



Developing ideas for Ramsey

2/9/19

Metro — Dynamics

Key aims of today's session

- Agree a shared view of the strengths and challenges facing the town
- Discuss emerging ideas and develop new ones – being **ambitious** and **creative**.
- Get contacts for those who can help us take this further.

Process and Progress

Completed:

- Data analysis across the towns
- First engagements with town stakeholders
- Development of initial ideas
- Sessions with HDC and Combined Authority officers

Ongoing:

- Further engagement with stakeholders, especially business
- Refinement of ideas, and testing with town teams

Still to come:

- Production of reports to Combined Authority

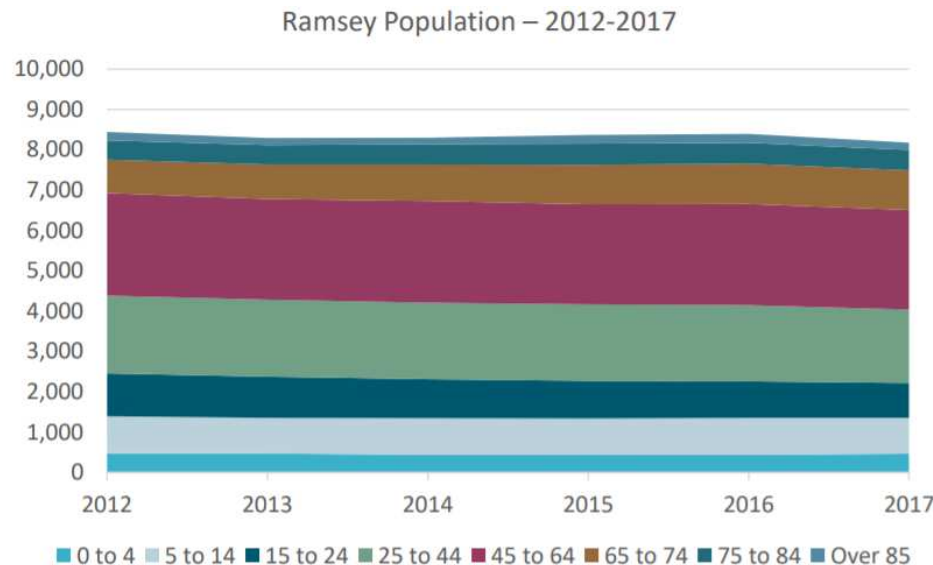


Portrait of the town

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Issues of rural isolation

- Public transport a huge problem, which has made the national headlines
- In the villages surrounding Ramsey (which are seen as very much part of the town) this is especially acute
- Ramsey unique among the market towns in having a **declining population already**.
- Businesses are leaving the town due to difficulties with infrastructure – both physical and digital



Source: ONS Ward Level Population Estimates



Need to sign on? You'll have to walk 24 miles to the jobcentre

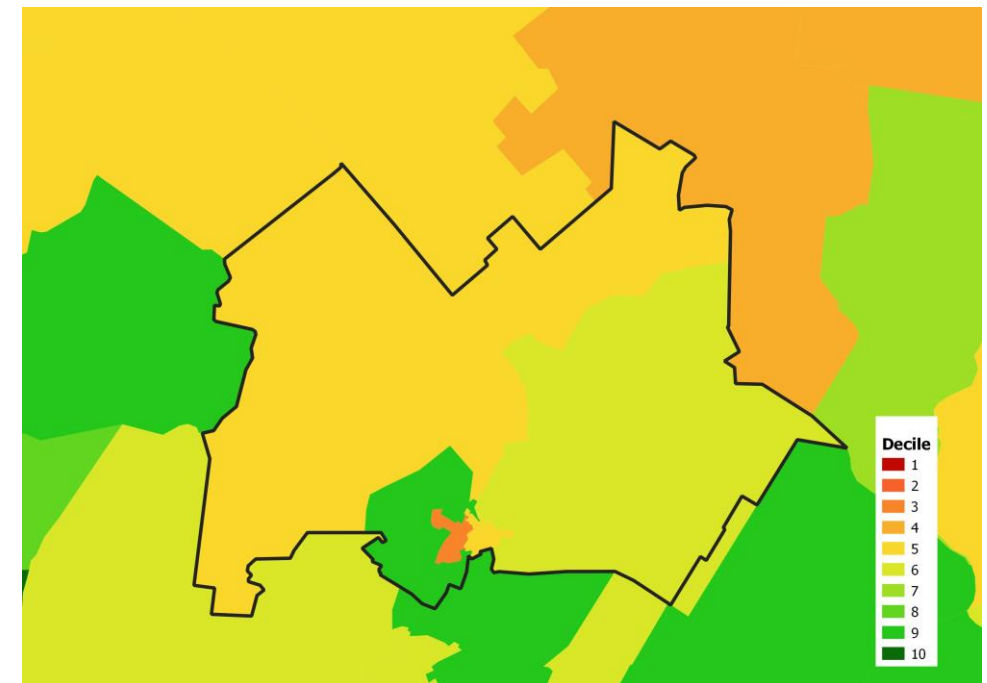
Each week, it takes Ray Taylor an entire day to claim benefits. He can't afford the bus – and others in his Cambridgeshire town won't have the option either when the route is cut in March



