Wakefield District Economic Growth Plan

Metro Dynamics on behalf of Wakefield District Council

Metro —— Dynamics

wakefieldcouncil

Contents

Forward **3**

Introduction and Purpose of Plan **7**

Wakefield's Economy **10**

- **Wakefield's economic equilibrium** **13**
- **Towards Strategic Opportunities** **14**

Strategic Opportunities **16**

- **Leveraging Wakefield's economic geography by delivering more housing in well-connected areas** **16**
- **Support the growth of innovative, future-facing Advanced Manufacturing specialisms and firms within the broader Manufacturing sector** **19**
- **Leverage strong logistics demand into higher value activities, improved distribution modes and innovative indigenous firms** .... Error! Bookmark not defined.

Integrate the growing Creative sector within Wakefield's urban core ...... Error! Bookmark not defined.

Executive Summary

Despite successes, Wakefield is trapped in a low-skill, low-GVA equilibrium

Wakefield has many key metrics of economic success; job creation has outpaced comparators, economic activity rates are high, and a strong track record of delivery has kept housing and commercial space costs relatively low, supporting quality of life for residents and maintained economic competitiveness. Although deindustrialisation represented a huge shock to the local economy, Wakefield has seemingly avoided the generational disconnection from labour markets and entrenched deprivation that followed in many similar places. Excellent connectivity by road and rail, and a pivotal position with access to markets in West and South Yorkshire, represent a strong foundation for growth.

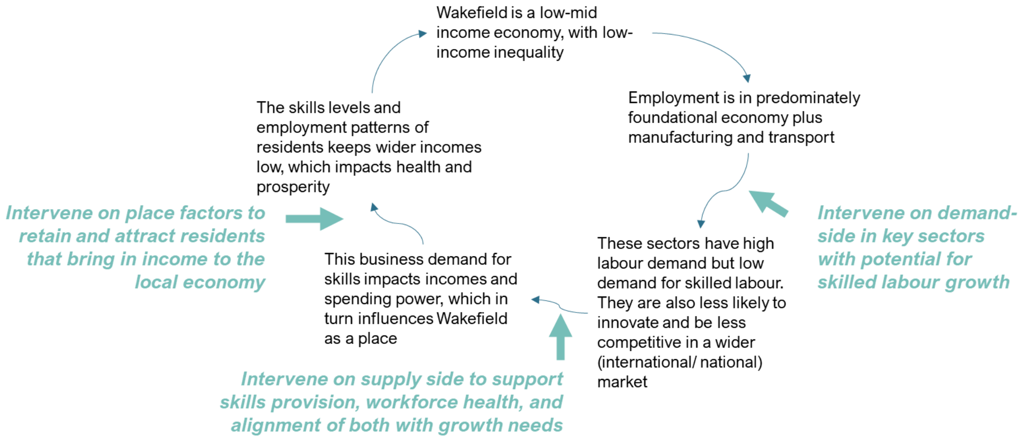
But as the recent Wakefield Futures report found, Wakefield is now trapped in a low-skill, low-GVA equilibrium. Wakefield's economy is disproportionately composed of low productivity sectors, and our analysis suggests those sectors are themselves less productive than their counterparts elsewhere. With demand for high skilled work low, Wakefield struggles to attract and retain the talent and capabilities that would support growth in innovative firms and sectors; growth that in turn would raise incomes for all residents.

The overarching goal of this Economic Growth Plan is to increase local incomes and in doing so, increase economic wellbeing for residents

The challenge outlined here is that Wakefield does not currently bring in enough money from the rest of the UK and the world, either through Wakefield businesses exporting valued goods and services, or through resident engaging with high value economic opportunities outside the narrow boundaries of the borough. The overarching goal is therefore to increase local incomes across the district and in doing so improve the flow of money around the local economy, benefitting high streets, small businesses and improving quality of life for residents.

To do so, Wakefield Council must be targeted with limited public resource and policy levers. By concentrating efforts on areas where the Council and partners have the most influence, Wakefield can drive growth on both the supply and demand sides of the local economy.

Figure 1. Breaking out of Wakefield's low-skill, low-GVA equilibrium



Five strategic priorities capitalise on Wakefield's latent strengths and opportunities

A limited number of evidence-based strategic priorities, aligned with local policy levers, are intended to demonstrate intent and commitment to partners and businesses:

1. Deliver more housing in Wakefield's well-connected urban centres - *Concentrating higher-density, mixed-use, transit-oriented development in Wakefield's most connected urban will unlock inclusive, higher-wage growth by strengthening links to fast-growing regional labour markets like Leeds, anchoring spend on local high streets.*

2. Support the growth of innovative, future-facing Advanced Manufacturing specialisms and firms within the broader Manufacturing sector - *Manufacturing is the largest tradeable sector in the district, but high energy costs are likely to pose a threat to traditional industries and sub-sectors. Wakefield will seek to grow innovative firms and sub-sectors that have the potential to maintain international competitiveness.*

3. Leverage Logistics demand into higher value jobs and productive local firms - *Wakefield has significant Logistics demand for space, but composition and occupational patterns suggest barriers to objectives around increased wages. Encouraging national logistics firms to headquarter activities locally while supporting the growth of smaller indigenous firms will support this challenge while ensuring Wakefield continues to capitalize on its location to generate demand.*

4. Integrate the growing Creative sector within Wakefield's urban centers - *The creative sector in Wakefield is small and spatially concentrated, and growth patterns across the UK suggest growth will be predominately urban in nature. Better integrating existing assets – such as Production Park, Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the Hepworth – into the fabric of major urban centres could come with significant spillover benefits for wider knowledge-intensive services and regeneration.*

