



# Worcester City Plan 2025-30

**An ambitious, vibrant and  
welcoming historic city with  
opportunities for everyone**



**Worcester**  
CITY COUNCIL



**Councillor Lynn Denham**

Labour, Leader of the Council



**Councillor Louis Stephen**

Green



**Councillor Jessie Jagger**

Liberal Democrat

## Introduction from the Council's Political Group Leaders

### Welcome to Worcester City Council's City Plan for 2025-30

#### A sustainable, vibrant and historic city with opportunity for everyone

Following on from our previous plan this continues to focus on a successful city that is built on collaboration between the City Council, citizens and stakeholders, alongside direct Council activities.

As Leaders of the Council's political groups, we have come together to present our shared ambition for Worcester.

Worcester City Council has specific areas of responsibility and duties to our local communities, and we must ensure our resources are used carefully to achieve these. We deliver these essential services for Worcester, but our joint ambition goes much wider.

Our vision is of a city that is sustainable,

prosperous, healthy, creative and diverse and where opportunities are available to everyone.

Only by listening and responding to our citizens and stakeholders, and working together with partners across the city, can our collective vision become reality.

The central focus of this plan continues to be on people and communities, adding clearer ambitions around the climate and biodiversity emergencies, air quality and travel.

We want a city which helps communities and individuals to prosper, participate in a shared experience of living in their city, and to have the opportunity to achieve their aspirations.

Above all we want everyone to have opportunities to live mentally, physically and socially healthy and fulfilling lives.

We want our city to be a leader in addressing the climate emergency and the biodiversity crisis, and to be resilient to the challenges of climate change.

We also want Worcester and its citizens to play an increasing role in the livelihood and wellbeing of the county of Worcestershire, linking the city's people and facilities with those in the urban extensions around the city and further afield.

## Our core ambitions are:

- ◆ We want our university and cathedral city to be recognised as one of the best places to live in the UK.
- ◆ A place renowned for its sense of community, a city whose citizens volunteer, support each other, and do their bit, not just for their own families but for their neighbours, their communities and their city.
- ◆ We want a city where all citizens have the same access and opportunities, irrespective of where in the city they live.
- ◆ Worcester will be a city for people of all ages, with varied opportunities for play, activity, leisure and cultural experiences
- ◆ We want our riverside city to become an international as well as a national destination,

and our restaurants, cafés, bars and shops to include a fabulous mix of mainstream and independent traders.

◆ We want Worcester to be a safe city with a strong base of creativity and innovation, and a leading centre for training in green construction skills.

◆ We want the city to be recognised for its heritage: a vibrant cultural scene, a place of art and festival, of colour and community, of open space used for the enjoyment of all.

◆ We want a city with an international reputation for sporting excellence for people of all abilities.

◆ Our vision is to protect and enhance Worcester's precious environment and to be active in the global effort to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies. Our

ambition is for Worcester to be a carbon neutral city by 2030.

◆ We want public, private and third sector partners in our city to continue to work together and use our collective resources to achieve the best possible outcomes for Worcester.

Previous City Plans have been great successes in helping to shape the city for the benefit of all.

Our City Plan has enabled the Council to submit successful bids for government funding which have brought nearly £85 million capital investment into the city, made up of £45 million of grant funding and nearly £40 million of partner funding.



# A city where everyone can prosper

## What we want for Worcester

We want prosperity for everyone, founded on secure livelihoods and an inclusive and diverse economy. Prosperity is about much more than economic measures – it includes health and wellbeing, a sense of belonging, opportunities for education, and political inclusion.

Worcester will continue to support sustainable growth from which all people and communities can benefit, with action to reduce inequalities. This will include support for residents experiencing financial hardship, re-settling from unstable accommodation or struggling with fuel poverty and child poverty.

We want to proactively attract new employers, support existing businesses to grow, and ensure everyone has the chance to get the opportunities, education, training and jobs that they need.

Worcester will be home to modern work patterns with a mix of offices and shared / collaborative working spaces, creating a vibrant city centre mix of business, residential, retail, dining and entertainment.

We want our entrepreneurial city to contribute to the prosperity of communities across Worcestershire and to the sustainable growth of the wider West Midlands economy.

Skills and training opportunities will be available to all, with

training in employability skills accessible to people close to their communities wherever possible.

We will work with partners to promote career opportunities in health and care, and in housing.

Safe and accessible car parks will support access to the city centre for those with limited mobility.

The city's university and colleges will continue to support local people to gain qualifications and students will stay in the city following graduation, contributing to our public services and businesses.

Our vibrant night-time economy will be a place where people feel safe and welcome.



