

# Barnsley Inclusive Economic Growth Strategy

2025-30



Barnsley – the place  
of possibilities.



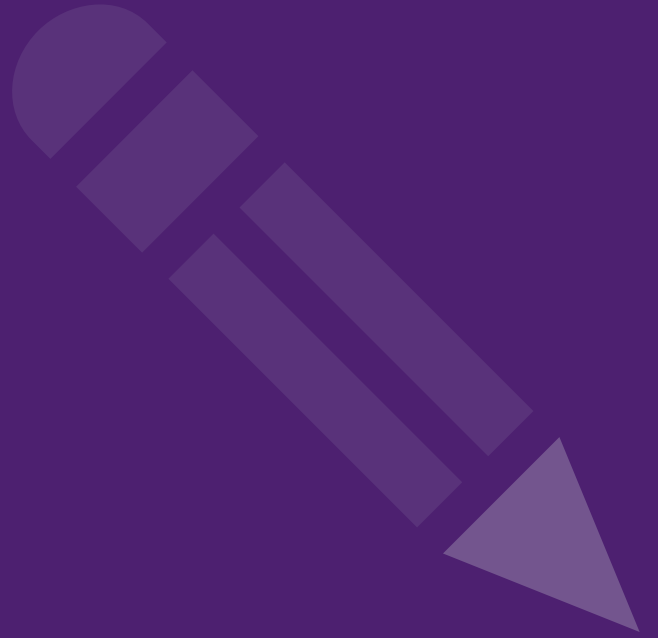
**BARNSELY**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

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Developed in 2024 by Metro Dynamics and Barnsley Council on behalf of the Barnsley Inclusive Economy Board.



# Foreword

# Foreword

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It is with great pride that I introduce the Barnsley Inclusive Economic Growth Strategy – a vision not just for continued economic growth in Barnsley – but for inclusive economic growth in a borough where everyone can thrive.

As Chair of the Inclusive Economy Board, I am proud of how this strategy builds on existing strengths and successes to set a positive direction for the future of Barnsley's economy.

The strategy builds on Barnsley's legacy of resilience, from rebuilding our economy after the mining closures to becoming the vibrant, dynamic borough we are today. With job growth nearly doubling the national average between 2015 and 2022 and over £300m invested in regeneration projects, Barnsley has become a hub for business, culture, and innovation.

To maintain this momentum for growth, we will leverage our assets to establish Barnsley as an exemplar for inclusive growth where innovative and digitally enabled businesses thrive, all our residents have good health and good jobs and fulfil their potential and we continue to attract investment to strengthen the physical fabric of our place.

The strategy is ambitious yet deliverable, focused on delivering meaningful change. It sets our strategic intent to grow a larger, more diverse, and higher-value economy and attract more investment, supporting all our residents to access good work or start and grow their own businesses and be proud to be part of our borough.

Our three missions – establishing Barnsley as the UK's leading digital town, future-proofing our logistics and manufacturing sectors, and empowering all communities to thrive – anchor this intent, providing a roadmap for a future where economic opportunity is accessible to everyone.

As we look to the future, I invite all our partners to join us in realising this ambitious vision. Together, we will create an inclusive economy in Barnsley where everyone can contribute, succeed, and feel proud to belong.



**Carrie Sudbury**  
**Chair, Barnsley Inclusive Economy Board and Chief Executive of Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber of Commerce**

Barnsley is the place of possibilities – somewhere people live healthy and productive lives in a robust and sustainable inclusive economy.

In Barnsley, we have a track record of being bold, brave, and innovative to drive positive change and deliver for our residents. We have already delivered transformative projects that have revitalised our town centre, supported our vibrant cultural and heritage offerings, facilitated high job growth and attracted significant investment to the borough.

We're proud of where we've got to, but we don't want to stand still.

Our Barnsley Inclusive Economic Growth Strategy provides a clear vision for the future of Barnsley's economy. It outlines how we will continue to build on our strengths while addressing the barriers that hold our communities back. From fostering innovation and investing in digital transformation to protecting our important economic sectors and reducing economic inactivity, this strategy reflects our determination to empower all of Barnsley's residents to thrive.

We must look to the future with excitement and optimism. We want to foster and grow ambition in Barnsley, enabling everyone to be the best they can be – with innovative and digitally enabled business thriving, residents with good health and good jobs, continued inward investment and support for council sustainability and net zero ambitions.

Our three ambitious growth missions to establish Barnsley as the UK's leading digital town, future-proof our logistics and manufacturing sectors, and empower all communities to thrive set the future direction for how we will build a local economy where economic opportunity is accessible to everyone.

This strategy articulates our ambition to grow a larger, more diverse, and higher-value economy and attract more investment, supporting all our residents to access good work or start and grow their own businesses and be proud to be part of our borough.

It will support our continued efforts to create a borough where everyone, regardless of background, can share in its success and deliver lasting change that benefits all corners of Barnsley and ensures it remains a great place to live, work, and grow.

I look forward to working with partners to create an inclusive economy in Barnsley, where everyone can contribute, succeed, and feel proud to belong.



**Cllr Sir  
Steve  
Houghton**

**Leader of Barnsley  
Metropolitan  
Borough Council**



# Introduction

# Introduction

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Barnsley is the place of possibilities, where economic growth is enabling local people to live happier, healthier and more prosperous lives whilst maintaining our sustainability commitments to future generations. Working together, we've rebuilt our economy from the sudden 20,000 job loss triggered by the closure of the coal mines which were formerly the life blood of our economic and social structures. We've transformed the town centre, attracted major businesses and new jobs to the borough, and invested in the sustainability of our Principal Towns.

This has delivered results for local people. Job growth from 2015–2022 was nearly double the national average and the business base has grown rapidly as employers have chosen to locate here.<sup>1</sup> Over £300 million of investment has been secured to deliver major **regeneration projects in and around our town centre**, which alongside our existing vibrant heritage, culture and green assets, have strengthened Barnsley's reputation as a great place to live, work, visit and invest.

Although Barnsley still faces legacy economic challenges including deep-seated economic and health inequalities which divide the east and west of the borough, we are well placed for growth. Our strategy must address these issues and enable everyone to reach their potential, whilst also recognising the wider macroeconomic trends – process automation, digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI) – which will continue to shape our economy. This takes place in the context of the climate emergency, the need to rapidly reduce emissions, use resources efficiently, help nature to recover and ensure a just transition to net zero carbon.

## Our strategy for growth is both future-focused and inclusive

This strategy presents a new twin-track approach to inclusive economic development for Barnsley. It will continue to **strengthen the foundations** which underpin economic growth – our support to businesses, the quality and health of our labour market, and our attractiveness to investors – whilst focusing our collective efforts on unlocking transformative growth opportunities through our **three Barnsley missions**. Our missions enhance our sector specialisms and increase participation in the labour market to drive long-term prosperity across the borough. The interlinked elements of our strategy are shown on the following page.

## Transforming the borough to 2030

This is an economic strategy which draws on economic levers to deliver inclusive and sustainable outcomes for our residents, businesses and places. It is designed to complement and support the delivery of existing local and regional strategies, and is an important vehicle through which we will realise our **2030 vision for Barnsley as the Place of Possibilities**.

Our strategic objectives are evidence-led and have been shaped through engagement with our partners and representatives from our business base. The result is a strategy which is ambitious yet deliverable, focused on the activities which will deliver meaningful change. It outlines our strategic intent to **grow a larger, more diverse, and higher-value economy, and attract more investment**. We also want to support all our residents to access good work or start and grow their own businesses and be proud to be part of our borough.

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<sup>1</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 11.

## **Vision**

Our overarching ambition for the borough,  
aligned to Barnsley 2030



## **Foundation themes**

The three broad and interconnected cornerstones of our  
economy through which our strategic objectives are grouped



## **Strategic objectives**

Our underpinning aims for Barnsley which establish  
strong foundations for inclusive growth and address the  
binding constraints on our economy



## **Barnsley missions**

The Barnsley-specific growth opportunities which provide  
a focus for collective delivery and cut across out strategic  
themes and objectives



## **Strategic outcomes**

The key changes we want to see from  
strategy implementation



## **Measures of success**

The metrics and indicators we will use to monitor our progress  
and evidence our impact to stakeholders and investors



# Barnsley 2030

## Our partnership vision for the future

Barnsley 2030 is our long-term ambition for Barnsley, shared by the Council and important public, private and voluntary sector organisations which support and develop our Borough and communities.

### Our vision is that Barnsley is the place of possibilities.

In Barnsley we want everyone to have a good life. This means everything from a quality place to call home, to good physical and mental wellbeing and a sense of self-worth through **diverse and secure employment opportunities**.

It's also about having access to the best possible local facilities in a community that values our people and our place.

In Barnsley we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn, develop new skills and, most importantly, to achieve their personal potential.

Barnsley aims to be an exemplar place to live and a great place to do business. We want to both retain and attract new people and businesses to the area, **creating an inclusive and diverse community enriched with skills, knowledge and experiences**. We want to meet the needs of today, without compromising the needs of the future and encourage people to connect to each other as well as to our place.

### Our vision is being delivered through four priority themes:

Growing Barnsley  
Learning Barnsley  
Healthy Barnsley  
Sustainable Barnsley

#### Our Growing Barnsley ambitions are:

1. to provide local businesses **early-stage business support** and the **chance to grow**;
2. enable people, businesses and organisations to **access and use digital resources**;
3. ensure people have a wider choice of **quality, affordable and sustainable housing**; and
4. develop Barnsley as a **great place to invest** and provide diverse and **secure employment** to add to an economy that benefits everyone.

The Inclusive Economy Board (IEB) is the partnership board committed to developing and sustaining an inclusive economy across Barnsley. The Board works directly through its partnerships and organisations to oversee these ambitious goals for Barnsley in 2030.

## Aligning our other Council strategies

Inclusive economic growth has mutually reinforcing relationships with other ambitions held by the council and partners for the continued development of a healthier, better skilled, and more environmentally and socially sustainable borough. This strategy therefore sits alongside other enabling strategies which already helping us deliver on our Barnsley 2030 ambitions.

For example, the **Barnsley Transport Strategy** (2022) aims to improve productivity and economic growth through better transport in the borough and connections to places and economies beyond. It is already delivering improvement in active travel and the bus network, whilst promoting future projects like a direct London train service and an inter-city service for the Dearne which will boost our economic footprint.

