

ROTHBURY PLACE PLAN 2024-2034



Foreword

Our Place Plan for Rothbury sets out our 10-year vision for the town's future as a vibrant, growing, connected and inclusive place to live, learn, work, and invest in. It has been shaped with input from the local community and partners and sets out our priorities to deliver investment and sustainable economic growth in the town.

The Place Plan for Rothbury sets out a future strategic direction for the town to ensure its relevance and growth well into the 21st century. The development of this Plan and its focus has been determined by drawing upon local stakeholders' experience, knowledge and data illustrating the current performance of the town, its assets, opportunities and also the direction it needs to move in if it is to keep ahead. It is this compelling evidence which will attract future funders to invest in Rothbury and bring about meaningful and sustained change. The Place Plan begins by defining a shared vision for Rothbury, which has a number of strategic objectives attached to ensure its successful delivery over the following ten years.

This plan has been developed following community engagement and consultation and the sharing of knowledge and resources of partners and stakeholders in the town. For Rothbury, a Place Partnership Group has been formed which is made up of representation from private, public and community sectors. Together they are working on behalf of the community to develop opportunities which can build on the town's distinctive and quality offer.

The Plan draws on various locally prepared action plans, the Rothbury Neighbourhood Plan and other Northumberland and regional strategies, as well as the overarching ambitions of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. Importantly, the Rothbury Place Plan has

considered a great deal of statistical data including the outcome of the Rothbury Borderlands consultation and underpinning socio-economic data which sets out the current performance of the town. This data informed the selection of Rothbury as a place which would be suitable for Borderlands investment under the Place Programme and also informed the headline "Themes" which emerged from the community consultation as a way of articulating Rothbury's story.

We look forward to working with the community, businesses and stakeholders to implement the Rothbury Place Plan.

Rothbury Place
Partnership
Group



The vision for our town is:
"Collaborating with the
community of Rothbury to
create a sustainable environment,
facilities and infrastructure to
support residents, businesses
and visitors of the town both
now and for the future"

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Part 1: A Vision for change for Rothbury

Introduction

The Rothbury Place Plan sets out a 10-year vision for the town. It has been developed in association with the local community, stakeholders and businesses and focuses on two investment themes - Vibrant Town and Working Town. These themes will drive the 10-year plan forward, ensuring that Rothbury becomes a place of opportunity for residents, an attraction for visitors and a place of prosperity for businesses.

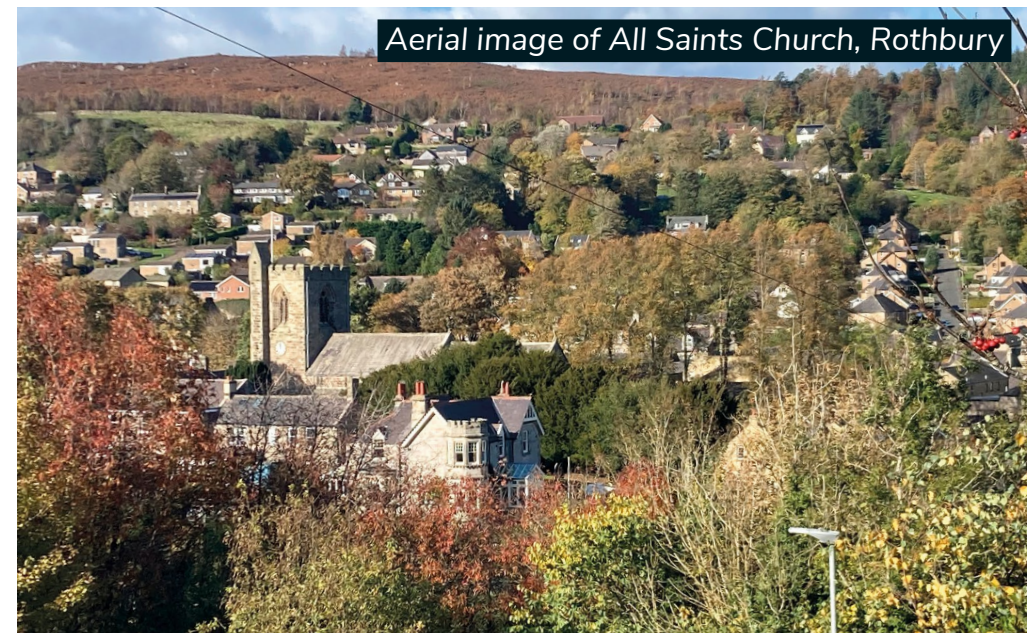
A series of project proposals have been identified in the process of developing this Place Plan with the aim of achieving the town's vision through a combination of funding sources including, but not limited to, the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

It has been prepared in the context of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal which commits fresh investment into our region and is being jointly funded by the UK Government and Scottish Government from 2021 to 2031. The Deal is focused on four strategic themes of improving places; enabling infrastructure; encouraging green growth and supporting business, innovation and skills. The Growth Deal includes the Borderlands Place Programme which identified seven towns in Northumberland to benefit from investment, including Rothbury.

The Place Plan has been prepared collaboratively by the Rothbury Place Partnership Group working with the local community. Engagement with the community has been key to developing the plan, and it is the community's engagement which captures the spirit and energy of the town. It is vital to ensure that this enthusiasm and determination to drive improvement over the coming ten years is represented fully and appropriately.

This plan details the desire for change within the local community, aligning with, and contributing to, the objectives of the Borderlands Growth Deal and its three BIG Challenges - inclusive growth; narrowing the productivity gap; and increasing the working age population.

We aim to demonstrate that the Plan represents a vision of Rothbury both in the next ten years and beyond. The community has engaged throughout the process, through stakeholder mapping sessions, business focus groups and public consultations. It is from these discussions that our ambitious vision has been created, building upon the engagement so far to create a meaningful change for the better.



Aerial image of All Saints Church, Rothbury

The plan is framed around five key development themes, which taken together, offer a balanced approach to a 10-year vision for the future area.