Health – real problems

- Type-2 diabetes a particular problem, linked to poor food choice (“longest crisp aisle in the area”). 27.8% of adults in Ramsey are healthy eating compared to a Cambridgeshire average of 32.4%. Childhood obesity is also particularly high
- Hospital stays for self harm one of the most concerning metrics – with rates 30.5% above the England average (Public Health England data). Death rates are also 10% above England average – linked to ageing and declining population
- There may be links between deprivation in the town and health challenges – although Ramsey does not experience extreme deprivation

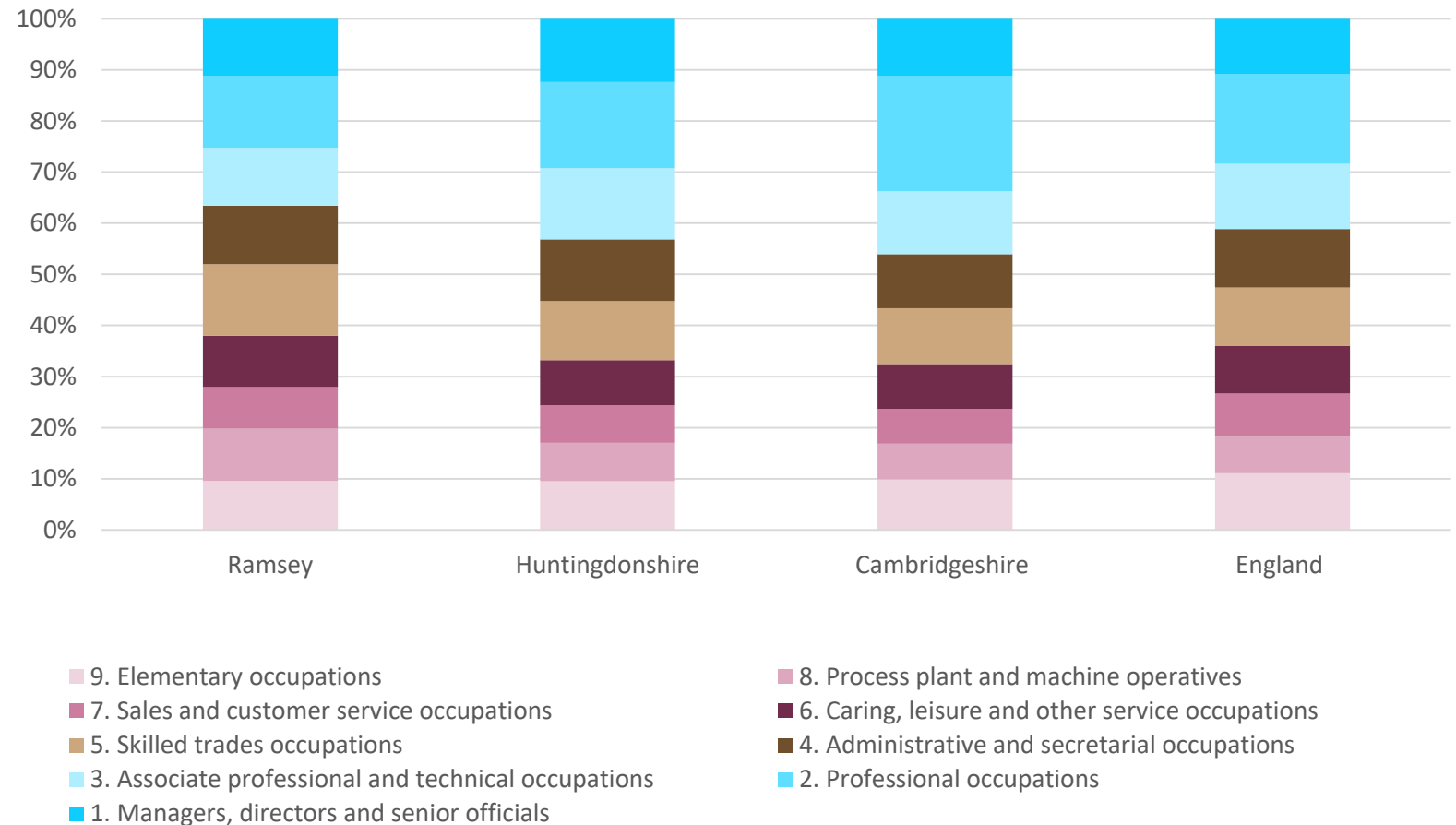
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in Ramsey