Similarly, the **Barnsley Housing Strategy 2023** is driving investment in existing housing stock to promote well-being and opportunity in our communities and enabling new housing development in strategic locations to accommodate our population and economic growth.

This ongoing growth and renewal takes place within the framework of our 2019 **Local Plan** –which has allocated housing, employment

and mixed-use development sites across the borough – to deliver 21,500 new homes and capacity for almost 29,000 jobs by 2033.

Our **2045 net zero commitment** is being delivered through carbon emission reduction, energy efficiency, renewable energy and the development of electric vehicle and district heat infrastructure. Barnsley's Positive Climate Partnership is committed to developing a sustainability strategy, which will sit alongside this Inclusive Economic Growth Strategy, and re-state the environmental and resource parameters in which our growth must take place.

In addition, a number of other strategies share mutually reinforcing and beneficial ambitions which are impacted by positive economic outcomes. For example, the Barnsley Place-based Partnership's **Tackling Health Inequalities in Barnsley** strategy seeks to promote better population health by influencing improved incomes. The partnership is committed to helping the local economy by 'buying goods and services from it and investing in it, in ways that generate sustainable, inclusive economic growth in Barnsley and the region'. Similarly, both the **Health and Wellbeing Strategy** and the borough's mental health strategy aim for everyone in Barnsley to have access to the resources they need to live a healthy life, and acknowledges the role of income and good work in this.



# Barnsley's economy today

**Barnsley boasts a range of strategic assets and partnerships which drive innovation, entrepreneurialism and prosperity for our people and places.**

With a growing population and business base, Barnsley is a dynamic and diverse borough. Founded on a proud industrial heritage, we have strong manufacturing expertise and growing logistics and digital sectors, supported by our strategic location on the M1/A1M corridor and proximity to major businesses, supply chains and R&D assets in the wider South Yorkshire region. Our leisure and visitor economy offers access to a rich blend of recreational, sporting and heritage assets, including Cannon Hall, Wentworth Castle Gardens, Elsecar Heritage Centre and the Trans Pennine Trail – as well as impressive natural landscapes in the Dearne Valley and moorland fringes of the Peak District National Park.

**In the decade to 2021, Barnsley enjoyed consistent economic growth in line with the national average.** Our strategic focus on delivering more jobs has yielded a 21% increase in the number of employment opportunities between 2012 and 2022.<sup>2</sup>

Our growing economy has been powered by a rapid rise in the business base. **Enterprising Barnsley**, our leading business support team, helped SMEs secure over £1.2m in private sector investment in 2022, and plays a key role in attracting businesses to the area<sup>3</sup>, and has led strategy on the digital economy in medium-sized cities through the URBACT EU programme.

Barnsley's hardworking and loyal workforce is also a major asset in attracting businesses, and our outstanding further education provision equips school leavers with the technical skills and aspiration to succeed.

The Council and its partners are committed to providing the stability and support needed for growth, taking a **place-based approach to economic development**. Our anchor institutions and strong partnerships are pivotal to this. Our colleges, healthcare providers, and other public service and community institutions, as well as our major manufacturing and logistics firms, play a critical role in the borough in supporting local employment and nurturing talent, and in providing better-paid 'good jobs' and promoting more inclusive, flexible and meaningful 'good work'.

Barnsley's economy also benefits from its membership of **South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA)**. This partnership provides access to investment, opens up further skills and business support for our residents, unlocks local supply chains and provides a united voice through which the region's economic interest is represented to national government.

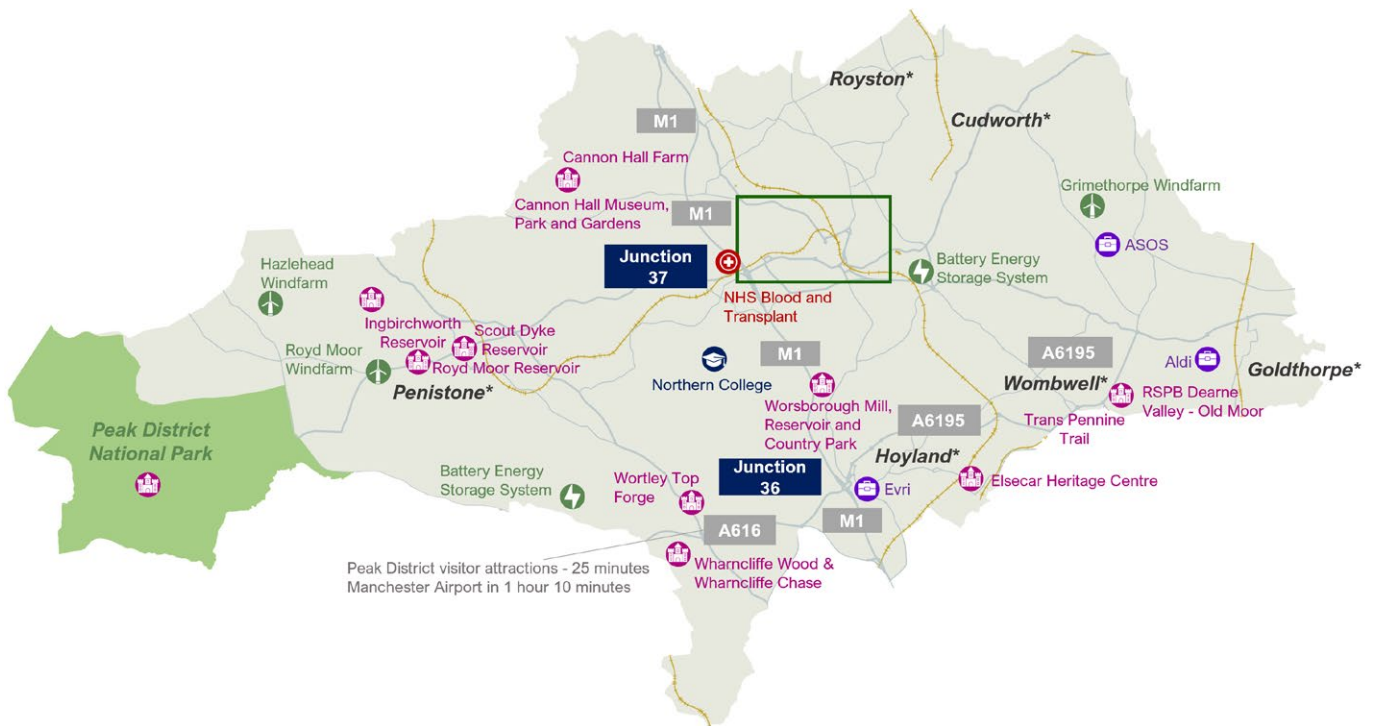


<sup>2</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Enterprising Barnsley; enterprisingbarnsley.co.uk.



# Map of economic assets in Barnsley



## Barnsley Central



### Legend

-  Education/skills provider
-  Innovation
-  Culture/visitor economy asset
-  Green energy infrastructure
-  Key employment site
-  Health services

SYMCA's *Plan for Good Growth* sets the regional context for our inclusive growth in Barnsley.

It aims to attract investment and income into the region and to **grow more secure, high-paid jobs**. South Yorkshire partners will focus on developing new businesses, improving skills at all levels, and ensuring that growth benefits the greatest proportion of residents and businesses by supporting the development of four regional priority growth areas – including Barnsley town centre.

Our membership of SYMCA also enables access to the £900m South Yorkshire Renewal Fund (Gainshare) – a long-term government funding commitment for local priority economic growth projects in the region.

Meanwhile, growing relationships with nearby urban centres of Leeds, Wakefield and Sheffield also provide opportunities for our business and residents, and therefore will continue to play a key role in our strategy for future prosperity.

**Barnsley has a strong track record of securing investment to promote sector growth, attract and retain talent and support placemaking across the borough.**

Flagship investments in the Digital Media Centre (**DMC01** – innovative start up and scale up space for digital and creative businesses – and **DMC02** – our cutting edge R&D hub) – have attracted tech entrepreneurs and positioned Barnsley to **proactively respond to the digital revolution** which is impacting all aspects of our economy and opening up new market opportunities. Recognised by SYMCA as a regional digital hub, Barnsley is leading activity to grow a strong tech ecosystem across South Yorkshire, supporting tech businesses to start and scale. Significant investments have been made in digital infrastructure to make Barnsley Council an exemplar of digital accessibility.

Our investments in major employment sites at **Junction 36** and **Junction 37** on the M1 corridor has made a significant contribution



<sup>4</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 49.

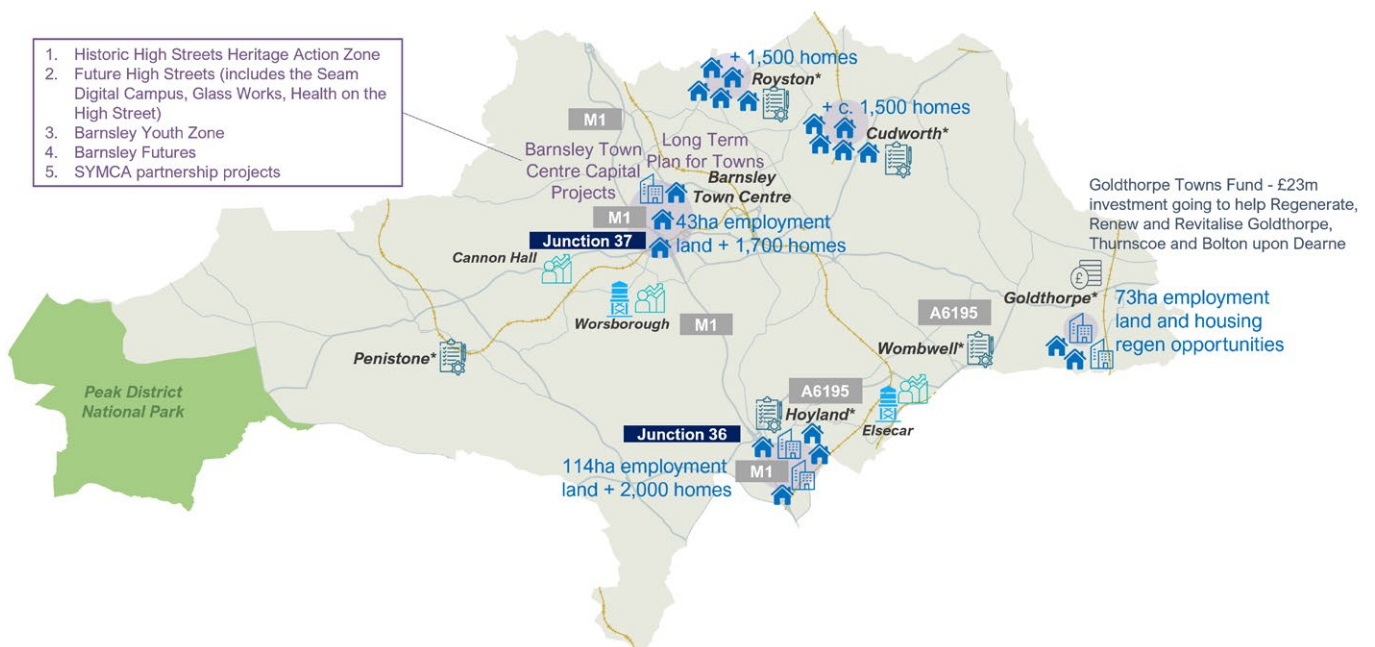
to the borough's growth in tradable jobs, which have increased by 2,875 since 2015, and attracted major employers including Evri.<sup>4</sup> We are continuing to unlock strategic employment sites through infrastructure investment, for example at the ES10 site in Goldthorpe. It is crucial that we continue to work in partnership with our largest employers – for example through the Positive Climate Partnership – as the organisations with the biggest economic footprints and biggest potential to drive sustainability and social value in the borough.