- **Place-Based:** Assessing what assets are already in place and what investment needs and solutions for each place on its own terms: what the place wants to be in 20 years, what it needs, and what it offers. This should make the most of what makes the place distinctive using local heritage and culture.
- **Collective:** Looking at the contribution of each part to the whole: the added value to the place, the area, the region, and the country.
- **Systemic:** Bringing public, private, third sector, and community assets together as part of a single, integrated system supporting communities, services and the economy.
- **Community-led:** Putting communities at the heart of decisions about the solutions that the Place Programme brings to the challenges facing their towns.
- **Prevention and Future Proofing:** Investment and action directed towards preventing further deterioration in our towns and town centres, and ensuring they are equipped to respond to future change, including recovery from the impact of Covid-19 and Climate Change.

With inclusive growth at its heart, the Borderlands Place Programme, which forms a key component of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, aims to create and sustain economically vibrant towns and town centres where people and communities see the direct benefits of economic growth. This means investing in infrastructure in a way that supports the sustainability and growth of local businesses, stimulates business investment, attracts visitors and spending, safeguards and creates secure, well-paid jobs for local people, and provides opportunities for people from all backgrounds to engage in employment, skills development and beneficial cultural and social activities.

The plan considers Rothbury's economic context, its unique needs and challenges as well as identifying the town's assets, strengths and opportunities to embrace and build on. With significant community and stakeholder input a new vision has been established to set out the aspirations and objectives to deliver sustainable growth in our town. Potential interventions and project ideas have also been developed to create a pipeline of investments that will meet this ambition for growth and may be eligible, once developed, for Borderlands, UK Shared Prosperity Funding and a wide number of other funding streams.

Funding through Borderlands will be limited to economic growth capital projects that contribute to addressing the three challenges of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal: growing the working age population; boosting productivity; and delivering inclusive economic growth.



War Memorial on Rothbury Front Street

Our vision for Rothbury

We have worked with stakeholders and the community to develop a vision incorporating the key ingredients that will combine to secure economic growth for Rothbury. It reflects the current role of the town in terms of its geographic and strategic context, the performance of the town centre, the socio-economic opportunities and challenges and the wider strategic developments that will generate jobs and investment.

Collaborating with the community of Rothbury to create a sustainable environment, facilities and infrastructure to support residents, businesses and visitors of the town both now and for the future.

Strategic objectives

Underpinning the Vision and the identified Themes are the strategic objectives which for Rothbury have been identified as:

1. **Vibrant Town** – Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Rothbury, the quality of the physical environment in the centre of town and the facilities and suitable environments for young people.
2. **Working Town** – Safeguard the existing businesses and encourage new businesses to the town ensuring a strong local employment offer to increase the number of working age residents driving economic and social participation.



Idyllic cottages, Rothbury



Introducing Rothbury

Location

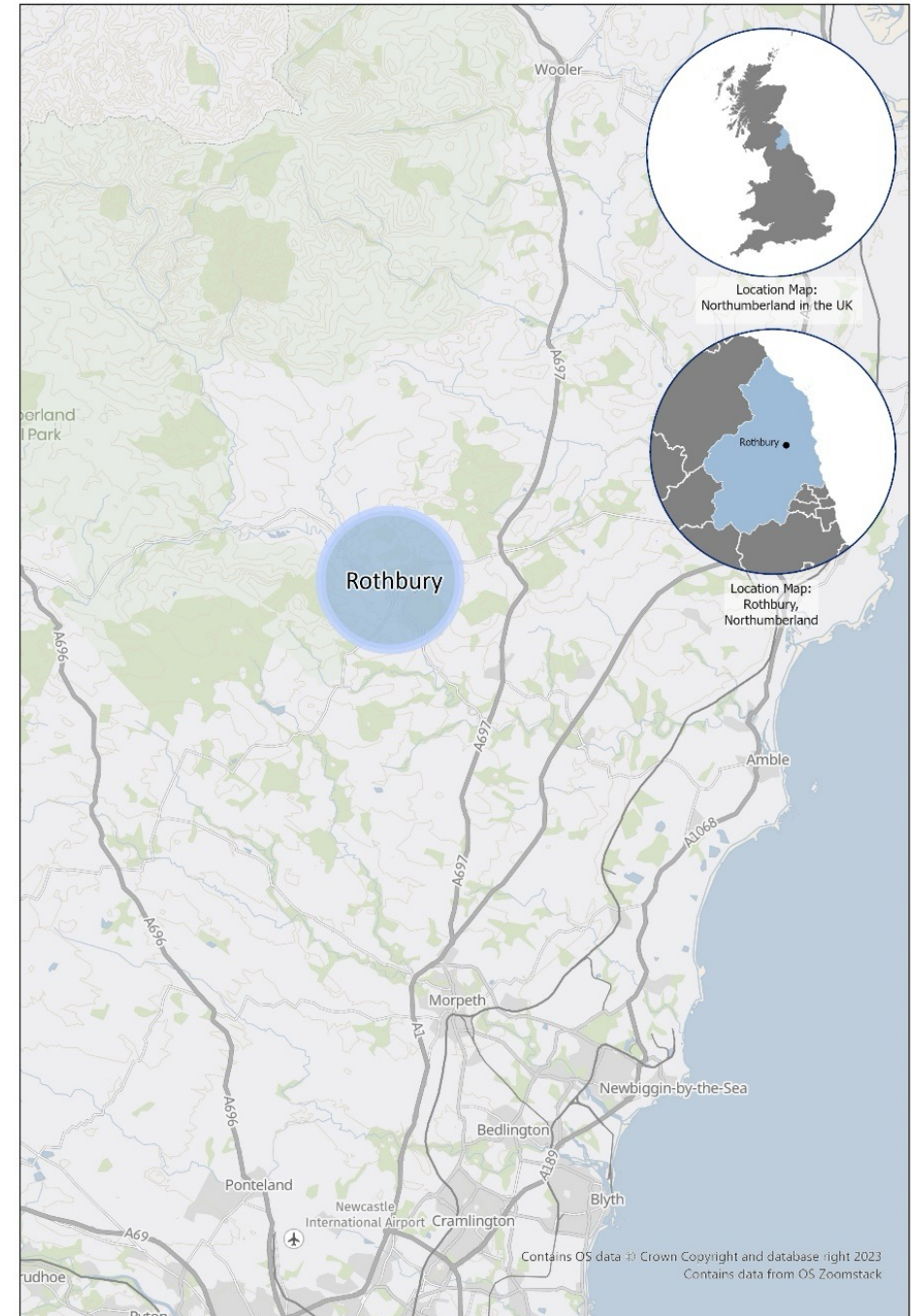
Rothbury sits on the banks of the River Coquet on the edge of the Northumberland National Park. It is 14 miles north-west of Morpeth and 26 miles north of Newcastle Upon Tyne.