## What will this look like

- ◆ Equality of opportunity and barrier-free access to training and apprenticeships.
- ◆ An increase in essential employability skills, including digital literacy and job search confidence.
- ◆ A highly skilled workforce, with the experience and knowledge to contribute to our local economy, and an increase in our green construction skills base

## Our role in achieving this

These are our existing and emerging strategies and plans that set out how we will work towards realising our ambitions for Worcester.

- ◆ South Worcestershire Development Plan, which includes a significant proportion of affordable housing, and employment opportunities.

- ◆ Existing businesses retained and new businesses investing in Worcester.
- ◆ More high value and better paid jobs.
- ◆ A larger proportion of local graduates remaining in the city to live and work.
- ◆ An increase in start-up businesses that last over 12 months.
- ◆ A higher number of disabled people in employment.

- ◆ Shrub Hill Supplementary Planning Document – outlining a sustainable mixed-use development in the heart of the city.

- ◆ Worcester Town Investment Plan – bringing opportunity to gain employability skills to the heart of our communities that need it most.
- ◆ Our Tourism Strategy supports the visitor economy.

- ◆ Progress in delivering the economic and housing ambitions of the South Worcestershire Development Plan.
- ◆ A thriving night-time economy, managed effectively and safely through partnership.
- ◆ Attractors for business to move to, invest and employ people in the city.
- ◆ Support for households experiencing financial hardship.

- ◆ Our Housing Enabling Strategy will deliver high quality affordable housing





## A resilient and sustainable city

### What we want for Worcester

We want Worcester to contribute to the global response to climate change and its impact on nature and biodiversity, and have the resilience to cope with the changing climate and extreme weather.

Our ambition is for a carbon neutral Worcester by 2030, and a city where the current decline in biodiversity has been reversed.

Our city, citizens and businesses will become more resilient to flooding and other extreme weather events such as high summer temperatures.

Our Riverside Park and other natural assets and green spaces,

including Local Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest will provide engagement with nature for everyone.

A balance will be struck between supporting vulnerable native nature whilst minimising invasive species.

Key habitats including our formal parks, green spaces and waterway corridors will be maintained and adapted to support an increase in climate-resilient biodiversity.

Less waste will be produced, and recycling rates will increase, alongside a new service to collect food waste.

There will be an increase in generation and use of renewable energy in the city.

The City's homes will be affordable, safe, energy efficient and well insulated, with improvements to existing housing

Air quality in the city will be improved to reduce its impact on health, and opportunities for low carbon and active travel will provide greater choice.

### What this will look like

- ◆ Worcester benefits from improved air quality through reductions in carbon emissions and pollution particles.
- ◆ The city's vibrant riverside is a destination in its own right, balancing leisure opportunities with climate resilience.
- ◆ Citizens and visitors benefit from more travel choices, including enhanced walking, wheeling and cycling and public transport options.
- ◆ The city's homes, businesses and facilities benefit from

### Our role in achieving this

These are our existing and emerging strategies and plans that set out how we will work towards realising our ambitions for Worcester.

- ◆ Our Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan.
- ◆ Our Active Travel Action Plan.

improved flood resilience.

- ◆ Properties at high risk of flooding have flood resilience plans and measures in place.
- ◆ There is a net gain in biodiversity across the city and no loss on protected sites.
- ◆ An achievable plan to phase out use of chemical weedkillers and fertilisers has been developed.
- ◆ The energy-efficiency of city homes is improved through specific improvement schemes

- ◆ Developing Biodiversity Strategy for our green spaces and waterways.
- ◆ Tree Strategy, to sustainably manage the city's trees, enhance urban canopy cover, and improve biodiversity.
- ◆ Planning policies that maximise Biodiversity Net Gain.

and the raising of housing standards including insulation.

- ◆ Local food production is supported through the Council's allotment provision, community groups and the planning system.
- ◆ There is minimal use of hard landscaping and an increase in street trees to help manage summer temperatures and water run-off.
- ◆ The city is making good progress on its committed ambition to being a net zero producer of carbon.

- ◆ The City Council will follow the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles when making investments.
- ◆ The City Council will support community groups who are helping the environment.



# Strong and engaged communities

## What we want for Worcester

The communities we live in and the relationships we have are the primary source of our physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.

Worcester will be a place where people have a sense of shared ownership and pride, alongside kindness and respect for all. They will feel that they belong to multiple and overlapping communities with varied interests and ambitions, communities that support each other and celebrate each other's differences and varied heritage.

It will be a city where people enjoy positive relationships with each other, and participate, volunteer and support each other to build resilient, inclusive communities where no one is isolated.

The City Council will listen to its citizens, who will feel engaged in shaping their city.

Worcester will be an accessible city where people are able to access the information and services they need and play an active role in their communities, enjoying the positive benefits of involvement and participation.

There will be broad participation in democracy and a high rate of voter engagement, including among the city's younger citizens.