We have already begun to deliver our vision for vibrant and sustainable communities through our transformative programme of regeneration, housing development and placemaking. Our £210 million investment in retail, leisure and health has transformed Barnsley town centre into a modern hub for the borough, driving footfall and hosting a dynamic year-round events programme which is restoring pride in place and retaining

wealth within the local economy. More than 60 projects are completed or underway from our **£35 million Principal Towns and Local Village Centres programme**, which is improving our high streets and creating new community spaces for our residents. We are also leading the way in delivering healthcare services in new ways: including our town centre Community Diagnostic Centre and our Health on the High Street ambition.

We must maintain our momentum for growth. Guided by this inclusive economic strategy, and Barnsley's 2030 vision of a place of possibilities, we will leverage our assets to establish **Barnsley as an exemplar for inclusive growth**; where innovative and digitally enabled businesses thrive, all our residents have good health, good jobs and fulfil their potential, and we continue to attract the investment to strengthen the physical fabric of place, whilst meeting our net zero obligations.

## Map of growth opportunities in Barnsley



### Legend

- \* Principal town
- Principal Towns Investment Plans
- Culture & Visitor Economy Capital Programme
- Our reservoirs

# A mission-driven approach to 2030

## A long-term framework for prosperity

To achieve our inclusive growth ambitions, we must continue to create the conditions for growth. Three **foundation themes** – economy, people and place – and **nine strategic objectives** provide the foundations of our inclusive economic growth strategy, and the overarching platform on which activity and investment is based.

Informed by our achievements over recent years and understanding of what works, our objectives reflect the core activities we must continue to do and those we must commence or accelerate. They aim to support indigenous growth whilst enabling us to remain agile to new opportunities. They are purposefully strategic to provide a guiding framework which will stand the test of time and enable flexibility in the design of targeted interventions which will need to respond to changing local needs and opportunities.

## Our strategic growth missions

Alongside our long-term endeavours to maintain and strengthen the core foundations for growth across economy, people and place, we will proactively drive forward **three major growth opportunities for the borough**. The **Barnsley missions** will galvanise collective action – providing a focus for partnership working and targeting of resources, expertise and activity. They set a clear statement of our ambitions to local and regional stakeholders and are centred on the strategic growth opportunities which will deliver the transformative growth Barnsley needs to 2030.

We will:



### Mission 1: Establish Barnsley as the UK's leading digital town

By 2030 Barnsley will be a digital powerhouse, driving inclusive growth by catalysing local innovation, fostering digital skills and attracting both top-tier talent and high-value businesses.



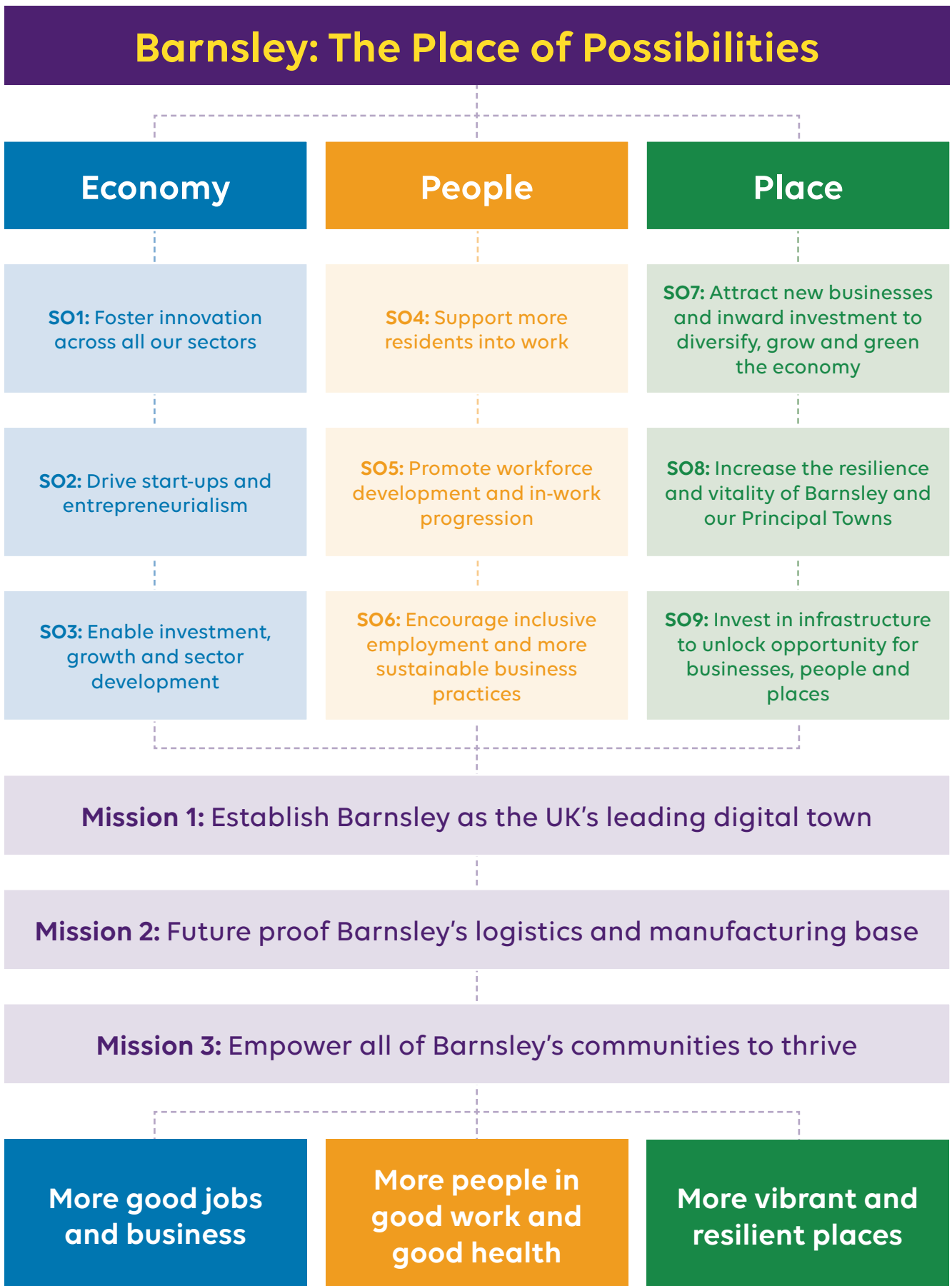
### Mission 2: Future proof Barnsley's logistics and manufacturing base

By 2030, Barnsley's manufacturing and logistics sectors will be exemplars of a pro-innovation, pro-technology economy – fuelling job creation and diversification by leveraging our prime location, advanced digital capabilities, and commitment to sustainable resource use and net zero.



### Mission 3: Empower all of Barnsley's communities to thrive

By 2030, we will have unleashed the untapped potential within our communities by reducing economic inactivity, championing diverse and inclusive employment, and promoting a vibrant culture of entrepreneurialism.







# Foundation 1: Economy

# Foundation 1: Economy

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Our economic growth rate in the last decade has kept pace with national trends, reaching £4.3bn in GVA in 2021.<sup>5</sup> This has been fuelled by our growing business base, composed of 6,860 enterprises.<sup>6</sup> Manufacturing, health, retail, and transport and storage are our largest employers, and we have growing specialisms in furniture manufacturing and specialised construction activities.<sup>7</sup>

## Kickstarting innovation-led productive growth

Despite our recent growth trajectory, Barnsley is still characterised as a **low productivity economy**: in 2021, GVA per hour worked was nearly £10 lower than the national average at £28.70.<sup>8</sup> Our low productivity is signalled by a lack of economic complexity.<sup>9</sup> Barnsley ranks 358th out of the 363 local areas, making us one of the least economically complex local authorities in the UK.<sup>10</sup> We have the lowest business density in South Yorkshire (281 businesses per 10,000 people) and the evidence shows a 29% decline in high growth businesses in Barnsley between 2017 and 2022.<sup>11</sup>

## Diversifying our business base

Between 2015 and 2022, we saw a 13% increase in tradeable jobs compared to 7% in Great Britain.<sup>12</sup> These are roles which support emerging and future sectors and typically form part of the national and global supply chains, and therefore are crucial to our future economic growth. Due to structural economic legacies of widespread employment in state-owned industry and large-scale manufacturing firms, **professional business services – such as finance and insurance – are underrepresented** in our sector base. With high levels of employment in traditionally manual roles, Barnsley's labour market is vulnerable to the adoption of automation. 9% of local jobs are estimated to be at high risk of automation, outstripping the national average of 7%.<sup>13</sup>

## Raising our wage floor

Wages have risen in recent years, but similar to the rest of South Yorkshire, pay in Barnsley remains low. In 2023, average gross annual pay by workplace in Barnsley was £35,783, slightly lower than the average gross annual resident pay (£35,891).<sup>14</sup> Within the borough, pay disparity plays out on a spatial level, with the M1 serving as a 'divider' between higher and lower net annual household incomes, underscoring the need for an inclusive economic development approach.<sup>15</sup>

## We want more good jobs and business in Barnsley. This means better-paid, higher-skilled jobs in more productive tradeable sectors.

