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1. INTRODUCTION
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

AECOM was commissioned to undertake a Visitor Destination Plan (VDP) for St Edmundsbury Borough Council. The VDP provides a shared vision and framework for the future development of the visitor economy of Bury St Edmunds (see Section 1.3) up to 2025.

The VDP provides the framework and a rationale for further investment setting out specific actions that partners can work together on to further develop the visitor, tourism and leisure economy in Bury St Edmunds and the wider setting.

It articulates the roles of different stakeholders and identifies clear actions on how the area can attract further visitors and maximise the economic benefit created. The VDP links to other local and sub-regional initiatives and strategies and requires the support of stakeholders at the local, sub-regional and inter-regional level to be a success.

Running concurrent to this VDP was similar assessments for Babergh and Mid Suffolk, and Ipswich. In some instances comparisons are made between the three VDP’s to help contextualise findings.

Figure 1.1: Key Towns in Suffolk
1.2 Aims of VDP

The aims of the VDP are to:

- Review and understand existing markets, visitor types and competition;
- Identify potential growth sectors and identify any barriers;
- Draw comparisons and lessons from other relevant destinations in terms of the growth sectors and how Destination Management Organisations (DMO’s) operate;
- Identify actions that link visitor economy activity with current strategies and funding sources; and
- Produce an indicatively costed and timed action plan targeting growth opportunities and markets and providing a steer for future investment.

1.3 Tourism Characteristic Areas

It is clear that the tourism offer of Bury St Edmunds covers a wider area than the town itself. This has since been reflected in the consultation process whereby the surrounding countryside is consistently identified as being one of the main assets from which the visitor economy of Bury St Edmunds can prosper.

With this in mind, the study area is broken down into two distinct tourism characteristic areas, namely:

- Bury St Edmunds (as shown in Figure 1.2). This focuses on the town centre itself with it being the main heritage, retail and cultural core.
- Outer Bury St Edmunds (although moving forward / in marketing this should be coined Bury St Edmunds and Beyond (as shown in Figure 1.3). The visitor economy of the main town of Bury St Edmunds has an interrelationship with the wider countryside of Suffolk, particularly the rest of St Edmundsbury borough, other parts of West Suffolk and Mid Suffolk. There are accommodation enterprises in this area which service visitors to Bury St Edmunds. Additionally, there are attractions in this area that complement the visitor offer of the main town (i.e. people staying in Bury St Edmunds and visiting them).

The VDP reflects the different characteristics and interrelationships of the two tourism characteristic areas, and demonstrates how they can be utilised to deliver a more coherent visitor offer by combining their different assets and attractions for mutual benefit.

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1 These have been defined in consultation with St Edmundsbury Council and partners. However, the original boundary for ‘outer Bury St Edmunds’ incorporated Newmarket. However, it was felt that Newmarket, with a distinct brand and its own DMO, was a destination in itself and a potential competitor.
Figure 1.2: Bury St Edmunds

Figure 1.3: Outer Bury St Edmunds / Bury St Edmunds and Beyond
1.4 Approach

For the VDP to be a success it is important that all relevant stakeholders are engaged. The approach adopted for the VDP includes a range of primary and secondary research to capture the views of relevant stakeholders.

The approach to the work included:

• A review of local and national research, policy and strategy;
• A number of visits to key towns, villages and attractions;
• An assessment of local data, policy and strategy including marketing material, visitor numbers and research, company websites, the events programme and STEAM;
• An examination of tourism and marketing websites;
• An electronic business survey which was completed by 74 organisations that provide tourism accommodation or are visitor attractions. The full results from the business survey are presented in Appendix C of Document 1; and
• 5 workshops and a number of telephone interviews with a range of public and private sector stakeholders.

1.5 Report Structure

This is the second of two documents that make up the VDP. The first document set out the baseline and includes the strategic and local context, an audit of the tourism and visitor economy, and an overview of the current visitor market and economic impact. It also included results from the business survey, case studies of how different DMOs are structured, and benchmarks in terms of potential growth areas for Ipswich.

The following report represents the main VDP document in that it sets out the vision and priorities for developing and improving the visitor offer of Bury St Edmunds and Outer Bury St Edmunds for the next 10 years. The report is structured as follows:

• Section 2 provides a summary of the baseline in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis.
• Section 3 establishes the direction of the VDP by highlighting the overarching principles, a vision statement, target markets and high level objectives;
• Section 4 details the specific actions for developing the destination offer;
• Section 5 sets out sets out recommendations for developing a DMO. It includes the proposed structure, the spatial remit, responsibilities, resources, potential funding sources, and the process for evaluating and monitoring progress of the VDP.

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STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) is a model for measuring local tourism activity.
2. SWOT ANALYSIS
2. SWOT ANALYSIS

Document 1 established the baseline for the VDP. Table 2.1 summarises this in the form of a SWOT analysis. The strengths and weaknesses relate to the destination as it stands, whereas, the opportunities and threats refer to the context and largely external.

The Action Plan seeks to build upon the strengths, address the weaknesses, pursue the opportunities and minimise the impacts of the threats.

Table 2.1: SWOT Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing assets</td>
<td>Specific attractions and open spaces</td>
<td>Lack of family attraction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Retail/shopping</td>
<td>Perception around poor car-parking</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Food and drink</td>
<td>Interpretation/signage/access</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Events/festivals</td>
<td>Poor products at market</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Quality of tourism accommodation</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Growing cultural offer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Geography and access</td>
<td>Good road links</td>
<td>Strength of nearby destinations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Heritage/history</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of surrounding natural environment</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Access to markets – geographic position in relation to large population</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compact town</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Market/ Visitors</td>
<td>Affluent visitors</td>
<td>Number of day visitors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strong satisfaction with assets/attractions</td>
<td>Low levels of visitor expenditure</td>
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<td>Year-round offer</td>
<td>Visitor website(s)</td>
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<td>Coach trips unable to stop / visitors only accessing markets</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Limited range of visitor markets</td>
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<td>Support / Promotion</td>
<td>Tourist guides/TICs</td>
<td>Promotion/branding – uncoordinated, lack of social media, West Suffolk brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public sector resource/ policy support</td>
<td>Low profile as a visitor destination</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private sector ambition</td>
<td>No DMO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>BID</td>
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<td>County wide (Visit Suffolk)</td>
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<td>Online presence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>Threats</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific activities</td>
<td>New events&lt;br&gt;New trails (linking assets) / access / interpretation&lt;br&gt;New hotel development&lt;br&gt;Better use of existing assets in and around Bury St Edmunds</td>
<td>Visitor offer is not continually ‘refreshed’ / little to attract existing visitors back&lt;br&gt;Market (as a key driver of visitors) loses appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing / Coordination</td>
<td>Creation of DMO&lt;br&gt;Around specific themes&lt;br&gt;In certain locations and destinations (complimentary areas / visitor access points)&lt;br&gt;Access to sub-regional / LEP funding (product development)&lt;br&gt;Working closely with Visit Suffolk</td>
<td>VDP recommendations not taken forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider trends</td>
<td>Ageing population&lt;br&gt;Technology – information and distribution&lt;br&gt;Staycations&lt;br&gt;Increased awareness in health related activities / increasing popularity of cycling&lt;br&gt;Increased levels of disposable income spent on leisure/ recreation</td>
<td>Funding climate&lt;br&gt;Technology not being used / maximised, destination being left behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Large catchment – unrealised potential&lt;br&gt;Ipswich and Mid Suffolk/ Babergh – similar process, synergies?</td>
<td>Continued lack of awareness of the town being a tourist destination&lt;br&gt;Stronger competition from nearby destinations&lt;br&gt;Core Strategy encouraging public sector transport rather than road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets / Visitors</td>
<td>Capturing more expenditure from existing visitors&lt;br&gt;Gaining a higher proportion of group markets (e.g. coach tours)&lt;br&gt;Attracting new visitor markets&lt;br&gt;Turning more day visits to overnight</td>
<td>Focus solely on older/ existing visitors&lt;br&gt;Coach drop offs no longer possible&lt;br&gt;Tourism resource/ support (e.g. TICs / tourist guides) reduces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. SETTING THE FUTURE DIRECTION
3. SETTING THE FUTURE DIRECTION

3.1 Introduction

This section sets out the overall principles of the VDP, identifies the key outcomes, sets out a vision statement and the strategic objectives.