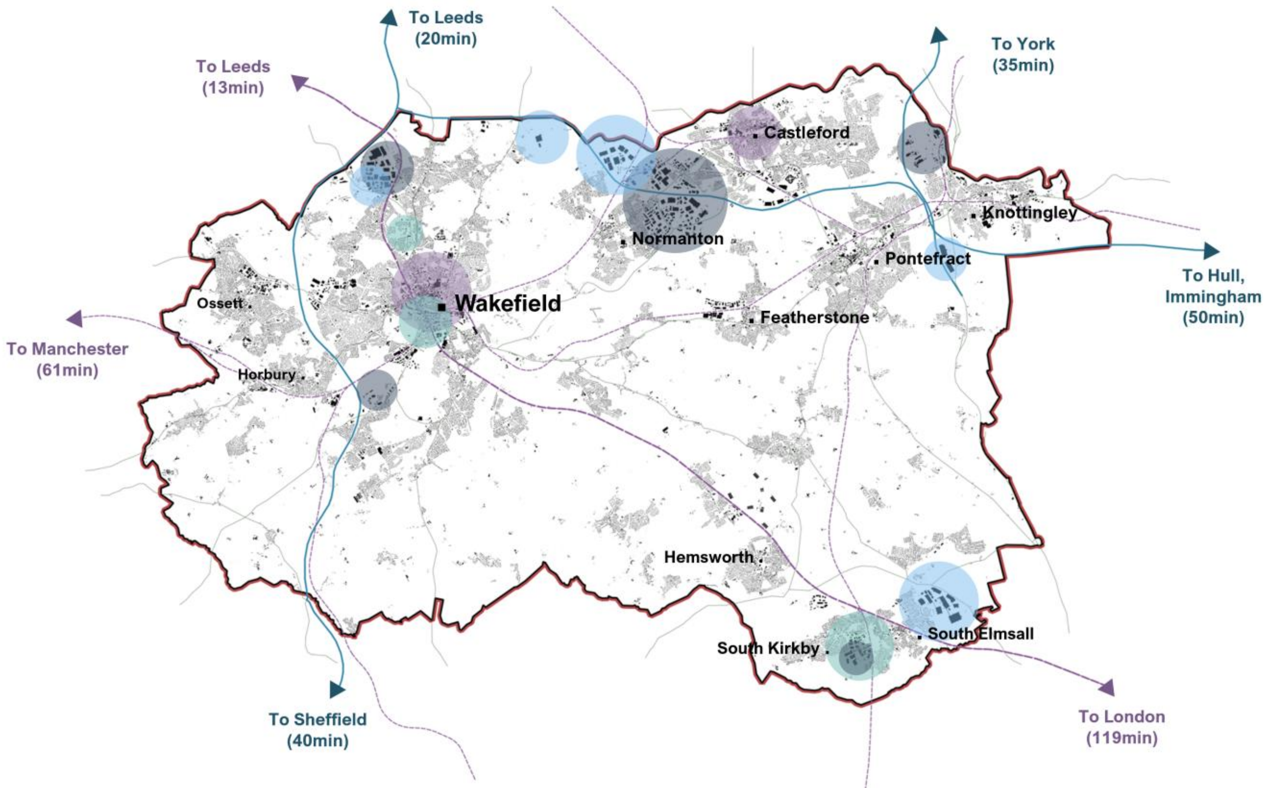
5. Mobilise investment and partnerships to build a skilled, healthy workforce for the future - *Healthy life expectancy in Wakefield is a serious challenge, and although Wakefield currently has high economic activity rates, this will have to be maintained to support wider economic growth potential. While local levers are limited, devolved funding and powers and national funding opportunities could be targeted to support the current workforce.*

Our projects demonstrate Wakefield’s commitment to delivering against our priorities

Wakefield’s flagship projects bring the preceding priorities to life, with a mix of current flagship council and business-led growth initiatives, and proactive policy development in path-breaking proposals like the Wakefield Futures Centre.

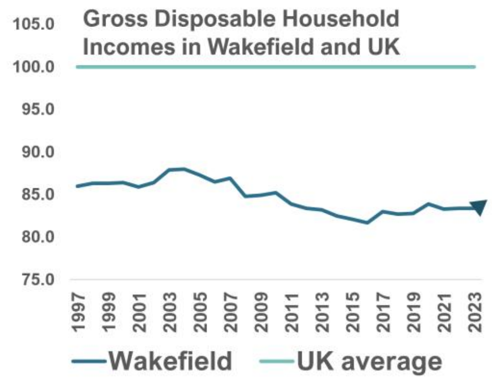
Wakefield has the opportunity and the will to move beyond business-as-usual delivery. We recognize that many important policy and funding levers are not directly in the hands of local leaders – or even yet in existence, in the lifetime this plan will operate on. In a fluid national policy landscape, entrepreneurial civic leadership paired with a consistent and clear-eyed long-term approach can deliver significant benefits for residents, and Wakefield will review the partnerships and capabilities that will allow delivery of this plan.

How will the Economic Growth Strategy deliver prosperity across Wakefield?



Wakefield's Strategic Growth Priorities	
1	Deliver more housing in Wakefield's well-connected urban centers
2	Support the growth of innovative, future-facing Advanced Manufacturing specialisms and firms within the broader Manufacturing sector
3	Leverage Logistics demand into higher value jobs and productive local firms
4	Integrate the growing Creative sector within Wakefield's urban centers
5	Mobilise investment and partnerships to build a skilled, healthy workforce for the future

To grow household incomes across Wakefield



1 Introduction and Purpose of Plan

With a population of 367,666 and a £10.25 billion contribution to the national economy, Wakefield is a significant economic driver within West Yorkshire and the wider North of England. Its strength in Manufacturing and Logistics positions Wakefield as a critical supplier and enabler within the regional economy, underpinning supply chains and supporting growth across West Yorkshire.

Despite these assets, Wakefield faces persistent challenges: below-average incomes, lower skills attainment, and poor health outcomes. Over the past year, Wakefield Council has worked to address these issues through the Wakefield Economic Wellbeing Strategy 2024–2029, which aims to improve the wellbeing of people and communities by fostering a fair and inclusive economy.[1]

In December 2024, the Wakefield Futures Commission was established to bring together independent experts in education and economic policy to examine the district's skills and educational needs. Chaired by Professor Sir Chris Husbands, the Commission's report concluded that Wakefield's economy is "driven by low-skilled industries, which reinforce its predominately lower-skilled labour market," creating a cycle of "lower wages, lower prosperity, poorer prospects for young people, skills gaps and greater inequality."[2]

These stark findings highlight the need for a deeper investigation into the structural components of Wakefield's economy, its industries, sectors, housing, health, and entrepreneurial ecosystem, and the development of a comprehensive plan that builds on the framework set by Wakefield Futures.

Figure 2. How the Economic Growth Plan interacts with other strategic documents

[1] Wakefield District Economic Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2029, Wakefield Council, 2024
[2] Wakefield Futures Commission Report, Wakefield Futures Commission, 2025

Document	Purpose and remit	Outcomes	
Wakefield Economic Wellbeing Strategy	Sets the overall vision and strategic direction of Wakefield District: To improve the economic wellbeing of people and communities	Targeting increased earnings, reduced deprivation, reduced health inequalities, thriving communities and a higher quality environment	Informs → Other policy areas eg: Community Wealth Building
Wakefield Futures Report	Set out a series of recommendations to shift the dial on Wakefield's economic trajectory and move towards high-skill, high value, innovative economic activity	Targeting innovation, training, participation and progression metrics for Wakefield residents	Informs → Other policy areas eg: Devolved Skills Policy
Wakefield Economic Growth Strategy	Outlines a route to delivering improved economic wellbeing *through* growth, based on Wakefield's economic strengths	Targeting increased local incomes and improved living standards for Wakefield residents	To inform → Council projects and operational priorities

How is this plan structured?

To advance economic growth, Wakefield Council has developed a plan focused on identifying and implementing pathways to sustainable economic growth. The plan comprises three core components:

- **Economic Plan** – The overarching document outlining the rationale for intervention and the strategic opportunities for growth within Wakefield
- **Sector Deep Dives** – Analysis of three priority sectors, Manufacturing, Logistics, and Creative & Digital, examining the drivers and constraints affecting business growth and productivity
- **Project Pipeline** – A prospectus of key projects and interventions designed to deliver on Wakefield's strategic growth opportunities

This is a pivotal moment for Wakefield to define its growth trajectory, particularly in the context of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's move toward deeper devolution through the Integrated Settlement and national policy priorities around industrial plan, housing delivery, and labour market reform, and this Economic Growth Plan will set out a route to doing so.

Why has the plan focused on only five priorities – and only three sectors?