Worcester will recognise, celebrate and learn from the city's shared history.

People living in the growing urban extensions just outside of the city boundary will be welcomed within our Worcester community.



## What this will look like

- ◆ Increased opportunities for young people to play, develop, participate and gain skills, and to access high quality training, apprenticeships and education.
- ◆ Increased integration and partnership working across all key stakeholders to support community cohesion and reduce crime and perception of crime.

## Our role in achieving this

These are our existing and emerging strategies and plans that set out how we will work towards realising our ambitions for Worcester.

- ◆ Our Community Strategy will maximise Worcester's wealth of community assets of both people and places.

- ◆ Improved turn-out at elections and in residents' satisfaction levels.
- ◆ Sustainable neighbourhood infrastructure, including welcoming and vibrant community centres for all ages, and a range of other local facilities and shops.
- ◆ A varied and vibrant range of community organisations and clubs providing opportunities

- ◆ Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy sets out our role in helping to reduce inequalities and safeguard the rights of people protected by the Equality Act 2010.
- ◆ Our Consultation & Engagement Strategy supports our role as a listening Council.

- for members and participants.
- ◆ Worcester will become a City of Sanctuary for people in need and will not tolerate hatred.
- ◆ Fewer families in temporary accommodation and fewer people sleeping rough.
- ◆ Reduction in underused and empty properties, and a reduced number of substandard rental properties.

- ◆ Our Customer Service Strategy focusses on providing excellent service to all our customers.
- ◆ Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategies will actively reduce these issues
- ◆ Supporting the local armed forces community under the Armed Forces Community Covenant



## An attractive heritage city with a vibrant modern culture

### What we want for Worcester

Worcester is a historic city with a remarkable built and natural environment that we want to sustain and pass on to future generations. We want to celebrate the city's natural heritage, whilst supporting Worcester as a modern vibrant city. It will be a university and cathedral city that is renowned for a broad range of modern cultural experiences and is proud of its remarkable history and the legacy that is visible in its architecture and open spaces.

We want to attract visitors to enjoy the city's compelling offer of superb

heritage attractions, beautiful open spaces, diverse arts and culture, and varied dining and entertainment.

Worcester will be a city renowned for its rich heritage, from its ancient Cathedral quarter and its industrial past through the social changes that have informed the development of its riverside and residential areas. Worcester's role in the English Civil War, as "the faithful city", will be widely known and a pull for visitors.

The city will be a destination with quality green spaces of all types,

including Green Flag-accredited parks, designated and well-managed nature reserves, and plentiful opportunities to engage with nature. Its compelling tourism offer will be supported by access for all to sites of interest, information and advice.

This will intertwine with the best of a fast-paced 21st Century city, through a cultural offer of festivals, sports, arts and entertainment that contributes to a diverse and vibrant city that is attractive for people to live, work and visit.

### What this will look like

- ◆ Worcester enjoys an enhanced reputation as a vibrant regional centre for arts and culture, and as a city of festivals.
- ◆ The city has a reputation as a destination with a major heritage appeal.
- ◆ There are increased visitor numbers to the city's museums, Worcester Cathedral, other cultural venues and events.
- ◆ Worcester's tourism, leisure, accommodation, hospitality and catering businesses benefit from sustainable growth.

### Our role in achieving this

These are our existing and emerging strategies and plans that set out how we will work towards realising our ambitions for Worcester.

- ◆ Our Arts and Cultural Strategy will support the growth of a strong and varied offer that builds Worcester's reputation as a dynamic, innovative, and distinctive place.

- ◆ A choice of accommodation is available for visitors, delivering more spend in the city's tourist attractions.
- ◆ More people are enjoying overnight stays in our city.
- ◆ Worcester's unique history is nationally and internationally recognised
- ◆ There is a diverse and growing cultural, theatre, music and arts offer for residents and visitors, including the regenerated Scala arts centre.
- ◆ Our city's full range of green spaces and parks are used and appreciated

- ◆ more by residents and visitors.
- ◆ Green Flag status is awarded to at least seven of the City's parks, including the riverside.
- ◆ The city's riverside is a popular national and international destination.
- ◆ Worcester's city centre has a very low rate of empty units and is a popular destination thanks to its mix of mainstream, independent and designer traders.
- ◆ There is a reduction in the number of heritage buildings at risk in the city.

- ◆ Our Tourism Strategy aims to support the visitor economy and raise the profile of Worcester as a visitor destination, encouraging social inclusion in tourism activities, and ensure the local environment is appreciated by all.
- ◆ Delivery of the Worcester Town Investment Plan is delivering enhancements to heritage destinations and assets.

- ◆ The Museums strategic plan defines how we will develop the collections and exhibitions to support the city's economy and our communities' health and well-being.
- ◆ We will develop strategies for proactively attracting large employers and businesses to set up in Worcester.