3.2 Overarching Principles

The approach to the visitor and tourism economy should be governed by the overarching principles as set out below. This is based on findings from the investigation process, feedback from consultations, and Visit England guidance in developing a destination.

Understanding the Destination

Bury St Edmunds is a historic market town with signature attractions of a Cathedral combined with the Abbey Gardens and Abbey Ruins. It exudes historical character at every turn; it has a strong retail offer, with a mix of good high street brands and boutique independent stores; and it includes different types of cultural venues, from the modern (Apex) to the historic (Cathedral). It is also a very walk-able town.

As with other destinations of its type including Winchester, Salisbury, St Albans, and Cheltenham, it is these characteristics that help define the destination and resonate with the visitor audiences. Therefore, as a key principle of the VDP, the destination should be promoted through the brand of ‘Bury St Edmunds’ (rather than West Suffolk or anything else).

The wider countryside needs to be incorporated into the brand in order to maximise the prospective value of visits. The countryside encapsulates a range of different themes and activities that can be used to attract visitors. Many of these experiences are in addition to those available in Bury St Edmunds, but are complementary to the types of visitors that the town attracts. These include visiting attractions, walking, golf, fishing, and other more leisurely countryside pursuits.

The wider countryside also encapsulates other provision, principally in terms of accommodation and some high profile attractions. The challenge in creating this ‘brand’ identity is to merge the different themes and markets that the surrounding countryside provides to ensure that, as one consultee put it, the area can be recognised as a ‘playground’ for a range of different visitors.

Building on the Strengths of Bury St Edmunds

The VDP seeks to build upon the strengths of the area as identified in the previous section. There are therefore, particular actions and objectives that maximise the value of these strengths such as the town’s historic character, its retail and its cultural assets.

Conversely, it looks to address some of the weaknesses particularly in terms of the marketing channels, accommodation, visitor welcome, and linkages / access with the wider countryside.

Supporting Wider Economic Development

Although the VDP is focussed on actions targeting the tourism and visitor economy, it must link in and support the wider economic development agenda. The VDP should be promoted in terms of how the visitor sector benefits the residents and workers of Bury St Edmunds and beyond rather than specifically the visitors. In this respect, the local community will benefit from a greater access to leisure and tourism assets and events, creating a wide range of job
and training opportunities and increase the footfall for existing businesses. Ensuring the local community are well engaged in the delivery of the VPD will greatly enhance its successful delivery and ensure that economic growth within the borough is achieved.

**Fit with Policy**

The policy context is summarised in Document 1. Important policy drivers within the town include the Bury St Edmunds Vision 2031 and the BID Business Plan. The VDP is mindful of these policies but the DMO will need to ensure all future activity aligns with these.

It is also imperative that the development of the Suffolk Tourism Strategy is reviewed in light of the VDP to ensure they are complimentary in nature.

Likewise, there are a number of specific policy ‘hooks’ identified within the two LEPs SEP’s that provide other opportunities to support growth and make a return for the sub-region. It will be important that the DMO engages with the LEPs and other fund holders.

**Realism and Partnership Approach**

The VDP is developed in line with what we feel is realist and achievable rather than being overly ambitious and unlikely to be delivered. The VDP is also based on a partnership approach to delivery and leveraging funding from other sources.

**Wise Growth**

Sustainability is a key consideration for any destination plan, but particularly where the natural environment is a regarded as one of the primary assets (as is the case in Outer Bury St Edmunds). With its attractive countryside, coastline and market towns, it is important that the VDP considers the range of potential impacts of any development in terms of how it affects the visitor economy, local community, the character of the environment, and the mix between different visitor groups.

3.3 **Key Outcomes**

In broad terms, the key target outcomes of delivering the VDP are as follows:

- A stronger the core offer of Bury St Edmunds as a destination
- More visitors to the town who also engage with different elements of Suffolk’s countryside, and vice versa
- Attracting different market audiences to the town, including younger groups and family groups
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer within the town, and therefore maximise the contribution of all types of visitors to the local economy
3.4 Vision Statement

By 2025, Bury St Edmunds will be a leading market town destination within a countryside setting, offering high quality and ‘distinctly’ Suffolk visitor experiences.

The historic characteristics of the town will continue to feature prominently, with the Cathedral and Abbey Gardens combining with the growing profile of retail, cultural and industrial assets. The range of attractions, accommodation and activities available within the wider area will be interwoven into the fabric of the Bury St Edmunds ‘offer’, all with a view to broadening the town’s market potential and encouraging extended stays.

3.5 Objectives

Section 4 sets out the most significant actions that should be delivered over the next ten years. The actions centre on the following 10 objectives presented under the following 3 themes:

Theme 1: Strengthening the Position of Bury St Edmunds as a Destination
1. Maximise the Value of Discovery within Bury St Edmunds
2. Maximise the Value of the Town’s Culture, Events and Festivals
3. Explore New Development Options for Bury St Edmunds
4. Address Key Infrastructure Challenges within Bury St Edmunds

Theme 2: Beyond Bury St Edmunds
5. Incorporate the Key Assets and Amenities within the Immediate Hinterland as being part of the Bury St Edmunds Offer
6. Position Bury St Edmunds as a Base for Walking and Cycling
7. Utilise the Strength of Bury St Edmunds to Help Attract and Disperse Visitors to Other Nearby Suffolk Destinations

Theme 3: Cross-Cutting Objectives
8. Create a Coherent Marketing and Promotional Framework
9. Encourage Wise Growth
4. ACTION PLAN
4. ACTION PLAN

4.1 Introduction

This section sets out the specific actions for developing the destination offer. A description of each of the objectives and some of the key actions are illustrated first before being summarised in a number of tables.

4.2 Action Plan

The objectives/actions are grouped as per the three themes discussed in Section 3.5. The tables at the end of this section illustrate the cost and prioritisation/timings of each action. In both instances the cost and timings relate to the initial action and would become more expensive / take longer if actioned. For example, an action may be to conduct a feasibility assessment for a specific asset which may initially cost little and be able to be actioned in the short-term. However, if the result of the assessment is that it will be progressed there would obviously be higher costs which would occur over a longer time frame. It is for this reason a lot of the costs and timing are towards the lower end / shorter-term.

Initial Cost:

- Nil – assumed that costs can be largely met via existing resources (i.e. staff-time only)
- Low – less than £10k
- Medium – between £10k and £100k
- High – over £100k

Prioritisation / timing:

- Short-term (ST) – Within the first two years
- Medium-term (MT) – 2 to 5 years
- Long-term (LT) – 6 to 10 years
Theme 1: Strengthening the Position of Bury St Edmunds as a Destination

1. Maximise the Value of Discovery within Bury St Edmunds

1.1: Support Continued Investment in the Town’s Attractions

Bury St Edmunds is an attractive historic market town that has a wealth of heritage features, including St Edmundsbury Cathedral, the Abbey Gardens, and the Abbey Ruins. Each of these is a free-to-access attraction and locationally clustered to the east of Angel Hill. This will present the main focal point of visitors to the town.