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<sup>5</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 41.

<sup>6</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Economic complexity is a measure of how much productive knowledge is contained within the economy. Higher scores reflect combination of specialisms indicative of highly productive economic activity. By contrast, more simple economies tend to have subsectors which interact less with others in the economy, requiring less highly specialised knowledge. The Economic Complexity Index (ECI) reflects a ranking of Local Authorities based on the similarity of their economic activity, areas with the highest ECI scores are more economically complex.

<sup>10</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 51.

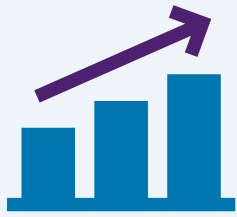
<sup>11</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 42; p.51.

<sup>12</sup> Tradeable sectors, defined as those that produce goods and services that can be traded outside of the region, are the key to increasing productivity and generating growth. This is because growth and prices are not limited by conditions in the local market and are more likely to innovate as they are exposed to more competition. The sectors included in the analysis of tradeable jobs are: Manufacturing. Professional, Scientific and Technical. Finance and Insurance. Information and Communications Administration. Support Services Arts, Entertainment and Recreation; Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> SYMCA, South Yorkshire's Skills Strategy, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 29

<sup>15</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 28



## £4.3bn GVA

39.6% growth (2011–21)  
National: 39.6%



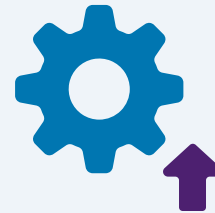
## 20.5% jobs growth

Between 2012–22  
National: 15.2%



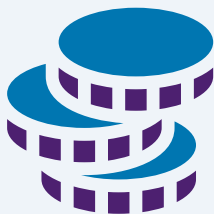
## Net gain of 2,150 tradeable jobs

11.9% growth (2015–22)  
National: 39.6%



## £28.7 productivity (GVA per hour)

16.2% growth (2011–21)  
National: £38.8 (+23.2%)



## £15.89 gross hourly resident pay

28.7% growth (2013–23)  
National: 39.6%



## Lowest economic complexity in South Yorkshire

One of the lowest economic complexities in the UK

## Our strategic objectives are to:

### Strategic Objective 1

**Foster innovation across all our sectors**

Innovation is central to accelerating productive economic growth. It is essential for unlocking new efficiencies and market opportunities for businesses, creating high-quality job opportunities for residents and pioneering new solutions to pressing societal and environmental challenges at both a local and national level. We want every business in Barnsley to participate in innovation, harnessing local assets such as our [MakerLab](#), [Creator Lab](#), Barnsley College SciTech Digital Innovation Hub, and South Yorkshire Integrated Care System Innovation Hub to fuel sector growth and strengthen our culture of entrepreneurialism.

We also want to maximise the business and environmental benefits of emerging markets in decarbonisation and sustainable resource use. As part of this, we will create inclusive pathways for residents, communities and third sector organisations to engage in and benefit from innovation – for example at the SEAM Digital Campus – to reaffirm Barnsley as a hub of opportunity and potential.

### Strategic Objective 2

**Drive start ups and entrepreneurialism**

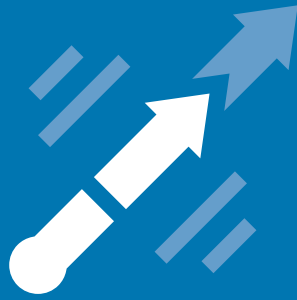
All of our businesses and entrepreneurs will have access to our best-in-class support offer. Our whole-life business support will help attract enterprises to start, scale and stay in Barnsley, and to attract further investment, develop new business and markets, increasing the diversity, sustainability and resilience of our local economy. The award-winning Enterprising Barnsley will continue to play a key role in connecting local businesses to available advisory and funding support as well as brokering new growth and investment opportunities.

### Strategic Objective 3

**Enable investment, growth and sector development**

We are committed to driving growth across all our sectors, from the foundational sectors linked to our proud industrial heritage to our emerging specialisms that will shape our future economy.

The provision of personalised account management and sectoral expertise (leveraging the town centre's designation as a 'Growth Area' in SYMCA's Plan for Good Growth), coupled with our strong relationships with institutional investors to stimulate the flow of private investment, will strengthen Barnsley's reputation as a leading location for emerging industries and high-value talent.



## Measures of success

- Improvement in productivity per job (GVA) to increase as percentage of national average
- Maintain annual business start-up rate to match South Yorkshire and national average
- Improvement in business survival rates to exceed the South Yorkshire average
- Support more jobs to further reduce the job density gap with the South Yorkshire average
- Increase in the percentage of all jobs which are tradeable and close the gap with the UK average
- Growth in workplace wages to exceed the South Yorkshire average



# Foundation 2: People

## Foundation 2: People

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Home to over 224,900 residents and a working age population of 152,200, our people are the engine of our local economy.<sup>16</sup> Education leavers today are increasingly better qualified, possessing the technical expertise and ambition to succeed. In 2024, our unemployment rate of 3.5% is below the national average, and we have the lowest number of residents Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in South Yorkshire, reflecting our unwavering commitment to supporting our residents into meaningful employment, education and training.<sup>17</sup>

### Reversing the trends of economic inactivity

We face significant and worsening challenges with economic inactivity – an issue which is particularly acute amongst women, 31% of whom are economically inactive.<sup>18</sup> Our landmark **Pathways to Work commission** documents the scale of the challenge: Barnsley residents are one fifth more likely to be out of work than residents elsewhere in the country.<sup>19</sup> Our inactive residents are more likely to have a disability (40%) and to have no qualifications (32%), signalling the need for targeted interventions to improve both health outcomes and access to skills development.

### Recognising the link between good health and good work

One of the most pressing barriers to employment is poor health, with 40% of economically inactive residents citing ill health as the primary reason for being out of work, compared to 28% nationally.<sup>20</sup> Supporting residents into good health through initiatives such as **Health on the High Street**, as well helping them into and stay in good work through Pathways to Work,

Working Win and Work Well, is therefore not only an economic imperative for unlocking growth and raising individual prosperity, but also a social imperative in enabling all our residents to thrive.

Low qualification rates in the labour force are another significant barrier to employment. We have the highest proportion of residents with no qualifications compared to other South Yorkshire authorities, a legacy of the borough's industrial past and ex-manual workers who have not yet reached retirement age.<sup>21</sup> Codesigning accessible pathways to skills attainment and demonstrating the financial value of good skills is crucial to unleashing economic growth. Employers have a crucial role to play here, championing upskilling and professional development opportunities to those in work to ensure that more residents stay and thrive in work.

### Establishing Barnsley as a hub of inclusive employment

The adoption of inclusive employment practices is essential for increasing the resilience and productivity of our native workforce, as well as attracting new talent to bolster our local labour market. **Without intervention, our workforce is set to contract.** By 2030, 22% of Barnsley's current working-age population will have reached or surpassed retirement age, and a further 12% are at risk due to an increasing trend of early retirement.<sup>22</sup>

**We want more people in good work and good health in Barnsley. This means providing secure and meaningful work, inclusive employment and promoting health in work and the important role of work and income in addressing our health inequalities.**

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<sup>16</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> Pathways to Work, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> BMBC, Review of the Local Economic Pressures Impacting Skills and Employability Through to 2030, 2023.



**224,900  
residents**

5.7% growth (2012–22)  
National: 6.7%



**Lowest NEET rates  
in South Yorkshire**

and 42.4% remain NEET  
for only 1–3 months



**25% have no  
qualifications**

National: 18%



**25.5% economic  
inactivity**

+19.2% increase (2013–23)  
National: 21.2% (–6.6%)



**3.5%  
unemployment  
rate**

68.2% reduction (2013–23)  
National: 3.9% (–50.6%)



**36.8%  
RQF4+**

National: 50.6%



## Our strategic objectives are to:

### Strategic Objective

4

**Support more residents into work**

Supporting residents to access and stay in employment is essential for unlocking Barnsley's full economic potential and driving inclusive growth. By piloting the innovative Pathways to Work Proof of Concept model and empowering residents to enter the workforce, we will strengthen local businesses, enhance community resilience, and reduce economic inequality.

Unlocking resident potential is about more than just job creation – it's about fostering a culture of opportunity where everyone has access to the skills, support, and pathways they need to secure sustainable employment. By tackling barriers to work and creating clear routes to success, we will raise aspirations, boost productivity, and position Barnsley as a **thriving, inclusive economy where all residents can contribute and prosper**.

### Strategic Objective

5

**Promote workforce development and in work progression**

As part of our vision to make Barnsley the place of possibilities, we want to grow our reputation as a hotbed for career growth, to attract new talent by offering unmatched access to development opportunities and a network of forward-thinking employers who recognise that investing in people is key to driving business success. Not only will this boost productivity, it will also increase the wellbeing and prosperity of our residents by promoting upskilling and reskilling opportunities to help them thrive in an evolving economy.

We will work strategically with education partners and employers to align training with the needs of our business community, ensuring Barnsley's workforce is future-ready and capable of meeting shifting market demands.

### Strategic Objective

6

**Encourage inclusive employment and more sustainable business practices**

We want our residents, regardless of background, to have access to good work. Crucial to this is inclusive employment practices, which includes offering flexible work, paying the Real Living Wage, operating fair recruitment practices, providing opportunities for development and supporting the mental and physical health of employees.

Better business practices improve job quality and workplace satisfaction, leading to higher productivity and can help reduce and mitigate our impact on the environment. We will build on the **Employer Promise** to launch the Employers Community Charter which provides a framework for local businesses to adopt conscientious, equitable, socially and environmentally responsible and community-focused employers. We will ensure that all of our biggest employers continue to maintain the commitment to 'Sustainable Barnsley' through the Positive Climate Partnership. We will also continue to support the BeWell@Work scheme.