A Brief History of Rothbury

Evidence of the Rothbury area having been occupied during the prehistoric period has been discovered but there is no evidence of the Romans having occupied the area. Fragments of a 9th century Anglo-Saxon cross were discovered in the 19th century.

The settlement remained largely insignificant during the early medieval period but was granted a market charter in 1291. Rothbury rose in prosperity during the 14th century to become the town with the highest parochial value in Northumberland by 1535 despite the Coquet Valley being regularly pillaged by the Border Reivers.

Although Rothbury is of ancient origin, it mainly developed during the Victorian era. A factor in this development was the arrival in 1863 of industrialist Sir William and, his wife, Lady Armstrong who created Cragside. Over the next 30 years they transformed their original hunting lodge into a “fairy-tale palace and garden”. The house and grounds are now cared for by the National Trust and open to the public.



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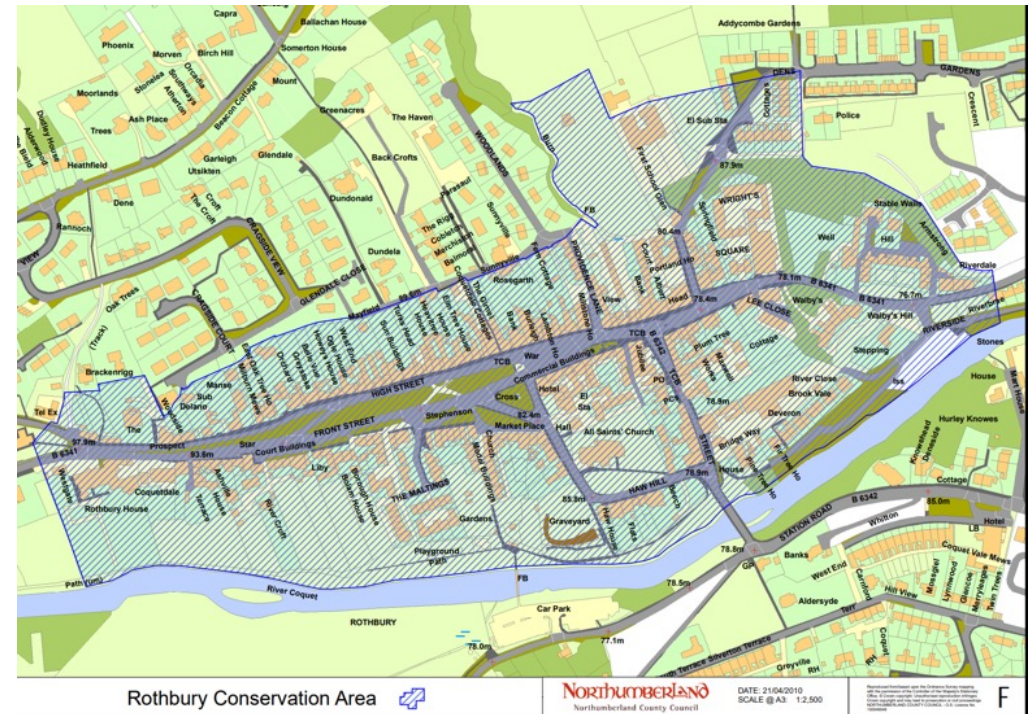
Rothbury today

Rothbury is a traditional market town at the heart of Northumberland's countryside and is often referred to as the 'Capital of Coquetdale'. It is a peaceful and picturesque haven, built of the same yellow sandstone as the rolling hills that surround it.

The town is home to a close-knit community and is a popular tourist destination. The town centre holds a good selection of bustling independent shops and pubs and is a recognised base for tourists to visit the Northumberland National Park and the Northumberland coastline, which is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

There are several significant constraints that create a physical limitation to the town's development, most notably topography and flood risk. A number of properties historically used for commercial purposes have been adapted to residential use or as holiday accommodation over recent years.

Rothbury is a settlement of historic interest including 52 listed buildings and a Conservation Area.



Our community

Population

The population of Rothbury was estimated to be 2,042 in 2022, a fall of 12% since the 2011 census. A significant proportion of the population, 37%, were aged 65 or over. This is over 10% higher than the county average. Both the working age and younger population have declined by around a quarter in recent years and are significantly less than the county average.



Employment

Only 45% of adults were recorded as employed during the 2021 census, against a county average of 52.4%. This reflects both the impact of the Covid lockdown at the time and the number of residents beyond working age.

The number of residents claiming work related benefits in July 2024 was 3.1% of the population, below the county average of 3.3%. Claimants in the 18-24 age group were at similar levels in Rothbury to the rest of the county at just under 6% of the cohort.

Social Grade data from the 2021 Census shows that the number of employed residents of Rothbury reporting to be in either managerial or professional roles is above average at 33%.



Overall deprivation

There are no households in Rothbury registered as being deprived in all four dimensions of deprivation and less than half of the households are classified under any of the four dimensions.