Added to this is Moyses Hall and Greene King Brewery Visitor Centre, both of which have a heritage theme. The Guildhall is set to add a further historic attraction. Work is underway on developing the Guildhall into a ‘self-sustaining live-action, cultural and community heritage experience’. The project is being supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with the final development proposal due to be revealed later in 2015. If successful, the Guildhall project should be completed in 2018/2019. The outline proposals suggest that it could represent a further ‘must see’ attraction within Bury St Edmunds.

The main priorities here are to ensure that the rich and collective heritage is marketed and promoted to an array of audiences; that the stories will need to be brought to life in a way that informs and excites; and that the attractions continue to invest in their experiences to maintain quality. Some attractions are already doing this well and needs to be maintained, whereas others are doing so less well.

1.2: Guided and Self-Guided Tours

Discovery of the town’s heritage needs to be encouraged amongst all audience groups. Many of the town’s key architectural and historical assets are included within a 90-minute guided tour, which takes place once per day in the main tourism season. However, these assets are not always marked through other means.

Guided tours are a valuable part of the visitor offer, but the timings of tours can be restrictive for a large proportion of visitors. A self-guided tour of Bury St Edmunds was available in the past but this now appears to be incorporated into the ‘Visitor Guide’ booklet. The booklet has 14 key points on the trail, most of which form part of the heritage theme. However, the booklet is not presented as a walking tour (i.e. there is no defined line on the mapping that visitors can follow) and the numbering is also not in a manner that can be followed easily (i.e. point 3 is the Theatre Royal on West Street but point 2 is Moyses Hall in the Butter Market).

It is recommended that a self-guided tour option be developed once more. This tour should join up the key assets in a manner which is easy to follow and understand, providing the key insights into the town’s history. A ‘trail’ should be provided. To add value to the experience, the trail should encompass quirky alleys and some architectural points of interest as well as the principal heritage features.

1.3: Improve Interpretation and Signage

Stand-alone interpretation of key assets is also a useful means of heritage learning and discovery. Some assets are currently supported by interpretation panels, however panels can become easily faded and outdated. Maintaining panels and developing new panels is likely to be required at some stage in the VDP timeframe.

3 Once a day at 2pm for Bury St Edmunds, operating May to September only
Likewise, signage around the town was highlighted as an issue, with some key features considered to be ‘hidden’ despite the town being easy to navigate. Signage to and from the car parks is also considered challenging from a visitor perspective. Visitor signage around the town should be reviewed to determine current effectiveness in terms of encouraging movement between the key areas.

The role of technologies should also be considered in interpretation. Integrating digital media and online content into interpretation can be a useful mechanism for increasing visitor interaction and understanding.

1.4: Developing Other Heritage Assets and Themes

St Edmund⁴ and the role of the town in the birth of democracy through the Magna Carta⁵ present two unique heritage assets and effort is being made to bring them to greater prominence. This has included attempts to resurrect the pilgrimage trail from London to Bury St Edmunds that was once one of the main pilgrimages in England; whilst the Bury St Edmunds Society has recently been awarded funds to establish an ‘Our Liberty’ light and sound trail for the 800-year anniversary of Bury St Edmunds role in the Magna Carta.

The potential for a St Edmund Pilgrim Trail is discussed further in Action 6.2. This type of initiative would have benefit in terms of raising the profile of St Edmund and allowing visitors to understand his importance as a martyr king of East Anglia. This should include the story of the Wolf who helped seekers find Edmund’s severed head after he was executed.

The story of the Magna Carta and how it came in to being is also a compelling story, with the abbreviated history included in the ‘magnacarta800’ website reading like a chapter from the Game of Thrones novels. This could be an interesting story to develop and promote through both traditional means and possibly through a play/the arts⁶.

2. Maximise the Value of the Town’s Culture, Events and Festivals

2.1: Develop and Promote Events to a Broader Audience Profile

Culture, events and festivals can form key drivers of visitors, help to encourage new visits, broaden the visitor profile, and inspire repeat visits to destinations.

The growing cultural offer and events programme is seen as a strength, with assets such as The Apex, Theatre Royal and Cathedral supporting shows, acts and performances from a variety of genres; and from mainstream to niche. The events and festivals programme of the town is busy, with some such as the Christmas Fayre and Time & Space Exhibition at Moyses Hall attracting significant volumes of visitors, including from overseas.

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⁴ St Edmund is a prominent figure who died a martyr to his Christian faith instead of renouncing his crown as the King of East Anglia to the Vikings. One legend of St Edmund is that his decapitated head was reunited with its body with the help of a wolf who was standing guard over it and called out to searchers. As a true former patron of England, there are calls for St Edmund to become the nation’s patron saint

⁵ The story of Bury St Edmunds role on the birth of democracy in England started in 1214, the year before the Magna Carta came into existence. The town was said to have been the meeting place for earls and barons of England that contained certain liberties and laws that they would demand from the king otherwise they would withdraw from their allegiance with him. The Magna Carta was signed in 1215, although this version was later declared null and void, it was the precursor for the revised version released in 1225 and then 1297, the latter of which remains in statute today

⁶ The Four Kings history plays has recently been developed by the Gloucestershire Theatre Association Ltd. The plays tell the story of the English Kings over the three generations which were key to the Magna Carta. The plays are looking to tour other venues across the UK as part of the Magna Carta 800-year anniversary.
The consultation process suggests that there is no signature event / something which is distinctive to Bury St Edmunds, however the above two examples are developing and strengthening year-on-year. The Bury St Edmunds festival, a ten-day festival covering music, film, theatre and other exhibitions, could also have this potential, however stakeholders suggest that it mainly attracts local residents at present, is not well publicised and lacks distinctiveness. Developing this into a more renowned festival is recommended. There was also a suggestion that a literary event could be developed, along the lines of the Hay Festival at Hay-on-Wye of the Cheltenham Literature Festival. This could be a welcome addition to the events programme, but it would need suitable organisation and investment.

At present, the Visit Bury St Edmunds website does not hold the full listing of events available and rather it encourages the user to visit the West Suffolk Diary site. The proposed changes to destination branding and to the website (see Objective 8) mean that this will be addressed as part of the marketing and promotional activities. Allowing event filtering by type and date is useful, however in line with recommendations elsewhere, filtering by genre/type of performance would also be beneficial to visitors either planning a visit and during their stay.

Typically, the audience profile of Bury St Edmunds is said to be older and more affluent, with some of the events according with this general profile. However, as demonstrated by the Time & Space Exhibition (Science Fiction) and the Suffolk Festival of Ideas (Green/Sustainable Living), events can be used to engage different audiences. A challenge here is in terms of the level of amenities that can be used to support extended stays on the back of the event or festival. This includes, for example, low cost and family-based accommodation associated with the town. This is examined in Objective 3.1.

In addition, although the VDP is mainly concerned with visitors, the consultation process suggests that local residents have a low awareness of the events programme. This is an important and easy-to-target market for events. It also links with visitors with visits through the ‘visiting the family and friends’ market. Therefore, improving local awareness of the events programming should also be a key activity.

2.2: Maximise the Value of Cultural Assets within Bury St Edmunds

The cultural venues are successful in drawing volumes of visitors into the town. However, it felt that many of these visitors do not utilise other assets during their stay. In particular, the cross-over between those attending shows and programmes in the Apex, for example, and the attractions is said to be low.

A number of the cultural venues have mailing lists. It is suggested that these channels are utilised more extensively to promote other aspects of the town, particularly in promoting the idea of visiting nearby attractions or conducting some form of activity as part of their stay.

