



KING'S LYNN CIVIC SOCIETY

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Dear Jemma / Connor

King's Lynn Masterplan (Draft Final) Consultation May–June 2026

We write to provide a written response to the consultation on the draft King's Lynn Masterplan, which we understand will shortly be finalised with a view to it being adopted by BCKLWN later this summer.

King's Lynn Civic Society was founded 79 years ago to protect our town's rich heritage and to influence the way our town evolves to meet challenges and change. We always want the best for King's Lynn and to protect and integrate our historic assets, whilst supporting appropriate innovation and high-quality development and regeneration.

We understand that the Masterplan aims to pull together current projects and previous plans, and to present a cohesive vision for enhancement and development of the town in coming decades. We all assume that local government reorganisation will shortly replace BCKLWN and NCC with a West Norfolk Unitary Authority, and that a new Norfolk/Suffolk combined authority may give a new regional mayor significant decision-making powers and funding opportunities for the region. Therefore, we recognise that this is a very important time to set-out regeneration and growth plans for King's Lynn.

General Comments

Kings Lynn Civic Society have supported this masterplanning process, have attended various events throughout the programme since 2025, and have previously submitted a number of contributions. We think it is an important document to prepare and that the team appear to have worked hard to involve the community and integrate local thoughts and ideas into the proposals.

We think the presentation of the final draft document is good and generally sets out ideas and aspirations well. The online presentation of the masterplan is particularly useful, being clear, well written and setting out the objectives and proposals somewhat more succinctly than the main Masterplan document itself.

Masterplan Boundary

One could argue that the boundary is slightly inconsistent in places. It extends over most of the St Margarets and St Nicholas ward, but cuts out a part of it in the east.

There is a compelling case to include the Hardwick Cemetery in the study area, as it certainly has a historic and contemporary 'town centre' use. It is an important green space. One could also argue that Extons Road/Holcombe Avenue and everything west of the railway line in that area should therefore also be included.

It is less clear cut as to why areas south of Harding's Pits (South Lynn) or the area north of Ferry Square (West Lynn) have been included.

Vision

The overall Vision Statement seems adequate and appropriate.

The only thing we might suggest adding is that the time period might be set out as *over the next 20 years **and beyond***. We know that, in reality, 20 years is not a long time. The Urban Development Strategy (UDS), which might be considered the precursor to this Masterplan, is now 20 years old – and not too much of it has yet been achieved.

Strategic Objectives

We broadly support all six 'Strategy (surely *Strategic*?) Objectives' – with some concerns/provisions as follow:

1. **Evolve and Adapt**: We are not clear why the 'Evolve and Adapt' objective has short-, medium- and long-term objectives, but the other objectives don't. Also, the definition of 'short', 'medium' and 'long' term is not given here (it is later). We think timescale needs to be defined here if projects are going to be divided into these categories.

SHORT TERM

Use quick wins to improve streets and public spaces:

- Yes, to Devil's Alley garden.
- Not sure what cycling and pedestrian improvements can be achieved at South Gate in the short term. But in principle we support this objective.
- Yes to the STARS gyratory project (and related cycle access improvements connecting to it).

- Not clear what 'shop front improvements' are (unless you mean the Shop Front Design Guide – which we support and is long overdue, but will be an organic process over many years ...?).

Support temporary, flexible and meanwhile uses

- Not entirely clear what this means and think, realistically, any major progress at Sommerfeld and Thomas is 'medium term'.

Introduce low-cost interventions that test future, long-term ideas and improvements

- Yes – we support these 'trials' (although not clear how that can work until the port land and land north of Wisbech Road is secured and cleared – so that sounds like medium-term). We think the most important short-term trial is to get traffic off of South Quay. Closing the Church Street car park with a view to its redevelopment and encouraging maximum use of the multi-storey car park also seems possible.

Improve the accessibility and legibility of key routes (e.g. Rail-to-River)

- Baxter's Plain should be short term with the STARS funding (?). We supported the Graham Massie 'key routes' initiative, but have been heartily disappointed with the Rail-to-River work. These routes need appropriate investment and this is probably a medium-term project.

Prepare sites for future development

- We support renewing the pool but not moving it to Lynnsport. It is probably not a short-term project?
- Prepare Church St for redevelopment.

Develop business cases, funding routes, partnerships and land assembly

- We would support developing a design/budget/programme to create the green space at Boal Quay which we think could then be a short-term project.
- Developing clear plans for the land north of Wisbech Road and at West Lynn also seems possible.
- Lean on the developer at the old Post Office to get that started – also a 'short-term' project?
- Reopening Custom House and the Guildhall should be listed as short-term projects?
- Developing clear plans for the Conservancy Board Building ('old baths') and 33–39 St James Street (Kwik Fit building) should also be 'short-term'?