Our plan signals clear commitment to private and national partners is the development of a limited number of priorities. The key success criteria for the priorities of this plan is that this Economic Growth Plan must deliver increased incomes for all local residents in all Wakefield's places. Some of this increase will come from better local benefit from economic activity outside of the district (and the first strategic priority in particular is intended to help capture and recycle these revenue streams), and some will come from growth of existing industrial and sectoral clusters and capabilities.

In particular, the three sectoral priorities in this plan have been chosen because they represent a genuine comparative advantage for the district as the remainder of this paper sets out. But they also represent a broad spatial route to incomes growth across the district, and they are sectors with a broad range of skill level requirements. In a district where much work is local and formal qualifications are under-represented, this balance is an essential pre-requisite for growth that supports increased economic wellbeing for all residents; in tandem with the Wakefield Futures Centre's role in driving long-term transformative change in the local economy.

The highlighting of three sectors in this plan does not preclude continued growth in other sectors – in particular Professional and Business Services, which is by far the largest IS-8 designated economic sector within the district and indeed nationally – and Wakefield will continue to support growth opportunities as they emerge with regional and national partners.

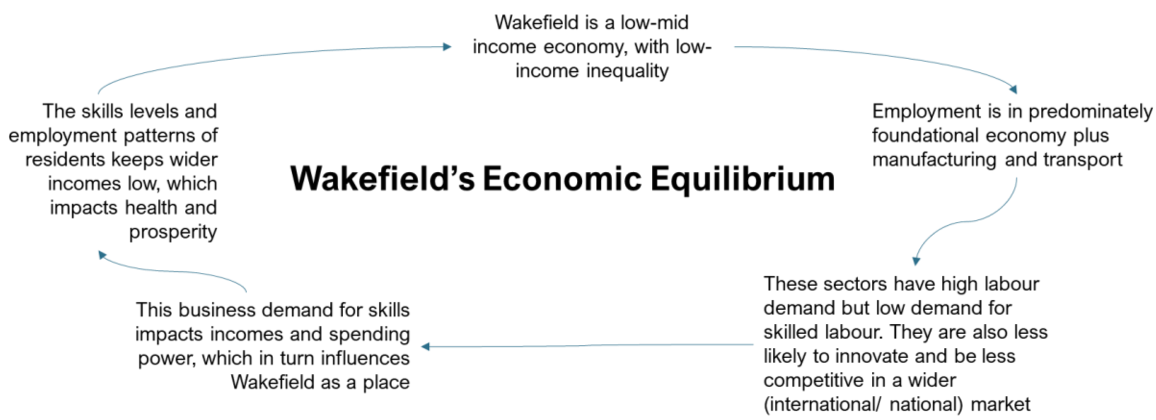
2 Wakefield's Economy Today

Wakefield, West Yorkshire's third largest economy, stands at a pivotal point in its economic development. Over the past two decades, Wakefield has demonstrated substantial growth, marked by falling unemployment rates and an economic activity rate that aligns closely with both regional and national averages. Recently published Centre for Cities research highlighted that disposable incomes have risen faster in Wakefield than across the UK as a whole, with incomes growing by 4.6% between 2013 and 2023. This performance reflects an economy that has successfully navigated global shifts through collaborative efforts by local, regional, and national governments, along with other key civic stakeholders, enabling a constructive transition from deindustrialisation and securing its economic position within West Yorkshire.

However, underlying these advancements is a persistent challenge: according to the Wakefield Futures Commission, the city remains characterised by a "relatively low-skills-low-growth economy." Comprehensive analysis undertaken for this plan supports the Commission's findings, indicating that this state of equilibrium perpetuates limited prosperity and opportunities for residents. This overview describes the underlying causes and factors sustaining this equilibrium, as well as its broader impacts.

In summary, the composition and relative stability of the economic sectors in Wakefield result in business demand for skills that falls below regional and national averages. This economic structure, characterised by the predominance of foundational and production-focused industries, fosters stability but lacks the necessary dynamism to support sustained growth. As these sectors typically demonstrate limited innovation and have difficulty enhancing productivity, there is reduced demand for and investment into advanced skills and innovation. This situation diminishes incentives and pathways for local residents to obtain higher qualifications or deepen their skillset.

Figure 3. Wakefield's Economic Equilibrium



As a result, both the supply and demand for human capital in the Wakefield economy remain below sub-regional and national benchmarks, restraining wage levels and limiting local capital circulation, ultimately constraining opportunities for future economic growth within the area. As a result, the local labour market offers many opportunities for entry-level and operational roles, but fewer pathways for career progression or access to higher wages. However, the potential to advance into higher-paying, higher-quality jobs are limited.

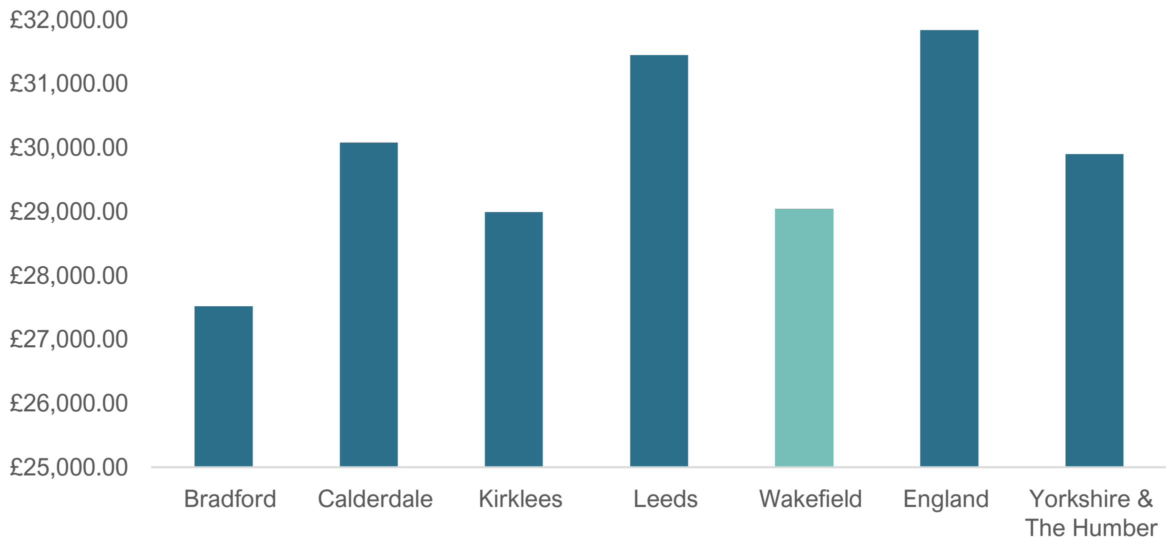
“If nothing is done, the economy will continue its present trajectory, and will continue to fail to deliver better jobs, stronger growth or higher skills” – Wakefield Futures Report, 2025

Wakefield’s Economy

Wakefield’s economy reached £10.25 billion in 2023, accounting for 14% of West Yorkshire’s total economic output. Despite the quantitative significance of the local economy however, there are reasons to believe that qualitative factors are a barrier; between 1998 and 2022, the productivity gap between Wakefield and Leeds increased from £4,343 to £13,273.

The reasons for this productivity disparity are explored in more depth in the subsequent section. However, there is one crucial symptom: low local incomes generated from work within Wakefield. In 2024, Wakefield’s median annual income was £29,042, lower than both the England median of £31,940 and Yorkshire and The Humber’s median of £29,901. As highlighted by the Centre for Cities, incomes are growing faster than in many places, but from a low base.