## Measures of success

- Increase the proportion of working-age residents who are economically active
- Reduce the proportion of working-age residents who are economically inactive due to long-term health issues, to below the South Yorkshire average
- Increase in percentage of population with level 4 qualifications to reduce the gap with the UK average
- Growth in resident wages to exceed the South Yorkshire average
- Decrease in the percentage of jobs which pay below the Real Living Wage to bring Barnsley in line with the South Yorkshire average



# Foundation 3: Place

## Foundation 3: Place

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Barnsley boasts a diverse mix of towns and villages, each with its own distinct character and strong sense of community. Our unique visitor economy offer is shaped by our economic geography, from vast rural landscapes to heritage assets and museums which celebrate the cultural legacy of our industrial roots.

At the heart of our local economy is our vibrant town centre, serving as a hub for commerce, leisure, and a flourishing cultural and events scene. Our Principal Towns, meanwhile, are the focal points of community life, offering vital spaces for social interaction, local businesses, and essential services that strengthen the fabric of our borough.

### Building on our regeneration track record

Our borough has undergone significant transformation in recent years, including the major town centre regeneration and public realm improvements to [regenerate, revitalise and renew Goldthorpe, Thurnscoe and Bolton Upon Dearne](#), funded by our successful £23.1m Towns Fund programme. These projects have helped revitalise our places and strengthened Barnsley's reputation as a borough that gets things done. With a proven track record of securing investment to drive local growth and achieve tangible outcomes for residents, our focus now is on leveraging these assets to showcase the borough as a great place to live, work and visit as well as applying our Barnsley blue print for inclusive and sustainable regeneration to all our communities.

### Ensuring all our places share in Barnsley's prosperity

Not all places share in the borough's recent success. 22% of the Barnsley's Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) fall within the most deprived in the UK, the majority of which are clustered in the east of borough in former coal mining communities.<sup>24</sup> The sudden and

large-scale unemployment triggered by the mine closures in the 1980s and 1990s, coupled with low levels of education attainment, have been long term barriers to economic prosperity and social mobility.

Structural economic legacies are only part of Barnsley's deprivation puzzle; with infrastructure, transport and housing challenges contributing to the borough's spatial inequalities. This both hinders local business activity, and cuts some of our residents off from participating in the economy, with Dearne North, Darfield and Hoyland Milton wards noted as high risk for digital exclusion.<sup>25</sup> Although our economy benefits from strategic road links, many of our residents do not have access to a car and are therefore dependent on unreliable bus services for commuting and accessing essential services. This is a particular challenge for those employed in our substantial night time economy (50% of all local jobs), for whom limited local public transport options present a significant barrier to accessing and staying in work.<sup>26</sup> The Borough has many communities which are regarded as at risk of transport-related social exclusion.

Addressing local infrastructure and environmental constraints is crucial to unlocking productive growth and achieving a rapid reduction of emissions and facilitating a just transition to net zero carbon. Businesses and residents must be empowered to take a leading role in local placemaking to ensure we meet Barnsley's economic, social and environmental needs and that our proposition reflects our rich history whilst telling a future-focused narrative of possibility.

### We want more vibrant, well-connected and resilient places in Barnsley.

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<sup>24</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 22.

<sup>25</sup> Digital Exclusion Risk Index (DERI), GMCA.

<sup>26</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p.45.



**Diverse natural  
and heritage  
assets**



**99.7% coverage  
with 4G services**



**60% drive a car or  
van to work**

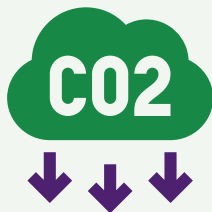
National: 45%



**Average house  
price £163,488**

(2023)

63% increase since 2013



**47% rate of  
CO<sub>2</sub> emissions  
reduction**

(2023)

National: 49%



**38th most deprived  
LA in England**

(2019)

47th most deprived in 2010

## Our strategic objectives are to:

### Strategic Objective 7

Attract new businesses and inward investment to diversify, grow and green the economy

We want to diversify our business base to build our economic and environmental resilience against global trends and shifts, and transform Barnsley into a hub of innovation and opportunity. By drawing in high-growth industries and cutting-edge companies we will enhance local supply chains, create quality jobs and promote innovative solutions and mitigations to climate change within our business base and support offer. We will strengthen the Barnsley brand working to promote our skilled workforce, pro-innovation business ecosystem and rich visitor and culture offer to drive investment across the borough.

### Strategic Objective 8

Increase the vitality and resilience of Barnsley and our Principal Towns

Our town centre and Principal Towns are vital hubs of economic, social and cultural activity. As key place actors, we aim to collaborate with residents and community organisations to co-create strong, vibrant narratives for each of our places, fostering local pride and ownership. Together, we will shape the development of dynamic, mixed-use centres that support both commercial and community needs, strengthening the economic vitality of all our places.

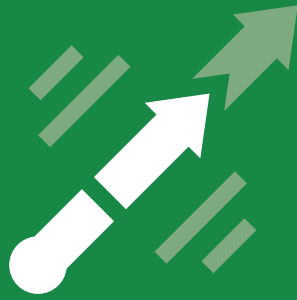
We will continue to promote the borough's varied visitor economy offer via Visit Barnsley and the South Yorkshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership, driving footfall and boosting local spend. This, combined with our commitment to delivering safe, affordable, and sustainable housing as outlined in our [Local Plan](#), will enable us to retain and attract talent, while building inclusive communities that can prosper and grow in the long term.

### Strategic Objective 9

Invest in infrastructure to unlock opportunity for businesses, people and places

We want to create a more connected and prosperous Barnsley, where businesses thrive, communities flourish, and opportunities are within reach for all. Transformative investments in physical and digital infrastructure will enhance the attractiveness of the borough to businesses, investors and potential residents, and will supercharge our innovation ecosystem.

**Key proposals** such as our ambitions for direct trains to London, a new station in the Deane with regional and national connections, the comprehensive review the South Yorkshire bus network and the creation of active travel routes will offer residents and businesses efficient, sustainable, and affordable transport options, while unlocking the full potential of our visitor economy through enhanced accessibility.



## Measures of success

- Increase the number and proportion of businesses in knowledge-intensive business services to reduce the gap with the South Yorkshire average
- Maintain the annual number of visitors to Barnsley town centre (footfall) above 7.5 million
- Increase the number of jobs in our six principal towns





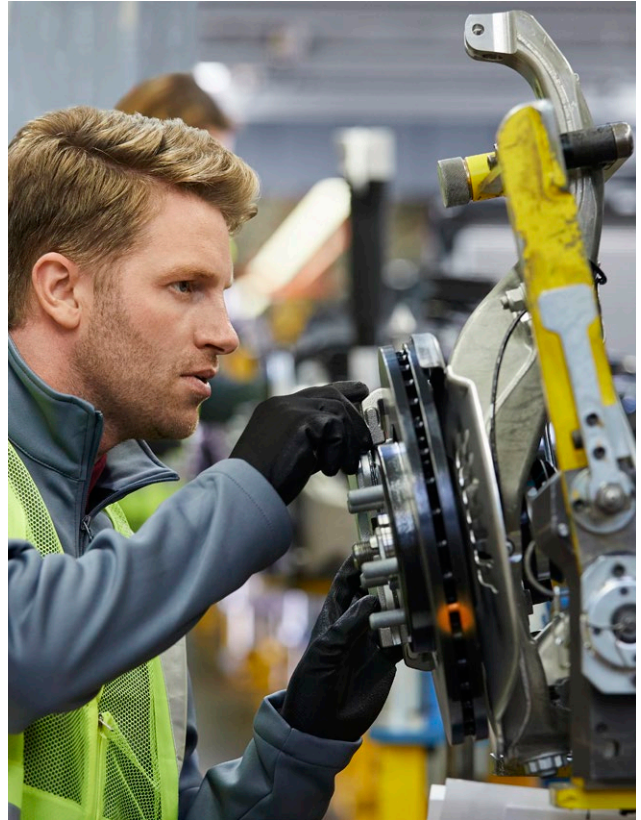
# Our Barnsley missions



# Our Barnsley missions

The Barnsley missions provide a specific focus for our strategic activity, allowing us to concentrate on the immediate actions which will help us achieve our 2030 vision whilst building on our existing strengths.

They are designed cut across our foundation themes and strategic objectives. Our missions set a clear statement of our ambitions to local and regional stakeholders, and are centred on the strategic inclusive growth opportunities which will deliver the more transformative growth Barnsley needs. Once delivered, they will cement our borough's reputation as a place that delivers results, reinforcing our position as a leading digital hub with a cutting-edge logistics and manufacturing sector, where all residents can access the opportunities to thrive.



## Establish Barnsley as the UK's leading digital town

By 2030 Barnsley will be an inclusive digital powerhouse, catalysing local innovation, fostering digital skills and attracting both top-tier talent and high-value businesses.

Barnsley Council and partners have a long-term ambition to establish the town as a magnet for high-value talent and businesses within the creative and digital technologies sector, whilst accelerating the adoption of digital technologies and skills across our business base, anchor institutions and residents. We have a vision to be a connected, smart town with a culture of innovation, collaboration and strong digital leadership.

Becoming a leading digital town will deliver:

- **Good jobs:** in addition to the direct economic opportunities within the digital technology sector, digital adoption and innovation has the potential to increase

productivity across the business base and drive demand for higher-skilled jobs.

- **Healthier, inclusive communities:** our digital tech capabilities will be a key driver for inclusive growth, ensuring all our citizens benefit from improved digital connectivity and access to technology, as well as the adoption of digital health innovations to achieve our vision for a **Healthy Barnsley**.
- **A resilient economy and labour market:** equipping our young people and workforce with the skills for a digitally-enabled labour market and economy will support resilience and strengthen

our place offer – enhancing our ability to attract new businesses and investment to the borough whilst decarbonising our economy.

We will build on our growing reputation for digital excellence, opening up our existing assets and expertise such as:

- **The South Yorkshire Institute of Technology (SYIoT)** – Open the purpose-built Barnsley College University Campus to deliver world-class technical education and training to help close skills gaps in construction, digital, engineering and health industries.
- **TECH SY** – Deliver the region’s flagship technology and digital ecosystem support programme to address the challenges facing our tech ecosystem and drive sustainable growth and innovation.
- **The Seam Digital Campus** – Realise our vision for a digital campus which enhances

access to public spaces and technical facilities to act as a testbed for innovative ideas, supporting the Barnsley economy to grow, with digital and tech at its heart.