Source: Metro Dynamics Analysis of MHCLG Data

Some challenges economically

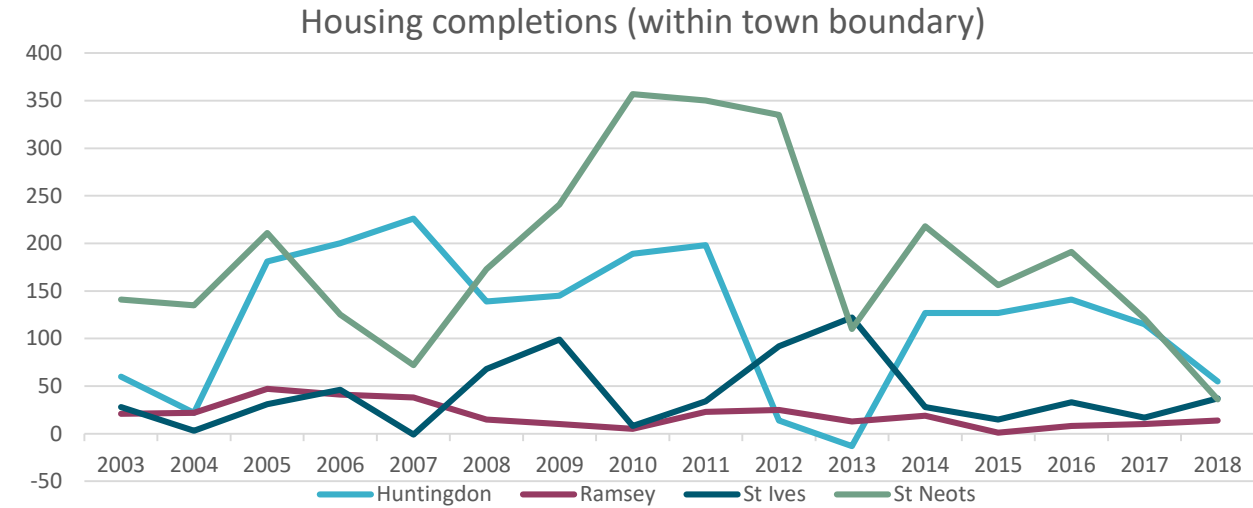
- Ramsey's GVA is estimated at £104m. This is only 2.5% of the total GVA in Huntingdonshire
- Retail and education are the two biggest contributors to output
- Generally, there's a lack of more highly skilled individuals, which reduces the productivity of the town
- Ramsey also has above average levels of residents with no qualifications.



Source: ONS Annual population survey

Development – historically lagging, but picking up

- Never more than 25 completions within the town boundary per year since 2008.
- However, this is now beginning to pick up, as one developer has had a go, and it's been successful.
- Local consortium has expressed interest in commercial site to the North – plans for a mixed-use development in two phases comprising A1, A3, A4 and A5 (retail) and a mix of B1, B2 and B8 (employment), D2 (skate park and MUGA), and sui generis uses (car sales, car repairs and veterinary clinic)
- Upwood – another significant opportunity