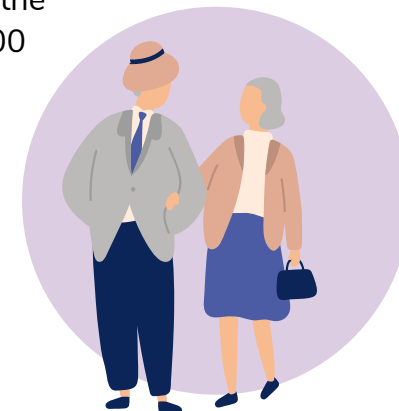
Median household income in Rothbury in 2023 was £39,886, almost £3,500 more than the county average and has grown significantly since 2011 (38%). Income growth across the county over the same period was 27.5%.



Home ownership

Home ownership is high at 71% (6% above the county average) and social rented tenure is low at 12% (6% below the county average).

The average house price in Rothbury in the summer of 2024 was £259,500, £30,000 above the average house price in Northumberland.



Education

Educational achievement of adult residents is comparatively high. In the 2021 census, only 14% reported holding no formal qualifications and 39% held qualifications at Level 4 and above, compared with the county averages of 18% and 31% respectively.

Rothbury First school has capacity for 126 pupils aged 3 to 9 and currently has 76 on roll. It was graded as 'Good' at its most recent Ofsted inspection (2019).

Dr Tomlinson C of E Middle school caters for 218 9–13-year-olds. It was graded as 'Good' at its most recent Ofsted inspection (2022).

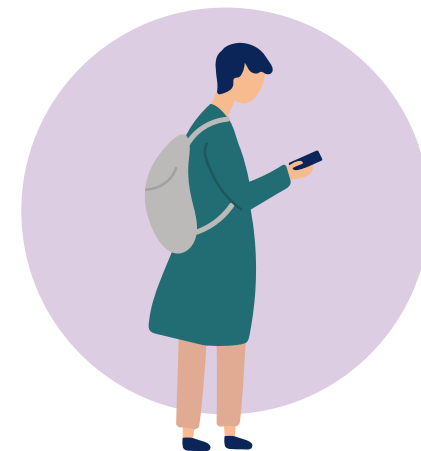
High school aged pupils from Rothbury attend King Edward VI school in Morpeth, a 16 mile journey each way.



Crime and anti-social behaviour

The reported crime rate in the Rothbury is comparatively low at 50 crimes per 1,000 residents in the 12 months to March 2024 whilst the crime rate countywide is 77 per 1,000 residents over the same period. 19% of crimes in Rothbury at this time were ASB .

Incidents of ASB have decreased slightly compared with 2022 and 2023, but the overall crime rate has remained similar and a number of high-profile incidents including break-ins at a supermarket and a Post Office, as well as a burglary at a national trust site have concerned residents.



Assets, strengths and opportunities

Visitor and tourist economy

Rothbury attracts national and international visitors. It is a destination in its own right and also an outstanding base from which to explore all that Northumberland has to offer.

Day trippers are attracted to Craggside, Brinkburn Priory, stunning riverside walks and the quaint and bustling high street.

Vacationers are offered extensive and varied accommodation from which to visit the Northumberland National Park, the Northumberland Coastline Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the many castles that the county boasts.

Rothbury makes an excellent base for walking and cycling holidays.

It is acknowledged by the Place Partnership Group that more visitors to the attractions that sit on the outskirts of town could be encouraged to visit the high street.

Natural environment

Rothbury lies astride Northumberland's longest river – the Coquet – and nestles within a valley which varies in width from over a mile to a few hundred yards. The topography owes much to the effects of glaciation with related deposits forming the terraces on the North side of the river. The quality of the natural setting is recognised in its designation as an Area of High Landscape Value.



Community and leisure

Rothbury Fitness Centre offers a selection of free weights, resistance and aerobic machines and a variety of group classes suitable for all ages and abilities. The swimming pool is not currently accessible and is undergoing assessment for repair.

Rothbury Tennis Club offers three all-weather courts. The Recreation Club is a charity, which oversees several sports clubs in Rothbury. As well as the Tennis Club there are Outdoor and Indoor Bowling Clubs, a Table Tennis Club and a Five-a-side Football Club.

The Jubilee Hall host regular community activities for all age groups including Keep Fit classes, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, creative and cultural activities.

Rothbury Golf Club has become a community facility used for birthday parties, weddings and other social events.



Challenges and issues facing Rothbury

Industry and employment

Rothbury has a small industrial estate comprising of three blocks of single storey semi-detached and terraced units totalling 17,777 sq ft.

Businesses in Rothbury are all micro or small enterprises and employment in the town is dominated by retail and the tourism industry.

Rothbury is commutable to the jobs market in SE Northumberland and Newcastle upon Tyne.

Seasonal economy / over reliance on tourism

Rothbury benefits from the tourist economy, but it does not come without challenges.

The tourist economy is seasonal, peaking in the summer, although Rothbury's tourist season can be longer than some destinations as its major attraction – the stunning natural environment – can be attractive to walkers and cyclists earlier and later in the year and Cragside is presently open throughout the year, though the house is closed for some of the winter.

External factors, such as the Covid-19 epidemic and the cost-of-living crisis, have a severe impact on tourism. As a county, Northumberland has shown strong recovery and in 2022 recorded over 8 million day visitors and almost 2 million overnight visitors, the latter being on a par with pre-Covid-19 figures. However, day visitor spend had not yet returned to pre-Covid-19 levels.

Employment in the tourist industry, particularly at the entry level, regularly attracts wages at, or close to, minimum wage and opportunities for progression are sparse.

Lack of activities for young people

The town has limited provision for young people and access to service centres such as Alnwick and Morpeth is limited.

The Jubilee Hall, known locally as 'the haarl' hosts Scout, Cub and Beaver groups and films are shown fortnightly.

The Parish Council maintains two play areas, Addycombe and Riverside.

Rothbury Juniors FC run teams from U8s-U15s.

A BMX and mountain bike track opened in 2022 which features a series of jumps and turns and caters for all levels of ability.