Figure 4. **Median Annual Resident Earnings (2024)**

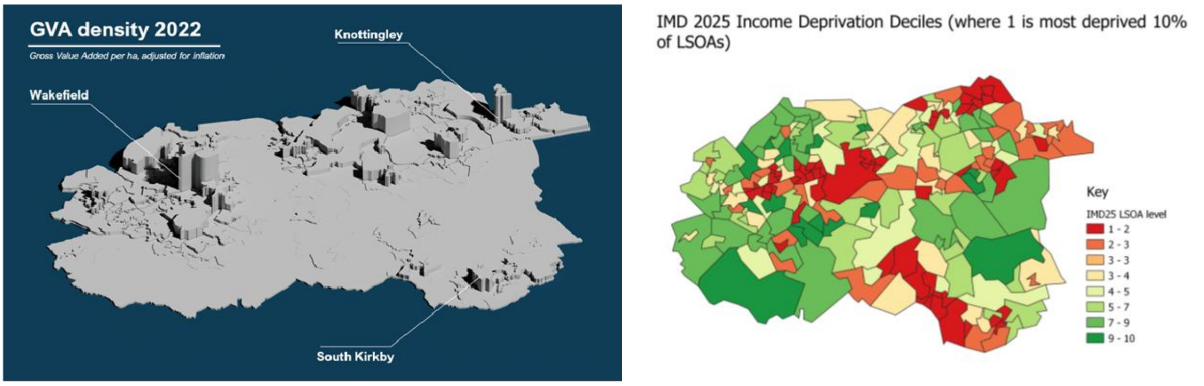


This constrains the overall volume of disposable income circulating within the local economy, thereby restricting the amount of money available for local spending, which is a necessary input for business growth and job creation. Not enough of the positive benefits from regional growth (on which more below) have accumulated to Wakefield residents, with much of the strongest benefits of regional growth accumulating in the more prosperous suburbs of Leeds, in Selby, York, and North Yorkshire.

Wakefield's Places

Wakefield is not one place, but several. Dividing Wakefield into three regions – broadly categorised as Wakefield and the South West, the Five Towns, and the South East - shows that Wakefield and the South East and the Five Towns have similar economies and populations; Wakefield is a significantly polycentric economy. In contrast, the South East represents a notably smaller economy relative to population; as a result, the South East lags behind the wider Wakefield area in terms of per capita productivity, with a figure of £12,849, £16,127 less than that of the Five Towns.

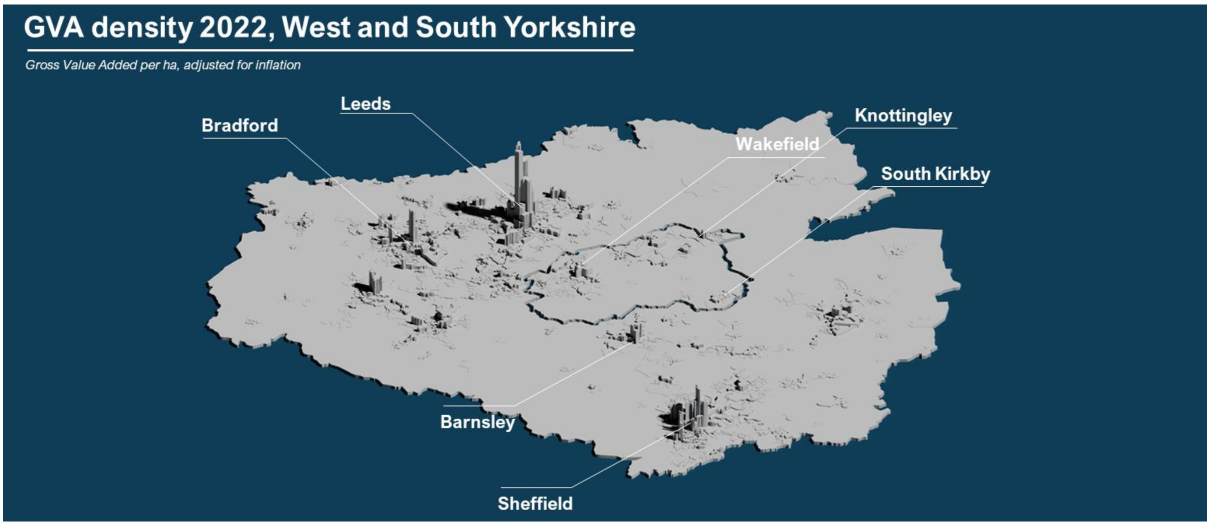
Figure 5. Local GVA Density 2022 (left)/compared with IMD 2025 Income Deprivation Deciles



Areas such as Wakefield City Centre, Castleford, Hemsworth, and South Kirkby have significant low-income populations. According to the 2025 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, these communities rank in the bottom 10% nationally for income-related deprivation and show high reliance on means-tested benefits. However, although there are specific areas of low income and poverty within Wakefield, overall levels of income inequality remain low. Wakefield demonstrates the smallest income disparity among West Yorkshire local authorities between its highest and lowest earners (ONS, 2025)

Wakefield's strong connections to regional economies in West and South Yorkshire support growth, and commuter patterns play a significant role in the difference between resident and workplace based earnings (explored in more depth in the relevant strategic priority)

Figure 6. Regional GVA Density 2022 (ONS Data, 2024 release)



Wakefield's Businesses

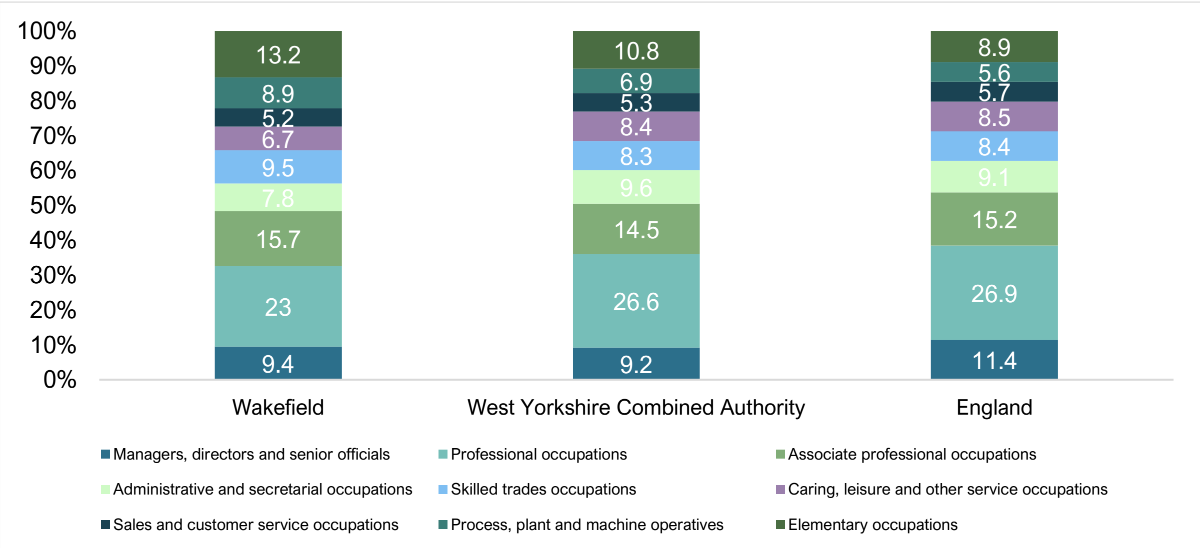
Wakefield's economic landscape is anchored in foundational sectors, exhibiting notably high employment levels in manufacturing, wholesale and retail, as well as transportation and storage. The city distinguishes itself through strengths in the manufacture of wearing apparel, beverage production, and warehousing and transport support services. This specialisation underscores Wakefield's unique economic profile, largely defined by its robust capacity in production and distribution rather than service-oriented industries. Conversely, Wakefield demonstrates a relatively low concentration of employment within professional services sectors when compared with regional and national benchmarks.