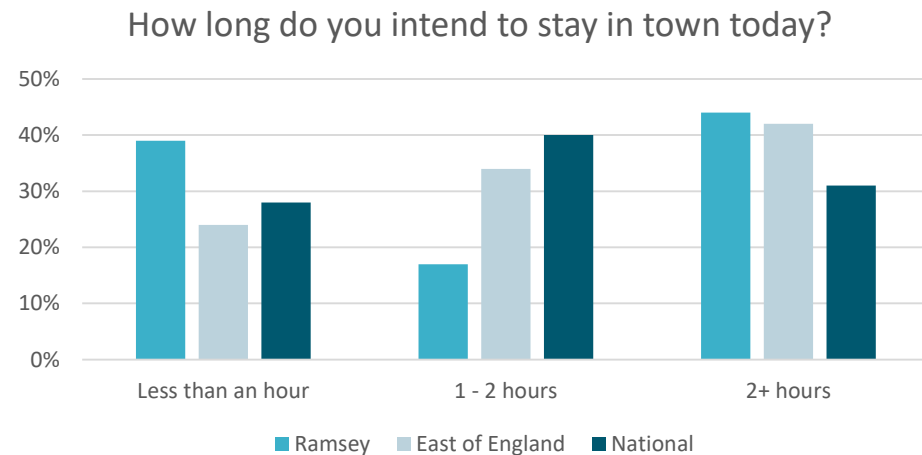


Source: Cambridgeshire County Council figures



A challenged, but changing retail scene

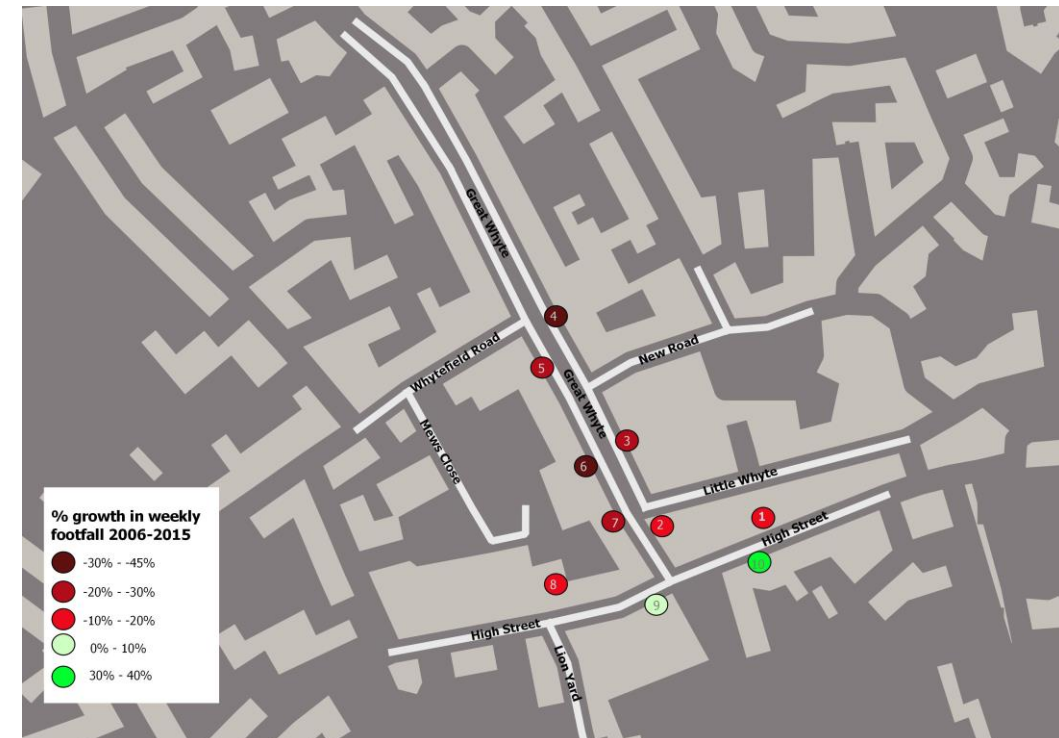
- Footfall has shrunk strongly on the Great Whyte, and 2,000m2 retail space lost since 2001
- Over three-quarters of respondents to the 2007 visitor perceptions report felt there were not enough night-time facilities. 2010 Town Centre report notes Ramsey is high on independents, but lack key attractors.



Source: Market town benchmarking Ramsey report

- New gin bar opening, and B&M moving into empty anchor store – signs of green shoots. Footfall on the actual high street has gone up.

Growth in weekly footfall



Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of HDC footfall data

A community that is keen and able to bring change

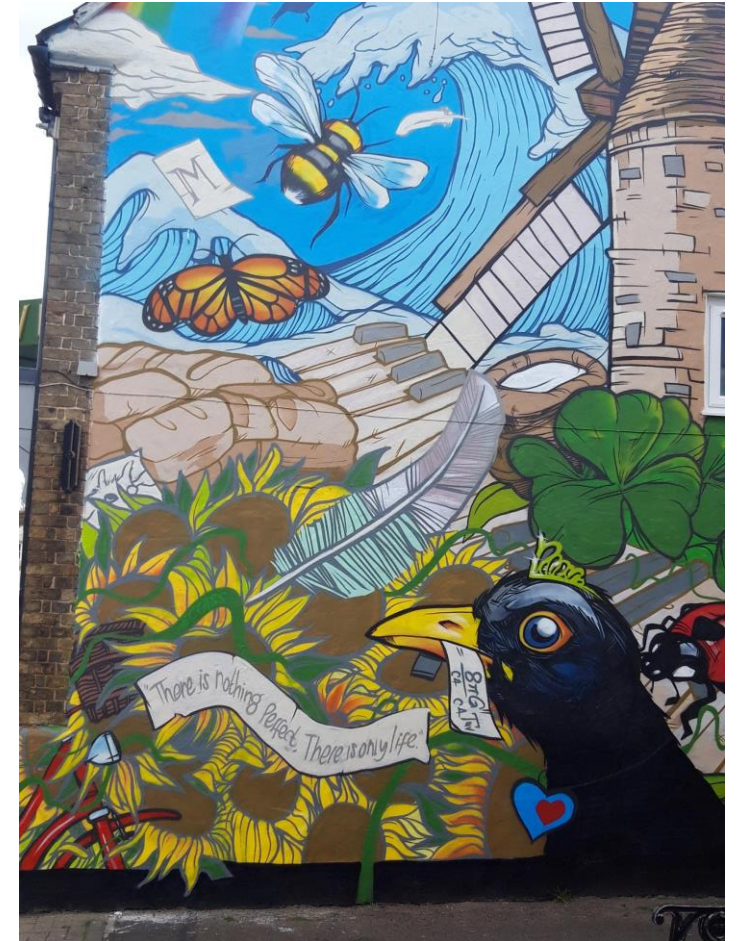
- The Ramsey Million has created momentum for change, and engaged large parts of the community. It has also brought different stakeholders together, and supported the development of key promotional materials, such as the Discover Ramsey website and walking tours
- A recognition among townspeople that things have to change – development is looked upon positively
- High levels of volunteer activity – demonstrate a positive community spirit and social capital



“People who grew up here recognise that something has to change.”