Variety in retail offer

Whilst local traders are acknowledged as being amongst the best things the town offers by many residents, enhancements to the retail offer is amongst the priorities for change called for by residents.

This call generally relates to the need for access to supermarkets. Rothbury is currently served by a Co-op with many residents travelling to Alnwick or Morpeth for their weekly shops. This becomes particularly difficult in the winter when roads to the larger settlements are unpassable.

Connectivity – public transport

Rothbury is not served by a train station and public bus provision is timetabled around the working day. The last bus to Rothbury from Alnwick leaves at 17:30, from Newcastle at 18:30 and from Morpeth at 19:15. There is no evening provision allowing residents to access the leisure and culture offerings in the nearby towns/city.

Lack of parking

Lack of parking, particularly in the town centre, was the most common response in the public consultation to the question ‘What is the worst thing about Rothbury?’.

Ageing population

Over a third of residents are over working age.

Front Street looking on to High Street, Rothbury



Overview of the public consultation

An online public consultation in June 2022 received 107 responses. None of the responses were from residents under the age of 20 and 55% were from residents aged 60 and over.

The most common responses to the question 'What are the best things about Rothbury?' were community spirit, the natural environment and local traders.

The most common responses to the question 'What are the worst things about Rothbury?' were a lack of parking, transport infrastructure and a general lack of infrastructure.

Respondents' priorities for change to Rothbury were Improved transport connectivity, an enhanced culture, leisure and retail offer and improved parking.

The consultation report is at [Appendix 1](#).

Summary

Rothbury has much to be proud of, particularly its natural environment and access to the surrounding National Park and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Locals have a strong sense of community spirit and a pride in their town, often referring to it as 'the village'.

However, an ageing population requires access to services that the town is struggling to provide and travel to the larger service centres can be challenging.

The visitor and tourist economy is strong but the town's infrastructure needs reassessing to accommodate the number of people and vehicles attracted to the area. The visitor economy provides jobs but the town would benefit from a wider range of skilled employment opportunities to attract younger families and retain young people.

More youth provision would further strengthen the town's attractiveness to the working age population.



A view of Rothbury from the surrounding hills

Investment Themes

The investment themes establish a focus in terms of how we will aim to deliver the vision and objectives of the Place Plan. A strength of the Borderlands Place Plan process has been the ‘whole-town planning’ approach, which has informed our investment themes. The themes reflect the feedback given by community members and stakeholders throughout the process; from stakeholder mapping exercises to public consultation, we have developed the themes around the key topics identified by the people and businesses of Rothbury.

Two Themes have been identified from the four strategic objectives which have informed the consideration of potential projects, interventions and investments. It is critical for this plan that these contribute to the achievement of the overall vision and work together with each other to form a coherent Plan which knits together and drives the change needed.

Investment theme 1 - Vibrant town

Theme 1 aims to invest in increasing spend and activity in the town and improve the resident and visitor experience, bolstering activity and encouraging increased footfall and spend by:

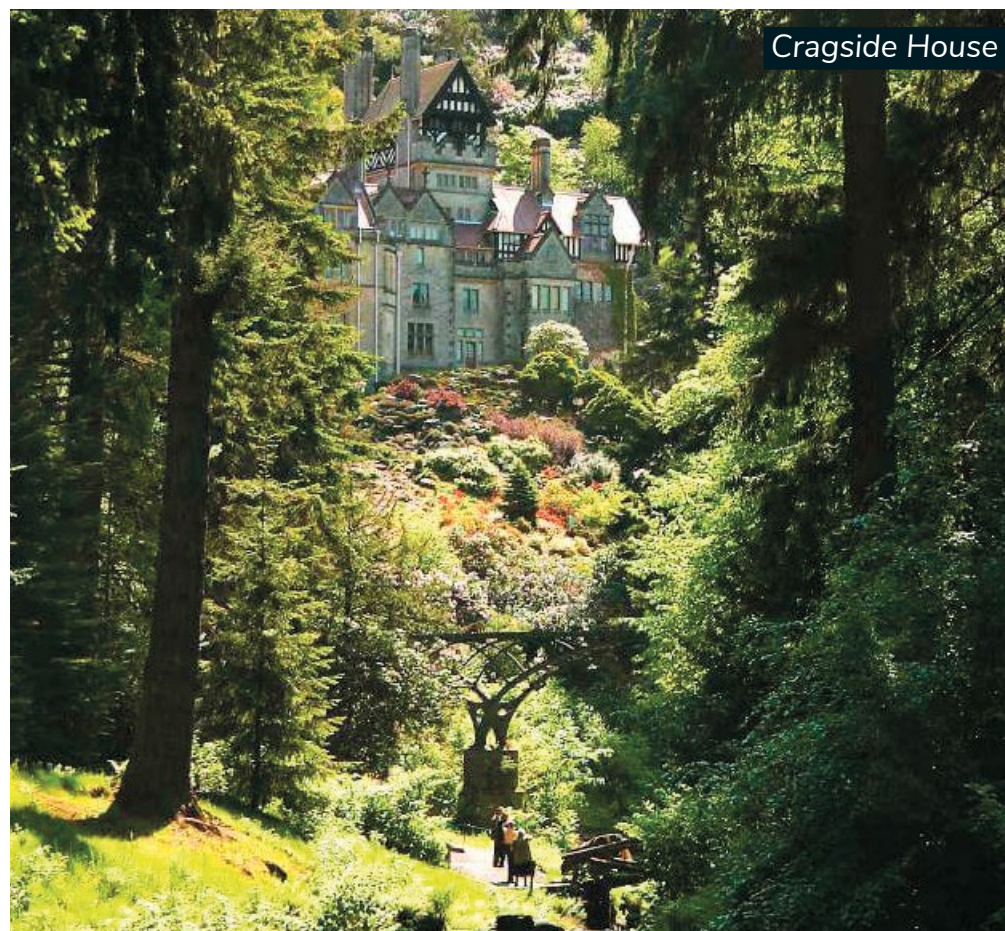
- Building upon Rothbury’s natural assets and driving growth in the tourism economy.
- Spreading the benefits of tourism to local people.
- Offering additionality to the daytime and nighttime offer.
- Enhancements to public realm spaces.
- Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage.
- Increase footfall and spending by providing new reasons for people and businesses to use the town centre (e.g. leisure, education, business).
- Improving facilities for young people so they feel more connected to Rothbury and are more likely to stay in the town.