Table 1. Sector Employment concentrations relative to local and national

Sector (% of total employment)	Wakefield	West Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	England
Manufacturing	12.4	9.7	10.6	7.3
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	15.3	14.5	14.7	13.7
Transportation and storage	12.4	5.7	5.8	5.1
Accommodation and food service activities	5.9	6.5	7.6	7.8
Information and communication	1.3	3.2	2.6	4.7
Financial and insurance activities	1.2	3.8	2.8	3.4
Professional, scientific and technical activities	4.7	8	7.1	9.7
Education	7.1	9.3	9.2	8.3

Wakefield's business base is dominated by industries that, while providing stable employment, are less likely to require or reward higher-level skills. Consequently, Wakefield's industrial composition reflects an occupational profile that is more operational and production-oriented, with a lower emphasis on knowledge-intensive roles compared to the national average. In 2024, 9% of employees in Wakefield were engaged in skilled trades, exceeding the regional and national figures of 7% and 6%, respectively. Professional occupations comprised approximately 23% of Wakefield's workforce, which is slightly below the figure of 27% at both the regional and national levels.

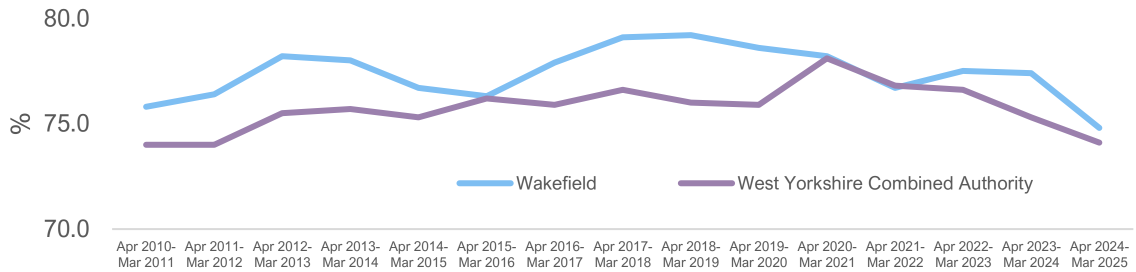
Figure 7. Occupational Employment 2024/25



Wakefield's Economic Equilibrium

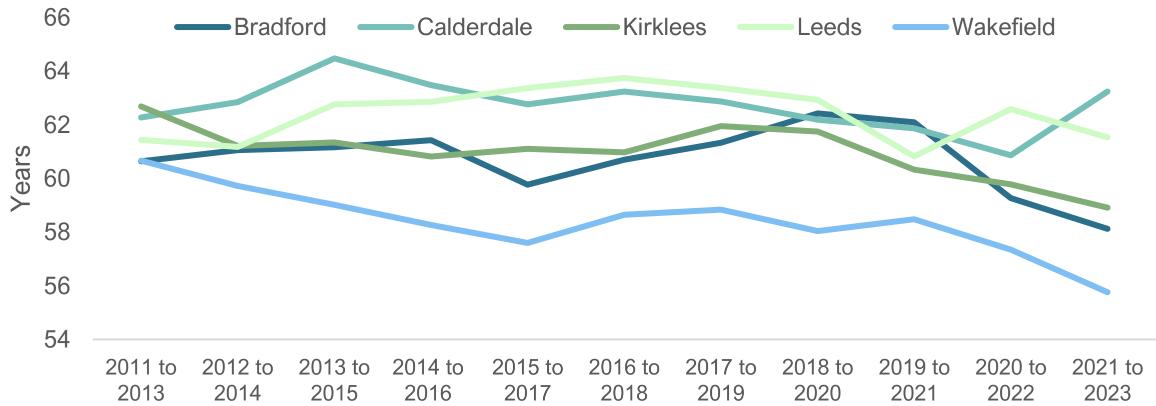
Wakefield's labour market is marked by two contradictory conditions; while economic activity rates are relatively high and unemployment is low, the area faces persistent challenges in skills attainment and progression. In 2024, the proportion of residents holding higher-level qualifications at RQF4+ (equivalent to Higher National Certificate qualifications and above) is just 38%, nearly 9% below national average and the lowest in West Yorkshire. At RFQ3+ level (A-Level and T-Level equivalent) Wakefield also ranks last among its peers, with only 57% of residents qualified at this level. Participation in further education is also the lowest in the region, with just 4,960 participants per 100,000 people, compared to a West Yorkshire average of 5,426 participants. (ONS APS, 2025).

Figure 8. Economic Activity Rate (Ages 16-64) (%, taken from ONS APS)



This equilibrium has serious implications for local residents. Over the past decade, healthy life expectancy has declined by approximately three years. Nationwide research from the Health Foundation has found a strong inverse relationship between income and health, where 43.2% of people on the lowest incomes report less than good health, compared with 31.3% on middle incomes, and 15.2% on the highest incomes. This is because lower income households often have limited access to quality treatments, nutritious food, and safe housing, while increased exposure to stress and health risks.

Figure 9. Female Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth, Wakefield within West Yorkshire

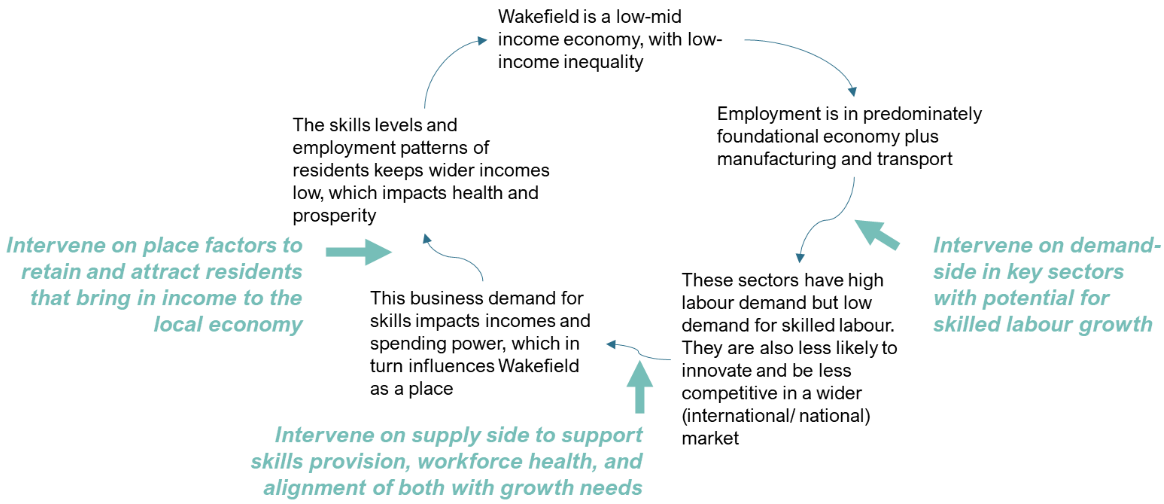


Given Wakefield's lower median income levels, this correlation may partially account for the area's pronounced health disparities; individuals born in Wakefield today have an average healthy life expectancy that is six years shorter than both the national average and that of residents born in Leeds. Local income growth is therefore both an economic and social imperative if outcomes are to be improved.