A programme of developing and improving Cultural Tourism across East Anglia is currently being pursued through the support of the New Anglia LEP. A number of key initiatives are emanating from this programme designed to engage visitors with the different elements of the creative sectors. This includes creating collaborative partnerships between creative sector enterprises and tourism businesses to establish better packaging and authenticity to the experience. The main focus of the programme at this stage is to ensure that existing cultural activities, programmes and events are targeted towards visitor audiences wherever possible, however it is anticipated that the programme could support additional cultural events in the future, particularly those that link with a unique aspects of local culture or heritage, for example.
3. Explore New Development Options for Bury St Edmunds

3.1: Examine the Potential for New Accommodation Types that Support New Audiences within Bury St Edmunds

The business survey and consultation process suggests that there could be a need to increase the bedspace capacity within Bury St Edmunds. The audit, as set out in Document 1 also revealed that the provision of accommodation within the town is low, which means that the potential for growth in overnight visitor numbers will be limited without the addition of further accommodation stock. This position will be alleviated somewhat by the new Premier Inn but this issue will certainly need reviewing in the mid to long-term.

It is important that any new capacity in accommodation is developed to be complementary to the existing stock and that the development options are designed to meet demand and/or target new audience groups. One potential option would be to offer lower end accommodation, with youth groups and family groups being a key target market. A youth hostel/backpacker accommodation could help in this regard, with YHA accommodation increasingly targeting family groups as well as young travellers.

Other budget and family accommodation (e.g. camping, caravanning and B&Bs) exist in Outer Bury St Edmunds. A key priority will be to ensure that the town is clearly linked to these sites (through marketing, promotion and transportation where possible) and that patrons of these accommodation enterprises are encouraged to explore Bury St Edmunds as part of their stay.

3.2: Explore Options that Create New Ways for Visitors to Discover and Engage with Bury St Edmunds

All tourism destinations need to continually review the ways in which they engage with their visitors in a manner that will present a ‘unique’ experience. Although by no means definitive, the following options were mentioned during the consultation process that could be pursued that would help deliver a greater sense of place or uniqueness to Bury St Edmunds:

- A farmers/artisan market - the possibility of a regular farmers market and / or indoor market should be explored to augment the weekly market (and potentially help address the issues of quality noted above). The produce should be distinctly ‘Suffolk’ in character.

- Distinctive cuisine - catering providers to utilise Suffolk’s produce to create high-end cuisine with signature dishes and menus that are ‘distinctly Bury St Edmunds’ or ‘distinctly Suffolk’.

- A horse and carriage ride – as a county with its own distinctive horse breed, The Suffolk Punch, consideration should be given to the viability of creating a horse and carriage ride around Bury St Edmunds. This could be in the form of a romantic carriage ride, or even an innovative ‘park and horse ride’ option linking some of the nearby but largely hidden car parks of the town.

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7 For example, when businesses were asked what facilities are lacking in the town, the second most popular response was ‘more tourist accommodation’ (36.4%). Additionally, almost half (46.7%) agreed that Bury St Edmunds does not have enough bedspaces.

8 There are around 650 bedspaces within the town itself. This equates to 237,250 bednights per year. On average there are 196,000 overnight trips by UK residents, staying a total of 552,000 nights to the borough of St Edmundsbury (data is not available for the town alone, although it is likely that a significant proportion are visiting Bury St Edmunds). Additionally, there are 31,000 trips to Bury St Edmunds by overseas visitors.
• Street theatre/performances – this could be used to help engage visitors in stories around the Magna Carta and St Edmund, for example. It could also include other street entertainment such as fire jugglers, magicians and comedians. These are very popular in places like York, for example, and have been known to be a strong driver behind visits\(^9\). Formalised arrangements with performers should be considered.

• New experiences linked to sugar-based products (linked to Action 3.3) – e.g. Cakes and Ale, Afternoon Cakes, Sugar-blowing, Artisan Chocolate/become a Chocolatier, for example.

3.3: Explore Additional Attraction Development Opportunities

All destinations need to refresh its attractions offer, with the addition of a new attraction often acting as a fillip to others. As mentioned, the Guildhall is developing into a new attraction that could have significant appeal.

One further option, but with a longer term timeframe, would be to create a new attraction around British Sugar. Bury St Edmunds is home to British Sugar, an Associated British Foods Company, with the sugar beet processed here predominantly grown in the UK, much of which is from East Anglia. There are a series of stories linked to sugar which could be explored through such an attraction. This includes:

• The history of sugar and sugar production dating back to 8,000 BC.
• The growth of sugar and the role of sugar plantations in developing social history across the globe, including the rise of slavery.
• Changes in sugar production in the UK, linked to the anti-slavery movement and World War I.
• The changing role of sugar within foods and drinks.
• Sugar and health – revealing the role of sugars in producing energy for the body and how this energy is consumed when active and stored when inactive.
• Sugar and sugar-based product tasting.

It is also possible that other sugar-based products (e.g. cakes, chocolate) could play a more prominent role within Bury St Edmunds, with the town to become synonymous, for example, as a haven for cakes and artisan chocolate.

4. Address Key Infrastructure Challenges within Bury St Edmunds

4.1: Address Poor Car-Parking Perception

Although the business survey suggests a divergence of opinion on the quality and quantity of car parking within the town, as an observation it is challenging to park within the town centre at busy times. In addition, car parks which have larger capacity on the outskirts of the town are not well signposted either on foot or by car.

\(^9\) 85% of visitors to York went just to enjoy the ambience and atmosphere, of which street entertainers are a significant part (York Visitor Survey, 2013)
Effort is already being made to address this issue, with a car-parking report having been commissioned. The report and its recommendations are due within 2015, and should include mechanisms for addressing the poor perception of car parking provision and their accessibility. This will be of benefit to both residents and visitors.

4.2: Address Issues that will Encourage Coach Tours to Stay Longer within Bury St Edmunds

Coach tours are an important market for certain economic sectors, particularly attractions, retail and catering.

Bury St Edmunds does not have accommodation within the town that can support coach tours, and although there is some accommodation with the capacity within the wider area, there is little evidence that tour operators are programming overnight stops in Bury St Edmunds currently. Rather, Bury St Edmunds is considered an interesting and convenient stop-off point for operators en-route to other areas of Suffolk and East Anglia.

Coach parking has been identified as a challenge, with the principal drop-off point in Angel Hill often already busy with cars. Coach tours, especially domestic, have on older age profile. Whilst many are likely to be active and able, a high proportion are also likely to have mobility issues and require assistance. With the cluster of attractions and amenities around Angel Hill, it is therefore appropriate that Angel Hill/the Cathedral area is the more appropriate drop-off for the tour groups. It is recommended that a more permanent solution be found that will make the pick-up and drop-off easier for all concerned.

With this in mind, part of the solution should include encouraging operators to spend more time within the town, to allow their patrons greater exploration and discovery. Joint ticketing and other incentives should be explored, such as a further discount /offer on key attractions.

Theme 2: Beyond Bury St Edmunds

5. Incorporate the Key Assets and Amenities within the Immediate Hinterland as being part of the Bury St Edmunds Offer

The wider hinterland of Bury St Edmunds incorporates a range of high profile and good quality attractions, accommodation providers, and activities. Although most of these are already included in marketing and promotional material, it is important that those visiting Bury St Edmunds consider these attractions as part of the overall offer of the town; and likewise anyone staying in accommodation within the countryside are encouraged to view Bury St Edmunds as their primary centre with key services for retail and catering, as well as attractions.

6. Position Bury St Edmunds as a Base for Walking and Cycling

6.1: Short Distance Trails

Despite being an urban centre, the characteristics of Bury St Edmunds complement the ‘pleasant’ countryside of Suffolk. Being a mid-sized town means that the countryside is also easily accessible from the centre of the town. Strengthening this association and the physical linkages between the town and the countryside should therefore be pursued.