New opportunities in heritage and culture

- Work ongoing around Great Fen is an opportunity to increase provision of environmental amenity to residents, and attract more visitors.
- Creation of new walking guides etc. is an opportunity to leverage the heritage of the town. Heritage is already a big draw – though some of this feels dated, and isn't sufficiently resourced at the moment.
- New mural (right) – a cultural reimagining of what the town is about



Questions

- Does this feel like the right picture?
- What's missing? What needs to be sharper?



Key components of a vision

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Key components of a vision for Ramsey

- A strong community, where people are involved in the life of the town and don't feel isolated
- A healthy community, with outdoor activities and healthy eating choices
- A destination of choice – by maximising heritage and waterway links. Explore accessibility to Great Fen
- An attractive base for “lifestyle entrepreneurs” to set up
- Well-connected to other towns



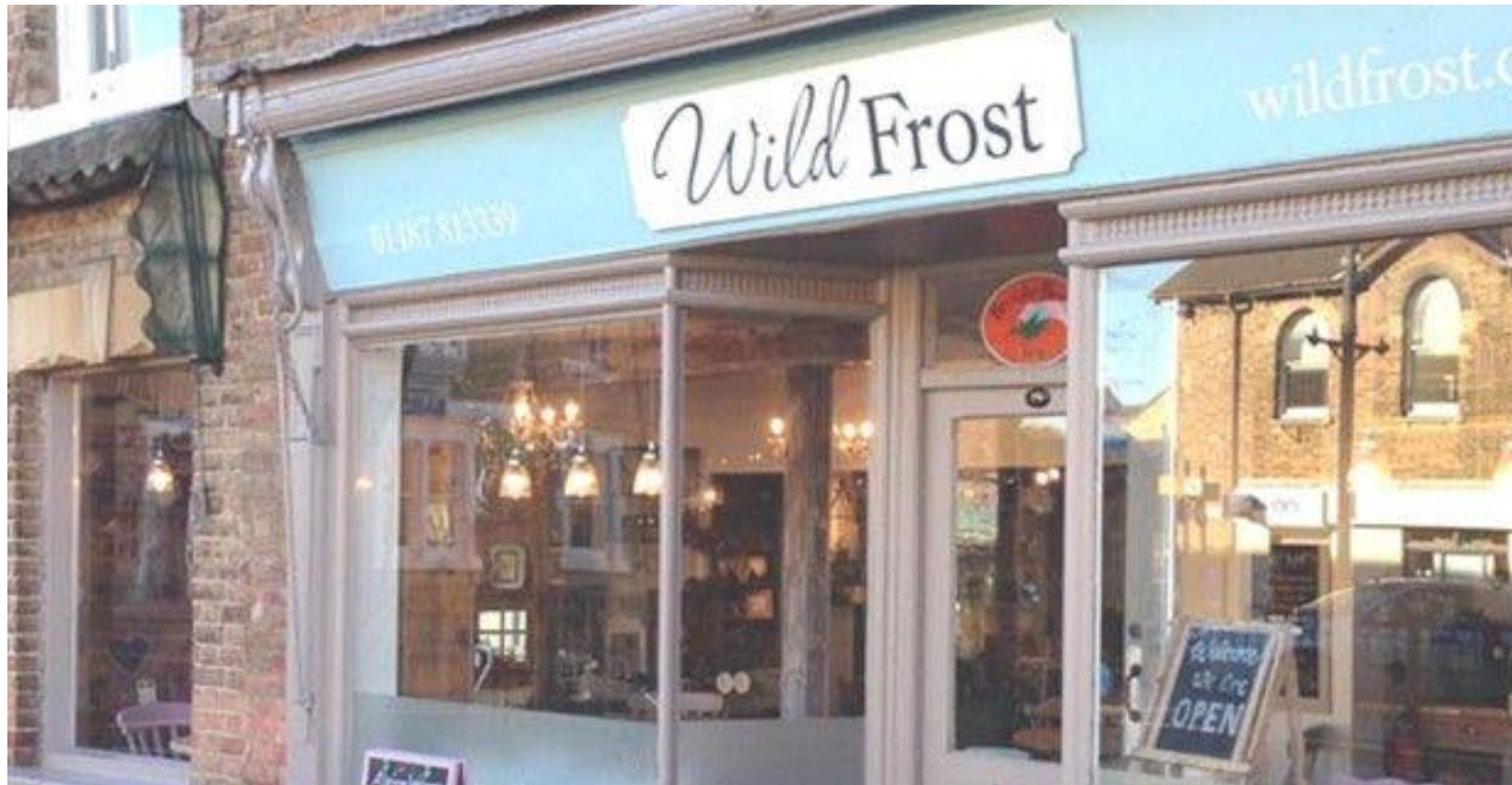
Developing ideas

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Basic principles for developing the ideas