## A healthy and active city

### What we want for Worcester

We want our citizens to enjoy long, healthy and fulfilling lives, and have a choice as to how they achieve this. We want a city that promotes health and wellbeing by providing attractive open spaces, quality provision for play, leisure centres, sporting facilities, and attractive options for active travel. These will make it possible for physical activity to be an integral part of daily life in the city for people of all ages.

Worcester will continue to be an inspirational sporting city, hosting regular regional, national and international competitions, and boosting grassroots participation for people of all abilities.

We want Worcester's citizens to have good quality affordable energy efficient housing that provides a warm, safe and healthy stable home.

Air quality will be good across the city with significantly reduced emissions.

Worcester people will be able to access quality health care from our partners.

Our healthy and active city will provide opportunities to all, including the growing older population.

Mental Health will be supported alongside physical health, with social and cultural opportunities available to all, aiding wellbeing and combatting loneliness.



### What this will look like

- ◆ Healthy walking routes around the city are enhanced to achieve a city where facilities are accessible to all.
- ◆ Benches and seating are located to support less mobile people to be able to walk to access the city's opportunities.
- ◆ Public transport is improved, reducing congestion and improving air quality, with an increased provision and use of walking, wheeling and cycling routes.
- ◆ Worcester has a strong national and international reputation for a wide range of sports, including disability and walking sports.

### Our role in achieving this

These are our existing and emerging strategies and plans that set out how we will work towards realising our ambitions for Worcester.

- ◆ We will manage our green spaces to provide opportunities for activity and connect people with nature.
- ◆ Our Active Travel Action Plan will promote active travel through our own projects and working with partners.

- ◆ A mix of good quality owner occupied, private rented and social rented housing will be available at a cost that is affordable to local people.
- ◆ Opportunities to participate in physical activity for all age groups are increased, through the wider sporting community, including grassroots sport, Park Run, and active leisure opportunities.
- ◆ A broad range of opportunities for participation in creative activities, workshops, classes, artistic musical groups.
- ◆ The City's Integrated Care System

is reducing health inequalities, including levels of obesity, smoking, alcohol and drug use and mental health problems.

- ◆ Worcester residents will have safe, stable and good quality housing.
- ◆ Rough sleeping will be rare and where temporary accommodation is necessary, this is for a brief period.
- ◆ Worcester will be known as an accessible city where opportunities are available to people of all abilities.
- ◆ Fewer lorries and other HGVs in the city centre.

- ◆ Delivery of our Play Plan will increase opportunities for inclusive play to support our young people's physical and mental health.
- ◆ Working with Worcestershire County Council, Worcester's Air Quality Action Plan will deliver improved air quality.
- ◆ An enhanced offer under our Arts and Cultural Strategy will support mental and social health.

- ◆ Our Homelessness & Rough Sleeping strategy aims to tackle root causes to minimise homelessness and end rough sleeping in the city, supporting the most vulnerable people in our city.



# Key achievements in recent years include:

Securing £45m grants for major capital projects:

- ◆ The Arches
- ◆ Scala arts centre
- ◆ Shrub Hill regeneration
- ◆ University Health and Medical training centre
- ◆ Beryl bike share scheme
- ◆ Museum development
- ◆ Walking and cycling routes

A varied and highly successful events programme, including the Victorian Christmas Fayre, Worcester Show, Three Choirs Festival, Light Night, Worcester Mela, blockbuster Museum exhibitions and many more.

Declaration of Climate and biodiversity emergencies and development of strategies and action plans to address these.

Support for both community organisations and small businesses through a successful programme of small grants.

Implementation of an action plan to boost walking, cycling and wheeling, including the launch of the Beryl Bikes bike hire scheme.

New facilities for football, hockey and cricket.

Worcester City Runs – the City Council is an active supporter of the annual event which attracts 5,000 participants each year.

An on-going programme of investment in play facilities across the city, including the creation of Worcester's first pump track.

Green Flag, the international mark of quality for green space standards, awarded to five city locations.

Renewable energy generation, through the installation of photovoltaic panels at St Martin's Gate multi-storey car park.

An on-going programme that has already seen EV chargers installed in Council car parks at St Martin's Gate, Tallow Hill and King's Street, with concessionary arrangements in place for local residents.

A council supported car share club at Tallow Hill car park.

A new communal working place, The Kiln, to support the city's growing sector of creative and tech freelancers and small businesses.

The expansion of the Building Block at Warndon Hub community centre has helped people learn and develop practical skills.

Purple Flag status has been awarded to Worcester, recognising Worcester's safe and thriving night-time economy.

We have taken effective action to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.

Accreditation by the Fair Tax Foundation, recognising the Council's responsible practices on finance and taxation.

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