As activities, both walking and cycling are growing in popularity amongst all age groups. Within destinations such as Bury St Edmunds, there is often an expectation that a series of trails will combine both town and the countryside assets. To this extent, Bury St Edmunds does have some provision (i.e. Lark Valley Path and Bury St Edmunds to Clare) and the town
is also part of the National Cycle Network (NCN Route 51 and 13). It also forms part of two large cycling events (Tour of Britain and Women’s Cycle Tour) which go through Bury St Edmunds and in to other parts of Suffolk. However, awareness of these trails and how the countryside can be accessed from the town centre is considered to be low.

Walking and cycling are activities that help engage visitors with built and natural heritage, and can be used to accentuate important – and otherwise inaccessible – features of interest. They are also activities that require visitors to invest time, and therefore successful walking and cycling destinations can engender longer durations of stay and regular repeat visits. However, it is important that any development of trails consider the different audiences and their needs. Although long distance trails help promote an area, the number of users completing the trails in one go is often low. Rather, most visitors interested in walking will complete a shorter trail – between 2 and 10-miles in length – as a day or part-day experience.

Trails should also link into existing assets wherever possible. The consultation process suggested that it was possible to walk between Bury St Edmunds and Ickworth House, but the trail is not well known. Similarly, it is possible – at least in principle - to access West Stow, Lavenham and Stowmrajet from Bury St Edmunds on foot or by bike. Creating these types of linkages to nearby towns and known attractions could be used as ‘signature’ trails for the town.

The town should also consider achieving the ‘Walkers are Welcome ’ or ‘Cyclists are Welcome’ status. These national initiatives have been designed to strengthen an area’s reputation for these types of activity by encouraging greater co-ordination of walking and cycling activities, investment amongst certain providers in being able to support these activity groups, and – in the case of cycling – the presence of cycle hire business.

6.2: Explore the Option of Longer Distance Trails

Whilst this may appear contrary to the sentiment outlined above, there is still value in creating long distance trails, not least because it provides exposure for the area within the activities field. This is particularly true for trails that have a close association with an important part of regional and national heritage.

As identified previously, there have been attempts to resurrect the pilgrimage trail from London to Bury St Edmunds that was once one of the main pilgrimages in England. There are both national and international examples of pilgrimage trails now acting as popular walking tourism trails (e.g. the Camino de Santiago in France and Spain, Via Francigena in Italy, and the Canterbury Pilgrims Way in England). There are also a series of online tour companies that promote pilgrimage routes to international markets, and therefore, recreating a long distance pilgrimage trail with St Edmundsbury Cathedral as the focal point would have merit.

Bury St Edmunds already forms part of a series of walks being promoted by the Long Distance Walkers Association (LDWA) including Walsingham Way and St Edmunds Way which are badged as pilgrimage walks. However, it is unclear whether these follow official pilgrimage routes. It is also unclear how well publicised and supported (i.e. through guiding, accommodation and bag carriage services) these trails are.

Developing this type of offer would be a longer term project and would involve a range of stakeholders in order to encompass all of the pilgrimage route. A shorter term option – and one that could be enacted by the DMO and its partners - would be to recreate the latter stages of the pilgrimage which would encompass other defined places at around 5/10/15 miles from

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For example, pilgrimroutes.com, responsibletravel.com, caminoadventures.com, and macsadventure.com
the town. This would enable visitors to walk part of a defined historic trail that has a direct relationship with St Edmund and St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

In addition amateur cyclists like to challenge themselves against routes ridden by professional cyclists. Within this context, promoting the routes of the two competition tours mentioned in **Objective 6.1** would attract some visitors to the area. However, most users will use short sections of any long distance trails and any linked looped trails off the main trail.

7. **Utilise the Strength of Bury St Edmunds to Help Attract and Disperse Visitors to Other Nearby Suffolk Destinations**

Extending the length of visitor stays will require the town to create linkages to other Suffolk destinations, with the town acting as a base. Bury St Edmunds has a strength of character that will enable the town to act as a visitor hub for the wider area. It is also a focal point for the local roads network meaning that other parts of Suffolk (along with Norfolk and Cambridgeshire) are within an easy drive time.

A key function of the Bury St Edmunds DMO will be to liaise with and support the other tourism organisations across Suffolk and in other areas, including Cambridge, to develop joint packages. Potential joint activities could include:

- The Brecks and Thetford Forest – a HLF landscape scheme that is seeking to engage visitors in this landscape that is rapidly developing into a centre for outdoor activities, the Brecks and Thetford Forest support a range of adventurous pursuits that support youth groups, younger adults and families. Bury St Edmunds could act as a base for those interested in outdoor pursuits but who also value heritage/town settings, with the prospect of a youth hostel/backpacker accommodation supporting this premise.

- Sudbury and the Dedham Vale/Constable and Gainsborough – Sudbury is an attractive market town in its own right, with complementary characteristics to Bury St Edmunds. It is also a gateway to the Stour Valley and Dedham Vale, a protected landscape steeped in peace and tranquillity; and it provides access to those seeking more about Constable and Gainsborough. The visitor profile between the areas is likely to be similar.

- Wool trade and Wool Towns – Bury St Edmunds was part of the Suffolk cloth industry which flourished in the Stour valley from at least the 14th century, with the town providing an important trading point. The wool producing towns of Lavenham, Long Melford, Clare, and Cavendish are easily accessible from Bury St Edmunds and the option of a combined driving/cycling/walking and interpretation experience could be explored.

- Heart of Suffolk – the Heart of Suffolk area, which includes towns such as Stowmarket and Needham Market, is easily accessible from Bury St Edmunds, with the train connection in particular presenting an opportunity. A combined walking/cycling trail could be envisaged, with visitors to Bury St Edmunds being encouraged to travel by train, explore the area by foot or by bike, and then return by train. Access to the Museum of East Anglian Life could be included as a joint travel and entry promotion, for example.

- Newmarket – Bury St Edmunds already supports Newmarket during horse racing events. With the advent of a new attraction and variety of experiences based on horse racing, horse breeding and horse riding within this area, Bury St Edmunds could further benefit from stronger links to this area.
• Cambridge – Cambridge is an internationally renowned destination that is high on the agenda for international visitors (ranked 10th in 2014\textsuperscript{11}). It is linked to Bury St Edmunds via rail and the two share some common characteristics. A day visit to Bury St Edmunds is certainly viable from Cambridge, and likewise Bury St Edmunds can support visitors wanting to spend time in Cambridge.

Theme 3: Cross-Cutting Objectives

8. Create a Coherent Marketing and Promotional Framework

It is proposed that a new DMO for Bury St Edmunds be established and that this newly formed company be charged with leading the development and marketing of Bury St Edmunds as a destination.

One of the priorities for the DMO will be to lead the marketing activities for both the town and the wider area. In this respect, Bury St Edmunds offers the strength of character that visitors will be looking for and therefore this should act as the lead ‘brand’ identifier. However, in accordance with the hub and spoke approach outlined above, the outer area of Bury St Edmunds needs to be incorporated as a means of encouraging longer stays and stays by different audiences.

There are several different ways in which this can be achieved. The brand could directly include the countryside (e.g. Bury St Edmunds and Countryside) or it could include a strapline that notes the countryside/beyond (e.g. Bury St Edmunds and Beyond; Gateway to the Suffolk Countryside; Historic Market Town and Countryside). Imagery of the countryside should also be interwoven into the imagery of the historic qualities town and its retail and cultural offers.

The website is a critical component of any marketing and promotional framework, as it has taken over as the lead promotional and information tool. It is generally accepted that the current websites for Bury St Edmunds will need to be revamped to meet modern standards alongside a mobile responsive one, and is therefore a priority for the DMO. This website should include multi-media and interactive elements that will help to engage different audience groups and ensure it is linked with social media. Suggested itineraries tailored to different audience types can be useful in this regard.

