retail, hospitality and leisure)			in the Council's Recovery Plan, with a particular focus on the Covid safe functioning of the town centre		
Bids for funding to support future delivery of visitor economy initiatives are less likely to be successful in the absence of the Visitor Economy Strategy	H	M	The Visitor Economy Strategy strengthens business case making for future funding applications.	M	M/L

### **13.0 Implications for consideration – community wellbeing**

13.1 The Visitor Economy Strategy includes a number of priorities (for example 'speciality and festival markets', 'culture and heritage' and 'town centre place making') that will deliver activities that will promote community wellbeing and help improve overall quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

### **14.0 Implications for consideration – Economy and skills**

14.1 The principal aim of the Visitor Economy Strategy is to increase the number of visitors (and associated visitor spend) that come into Chesterfield borough in order to support existing employment and new job creation. The town centre is facing many structural challenges (such as the growth of on-line retail and competition from larger destinations) which are acting to take footfall out of the town centre. Many of the activities in the strategy are specifically focussed on attracting new footfall to the town centre (as the key visitor asset), which will help to underpin the viability of existing businesses in the centre and also support new start-ups.

### **15.0 Implications for consideration – Climate Change**

15.1 Chesterfield has an opportunity to establish itself as a sustainable visitor hub through the provision of gateway facilities and low carbon transport for visitors to the Peak District and surrounding area. Chesterfield is

already a key eastern rail gateway for the Peak District and the importance of this role will increase in future with the arrival of high speed rail services. Chesterfield has established public transport links to destinations such as Bakewell and Matlock as well as local attractions such as Bolsover Castle. There is an expanding local cycle network (including links to the Trans-Pennine Trail) alongside investment in electric vehicle charging points in town centre car parks. Attracting additional visitors (and associated spend) also helps sustain local businesses and the wider range of facilities that enhance the quality of life for our residents, for example theatres, attractions, recreation opportunities, events and festivals.

## 16.0 Implications for consideration – Equality and diversity

16.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed when the activities in the Action Plan have been finalised and be informed by the consultation.

### Decision information

<b>Key decision number</b>	1051
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

### Document information

<b>Report author</b>	
Neil Johnson Service Director (Economic Growth) Matthew Southgate Senior Economic Development Officer (Economic Growth)	
<b>Appendices to the report</b>	
Appendix 1	Situation Report
Appendix 2	Draft Visitor Economy Strategy