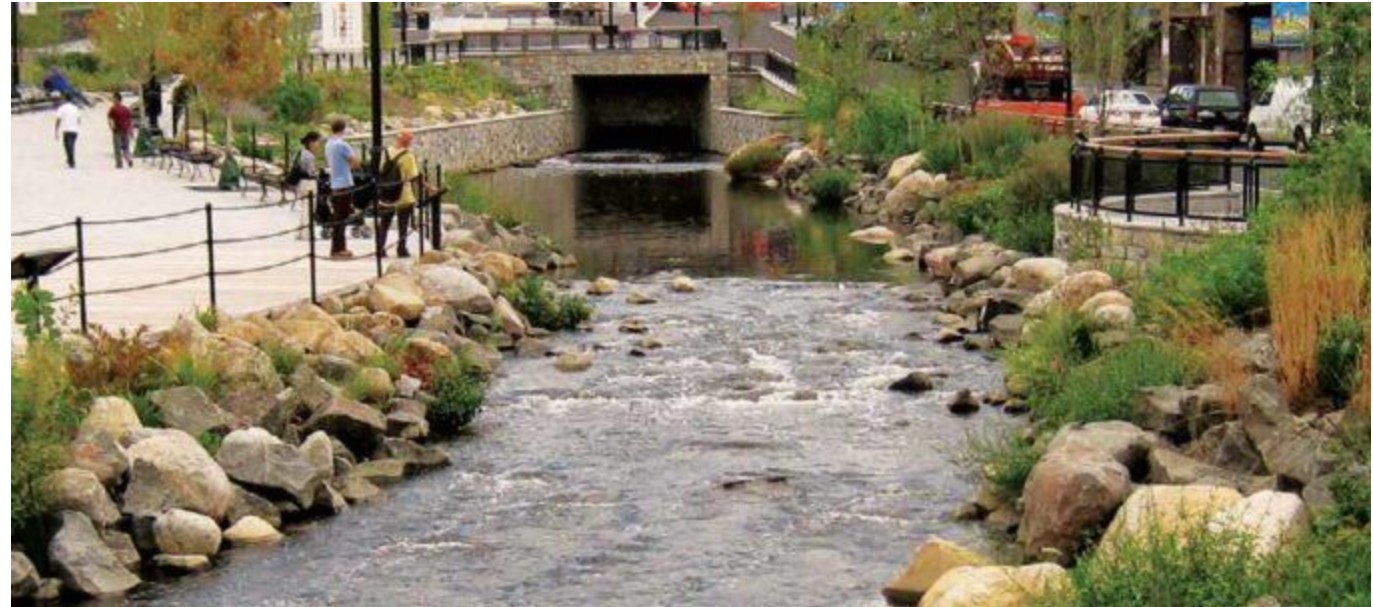
- Be ambitious, then work back through the challenges
- Build on things already happening, but use this to expand, develop, involve the Combined Authority and other partners
- Just a focus on town-level here... but in some areas District-wide approaches may be needed for the level of ambition required (e.g. on skills and education – which are not picked up in this pack)
- Ideas below are a starting point, not everything will be possible.
But having bold ambition means things start happening.

The challenge: bringing the Great Whyte to life



Idea 1 – Daylighting the river

- **Key attractive feature of town centre**, leading to higher footfall. Links very well to Ramsey's visitor assets
- **Brings environmental and amenity benefits**, supporting biodiversity and creating a calming environment
- **Ties into wider work around rivers and visitor economy**



Next steps: meeting with Environment Agency, Middle Level Commission, and possibly Cambs County Council to discuss

Idea 2 – Reducing Heavy Goods Vehicles

- **Banning HGVs on the Great Whyte within set hours** would make the town centre much more of a pleasant destination to spend time in. This would do little to damage passing trade, as these vehicles are generally not stopping
- **Needs to be understood whether this could be done without sending lorries down residential streets**



Next steps: explore with County Council traffic implications/options

Idea 3 – Totem signage

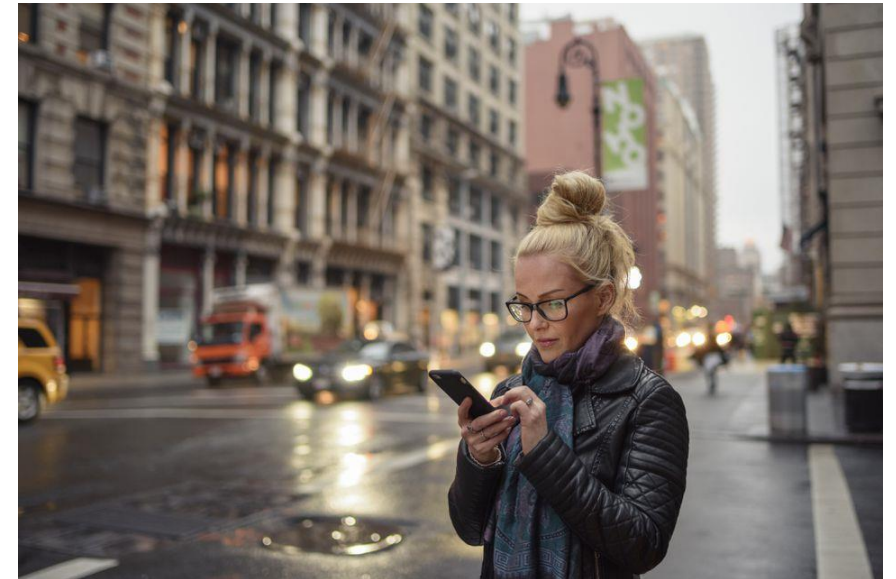
- Can improve legibility/navigability, highlight heritage and cultural assets.
- Would link into the Discover Ramsey platform
- A quick and easy way to lift the “feel” of the town centre