It should be recognised that website use is still not universal, with older age groups still less likely than younger groups to source their information on-line. Although this is slowly changing, there is still a place for printed ‘destination’ literature. Printed literature in the form of brochures should be produced and should contain sufficient information on the destination to enable would-be visitors to be inspired to visit without the need for the website. Cross-referencing with the website will allow those inclined to do so to obtain more detailed information on-line, as would the use of QR (Quick Response) codes\textsuperscript{12} on printed material, which would allow the user to read more detailed information via smartphone or other QR reading devices.

Brochures need to take a lead from the website to ensure consistency in the information being provided, although brochure information will be more condensed. Standard information such as contact numbers for the TIC and accommodation will still be important inclusions to help secure bookings.

\textsuperscript{11} Visit Britain - Top towns for 'staying visits' by inbound visitors - http://www.visitbritain.org/town-data
\textsuperscript{12} QR codes are two-dimensional bar codes that are optical machine-readable. Scanning the bar code using portable devices reveals record information related to the item that is held on an internet-based server.
Producing leaflets for distribution will also remain an important marketing and promotional tool. Although leaflets are generally orientated towards a specific attraction and event, in the case of Bury St Edmunds and its linkages to the surrounding area, theme-based leaflets could be useful as a means of grouping certain features together (e.g. Constable, Gainsborough, Wool Towns, etc). Where a theme could include one or a series of fee-paying attractions, a discount offer should be presented through the leaflet to encourage use. The offer of discounts could be extended across the Bury St Edmunds visitor economy to promote cross-selling, for example reductions on overnight accommodation rates, food/drink vouchers, or a theatrical performance.

9. Encourage Wise Growth

A key aim of the VDP is to increase visitor footfall. As a result, delivering success in the visitor economy has an inherent risk that visitor presence could damage the environmental characteristics and community that they interact with.

Visitor management needs to be sympathetic to all needs. An approach of sustainable management means that visitor behaviours and pressures should not unduly impinge on the character or culture that makes Ipswich a place of interest, but rather that visitors will be encouraged to support as well as engage with such assets. This type of approach is recommended by VisitEngland’s ‘Wise Growth Action Plan’. ‘Wise Growth’ recognises the different interactions of visitors with the local setting, and sets out the requirement to consider how all aspects that comprise the broad visitor experience (the industry, the community, the environment and the visitor) will be affected by the proposed changes of the VDP.

Practical guidance on employing the principles of Wise Growth are available through VisitEngland, and include engaging businesses in robust and credible certification programmes that provide improvement for businesses and clear guidance for consumers on “Wise” products (e.g. Green Tourism Business Scheme); engaging visitors in active conservation programmes (i.e. through volunteering) or supporting conservation programmes (i.e. through donations/visitor giving schemes); and engaging residents in supporting the visitor experience, through providing greater depth of understanding on local history and culture, through to giving advice on genuine accounts of the ‘hidden gems’ of the destination.

As a potential gateway to other destinations in Suffolk, including those with environmental sensitivity (e.g. the Suffolk Countryside, which include managed landscapes – i.e. the Brecks, and Stour Valley), it is important to include messages that will encourage appropriate behaviours in these settings. This should include as a minimum messages regarding using more sustainable forms of transport. It should also include messages relating to avoiding behaviours that could lead to damage of the natural environment such as littering, trampling of low-lying habitats, and letting dogs off leads in areas/at times when there will be ground nesting birds. Overall, securing visitor ‘buy-in’ to the conservation aims and objectives that aim to protect the “whole landscape” prior to visiting the wider countryside and coast should be considered a priority strategic objective.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MAXIMISE THE VALUE OF DISCOVERY WITHIN BURY ST EDMUNDS</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Priority</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td><strong>Support Continued Investment in the Town’s Attractions:</strong> Support the development of the Guildhall into a unique attraction Encourage continued investment in the improved experiences of the key attractions and assets of Bury St Edmunds Identify local ‘champions’ who can encourage innovation and advise on the interpretation. As part of this all relevant attractions (e.g. museums and heritage sites) should be encouraged to review how they present themselves. This could also include an annual award for innovation.</td>
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<td>L/M</td>
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<td>ST</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td><strong>Guided and Self-Guided Tours:</strong> Support the continuation of the Guided Tours Develop a self-guided heritage trail that links the key historic assets of Bury St Edmunds</td>
<td>L</td>
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<td>ST</td>
<td>ST</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td><strong>Improve Interpretation and Signage:</strong> Monitor and maintain existing interpretation boards within Bury St Edmunds Look to develop new interpretation panels that highlight other key heritage features or stories associated with the town Augment interpretation panels with access to online content Improve signage to the town (especially car parks with space available) and around the town</td>
<td>L</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>ST</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
<td><strong>Developing Other Heritage Assets and Themes:</strong> Explore options for presenting the Magna Carta and St Edmund as stronger components of the town’s heritage offer, including through walking trails and through the arts for example Explore the idea of a St Edmund day</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>MT/LT</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>MAXIMISE THE VALUE OF THE TOWN’S CULTURE, EVENTS AND FESTIVALS</td>
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### Develop and Promote Events to a Broader Audience Profile:

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<tr>
<th>2.1</th>
<th>Develop and Promote Events to a Broader Audience Profile:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look to position certain existing events (Christmas Fayre, Sci Fi Convention, Bury St Edmunds Festival) to a wider audience base as signature events for the town</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ensure all events are well publicised on the formal promotional channels, which is to include filter by date, location and genre (ensuring those outside the town are also illustrated)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop an events advisory group and host workshops to discuss ideas for refreshing events and festivals. Also seek to build upon and link to events in Outer Bury St Edmunds</td>
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#### Maximise the Value of Cultural Assets within Bury St Edmunds:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.2</th>
<th>Maximise the Value of Cultural Assets within Bury St Edmunds:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage with the wider visitor services sectors (i.e. accommodation, catering) to develop packages that utilise the strength of the cultural sector to deliver more overnight stays</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Engage with the East Anglia Cultural Tourism programme and ensure collaboration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Explore other uses of parks/open spaces for culture, events and festivals (e.g. bands, sound and light)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ensure local residents are aware of events to raise poor perception of the area</td>
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#### Explore New Development Options for Bury St Edmunds

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.</th>
<th>EXPLORE NEW DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS FOR BURY ST EDMUNDS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Examine the Potential for New Accommodation Types that Support New Audiences within Bury St Edmunds:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore the potential for low cost and family-orientated accommodation for the town</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Encourage more B&amp;B provision within the town</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ensure that accommodation within the hinterland of the town promoted as being part of the overall stock available to those seeking a stay in Bury St Edmunds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Explore Options that Create New Ways for Visitors to Discover and Engage with Bury St Edmunds:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore different options that could be used to present a ‘unique’ experience within Bury St Edmunds, e.g. Farmers/Artisan Market, Suffolk Punch Experience, formalised street art/performance, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Explore Additional Attraction Development Opportunities:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore the potential to create a new attraction based on British sugar and the UK sugar industry</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage with businesses to explore options for creating new experiences based around sugar-based products, e.g. Cakes and Ale, Afternoon Cakes, Artisan Chocolate, etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4. ADDRESS KEY INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES WITHIN BURY ST EDMUNDS