- **National Centre for Digital Technologies (NCDT)** – Establish a centre dedicated to collaborative research & development and innovation to enhance university-business connections, foster a vibrant innovation ecosystem and address macro-level challenges.
- **Tech Town and Tech revolution** – Barnsley Council lead partner in delivery of Europe-wide digital and tech strategy networks 2015–21

Through these initiatives – and future opportunities for innovation and job creation, such as a digitally-enabled Health on the High Street project – we will cultivate a nationally competitive offer to innovative digital entrepreneurs, learners and business owners.



## Our priorities for action

In addition to continuing to create the conditions and infrastructure for growth across the economy and borough, we will work collaboratively to accelerate digital growth opportunities by:

### 1. Building a compelling offer to start up and scaling digital businesses:

Action	Economy			People			Place		
	SO1 Innovation	SO2 Start Ups	SO3 Sectoral Growth	SO4 Sustainable Employment	SO5 Workforce Development	SO6 Inclusive Employment	SO7 New Businesses	SO8 Principal Towns	SO9 Inward Investment
Continue to expand our physical digital assets such as the Digital Media Centre and Barnsley Innovation Centre – and deliver our ambition for the SEAM Digital Campus – to attract more digital businesses and tech entrepreneurs to the town centre	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
Retain provision of our high-quality business support and networking offer to digital businesses and those innovating through digital technology adoption	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		
Showcase our digital assets through targeted events and marketing, working with SYMCA on internationalisation and inward investment to position Barnsley as the premier destination for digital investment			✓				✓	✓	



## 2. Activating our digital assets to support growth and inclusion across the borough:

Action	Economy			People			Place		
	SO1 Innovation	SO2 Start Ups	SO3 Sectoral Growth	SO4 Sustainable Employment	SO5 Workforce Development	SO6 Inclusive Employment	SO7 New Businesses	SO8 Principal Towns	SO9 Inward Investment
Support AI and tech adoption across our logistics, manufacturing and wider business base	✓	✓	✓						✓
Target our digital capabilities to support service efficiencies and innovation adoption across our public services, especially our health sector and anchor institutions	✓				✓			✓	✓
Empower local people to create our own 'better' jobs – making it easier for tech entrepreneurs to trial new business ideas and connect into local support services, personal development opportunities and business and research networks		✓		✓	✓	✓			



### 3. Empowering our residents to have the skills and aptitude to thrive in a 21st century economy:

Action	Economy			People			Place		
	SO1 Innovation	SO2 Start Ups	SO3 Sectoral Growth	SO4 Sustainable Employment	SO5 Workforce Development	SO6 Inclusive Employment	SO7 New Businesses	SO8 Principal Towns	SO9 Inward Investment
Build a lifelong and inclusive digital skills pathway, from basic foundational skills and the ambition for the Every Child a Coder digital skills programme, through to the development of high-tech capabilities to enable residents to access opportunities in emerging tech and AI				✓	✓	✓			✓
Extend the accessibility of the sector in our Principal Towns; building digitally enabled assets and embedding digital growth ambitions into all future investment	✓	✓						✓	✓
Work with the partners to ensure a supply of digital talent and entrepreneurs and showcase local job opportunities		✓		✓	✓		✓		





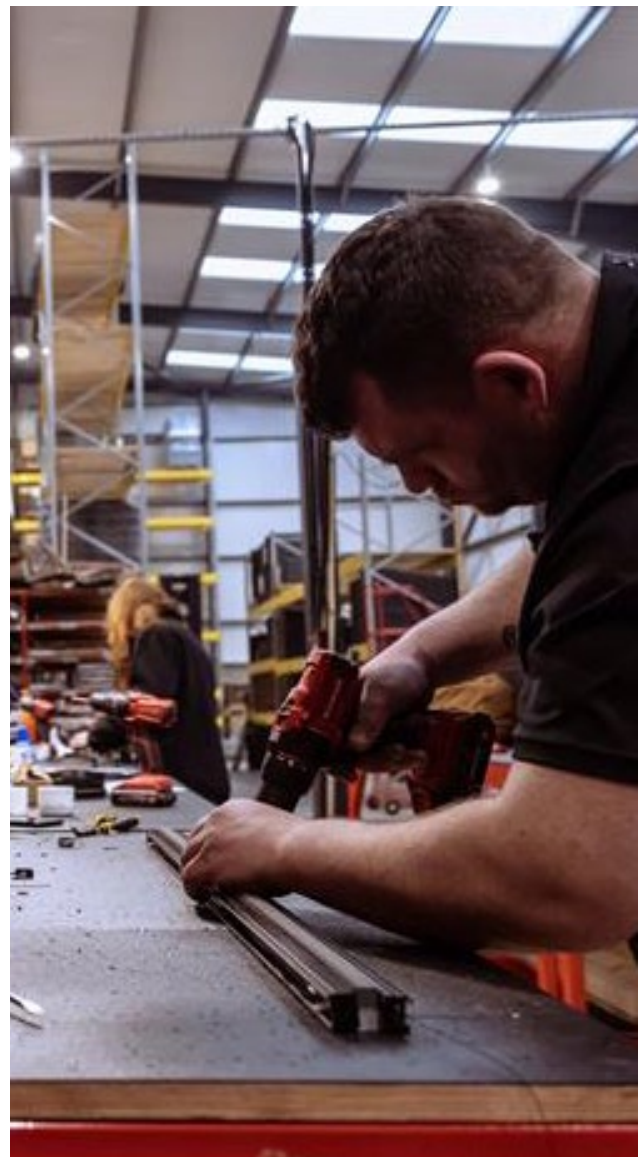
## Future proof our logistics and manufacturing base

By 2030, Barnsley's manufacturing and logistics sectors will be exemplars of a pro-innovation, pro-technology economy – fuelling job creation and diversification by leveraging our prime location, advanced digital capabilities, and commitment to sustainable growth.

Manufacturing and logistics are critical to Barnsley's economic vitality. 15% of the local working age population is employed in manufacturing jobs, and our logistics sector has been one of our fastest growing industries in recent years.<sup>27</sup> The strategic decision to open up employment land at Junction 36 and Junction 37 of the M1 corridor has made a significant contribution to the town's overall growth in tradable jobs (which have increased by 2,875 since 2015) and attracted investment from major employers including Evri.<sup>28</sup>

Manufacturing, warehousing and transportation are highly ranked for their automation potential, which presents both threats and opportunities for our economy. Whilst it can lead to job displacement and require workers to adapt to new technologies, it also offers the potential for increased efficiency, reduced costs and carbon emissions, as well as the creation of higher-skilled and better-paid innovation-focused jobs.

Given the prominence of these sectors in Barnsley's economy, we must support our businesses to embrace and adopt new technologies and processes to grow, stay agile and lead industry developments.



<sup>27</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 44.

<sup>28</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 49.



Provision of accessible upskilling and reskilling opportunities to prepare and develop employees for the roles of the future will safeguard our residents from changing ways of working and ensure they have the skills today for the jobs of tomorrow. This will deliver:

- **Good jobs, investment and supply chains:** land allocations within the Local Plan and our strategic location on the M1/ A1M corridor provide an opportunity to bring more jobs and complexity to our economy. Barnsley's excellent connectivity to regional manufacturing and research assets across Sheffield, and its proximity to tier one manufacturers such as Boeing and Rolls Royce – who have recently chosen South Yorkshire as the home of its new £1.5bn small modular reactor (SMR) manufacturing and testing facility – create the potential to attract businesses within the region's manufacturing supply chains and continue to increase tradable jobs.
- **Innovation, ideas and resilience:** as global technological and environmental drivers impact all sectors of the economy, we must

protect our manufacturing and logistics industries while building resilience, improving productivity and encouraging innovation within our business base. By supporting the transition to a pro-innovation, pro-technology economy, we will harness AI, digital adoption and technology to rapidly reduce emissions, support nature to recover, enhance business resilience and unlock new growth opportunities.

- **A market for professional services:** we will leverage the growth of our manufacturing base to attract and expand the professional services sector within the town centre and Principal Towns, creating more jobs within the manufacturing supply chain.

By building critical mass and density within these key sectors we will increase our resilience and attractiveness to businesses, investors and engineering talent. Coupled with the digital mission and targeting of our leading technical capabilities, we will put Barnsley on the map as a pro-innovation, pro-technology economy.



## Our priorities for establishing Barnsley at the forefront of the UK's manufacturing and logistics sectors

In addition to continuing to create the conditions and infrastructure for growth across the economy and borough, we will work collaboratively to expand and deepen our manufacturing and logistics sectors by:

### 1. Encouraging resilience and innovation in our manufacturing and logistics sector; equipping businesses for future growth:



Action	Economy			People			Place		
	SO1 Innovation	SO2 Start Ups	SO3 Sectoral Growth	SO4 Sustainable Employment	SO5 Workforce Development	SO6 Inclusive Employment	SO7 New Businesses	SO8 Principal Towns	SO9 Inward Investment
Connect logistics and manufacturing sector employers to our digital and tech supply chains to support the adoption and diffusion of digital and tech solutions	✓	✓	✓				✓		
Encourage more businesses to invest in innovation by connecting them into our business support offer, investors and continuing to encourage networking across the sector	✓		✓			✓			✓
Nurture the development of engineering talent within Barnsley to support manufacturing and logistics businesses to innovate, grow and thrive	✓			✓	✓			✓	



**2. Realising the potential of major employment sites at J36 and J37 on the M1 and at Goldthorpe, and continuing to encourage a diverse mix of quality employment opportunities:**



Action	Economy			People			Place		
	SO1 Innovation	SO2 Start Ups	SO3 Sectoral Growth	SO4 Sustainable Employment	SO5 Workforce Development	SO6 Inclusive Employment	SO7 New Businesses	SO8 Principal Towns	SO9 Inward Investment
Continue to work proactively with SYMCA and wider regional partners on trade and investment to accelerate growth of the region's manufacturing sector and supply chains, and use our proximity to major manufacturing assets to proactively promote Barnsley		✓	✓				✓		
Support the expansion and retention of our existing business base through our leading business support offer	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Work with developers, owner investors and businesses to bring forward high-quality employment schemes which are attractive to the market but also meet local needs and future-proof our employment land in terms of power capabilities, energy efficiency, and connectivity			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓



## Empower all of Barnsley's communities to thrive

By 2030, we will have unleashed the untapped potential within our communities by reducing economic inactivity, championing diverse and inclusive employment, and promoting a vibrant culture of entrepreneurialism.