MEDIUM TERM

Rework existing buildings with minimal intervention

- Yes – we support getting Debenhams back into use as a short-to-medium term project.

Retain heritage character while enabling new uses:

- We would support Sommerfeld and Thomas and the Silo Site being redeveloped in the medium term - if this is possible.

Reinforce active ground floors and diverse uses:

- See above about Debenhams and the Post Office.

Enhance key public spaces (riverfront, squares, High Street)

- Devil's Alley and Baxter's Plain should be short-term. We have noted the potential to get the Boal Quay green space started. The others might be medium-to-long term?

Other Medium Term

- We think it should be a short- to medium-term goal to deliver redevelopment of Church Street.
- It should be a medium-term goal to commence the West Lynn and Port Land redevelopments as well as South Gate, even if it is a phased process.
- Have Conservancy Board building back in use.

LONG TERM

Enable phased growth aligned with infrastructure improvements

- Agree – completing the transport infrastructure transition is essential – but it will be phased and can start now.

Deliver major mixed-use, cultural and leisure destinations:

- Agree – deliver mixed use development at key sites – but it can be phased as long the overall objectives for the end product are in place.

2. **Land Uses and Local Needs:** We support in principle all of these ideas – but surely they also need short-, medium- and long-term projects to be fully identified?
3. **Harness History and Culture:** We again support in principle all of these ideas – but think they should simply be integrated into the planning and design process for individual projects?
4. **Harness Natural Assets:** We support this in principle. Devil's Alley and Baxter's Plain should be identified as the short-term enhancement projects and the Boal Quay green space should be shown as short to medium term.

There is some key green space which is in the study area but not shown on the plan (e.g. Harding's Pits). We are not clear why car parks are shown 'green' (especially if they are going to be multi-storey).

5. **Transport and Access:** This is so important and we feel should, to a great extent, be leading/shaping the approach to individual regeneration opportunities (and programming). Short-, medium- and long-term projects should be clearly identified.

Whilst we think multi-storey car parks are part of the answer, we think that simply reducing the need/desire to travel into town in a car should be the more important goal. 20% households don't have a car and this is likely to rise, and sustainable alternatives would encourage that shift. In larger urban centres 30–40% of households don't own a car. Even with a rural hinterland, providing alternatives to car ownership will reduce traffic and parking issues.

MSCPs are expensive. They can also produce 'dead zones' in an urban area. If we are going to have them, we think they would ideally be integrated into mixed-use development? (Undercroft parking might also assist flood resilience in new buildings?)

6. **Built Form and Public Realm:** We support this objective in principle – especially the development of pocket parks and 'micro-destinations'. We consider this very important in higher density development – especially in relation to having sheltered sitting areas with natural sunlight within residential development.

What we don't support is the type of higher density development that is actually being delivered most regularly in the town centre at present – pokey small flats with no outside space ... and HMOs.

Regarding high quality public realm, we continue to support production of a clear design guide with an agreed palette of materials (which would make subsequent management and maintenance much easier).

Public realm and green space delivery must come with fully costed and resourced management plans. There is no point in planting new trees if they are going to die...

Illustrative Masterplan

We understand that the 'quantum of development' has been calculated by estimating the potential of each of the 24 (26?) sites identified. We perhaps expected to see a higher number of new homes.

We have the following comments on the 24 sites identified:

King's Staithe Square: We see this as an important established public realm space that has often been used successfully for events. In this respect we do not see it as high priority to alter. We are also somewhat sceptical of the soft landscape elements in this plan and wonder how practical it is (underground constraints / occasional tidal flooding) and whether it would actually make the space less flexible for use. Nevertheless, we would be interested in reviewing more detailed proposals.

South Quay: Although our committee and others are divided about the soft landscape elements along the quay, we do agree that it could be useful to provide shelter, spatial definition and amenity benefits here. A more coordinated, high-quality approach to public realm design could/should replace the setting outside Marriotts (which we regard as an eyesore). Tidal flooding would need to be factored in to detailed design. Removal of car parking would be generally welcomed. (Trial removals should be started asap.) More river (boat) activities should be encouraged.

Devil's Alley: We support development of this garden idea and think it should be seen as a short-term 'quick win'. We think it could be combined with the idea of the Hansa wooden crane tower that has recently been promoted (and could provide the 'opportunity for commercial'?). We still have some reservations about the long-term strength of the Mill Fleet revetment and think that should be properly investigated prior to any work commencing.

Sommerfeld and Thomas: We strongly support redevelopment of this site and think it is essential for successful regeneration of the South Quay in general. Finding the right end user is paramount. We would like to think the project is short term but wonder how realistic that timescale is.