| 4.1 | **Address Poor Car-Parking Perception:**  
Address issues identified by the Bury St Edmunds car parking report that could impinge on the visitor experience | M | ST |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4.2 | **Address Issues that will Encourage Coach Tours to Stay Longer within Bury St Edmunds:**  
Examine options for a more permanent and dedicated coach tour drop-off point located close to the centre of Bury St Edmunds  
Consultation with coach operators to promote the assets of Bury St Edmunds and Beyond | M | L | MT | ST/MT |
### Table 4.2: Beyond Bury St Edmunds: Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>INCORPORATE THE KEY ASSETS AND AMENITIES WITHIN THE IMMEDIATE HINTERLAND AS BEING PART OF THE BURY ST EDMUNDS OFFER</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Map the assets and attractions within the immediate hinterland of Bury St Edmunds and include within future marketing and promotional campaigns</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage formal linkages (e.g. walking, cycling, public transport) between Bury St Edmunds and key attractions and accommodation operations</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>POSITION BURY ST EDMUNDS AS A BASE FOR WALKING AND CYCLING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td><strong>Short Distance Trails:</strong></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>MT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to develop the walking and cycling offer of Bury St Edmunds, with the town to be connected with key assets and attractions in the local area (e.g. Ickworth House, West Stow). Ideally these should be off-road</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>MT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look to establish a cycle hire outlet, with electric bike options available</td>
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<td>MT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look to establish Bury St Edmunds as a Walkers are Welcome and Cyclists are Welcome destination</td>
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<td>ST</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td><strong>Explore the Option of Longer Distance Trails:</strong></td>
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<td>LT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actively promote long distance walking and cycling trails that include Bury St Edmunds as ‘challenge’ trails (e.g. the Tour of Britain and Women’s Cycle Tour routes)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore the option of a creating a defined long distance St Edmunds Pilgrims Trail with key stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>UTILISE THE STRENGTH OF BURY ST EDMUNDS TO HELP ATTRACT AND DISPERSE VISITORS TO OTHER NEARBY SUFFOLK DESTINATIONS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Integrate neighbouring destinations within the overall offer of Bury St Edmunds, particularly the Brecks/Thetford Forest, the Heart of Suffolk, and Sudbury and the Stout Valley/Dedham Vale</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider joint marketing and promotional activities</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.3: Cross-Cutting Objectives: Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CREATE A COHERENT MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL FRAMEWORK</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Revamp the Visit Bury St Edmunds website, including information on events and information in to relevant themes</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Ensure that destination website remains up-to-date and linked with social media</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link the website to reviews on TripAdvisor. Ensure TripAdvisor is frequently monitored and comments are responded to</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Include options for printed material to provide visitor information on Bury St Edmunds and Beyond, which can be distributed to information sources (e.g. TICs and Libraries) and in nearby locations such as Ipswich, Norwich, Colchester, Cambridge, etc.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>Develop/strengthen relationship with VisitEngland/Visit Suffolk and promote to them relevant activities, events and stories and illustrate the link to its themed marketing campaigns. Use their expertise around funding, networking, marketing support, access to journalists</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Use thematic linkages to encourage exploration of other Suffolk assets, attractions and key features (e.g. Heritage, Wool Towns, etc.)</td>
<td>L/M</td>
<td>ST/MT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ENCOURAGE WISE GROWTH</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>In collaboration with other DMOs, develop a ‘Getting around Suffolk’ information sheet containing how to reach the area, where to park and how to access transport facilities in the area, raising the profile of public transport, cycling and walking</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>MT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>Encourage the adoption of sustainability criteria within all new developments, activities, products and events (e.g. BREEAM)</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>Highlight and explore relevant funding opportunities / work more closely with the LEP</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>Encourage exploration of the wider Suffolk through more sustainable transport where this is practical</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. DMO DEVELOPMENT
5. **DMO DEVELOPMENT**

5.1 **Introduction**

This section sets out recommendations for developing a DMO. It includes the proposed structure, the spatial remit, responsibilities, resources, potential funding sources, and the process for evaluating and monitoring progress of the VDP.

5.2 **Proposed Structure**

The VDP needs to be delivered by a range of public, private and voluntary sector bodies. The purpose of establishing a DMO is to ensure that these different stakeholders have an active role and responsibility for managing and delivering improvements across the visitor economy.

As highlighted in Appendix B of the Baseline Report, there is no set model for a DMO. However, based on best practice from elsewhere, consultation with local stakeholders, the fact Our Bury St Edmunds is currently undertaking a number of relevant roles, and that the DMO should be private sector led and encourage collaboration between the relevant public, private and voluntary stakeholders, it is recommended that the Bury St Edmunds BID act as the lead on the formation of the DMO.

The following has been agreed in principle with Our Bury St Edmunds, although the finer details would need agreement between the range of stakeholders.

The BID is already active in developing services to attract visitors and improve the visitor experience of the town. This includes promoting key attractions, accommodation providers and cultural venues; actively promoting bus routes into the town; and providing information on the town’s key attractions. Taking the role of the DMO, possibly as a separate but linked business entity, would allow the BID to take a more formal role take over destination management responsibilities.

The activities of the DMO would then be supported through a management board that includes representatives of the different stakeholder groups (i.e. local authorities, local accommodation, local attractions, the arts/creative sectors, key sports providers, and business/conference sectors). Most of these sectors have been represented through the consultation process, and it is recommended that these individuals and the organisations they represent remain involved.

5.3 **Geographical Coverage**

Clearly, the DMO will have a primary focus on the destination of Bury St Edmunds, however as reflected in the vision and the objectives, the geographical influence of the town as a destination needs to include a wider countryside area, particularly those destinations and tourism character areas which are easily accessible from the town and/or which have a thematic link. These have already been detailed in Section 4, but include The Brecks and Thetford Forest, Sudbury and the Stour Valley/Dedham Vale, the Heart of Suffolk and Newmarket. This could also benefit the DMO in terms of more revenue funding opportunities.

Figure 5.1 illustrates some of these key relationships although there could be other relationships which are strengthened / explored further such as Cambridge.

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13 For example: marketing the town, engaging local businesses and other important stakeholders, it has existing back-of-house functions to provide administration support
5.4 Responsibilities

The DMO, working with partners, will ultimately be tasked with delivering this VDP. This and other key activities should include:

- **Marketing and promotion** – acting as the lead agency in delivering online, social media and printed material that is designed to inspire visits amongst a range of audiences. This should include supporting the development of organisations, events and businesses that have the potential to provide a greater role in the visitor experience but not the resource (e.g. attractions and events run by volunteers).

- **Visitor economy development** – working with various organisations across the visitor economy to strengthen the visitor experience, including providing oversight on the key issues that need to be addressed and seeking funding to deliver key projects.

- **Quality, accessibility and sustainability** – working with a range of organisations, including VisitEngland, local businesses and education providers, in promoting the adoption of practices that improve quality, accessibility and sustainability amongst key tourism services.

- **Monitoring and evaluation** - gathering relevant research and intelligence on the current position and future changes that could impact on the visitor economy within the destinations. Any research should firstly be considered at a county level to ensure efficiency savings.

5.5 Staff Resource

It is recommended that a dedicated position is created by the DMO to:

- Seek and respond to funding opportunities that could help support some of the actions identified in the VDP; and
• Act as a liaison and co-ordinator of activity that involves the different DMOs, management bodies, local authorities and other stakeholders. There exist a number of potential synergies across the existing and emerging DMOs and Visit Suffolk. A number of these were highlighted under Section 4 but also include poor visitor perception/low profile of the areas; cycling/walking trails that link up assets; heritage (e.g. rail); and the need for greater events/festivals co-ordination.

Back-of-house administration support would also be required. It would make sense for this to be housed in Our Bury St Edmunds, however, there is no capacity within the existing structure and an additional 0.5 to 1.0 FTE post would need to be created. Before the DMO is set up the funding for the 1.5 to 2.0 FTE posts would need to be identified. There is also the potential of Visit East Anglia helping out here.\textsuperscript{14}

There may be a requirement for other specialist input to address key areas of the VDP. As such, it is recommended that advisory groups be established where relevant, for example:

• Information and the visitor welcome – SEBC, the TI C, car parking providers, attractions, and accommodation enterprises.