Over recent years, we have seen the unemployment rate and the number of workless households decrease at an impressive rate due to our ongoing commitment to create more jobs across the borough. However, too many of our residents continue to find themselves unable to work or stay in work due to personal and unforeseen circumstances and a shortage of inclusive labour market opportunities. Economic inactivity has risen above 25%, which puts significant pressure on our support services, but it is also fundamentally unacceptable that our residents are prevented from improving their quality of life and wellbeing through sustained work, self-employment or volunteering.<sup>29</sup> Through our Pathways to Work commission, the largest study of its kind to deeply interrogate the drivers of economic inactivity, we have an opportunity to be a national exemplar for inclusive growth. This will help deliver:

- **A 'can-do' culture:** Barnsley is a place of possibilities with outstanding anchor institutions, significant growth potential and a determination to realise this. We want our 'can-do' attitude and growth mindset to be a defining feature of our borough.

We must create the conditions for entrepreneurialism to thrive and residents to be empowered to define and create their own jobs and feel part of a place which they are proud of.

- **Healthier and more resilient communities:** by delivering our ambitious [housing strategy](#), our ongoing engagement with SYMCA to improve transport connectivity across the region, and our investment in Principal Towns, we have an opportunity to create resilient communities by ensuring residents have the skills and support to thrive, access to good jobs, and excellent physical and digital connectivity.
- **Better business:** our investments into the physical fabric of the town, and growing programme of events has created a centre where businesses can thrive. To ensure continued business growth and benefits for residents, we must now focus on curating a labour market that values diversity and embraces inclusive employment. This approach will bring new skills, experiences, and ideas into local workforces, attracting progressive employers to Barnsley and enabling more people to access quality jobs.

<sup>29</sup> Metro Dynamics Evidence Base, p. 38.

## Our priorities for unleashing the potential of all Barnsley's communities

In addition to continuing to create the conditions and infrastructure for growth across the economy and borough, we will work collaboratively to reduce economic inactivity and maintain low levels of unemployment by:

### 1. Promoting a culture of entrepreneurialism and empowering young people and residents to define and create their own 'better' jobs:



Action	Economy			People			Place		
	SO1 Innovation	SO2 Start Ups	SO3 Sectoral Growth	SO4 Sustainable Employment	SO5 Workforce Development	SO6 Inclusive Employment	SO7 New Businesses	SO8 Principal Towns	SO9 Inward Investment
Work with education partners to embed entrepreneurialism and build strong connections between education and our business base		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Collaborate with VCS partners to empower residents to shape placemaking initiatives, facilitate social action and pathways to work				✓	✓	✓		✓	
Enhance our business support offer to encourage self-employment and increase accessibility for residents from underrepresented groups		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
Support the repurposing of under-used assets to create accessible spaces in our Principal Towns for people to explore and launch start ups, drawing on levers such as Community Asset Transfer		✓					✓	✓	✓

## 2. Providing targeted support to help those who are economically inactive and have limiting long-term health issues back into employment or self-employment:

Action	Economy			People			Place		
	SO1 Innovation	SO2 Start Ups	SO3 Sectoral Growth	SO4 Sustainable Employment	SO5 Workforce Development	SO6 Inclusive Employment	SO7 New Businesses	SO8 Principal Towns	SO9 Inward Investment
Pilot the Barnsley Proof of Concept model outlined in the Pathways to Work commission and share lessons learnt with DWP and other regional and national partners				✓	✓	✓			
Build on the success of Health on the High Street and explore 'pop ups' in Principal Towns				✓				✓	✓
Work with local employers and anchor institutions to create a diverse and inclusive labour market and market this as part of the borough's USP to support talent attraction and inward investment		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		





### 3. Embedding inclusive growth across the Council:

Action	Economy			People			Place		
	SO1 Innovation	SO2 Start Ups	SO3 Sectoral Growth	SO4 Sustainable Employment	SO5 Workforce Development	SO6 Inclusive Employment	SO7 New Businesses	SO8 Principal Towns	SO9 Inward Investment
Ensure the consideration of inclusive growth principles within all major investments and drive a cultural change across the council where inclusive growth is understood and considered at each stage of service and programme design, delivery and evaluation	✓					✓	✓		✓
Advocate for a Good Employment Charter for South Yorkshire and encourage Barnsley's employers to take a leading role in its codesign and adoption			✓		✓	✓		✓	



# Implementation

This strategy provides a long-term framework for growth whilst outlining our shorter-term ambitions to focus on early delivery, as well as shape future funding asks and resource allocation. It is a flexible approach – the projects listed are not exhaustive, and we expect activity to evolve over time as new opportunities emerge.

Implementation of the strategy will bolster our reputation as an ambitious borough with a strong track record in securing the funding required to deliver the programmes and regeneration activities needed to make Barnsley thrive. Our strategic missions will shape the next chapter in Barnsley's economic narrative by positioning us at the forefront of logistics and manufacturing and as the UK's premier digital town. The translation of the nationally significant Pathways to Work commission into innovative local solutions, which unlocks the potential of all our people and places, will also establish us as leaders in addressing economic inactivity.



## The role of the Inclusive Economy Board

The strategy is co-owned by the Council and the Inclusive Economy Board (IEB). Composed of representatives from Barnsley's public, private, and third sectors, the IEB is responsible for delivering an inclusive economy for Barnsley. The IEB aims to maximise opportunities and reduce inequalities, ensuring that everyone in Barnsley benefits from its economic growth and prosperity.

As co-developers of the Barnsley Inclusive Economic Growth Strategy, the IEB will provide strategic oversight of implementation and will help to monitor our progress. The IEB will play a key role in championing the strategy and advising on its implementation to achieve maximum impact. This includes ensuring our strategic objectives are considered in broader decision-making and promoting opportunities for business and community participation in the development of local initiatives.

## Delivering our strategy

We have already begun delivering against a number of the ambitions outlined in this strategy.

The **purchase of the Alhambra shopping centre** to expand our successful Health on the High Street initiative, will help us support more residents into good work and health whilst also driving footfall in our town centre. Our £1.6m investment to launch the **Great Childhoods Ambition** will deliver a suite of accessible interventions which ensure our young people are best placed to participate in the labour market and new economic opportunities. The continued regeneration of our Principal Towns will provide a strong foundation for further placemaking initiatives and we are proactively working with SYMCA and central government to secure funding to pilot the recommendations of the Pathways to Work commission.

## Key delivery priorities

### The SEAM Digital Campus

**The SEAM Digital Campus**, including the ambition for a National Centre for Digital Technologies, is the cornerstone of Barnsley's strategy to position itself as a leading digital town by 2030. It aims to catalyse local innovation, foster digital skills, and attract top-tier talent and high-value businesses to the region. It will an environment for testing, learning and piloting and foster a culture of risk and innovation, based on Barnsley's leading work on tech and digital growth in medium-sized cities.

Phase One, utilising money from the Future High Streets Fund, includes the redevelopment of the lower SEAM car park to provide a high-quality public realm in the form of a new urban park in front of the Digital Media Centre 1 (DMC1), including landscaped areas, seating, feature lighting and public art for users of the SEAM Digital Campus and the Town centre. It also includes refurbishing 292 parking spaces – including Electric Vehicle charging points, improved lighting and CCTV – to enhance the facilities and bring them up to Park Mark standards.

**The National Centre for Digital Technologies** aims to serve as a hub for digital excellence, providing state-of-the-art facilities and resources to support the growth of the digital sector. It aims to be dedicated to collaborative research & development and innovation to enhance university-business connections, foster a vibrant innovation ecosystem and address macro-level challenges. This centre aims to play a pivotal role in driving inclusive growth by offering training and development opportunities that **equip residents with the skills needed to thrive in the digital economy**. By fostering a **culture of innovation and entrepreneurship**, the council aims to create a vibrant ecosystem where digital and tech businesses can start, scale, and succeed.

In addition to enhancing digital capabilities, the SEAM Digital Campus will contribute to Barnsley's broader economic development. The council's vision includes leveraging the campus to attract significant investments, create high-quality jobs, and support the growth of local businesses. It aligns with commitments to inclusive economic growth, ensuring that the benefits of digital transformation are accessible to all residents. These strategic objectives for the SEAM Digital Campus are part of a larger mission to **establish Barnsley as a digital powerhouse**. By investing in digital infrastructure and fostering a supportive environment for tech innovation, Barnsley aims to **lead the way in digital transformation** and set a benchmark for other areas.





## Health on the High Street: Health and Wellbeing Hub

**Health on the High Street** is a trailblazing initiative in Barnsley that is bringing access to a range of health and wellbeing activities into the heart of Barnsley town centre, improving access to health and bringing increased footfall on the high street. A health and wellbeing hub will be at the heart of this approach.

Phase one of this initiative was the creation of the Community Diagnostic Centre in The Glass Works which already offers a range of diagnostic services, such as ultrasound, x-ray, breast screening, and phlebotomy, in a convenient location. This facility has reduced waiting times, increased uptake rates, for example we have seen a 22% increase in attendance for mammograms and a 24% reductions in Do Not Attend (DNAs), improved patient satisfaction, and contributed to early prevention and integration of care. From an economic growth perspective, it has increased footfall into the town centre (an additional 55,000 visits) which directly impacts our ability to attract other end users into the town centre, whether they be retail, leisure or food and beverage end users.

Phase two will be the development of a health and wellbeing hub in the Alhambra Centre in the centre of town, working with key partners such as Barnsley Hospital, Barnsley Premier Leisure and South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SWYFT)

The Hub will host a number of health and wellbeing services, such as NHS outpatient services, gym and wellbeing centre, and mental health services, in addition to other related council services and will provide spaces for people to access, link, and talk about the support they need.

The Alhambra Centre, which was acquired by the Council with the support of the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA).



The Health and Wellbeing Hub will reduce pressure on existing healthcare facilities, improve access and quality of care, increase the diversification and prosperity of the town centre, increase footfall, and integrate wrap around care and compatible services to address the wider determinants of health and wellbeing. In addition, we anticipate that it will reduce pressure on A&E services – by encouraging residents to access non-emergency services in a different location, we are challenging the 'hospital first' culture and reducing dependency on acute settings.