Towards Strategic Opportunities

Wakefield's economic equilibrium, market by stable employment yet constrained by low skills levels and modest growth, is not an anomaly but a familiar pattern among for former industrial areas that have transitioned their economies in light of national and global forces. This stability, while offering resilience, has also entrenched structural limitations that restrict innovation, wage progression, and upward mobility. The evidence presented in this plan, reinforced by the Wakefield Futures report, underscores that without decisive intervention, the district risks perpetuating a cycle of low-value employment and limited prosperity.

Figure 10. Breaking out of Wakefield's low-skill, low-GVA equilibrium



Understanding this equilibrium is critical because it reveals where strategic levers can be applied most effectively. By concentrating efforts on areas where the Council and its partners have the most influence, Wakefield can drive growth on both the supply and demand sides of the local economy, thereby altering current trends and facilitating the development of a more dynamic and inclusive economic environment. Five priorities stand out as pivotal to intercepting the current equilibrium and driving transformation.

1. Capitalising on the opportunity of Wakefield's economic geography by delivering more housing in the well-connected urban centres of Wakefield
2. Support the growth of innovative, future-facing Advanced Manufacturing specialisms and firms within the broader Manufacturing sector
3. Leverage strong Logistics demand into higher value activities, improved distribution modes and innovative indigenous firms
4. Integrate the growing Creative sector within Wakefield's urban centres
5. Mobilize national and regional funding streams to take action on workforce development, healthy work and workforce skills

These are explored in depth in the following section of this plan.

3 Strategic Opportunities

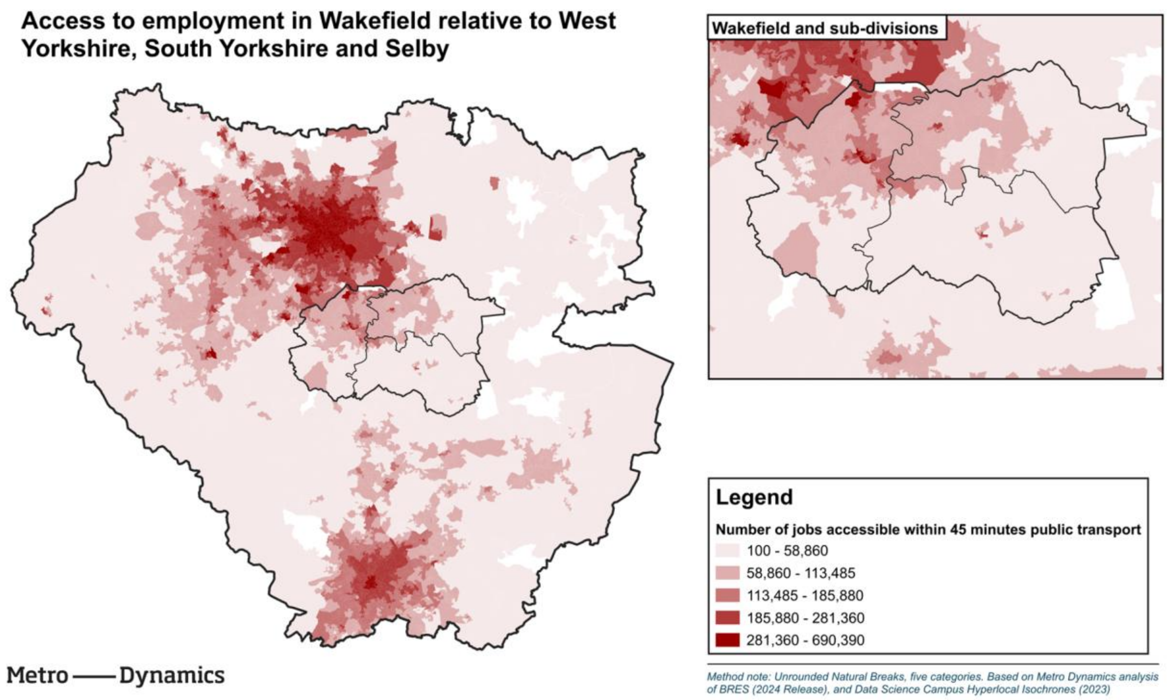
1: Deliver more housing in our well-connected urban centres

Objective: Concentrate higher-density, mixed-use, transit-oriented development in Wakefield's most connected city centre and urban areas to unlock inclusive, higher-wage growth by strengthening links to regional labour markets and anchor spend on high streets

Wakefield has the potential to leverage its strong connectivity to stimulate local income growth by directing development toward higher-density, mixed-use neighbourhoods within the most accessible areas of the city centre. The city benefits from robust rail and public transport links, providing convenient access to major employment centres, particularly Leeds, as well as Sheffield, Manchester, and London. This connectivity presents opportunities for Wakefield residents to engage with broader labour markets, especially the sizable Leeds market, and secure employment in high GVA and higher wage sectors.

However, this potential is not being fully realized; current productivity and household income data indicate that economic gains within West Yorkshire are concentrated in the more affluent suburbs of Leeds, even though Wakefield maintains excellent access to the region's primary economic hub. Facilitating more diverse living options in transit-rich neighbourhoods and better integration with regional labour markets would enable increased earnings to circulate through Wakefield's high streets and foundational economy. Enhanced demand, together with improved placemaking initiatives, could further transform the city centre into an attractive location for living, working, and leisure, while also supporting the district's transition away from a low-skills, low-GVA equilibrium by offering urban housing to professionals and commuting families.