Investment theme 2 - Working town

Theme 2 aims to retain and increase the working age population in Rothbury by creating and safeguard employment in the town and to provide residents, particularly young people, with the opportunity to be part of a skilled workforce with a sustainable future in the town and North East economy by:

- Helping young people, in particular, to achieve their potential, strengthen their progression and pathways through education, employment, self-enterprise and raise their aspirations and income levels.
- Investing in flexible commercial space to encourage businesses back into all parts of the town and ensure that Rothbury is a compelling business environment.
- Developing innovative approaches to ensure people starting new retail enterprises have access to low-cost retail outlets, through innovative access to market stalls and empty shops.
- Promoting equitable access to quality education, training, employment, entrepreneurship, and community participation.
- Equipping young people as problem-solvers & engaged members of society, helping to create a better community.
- Fostering entrepreneurship as a mindset and a livelihood.
- Seeking out new opportunities for business operations to train young people in the community through hands-on mentorships and apprenticeships. Providing excellent opportunities to prepare tomorrow's workforce while also identifying and nurturing potential young talent for existing businesses in Rothbury.



Part 2: Development and implementation

Development of the Place Plan

There are more than 100 towns across the Borderlands area with different and distinct characteristics. Rothbury's inclusion as one of Northumberland's seven towns on the Borderlands Place Programme was assessed using the Unified Borderlands Town Index, developed to facilitate the town prioritisation process. It was critical that the framework was:

- evidence based
- robust in its justification
- transparent for our stakeholders and communities

The index was based on a two-stage gateway process:

- A quantitative assessment of a generic range of published indicators that defined the relative “economic health” of the towns in scope.
- The progressive application of a range of qualitative factors that correlated to the broader “levelling up” aims of the Programme.



The local Place Partnership Group in Rothbury was created following a stakeholder mapping exercise with local councillors and consists of public, private and community sector representatives. The group is facilitated and managed by the County Council’s Regeneration Service. The purpose of the group in the first instance is to support and advise on the development of this document for the town, working with local community stakeholders in Rothbury and providing a ‘whole town approach’.

Place Partnership Group	Organisation
Cllr Steven Bridgett	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Ashley Arkle	Rothbury Parish Council
Cllr Peter Colquitt	Rothbury Parish Council
Ken Branson	Churches Together
Abbie Curtis	Northumberland Estates
John O’Brien	National Trust
Paul Cramman	Jubilee Hall Trust
Jon Monks	Shepherds Walks
Duncan Wise	Northumberland National Park Authority



Interventions and investments

Central to the development of the Place Plan are the five core principles underpinning the design and delivery of the wider Place Programme:

- **Place-based:** Assessing investment needs and solutions for each place on its own terms: what the place wants to be in the future, what it needs, and what it offers.
- **Collective:** Looking at the contribution of each part to the whole: the added value to the place, the area, the region, and the country.
- **Systemic:** Bringing public, private, third sector, and community assets together as part of a single, integrated system supporting communities, services and the economy.
- **Community-led:** Putting communities at the heart of decisions about the solutions that the Place Programme brings to the challenges facing their towns and town centres.
- **Prevention and future proofing:** Investment and action directed towards preventing further deterioration in our towns and town centres.



Stepping stones across river Coquet at Rothbury

Through consultation the community has been pivotal in shaping the Place Plan. Their thoughts and ideas have been central to our strategic objectives and ensure that they align accordingly with all seven Borderlands Place Programme strategic objectives:

Borderlands Place Programme Investment Objectives	Rothbury Place Plan Projects
SO1: Empower local communities to imagine and then build a long-term future for the towns they live in.	Vibrant Town – Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Rothbury, the quality of the physical environment in the centre of town and the facilities and suitable environments for young people.
SO2: Safeguard existing businesses and attract new businesses to our towns and town centres.	Working Town – Safeguard the existing businesses and encourage new businesses to the town ensuring a strong local employment offer to increase the number of working age residents driving economic and social participation.
SO3: Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in our towns and town centres.	Vibrant Town – Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Rothbury, the quality of the physical environment in the centre of town and the facilities and suitable environments for young people.
SO4: Safeguard existing employment and deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation.	Working Town – Safeguard the existing businesses and encourage new businesses to the town ensuring a strong local employment offer to increase the number of working age residents driving economic and social participation.
SO5: Maintain and increase the number of people living in our towns and town centres.	Working Town – Safeguard the existing businesses and encourage new businesses to the town ensuring a strong local employment offer to increase the number of working age residents driving economic and social participation.
SO6: Retain and increase the working age population in towns.	Working Town – Safeguard the existing businesses and encourage new businesses to the town ensuring a strong local employment offer to increase the number of working age residents driving economic and social participation.
SO7: Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in our towns and town centres.	Vibrant Town – Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Rothbury, the quality of the physical environment in the centre of town and the facilities and suitable environments for young people.

The Place Plan's Key Objectives

The Rothbury Place Partnership Group agreed to deliver the Borderlands Place Programme strategic objectives via two strategic objectives for this Place Plan based upon their experience of the town and feedback from residents, visitors and businesses.

- **Vibrant Town** – Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Rothbury, the quality of the physical environment in the centre of town and the facilities and suitable environments for young people.
- **Working Town** – Safeguard the existing businesses and encourage new businesses to the town ensuring a strong local employment offer to increase the number of working age residents driving economic and social participation.