• Cultural and events tourism in Bury St Edmunds – arts venues, arts organisations and event’s organisers.

5.6 Fit with the Wider County

It is important that the proposed DMO works closely and aligns with what other bodies responsible for delivering tourism in Suffolk are doing. It is an opportune moment to ensure the right framework is in place, as Visit Suffolk look to support the development of a number of potential DMOs across the county in the near future. There needs to be coherence between the different organisations to minimise duplication and maximise value.

The following sets out a number of recommendations for what this framework could look like:

• Visit Suffolk will continue to develop the county wide brand and marketing and support those areas without a DMO.

• Where DMOs exist or are established they will promote the area’s visitor offer. The DMO will coordinate with local businesses and stakeholders. The Visit Suffolk marketing will complement and not compete with that of individual DMOs.

• Visit Suffolk / Visit East Anglia will undertake county wide research and market intelligence.

• In Mid Suffolk and Babergh it is currently being proposed that a number of Local Tourism Action Groups (L-TAGs) are established rather than DMOs (due predominantly to limited private sector resource and the area being so vast). Visit Suffolk will take a lead role in marketing and promotion, with the L-TAGs taking on more of the development and co-ordination functions.

• The marketing across Suffolk and between the various bodies is currently not well linked or consistent and can be confusing for a potential visitor. This needs rectifying. For

\textsuperscript{14} For example, VEA could assist with back office on a ‘pick and mix’ arrangement, chargeable to the DMO but at competitive prices
example, websites need to be able to stand on their own but at the same time have messages that flow through. Visit Suffolk should propose how this is implemented.

- DMOs, L-TAGs and other organisations need to ensure they work in partnership with each other rather than as competitors as it would be for the greater good. As discussed in Section 5.5 there are a large number of synergies between the areas and they should not work in isolation (e.g. regular networking or representation at other DMO meetings would be beneficial).

Figure 5.2 shows the different roles of the DMOs and L-TAGS. As above, Visit Suffolk will be the umbrella organisation sitting above the network of DMO’s / L-TAGs.

Figure 5.2: Functions of DMOs and L-TAGs

5.7 Potential Funding Opportunities

Levels of tourism funding in the public sector have reduced greatly in recent years (e.g. demise of Regional Development Agencies and reducing local authority budgets). Likewise the private sector is still slow to invest despite increased business levels and increase in staycations. In the foreseeable future, these difficult economic conditions are likely to continue and public sector contributions will not return to pre-recession levels and yet there is greater responsibility at a local level for destination management from Government policy.

Various DMOs have begun investigating innovative funding models and ways to make efficiency savings such as Tourism Business Improvement Districts, partner marketing models, sharing back office operations and various forms of private sector membership approaches. With this in mind, Visit England are establishing a Future Funding Group in order
to share best practice and lessons learned in implementing these funding models. A key role for the DMO will be to identify potential funding streams along with other partners such as the LEP and DMOs. It is advised that this includes membership to the Future Funding Group.

Tourism related grants and loans have always come from a wide range of sources relating not just to tourism and the visitor economy but also to economic development, regeneration, culture, heritage and the arts. The following is a list of some of the current and potential sources of funding, however, this list is not extensive:

- **SEBC** – although budgets are being squeezed, there appears to be appetite within the Council to potentially contribute funds towards the sector if return on investment can be justified. The Council are currently developing touch point information screens.

- **New Anglia LEP** – The LEPs notional allocation of European funding for 2014-2020 is around £94m or £188m with match funding added. Of this, a sizeable proportion could be used to support the visitor economy as follows:
  
  - ERDF and ESF funding is allocated to thematic objectives. Although it is currently unclear as to the specific activities that will be funded under each a number of the themes lend themselves to supporting tourism and the visitor economy including: innovation (£11.13m), SME competitiveness (£16.18m), employment and labour mobility (£7.89m), social inclusion (£9.30m), and education and skills (£20.23m).
  
  - £3.2m of EAFRD funding will be used to support activity in rural areas, including support for tourism activities such as encouraging:
    
    - Growth in visitor days, through extending the season and promoting overnight stays.
    
    - Greater consumer focus through increasing the quality of provision in accommodation, and food and drink and by promoting local food, drinks and crafts.
    
    - More eco-tourism by utilising the natural and built heritage, promoting sustainable travel, and promoting ‘glamping’.

- **Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP** - The LEPs notional allocation of European funding for 2014-2020 is around £72m or £144m with match funding added. Of this, a sizeable proportion could be used to support the visitor economy as follows:
  
  - £7.39m is available for the Rural Development Programme which covers four main areas including supporting tourism activities in rural areas.
  
  - £0.4m of EAFRD is available for skills support for rural tourism.
  
  - £8m of ERDF is available to enhance the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises with tourism listed as one of the key sectors there.

- **GREAT UK Challenge Fund** – this is a new merit-based initiative, operating as part of the overall GREAT campaign, which is open to eligible education, tourism, and trade and investment organisations. It has been established to provide seed-funding for projects that enable city, metropolitan, regional and national organisations and also sector associations operating in partnership to exploit market opportunities overseas. £2m is available in 2015/16. It is designed to encourage innovative thinking to promote the UK abroad and
projects that deliver economic benefit, but it is left to applicants to propose the most effective means of doing so.

- **DMO Membership** – A number of DMOs charge membership fees to businesses in their area. Although this is likely to go in to the day-to-day running of the DMO there could potentially be some surplus. Additionally, depending on how the DMO functions there could be other opportunities to generate revenue from businesses such as through hosting events or collaborative marketing. It is important that the DMO is mindful of creating another subscription fee that organisations may already pay to the BID or indeed DMOs. The different DMOs around Suffolk should discuss the potential of allowing businesses who are already a member of one DMO to join another for free / a reduced fee.

- **Regional Growth Fund** – this fund will support projects that create private sector investment and jobs. It has been granted to tourism projects previously such as to Visit England in Round 2 for a three year programme called Growing Tourism Locally. It is currently unclear whether there will be further rounds of this fund but it is worth considering if there is.

- **Heritage Lottery Funding** – this fund is administered to a wide range of projects that benefit heritage, people and communities. This includes; buildings and monuments, community heritage, culture, industrial heritage, land and natural heritage, and museums, libraries and archives.

- **Big Lottery Funding** – £300 to over £500,000 is available to organisations ranging from small local groups to major national charities. Relevant projects that have been recently funded include: Gosford Park (£56k to improve a local park), Lakeside Explorers (Exhibition Park in Newcastle has turned the Town Moor end of the site’s boating lake into a mosaic of habitats to attract wildlife and provide a leisure and learning asset for visitors and families), and Wheels for Wellbeing (promoting cycling for all in London).

- **Arts Council** – they invest funds in arts and culture across England. They funds a wide range of activities including theatre, digital art, reading, dance, music, literature, crafts, and collections.

- **Sports Lottery** – this is administered by Sport England to support sport at all levels. This covers a wide range of themes including one aimed at iconic facilities to innovative, large-scale, multi-sport facility projects.

### 5.8 Evaluation and Monitoring

As set out above, a role of the DMO will be to monitor and evaluate the progress of the VDP and the performance of the visitor economy. Visit Suffolk can also assist here. It is recommended that the following indicators are monitored:

- Day visitors
- Domestic overnight visitors
- Overseas visitors
- Tourism expenditure
- Tourism related employment (FTE’s)
• Visitor satisfaction
• Events hosted
• Marketing material produced
• Investment secured
• Accommodation stock and occupancy

It is recommended that the above indicators are monitored on at least an annual basis. It would also be beneficial to assess progress against the objectives / actions of the VDP, establishing whether there have been wider benefits and refreshing it where required on a regular basis.