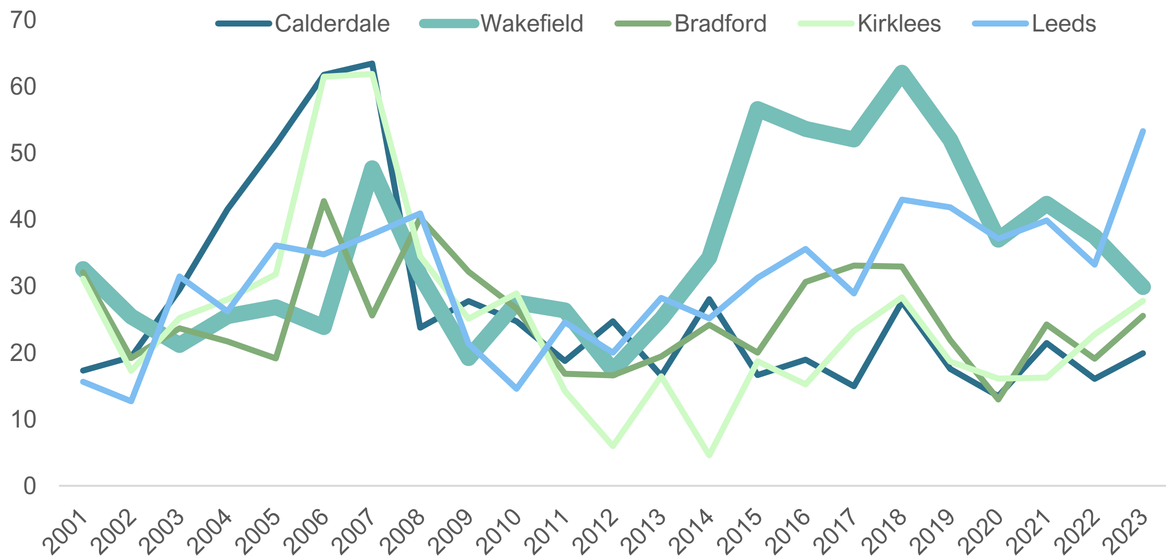
Figure 11. **Access to employment in Wakefield relative to West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire**



At present, this connectivity is under-leveraged. Accessibility analysis shows Wakefield city centre, particularly the areas surrounding Westgate station, has the highest access to employment within the district; Normanton and Castleford also exhibit relatively strong job access into the wider West Yorkshire area. Yet immediate city-centre population density is comparatively low; the land most favoured by transport is not being used for transport-complementary activities such as compact housing, active ground floors, local amenities and flexible workspace. Repurposing these sites for urban living would align land use with infrastructure investment, increase footfall, and anchor spend locally.

This proposition builds on strong delivery capabilities. Over the last decade Wakefield has outperformed much of West Yorkshire on housing delivery, with major brownfield conversions supporting volume and pace. Affordability remains comparatively favourable relative to local incomes, making the prospect of live in Wakefield, but working in Leeds model both realistic, resilient and rewarding.

Figure 12. **Net additional dwellings per 10,000 residents per year (MHCLG, 2025)**



Adding to that proven delivery track record towards city-centre and station-area intensification would maintain affordability while unlocking commuter convenience. Shifting the dwelling mix towards a greater proportion of flats and apartments, alongside family-sized homes, could yield significant benefits for Wakefield. Ensuring development reflects a diverse mix of housing types would help to address the district's current scarcity of flats and increase the attraction and retention Wakefield young people. By catering to a more diverse population, Wakefield stands to enhance vibrancy in its urban areas, support local businesses, and foster a more dynamic, inclusive community.

Translating priorities into projects: Flagship projects and principles

We are committed to translating these delivery priorities into practical projects that deliver positive outcomes for residents in the medium-term. A selection of key project and opportunities that have emerged during the writing of this plan are as listed below, with a mixture of current and emerging project opportunities.

Figure 13. Select projects and commitments to deliver against this strategic priority

Project Name	Project Summary
Wakefield City Centre Masterplan/Muse Regeneration Partnership	*(Currently underway) A coordinated regeneration programme for Wakefield's city centre, focused on repositioning the centre as place to live-work-shop, bringing forward new homes, a stronger leisure/culture offer, greener public spaces, and better connections between key areas and stations.*
Castleford Town Centre Masterplan	*(Currently underway) A regeneration programme repositioning Castleford town centre as a mixed-use destination; shifting beyond a retail-only offer toward town-centre living, culture/leisure, repurposed heritage buildings, and higher-quality streets and spaces, with stronger links to the riverside.*
Wakefield Retail Park Regeneration	*(Emerging) Wakefield Retail Park presents a mixed-use regeneration opportunity on the edge of the City Centre boundary, within walking distance of Wakefield Kirkgate station, and consolidated Council-led ownership. This could repurpose current retail-led space with excellent basis connectivity, and link the Hepworth gallery with the urban core of the city.*

Outcomes and measures of success

Delivering the above projects and furthering the relevant strategic priority would result in positive movement in the following outcomes;

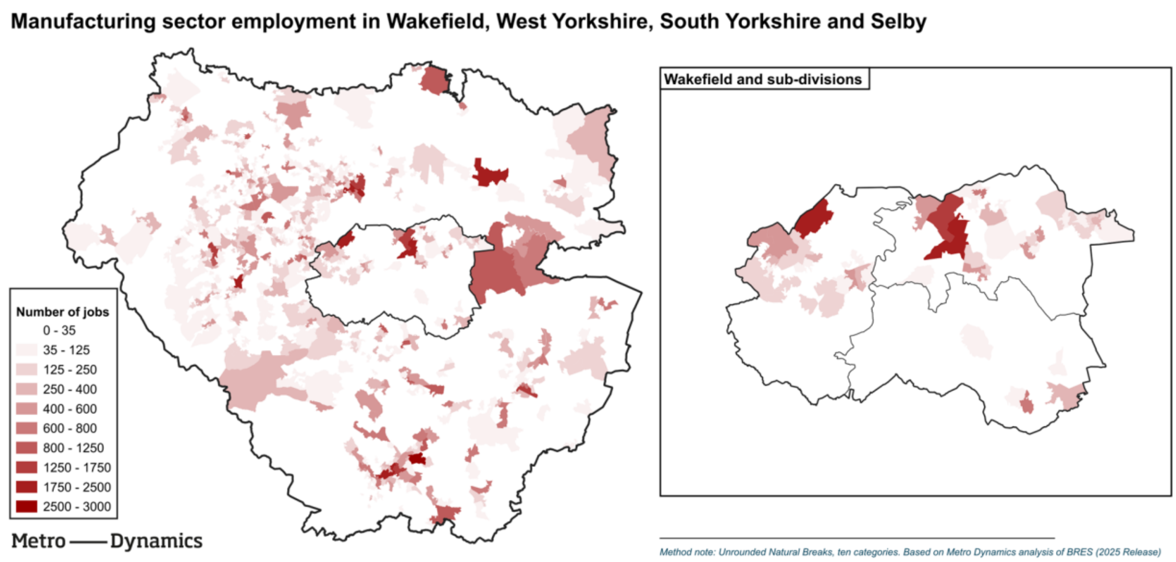
- **Connected urban living** – Mixed-use neighbourhoods around Westgate, Kirkgate and other transit hubs, with active ground floors and everyday amenities
- **Inclusive earnings uplift** – More residents accessing higher-wage employment across the wider labour market, with rising incomes circulating on Wakefield's high streets
- **City-centre vitality** – A lively, safe and attractive centre where footfall, dwell time and leisure activity grow, supporting local businesses
- **Housing choice and affordability** – A balanced mix of flats and family homes that keeps living in Wakefield accessible and appealing to young people and commuting families

2. Support the growth of innovative, future-facing Advanced Manufacturing specialisms within the broader Manufacturing sector

Objective – Transform Wakefield's manufacturing sector into a high-productivity, innovation-driven engine of growth by diversifying into advanced manufacturing to create high-quality, higher-wage jobs and secure long-term competitiveness, while supporting the modernisation of traditional industries through productivity and efficiency improvements and digitalisation

Manufacturing remains a cornerstone of Wakefield's economy, accounting for 11.6% of total employment and 8.5% of all businesses in the district. Its strength is rooted in West Yorkshire's historic industrial base and reinforced by Wakefield's excellent motorway connectivity and access to a broad labour market. The sector is 1.5 times more specialized than the national average, underscoring its importance as a driver of jobs and economic output compared to other parts of England. Major firms such as Haribo, Forza Foods, Card Factory, and Stölzel Flaconnage highlight Wakefield's distinctive manufacturing specialisms in food and drink, textiles, glass, and metals.