The initial investment will be underwritten using SYMCA Gainshare funding which will be complemented by partner investment, as well as additional funds from other sources, including a £1.5m investment from Barnsley Council's Future High Street Fund allocation. The next stage is to work with partners to deliver the initial capital works, funded by FHSF, and work on the commercial strategy for the asset. In addition, a Full Business Case will be submitted to SYMCA once plans have been developed further.



## Pathways to Work

Barnsley Council partnered with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to launch the Pathways to Work Commission in July 2023. This ran until July 2024, with a focus on how to enable all of Barnsley's working-age residents, particularly those furthest from the labour market, to access pathways to employment. Barnsley has higher than average rates of economic inactivity (those out of work and not actively seeking work), with 27.2% of its population considered economically inactive in the year to March 2024, compared to a United Kingdom average of 22.1% in the three months to May 2024.

Chaired by the Rt Hon Alan Milburn, the Commission brought together twelve national experts who met regularly over the year to dissect what can be done to address this problem. The Commission took innovative approaches to local insights, engaging with almost 150 individuals and organisations through evidence sessions including a wide range of local and regional partners. There has also been wide-reaching research conducted as part of this process, including a telephone survey of 750 economically inactive residents across South Yorkshire,

and qualitative research with 57 Barnsley residents who are out of work or at risk of falling out of work.

The Commission set out its findings and recommendations in its final report, published in July and launched at Barnsley Town Hall. This was attended by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Liz Kendall, who gave a speech endorsing many of the report's recommendations. The report has received positive plaudits from partners and media, both regionally and nationally, and has paved the way for a revolutionary change in labour market support through the creation of an inclusive economy for all our residents.

The key recommendation for Barnsley is to further develop a **proof-of-concept model for a user centric and holistic approach to employment support**, with the proposal developed for a borough-wide implementation from Spring 2025. As well as this, additional recommendations for Barnsley are to tackle educational attainment gaps and develop the nature and quality of work. By reducing challenges and supporting people to overcome barriers, we want our residents have a fairer chance at opportunities.



# Measuring our success

We have defined a set of strategic outcomes by which we can measure the impact of our activity. These are designed to sit alongside the wider metrics articulated in the [Barnsley 2030 delivery plans](#) and will be used to track the economic health of the borough.

Effective monitoring and evaluation are essential for successful strategy implementation. These processes equip us with the means to communicate our progress and demonstrate evidence of our impact, and are therefore a key mechanism by which we can attract further investment into Barnsley.

Theme	Strategic outcome	Measure of success
Economy	More good jobs and business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in productivity per job (GVA) to increase as percentage of national average</li> <li>• Maintain annual business start-up rate to match South Yorkshire and national average</li> <li>• Improvement in business survival rates to exceed the South Yorkshire average</li> <li>• Support more jobs to further reduce the job density gap with the South Yorkshire average</li> <li>• Increase in the percentage of all jobs which are tradeable and close the gap with the UK average</li> <li>• Growth in workplace wages to exceed the South Yorkshire average</li> </ul>
People	More people in good work and good health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the proportion of working-age residents who are economically active</li> <li>• Reduce the proportion of working-age residents who are economically inactive due to long-term health issues, to below the South Yorkshire average</li> <li>• Increase in % of population with level 4 qualifications to reduce the gap with the UK average</li> <li>• Growth in resident wages to exceed the South Yorkshire average</li> <li>• Decrease in the % of jobs which pay below the Real Living Wage to bring Barnsley in line with the South Yorkshire average</li> </ul>
Place	More vibrant and resilient places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number and proportion of businesses in <b>knowledge-intensive business services</b> to reduce the gap with the South Yorkshire average</li> <li>• Maintain the annual number of visitors to Barnsley town centre (footfall) above 7.5 million</li> <li>• Increase the number of jobs in our six principal towns</li> </ul>

## Envisioning the Barnsley of 2030

If we deliver on our ambitions outlined in this strategy, the Barnsley of 2030 will be transformed into a powerhouse of innovation and entrepreneurship, fuelled by a diverse and resilient economy anchored in high-value industries and emerging specialisms. Our businesses will be at the forefront of sector developments, operating within a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem that champions innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability which has made Barnsley a premier destination for both talent and investment.

Our residents will be happier and healthier, employed in good work which enables them to take charge of their careers or launch successful ventures. Those who have previously been outside the labour market will be thriving in good jobs, supported by employers who practice inclusive employment practices to unlock individual prosperity and drive firm level productivity. We will be a vibrant, well-connected, digitally enabled borough with a leading town centre and thriving Principal Towns that reflect a strong sense of community, and that residents are proud to belong to.

**By 2030, Barnsley will be the place of possibilities.**





# Annex 1: Overview

The alignment of our nine strategic outcomes against our three core missions are provided in the following table:

Mission	Priority	Action	Economy			People			Place		
			SO1 Innovation	SO2 Start Ups	SO3 Sectoral Growth	SO4 Sustainable Employment	SO5 Workforce Development	SO6 Inclusive Employment	SO7 New Businesses	SO8 Principal Towns	SO9 Inward Investment
Establish Barnsley as the UK's leading digital town	Build a compelling offer to start up and scaling digital businesses	Continue to expand our physical digital assets such as the Digital Media Centre and Barnsley Innovation Centre to attract more digital businesses and tech entrepreneurs to the town centre	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
		Retain provision of a high-quality business support and networking offer to digital businesses and those innovating through digital technology adoption	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		
		Showcase our digital assets through targeted events and marketing, working with SYCA on internationalisation and inward investment to position Barnsley as the premier destination for digital investment			✓				✓	✓	✓
Establish Barnsley as the UK's leading digital town	Activate our digital assets to support growth and inclusion in the borough	Support AI and tech adoption across our logistics, manufacturing and wider business base	✓	✓	✓						✓
		Target our digital capabilities to support service efficiencies and innovation adoption across our public services, especially our health sector and anchor institutions	✓				✓			✓	
		Empower local people to create our own 'better' jobs – making it easier for tech entrepreneurs to trial new business ideas and connect into local support services, personal development opportunities and business networks		✓		✓	✓	✓			

Mission	Priority	Action	Economy			People			Place		
			SO1 Innovation	SO2 Start Ups	SO3 Sectoral Growth	SO4 Sustainable Employment	SO5 Workforce Development	SO6 Inclusive Employment	SO7 New Businesses	SO8 Principal Towns	SO9 Inward Investment
Establish Barnsley as the UK's leading digital town	Empower our residents to have the skills and aptitude to thrive in a 21st century economy	Build a lifelong and inclusive digital skills pathway, from basic foundational skills and the expansion of our successful Every Child a Coder digital skills programme, through to the development of high-tech capabilities to enable residents to access opportunities in emerging tech and AI				✓	✓	✓			✓
		Extend the reach of the sector into our Principal Towns; building digitally enabled local service centres and embedding digital growth ambitions into all future investment	✓	✓						✓	✓
		Work with the FE sector and business base to ensure a supply of digital talent and entrepreneurs and showcase local job opportunities		✓		✓	✓		✓		
Future proof our logistics and manufacturing base	Encourage resilience and innovation in our manufacturing and logistics sector; equipping businesses for future growth	Connect logistics and manufacturing sector employers to our digital and tech supply chains to support the adoption and diffusion of digital and tech solutions	✓	✓	✓				✓		
		Encourage more businesses to invest in innovation by connecting them into our business support offer and continuing to encourage networking across the sector	✓		✓			✓			✓
		Nurture the development of engineering talent within Barnsley to support manufacturing and logistics businesses to innovate, grow and thrive	✓			✓	✓			✓	

Mission	Priority	Action	Economy			People			Place		
			SO1 Innovation	SO2 Start Ups	SO3 Sectoral Growth	SO4 Sustainable Employment	SO5 Workforce Development	SO6 Inclusive Employment	SO7 New Businesses	SO8 Principal Towns	SO9 Inward Investment
Future proof our logistics and manufacturing base	Realise the potential of major employment sites at J36 and J37 on the M1 and at Goldthorpe, and continuing to encourage a diverse mix of quality employment opportunities	Continue to work proactively with SYMCA and wider regional partners on trade and investment to accelerate growth of the region's manufacturing sector and supply chains, and use our proximity to major manufacturing assets to proactively promote Barnsley		✓	✓				✓		
		Support the expansion and retention of our existing business base through our leading business support offer	✓	✓	✓				✓		
		Work with developers, owner investors and businesses to bring forward high quality employment schemes which are attractive to the market but also meet local needs and future-proof our employment land in terms of power capabilities, energy efficiency, and connectivity			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Empower all of Barnsley's communities to thrive	Promote a culture of entrepreneurialism and empower young people and residents to define and create their own 'better' jobs	Work with education partners to embed entrepreneurialism and build strong connections between education and our business base		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
		Collaborate with VCS partners to empower residents to shape placemaking initiatives, facilitate social action and pathways to work				✓	✓	✓		✓	
		Enhance our business support offer to encourage self-employment and increase accessibility for residents from underrepresented groups		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
		Support the repurposing of under-used assets to create accessible spaces in our Principal Towns for people to explore and launch start ups, drawing on levers such as Community Asset Transfer		✓					✓	✓	✓

Mission	Priority	Action	Economy			People			Place		
			S01 Innovation	S02 Start Ups	S03 Sectoral Growth	S04 Sustainable Employment	S05 Workforce Development	S06 Inclusive Employment	S07 New Businesses	S08 Principal Towns	S09 Inward Investment
Empower all of Barnsley's communities to thrive	Provide targeted support to help those who are economically inactive and have limiting long term health issues back into employment or self-employment	Pilot the Barnsley Proof of Concept model outlined in the Pathways to Work commission and share lessons learnt with DWP and other regional and national partners				✓	✓	✓			
		Build on the success of Health of the high Street and explore 'pop ups' in Principal Towns				✓				✓	✓
		Work with local employers and anchor institutions to create a diverse and inclusive labour market and market this as part of the borough's USP to support talent attraction and inward investment	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		
Empower all of Barnsley's communities to thrive	Embed inclusive growth across the Council	Ensure the consideration of inclusive growth principles within all major investments and driving a cultural change across the council where inclusive growth is understood and considered at each stage of service and programme design, delivery and evaluation	✓					✓			✓
		Advocate for a Good Employment Charter for South Yorkshire and encourage Barnsley's employers to taking a leading role in its codesign and adoption			✓	✓	✓			✓	

Please visit [barnsley.gov.uk](https://www.barnsley.gov.uk) to find out more.

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