Boal Quay: In principle KLCS support a mixed-use redevelopment of this site. We think the large flat roof blocks in the artist's impressions for this area look austere and in fact we think tend to demonstrate that they would not be suitable for this setting. A more thoughtful variety of pitched rooftops would be much more sympathetic to the rest of the waterfront and the Friars Conservation Area. A couple of the illustrated blocks may in fact be multistorey car parks, and again we think if this is the case, buildings would be better designed as 'mixed-use', with undercroft parking. Vehicular access should not compromise the bus lane and pedestrian/cycle routes.

This area has received many previous proposals. In recent years there has been strong consensus that the former Nar Loop and its quay front will be retained as a 'wetland public open space'. We therefore think that that aspect of the masterplan should be brought forward soon – in the short-to-medium term. It will assist in bringing the area back to public use and will better present the other areas for redevelopment.

Common Staithe Square: We support enhancement of the river front public realm in this area, but would need to review any plans for residential development on its merits when brought forward. Any scheme must not compromise the operational flexibility of the Corn Exchange, which we regard as our premier theatre and concert hall. Repurposing of the Pilots' Office is also key to the success of this area. Loss of parking here and in the TMP must obviously be mitigated by creation of new parking or alternative transport options elsewhere.

St James Swimming Pool: We support development of new leisure facilities and accept that a modernised pool will be required at some point. We are still sceptical of the rapidity with which this proposal has come forward, given that engineers won an award for their energy-efficient new heating system for this facility only 3 years ago, in 2023. We do not support moving the main West Norfolk pool to Lynnsport and we are not convinced that this site will represent prime real estate for residential development. We fear if the relocation and demolition proceeded with haste, the town centre will be left with another long-term derelict site.

Debenhams: We strongly support any plan to get this building back into appropriate town centre use as soon as possible. Plans must respect the best fabric of the building. We are happy with a mixed-use approach, but retaining suitable rear delivery access seems necessary.

Port area and timber yard: Although we have supported redevelopment of this area in the past, we think the plan offered here is sub-optimal. A large area of ground level parking is a poor use of space and will make a poor transition between port and town and we regret that there appears to be no effort to safeguard the railway corridor into the port site. We see reinstatement of a railhead to the port as a significant infrastructural opportunity that will reduce dependence on road freight.

West Lynn: Support. We are pleased to see a mixed-use development approach, including improvements to the ferry infrastructure. Hopefully a medium time frame is achievable.

Land north of Wisbech Road: Support. Enhancement of the Nar corridor needs to be considered in this scheme. We are not opposed to the parking idea as long as it doesn't diminish the overall site design.

Church Street car park redevelopment: Support – but think it should be short to medium term. What is stopping this coming forward? It could encourage optimal use of the existing multi-storey car park. (We also still think it could be partly used as a 'southern' transport interchange for buses off Harding's Way.)

South Gates Regeneration: Support – but don't think a short time frame is achievable (at best medium and phased?). Urban realm design must drive it. We do not want a large road to dominate the centre of the site. The route through the gate should be retained as a primary cycle/pedestrian route (perhaps also available for other ceremonial use).

Former Post Office: Anything that can be done to push the developer forward on this landmark regeneration project would be supported. Delivery of the Baxter's Plain enhancement may help. However, when the scheme was granted, we did not support the large ground-floor pub proposal – and think that that outcome would actually undermine the whole scheme. We think a mixture of community amenities on the ground floor would do much more to support a new residential community in this area.

Inner Purfleet: We have seen previous plans for this which seemed overly complicated and expensive, but enhancing the small areas next to it would be welcomed.

Pilots' Office: We strongly support repurposing the baths side of this building asap if the Conservancy Board can be relocated.

Hillington Square: We will review plans when they are made available.

Former Carnegie Library: We will review plans when they are made available.

Chapel Street Car Park: We would review plans when they are made available – but it is one car park that may be worth retaining given the neighbouring buildings.

Austin Street Car Park: We would wish to see the plans for this to understand the cycle lane proposal. It has been the coach park for the town but increasingly now seems to be requisitioned by Post Office staff (?).

Baker Lane Car Park: We will review plans when they are made available – but it is another car park that may be worth retaining.

Old Market Street: We will review plans when they are made available.

Tuesday Market Place: An iconic space and we would support removing parking from it in principle. We would need to see any plans for public realm works and would be very interested in being included in a design development team if funding materialised.

Saturday Market Place: As for TMP above.

Juniper Austin and Albert Street Car Parks: We think there is a compelling case for mixed use development on this site and feel it should be considered a medium-term project.

St James Street (Kwik Fit): We would strongly support bringing this building back to use and think if there is any chance of the LPA bringing it forward it should be considered a short to medium term project – not long term.

In summary, King's Lynn Civic Society support the King's Lynn Masterplan and thank the project team for their work in developing this guide to regeneration aspirations in the town.

Kind regards

Alison Gifford

Chairman