These two strategic objectives, as applied to Rothbury, and the wider Borderlands Place Programme strategic objectives created the matrix and criteria required to appraise the expressions of interest received from project sponsors. A range of nine critical success factors (CSFs) were used to assess the EOIs.

- Priority investment themes
- Opportunities and challenges facing the town
- National and regional strategic / funding objectives
- Priorities of local people, communities, businesses
- Additionality to the town's major strategic investments
- Need for funding and evidence of market failure
- New and innovative approaches
- Deliverability
- Value for money

Our Place Plan delivers on the Government's economic growth agenda, aimed at tackling geographical disparities across the UK. The Place Plan will help Rothbury to close the prosperity gap with other parts of the UK by creating new, skilled jobs, boosting household incomes, and boosting pride in place, including improved satisfaction with the town centre.

Clean growth is at the heart of our plans, in line with Government net zero carbon reduction goals identified in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, the Energy White Paper, and Sixth Carbon Budget. These plans highlight significant clean energy investment in the coming years (including wind, carbon capture, and hydrogen), quadrupling the UK's offshore wind capacity by 2030, bringing jobs and growth to ports and coastal towns. Our Place Plan demonstrates how Rothbury will play a significant role in the clean growth agenda, attracting new jobs and investment, and supporting the UK's net zero carbon goals.



Complementary initiatives - Economic development

The following table illustrates several key investments already underway in Rothbury which are linked both directly and indirectly to the proposals received under the core investment themes. It is intended that the projects below will complement and align with the proposals received for both investment through the Place Programme and those developed with partner organisations and other funders.

Complementary Initiatives – being developed and in delivery:

Project and Lead Sponsor	Description	How it supports the Place Plan Strategic Objectives
Active Travel Network Plan – Northumberland National Park Authority	Active Travel Network Plan: Consultants are being commissioned to produce an Active Travel Network Plan (also known as a Rural Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) for Northumberland National Park, identifying where future investment should be prioritised to enable more people to participate in active travel between four gateway towns, including Rothbury.	Vibrant Town

Building our future

As described earlier in the Vision section, two key themes have been identified and agreed locally which have informed the consideration of potential projects, interventions and investments. As a result, the Place Plan will focus investment on where it is really needed in Rothbury, drawing upon on all of the feedback received at public consultation, throughout the showcase events and recognising the importance of the whole stakeholder engagement process.

Proposal submission process

Proposals were invited through an Expression of Interest process to identify potential projects that would help Rothbury achieve its vision, objectives and investment themes outlined within this Place Plan. It was emphasised that a small number of larger capital projects which would have significant impact on the town were being sought for Borderlands Place Programme funding.

Additionally, projects which were considered to have potential to have a large impact and meet the vision and objectives of the Place Plan, but which were not eligible for Borderlands funding, would be included in the town's place plan and developed separately to the Place Programme process.

Projects were assessed against the criteria on the Project Proposal Proforma, and eligible projects then formed a 'long-list' to be considered by the Rothbury Place Partnership Group for inclusion in the Rothbury Borderlands Place Plan.

The completed Place Plan would then be assessed by the accountable body before being submitted to the Borderlands Place Programme Board.

Project sponsors were reminded that this was a two-stage application process; If the Rothbury Place Plan was endorsed at this first stage by the Borderlands Place Programme Board, officers would work with the sponsor to develop the project further to enable the project proposal to be considered for inclusion in the Borderlands Town Investment Plan (BTIP) for the town. The final BTIP and individual project applications will form the basis of the final application to the Borderlands Programme Board and forms a second stage in the application process. The timeline for Rothbury's EOI process is detailed below.

This Place Plan includes a pipeline of potential schemes to support its delivery and also a prioritised list of potential schemes which, at this stage, may be eligible for Borderlands funding.



Proposal summary

The following section details the proposals received throughout the call-out process for expressions of interest to the Borderlands Place Plan.

This Place Plan has taken a whole of town approach to identifying the key priorities which are important to the creation of a thriving community over the next 10 years – these come in the form of the infrastructure, assets, economic activity, community services and connections needed to sustain and nourish the population, support their aspirations and ensure a cohesive community with a strong sense of civic pride and community spirit. The table below sets out a monitoring framework for the Place Plan, identifying under each theme and strategic objective, the key activities which will be delivered (outputs) to initiate the positive changes and developments (outcomes) we want to bring about in the community, together with some of the key metrics which will be used to evidence the impact of the Plan. These outputs and outcomes are consistent with those detailed within the Borderlands Place Plan Guidance.

However, the guidance recognises that this is not an exhaustive list, and that additional project specific outputs and outcomes may be agreed as appropriate. In addition, as some of the priority projects identified within the Place Plan will not be funded through the Borderlands Place Programme, we have included additional measures where appropriate to capture the potential contribution of projects of this nature. All of these are defined at Place Plan level – however, as part of the management and governance arrangements for the delivery of the Plan, each prioritised project will have its own project specific outputs and outcomes which demonstrate their intended and agreed contribution to these higher-level objectives and against which they will be required to measure and report progress on a regular basis.

The Rothbury Highland Pipe Band performing in Rothbury



Project proposals

Investment Theme One – Vibrant Town

Project Title/ Sponsor Sector	Initiative	Strategic Objectives	Potential outputs/Outcomes
Visitor Infrastructure Improvements Local Authority	Increased parking, improved gateways and signage, wayfinding and walking/sculpture trails. Accessibility and connectivity improvements.	Borderlands strategic objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7. Place Plan strategic objectives 2 and 4.	Increased footfall Increased visitor spend

Investment Theme Two – Working Town

Project Title/ Sponsor Sector	Initiative	Strategic Objectives	Potential outputs/Outcomes
Coquetdale Common Wealth 3rd sector	A business hub to foster new and help grow established businesses. Potential for affordable accommodation on 1st floor.	Borderlands strategic objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Place Plan strategic objectives 1 and 3.	Jobs created Unused land/buildings brought back into use. Businesses created

Project Proposals Prioritised for Development Support Towards Borderlands Town Investment Plan (BTIP)

The Place Partnership Group have also considered which of the Place Plan project proposals may be in scope for BTIP development. This is based on available information at this EOI stage in the project development process and considering the following criteria:

- Strategic fit with Place Plan.
- Strategic fit with Borderlands eligible activity and key drivers e.g. town centre regeneration.
- Value for Money and Deliverability.
- Suitability for this funding stream versus other known options in terms of additionality of Borderlands funding.