Next steps: Speak to designers



Idea 4 – On-street Wi-Fi

- Can support market traders to accept contactless payments (has significantly increased earnings of market traders in Ely)
- Allows for promotion of the Discover Ramsey brand to visitors, along with links to shops, cafes and restaurants
- Can also provide detail of footfall and usage of the space to inform approaches and monitor success



The challenge: Health issues, especially around weight



Idea 1 – Inclusion in North Cambridgeshire health opportunity area

- Through work in Fenland, we are working towards the creation of an “opportunity area for health” (based on CPIER)

» **KEY RECOMMENDATION #9:**

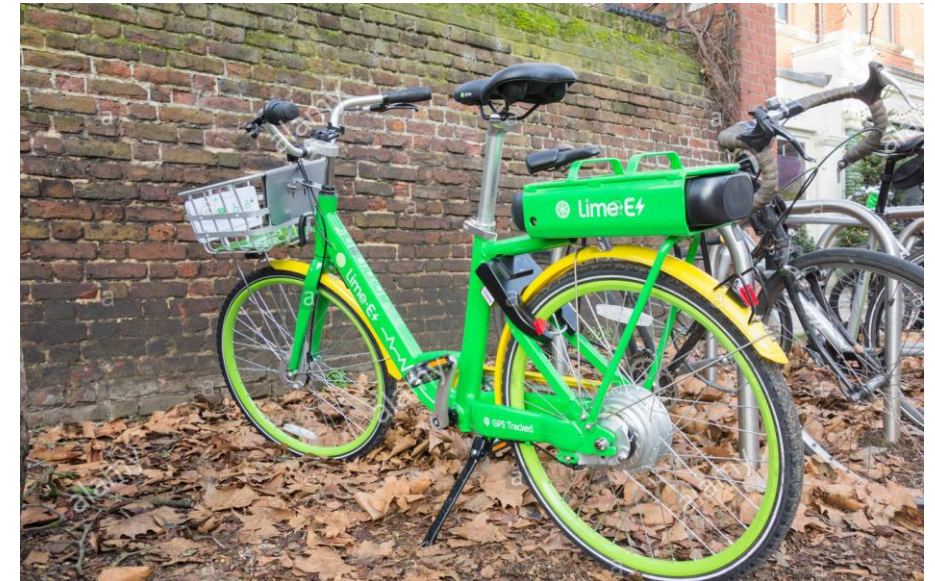
An Opportunity Area for Health, including mental health, should be created in the north of the area, recognising it as being just as serious an issue for social mobility as education. This pilot should be championed by the Mayor, the local health system and Public Health England, and linked to the proposals for the devolution of health and social care.

- This looks to bring in **Public Health England** and be a basis for trials around **Cardio Vascular Disease**. Ramsey shares many of the same health problems as Fenland, meaning we could make the case for its inclusion.

Next steps: Continued discussions with PHE and Combined Authority

Idea 2 – E-bike scheme

- An **E-bike scheme** to get people moving. This could be given away for a deposit, or on a hire per day basis.
- Easier than riding push-bikes, and ideal for flat terrain and straight roads/paths
- Through Ramsey Million, hiring out of motorbikes to get people to work has been successfully trialled – so a template to use here. Related to idea 3...



Next steps: Explore costs of scheme, commercial model, and other case studies

Idea 3 – new cycle ways using new technology

- Cycleways can open up connections between Ramsey and surrounding villages
- New technology recently trialled in Netherlands of recycled plastic cycle ways:
 - Lighter and more weather resistant than asphalt (therefore better for the landscape)
 - Eco-friendly – uses up waste plastic, and less CO₂ in production
 - Gives Ramsey pioneer status of new tech in England
- Modular construction, easy to install/remove
- Can also be used to install fibre cabling for better broadband



Next steps: Explore rough costings

The Challenge: attracting more visitors to Ramsey



Idea 1: A proposal around Abbey House

- A **creative proposal around Abbey House**, which is generally inaccessible to the public, could be the centrepiece of the Ramsey visitor experience. According to the internet, it's now used as a venue... but unclear what for. Open to the public occasionally in September
- Is there an opportunity to **bring in the National Trust/Heritage England/other?** Would need to be run on a commercial basis



Next steps: Discuss with relevant stakeholders (College, Lord De Ramsey, etc.)

Idea 2: Improved waterways access

- Plans for turning circle at High Lode could be revived to bring more people to the town
- The Great Fen provides opportunities for waterways links – these to be promoted to encourage journeys between Ramsey and the Great Fen



Next steps: Talk to MLC and Cambs County Council

The Challenge: Attracting and retaining businesses



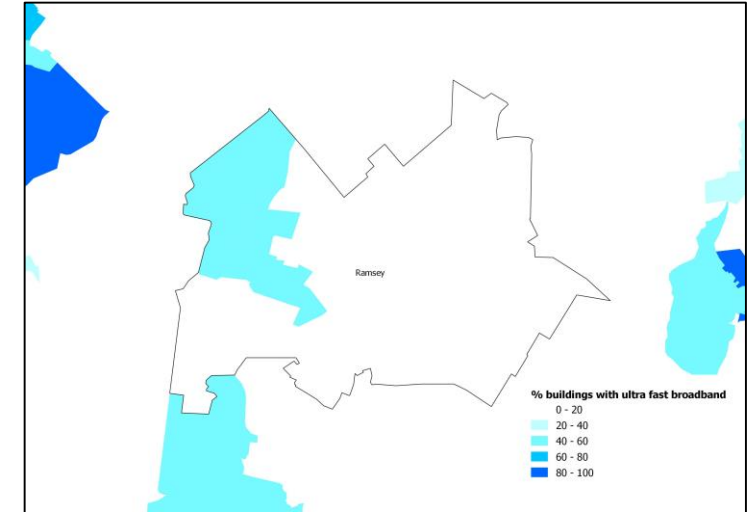
Note: Business Forum on 23rd September will help to understand issues further

Idea 1: Full fibre rollout

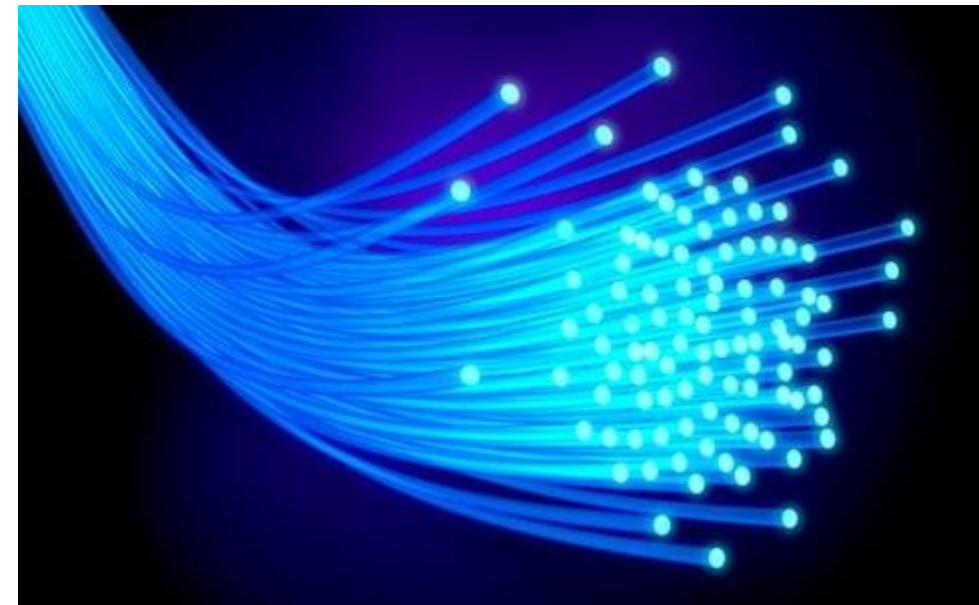
- Can be achieved with network of volunteers
- **Case study: Broadband for the Rural North** – fastest speeds in the UK are in rural Lancashire!
- Building on strength of community/volunteer networks
- Also tackles challenges of rural isolation and health
- **AND** can potentially tie into cycleways

Next steps: Talk to Connecting Cambridgeshire

Ultrafast broadband provision in Ramsey



Source: Ofcom Connected Nations Spring Update 2018, output area level



Idea 2: Encourage development to the North of Ramsey

- Work with local consortium to bring in retailers, etc.
- Build local support around this – how could it work, what would it do
- Explore with Tesco how this can be a positive relationship

Next steps: Speak to those involved in the plans (contact details?)

Challenge: Poor public transport

- Difficult to deal with at a town level. Requires CA-based approach.
- New powers given to Combined Authorities mean that there are some increased powers to make bus operators play ball
- Connecting Ramsey and the surrounding villages
- Connecting Ramsey to other towns



Next steps: Get feedback from public transport consultation.



People to speak to next

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Key businesses identified (so far)

- G's
- Anthony Byrne Fine Wines
- Argohurst Limited (Also known as T.E. Ramm)
- Safestyle Windows

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