The proposals in the table below were identified as being those that best fit the criteria at this stage. It is important to note that the final projects to be included in a BTIP may be amended as further project development is undertaken to support the delivery of this Place Plan:

Project Title	Project Description
Visitor Infrastructure Improvements	Increased parking, improved gateways and signage, wayfinding and walking/sculpturetrails. Accessibility and connectivity improvements.
Coquetdale Common Wealth	A business hub to foster new and help grow established businesses. Potential for affordable accommodation on 1st floor.

The proposals in the wider pipeline will be added to the local authority's project pipeline and their development monitored regularly by the PPG. NCC will discuss in liaison with sponsors how project development and delivery can be supported further utilising available resources and funding opportunities.



Performance monitoring

The Rothbury Place Plan has been developed to meet evidenced local needs and a clear baseline has been set to enable monitoring of progress and achievement of outputs, outcomes and other benefits. Any gaps in data or baselines will be progressed during the Borderland Town Investment Plan (BTIP) development process to underpin the prioritised projects and the programme overall.

The lead authority, Northumberland County Council will undertake monitoring of the overall investment programme as outlined in the Place Plan and the subsequent BTIP in conjunction with the Rothbury Place Partnership Group in line with the approach used for other place-based programmes as set out below:

- Demonstrate clearly how the scheme objectives will be achieved including intended changes and demonstrating the links between the interventions and benefits & outcomes within the community.
- Agree the baseline (current context and data both quantitative and qualitative) and progress stages to keep the Place Plan and the BTIP focussed and resources aligned.
- Identify gaps in data, baselines, comparators and collection methodology and create solutions, this will lead to refinement of what will be monitored, why and how.
- Enable accurate reporting generating confidence with funders, setting out monitoring of KPI's and change milestones throughout, supporting dynamic risk management.
- Create clear messages about the outputs and outcomes for a range of audiences to widen understanding about the scope and ambitious impact of the Rothbury Place Plan.
- Assess the additionality of activities (and impacts) and demonstrate VFM.

Once the Borderlands Place Partnership Board and the Programme Board approve the Rothbury Place Plan, the Place Partnership Group and NCC will be invited to create a Rothbury Borderlands Town Investment Plan. The monitoring and evaluation approach will be a key component of this as it will be fully incorporated into the overarching business case for the Rothbury interventions and the individual projects that will combine to deliver the vision and strategic objectives.

NCC as lead authority will be responsible for monitoring project and programme delivery and reporting to the Borderlands PMO. Grant funding agreements will be issued to individual project sponsors once the BTIP Part 1 has been approved and a BTIP Part 2 for an individual project has been approved, which will incorporate all monitoring and reporting requirements and any special conditions that might apply such as compliance with subsidy control.

Appropriate systems, processes and records will be established to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements such as eligibility, record keeping, document retention, financial output and milestone monitoring and reporting requirements, publicity requirements, subsidy control, procurement and audit purposes.

The Place Partnership Group will receive regular updates on the progress of BTIP projects and provide ongoing community oversight of these and the wider package of interventions that are not Borderlands eligible but continue to meet the vision and investment priorities outlined in this Place Plan.



Management and governance

The Rothbury Place Plan has been developed with the local community and it represents their vision and aspirations for the town. The Place Partnership Group will continue to meet regularly to develop the Town Investment Plan and the prioritised projects and will support the wider pipeline of interventions that may be eligible for a range of other funding.

The remit of the Place Partnership Group will be reviewed regularly to ensure that representation is diverse and inclusive to provide strategic oversight, influence and direction to implementation of the Place Plan. This group is vital as the interventions are shaped to ensure strong community engagement and consultation and to encourage maximum collaboration with project sponsors across the investment themes.

In terms of approvals and assurance, the role of the group is to guide, input to and agree the projects that are identified as priority for Borderlands funding during the BTIP process from a collective community perspective. The group will provide local endorsement for the final BTIP, which will then require approval from NCC prior to submitting to the Borderlands PMO and being subject to full appraisal.

With the support of NCC the group will fully consider any queries that result from this process and respond through regular meetings to ensuring that the final BTIP is ambitious and deliverable.

Subject to BTIP approval, it is anticipated that the Rothbury Place Partnership Group will become an active champion of the investment plan and support ongoing communication and engagement activities as projects develop using their local connections and collective voice.

There has been significant momentum gained and the group will continue to be supported by council officers with meeting co-ordination, progress reporting and advice for members and project sponsors on external funding opportunities. This will ensure that the Place Plan has the widest impact possible and will incorporate best practice through the network of Borderlands place programme officers and the Borderlands PMO.

The role of NCC as lead authority is established through guidance from the Borderlands Place Programme and includes formally approving the BTIP for submission to the Borderlands PMO. NCC will implement an internal assurance process prior to submission to ensure the plan is compliant with guidance and the business case for the Rothbury programme and the local package of projects are viable, deliverable and will lead to delivery of the vision, objectives and intended outputs and outcomes.

Once the BTIP is approved and a BTIP Part 2 for an individual project is approved, NCC will be responsible as accountable body for issuing grant funding agreements to individual projects as well as monitoring spend, progress and performance. The council's Economy & Regeneration Service will support co-ordination of the Place Partnership Group keeping them updated with progress.

Rothbury and Rothbury Bridge from the banks of the River Coquet



Appendices

Appendix 1 – Consultation report

This document is also available in an accessible format.

Contact us

Email: Growth@northumberland.gov.uk

Front cover images, from left to right:
High Street Rothbury, Rothbury Bridge