Figure 14. Manufacturing employment in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire

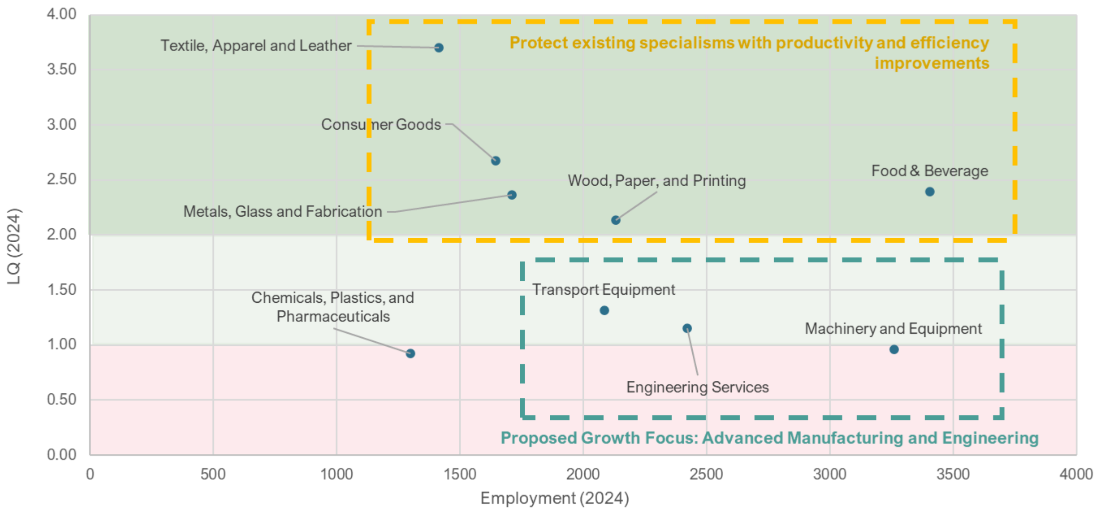


However, whilst Manufacturing is critical to Wakefield's economy the sector has seen signs of stagnation and areas of decline. Total employment increased by 2% but overall sectoral output declined by -2.7% leading to a -4.6% decline in overall productivity. This productivity decline has meant that Wakefield now has the least productive manufacturing workers in the whole of West Yorkshire, with each worker producing £1,432 in value less than Bradford and £15,258 less than Kirklees annually. Lower productivity translates directly into lower average wages for workers because of the reduced value generated per hour worked, limiting employers' ability to offer competitive pay. This wage gap not only affects household incomes but also undermines the attractiveness of manufacturing careers in the region, making it harder to retain skilled labour and invest in innovation. Over time, this dynamic risks creating a cycle of underinvestment and declining competitiveness, further widening the gap between Wakefield and other West Yorkshire districts.

The productivity differential is partially attributable to Wakefield's industrial composition. Dominant sub-sectors, food and drink, textiles, glass, and metals, are typified by lower technological intensity, higher labour-to-capital ratios, and product portfolios concentrated in low-value, high-volume outputs. These structural features, combined with tight cost-price margins, render firms acutely sensitive to exogenous shocks such as energy price volatility, inflationary pressures, and global competitive dynamics. Regulatory changes – such as national recycling regulations – also play a significant role for local business. Stakeholder engagement corroborates that productivity enhancements increasingly derive from process innovation, automation, and digitalization, mechanisms that elevate output, expand profit margins, and mitigate exposure to input cost fluctuations.

Strategic diversification toward higher-value, capital-intensive manufacturing activities, such as industrial machinery, transport-related production, and electronics, is imperative because these sectors offer the greatest potential to create innovative high-quality jobs with significantly higher wages and productivity. To catalyse this transition, local and regional policy should focus on cluster development, targeted R&D incentives, and partnerships between local firms, universities, and technology providers to foster innovation ecosystems.

Figure 15. Manufacturing sub-sector specialisations



Policy interventions should therefore support the accelerated adoption of productivity improvements, energy efficiency, digitalization, and more advanced manufacturing technologies within Wakefield's established specialisms to safeguard employment, enhance resilience, and improve productivity. This requires coordinated investment in capital equipment, workforce upskilling, and technology diffusion programmes to ensure that firms, particularly SMEs, can integrate robotics, data-driven process optimisation, and smart manufacturing systems into their operations. Such measures will not only raise output per worker but also strengthen supply chain efficiency and reduce vulnerability to cost shocks, positioning traditional sub-sectors for sustainable competitiveness.

Translating priorities into projects: Flagship projects and principles

We are committed to translating these delivery priorities into practical projects that deliver positive outcomes for residents in the medium-term. A selection of key project and opportunities that have emerged during the writing of this plan are as listed below, with a mixture of current and emerging project opportunities.

Figure 16. Select projects and commitments to deliver against this strategic priority

Project Name	Project Summary
Expansion of existing anchor manufacturing firms	*(Currently underway) Our current manufacturing anchor employers have scope and appetite for expansion, in places like Castleford and Wakefield Industrial Estate. Wakefield will support their growth as much as market demand will allow, using available levers around planning, land, and grid capacity.*
Supporting local energy production to reduce grid burdens	*(Emerging) We will commit to exploring innovative approaches to reducing the energy burden on the local grid, which is a choke point for future growth in this and in other energy-intensive sectors. Many local firms are exploring routes to local production – through solar, wind, or potentially more innovative routes around energy-to-waste and hydrogen – which would reduce grid burdens and insulate business from cost pressures.*
Industrial Automation Research Centre	*(Emerging) We has genuinely world-leading automated processes with some major firms in the region, and a strong need to increase productivity to maintain competitiveness. This preliminary project concept will explore the opportunity of automation within the local economy.*
Wakefield Futures Centre	*(Emerging) The Wakefield Futures Centre is a proposed output of the Wakefield Futures report. We will use the Wakefield Futures Centre as a vehicle to address the cross-cutting engineering and process improvement skill shortages which stand as a current choke point for growth in this and other sectors, and in doing so contributing to high value, high skill work.*

Outcomes and measures of success

Delivering the above projects and furthering the relevant strategic priority would result in positive movement in the following outcomes;

- **Improved Productivity** – Increase in output per worker across Wakefield's manufacturing sector
- **Higher Wage Levels** – Growth in average wages in manufacturing jobs, narrowing the gap with regional and national benchmarks
- **Job Quality and Quantity** – Creation of new high-skill, high-wage roles in advanced manufacturing sub-sectors
- **Technology Adoption** – Widespread integration of automation, robotics, and digital production systems in traditional industries
- **Sector Diversification** – Expansion into advanced manufacturing industries such as industrial machinery, transport-related production and electronics
- **Innovation Ecosystem Development** – Stronger partnerships between local firms, universities and technology providers driving knowledge transfer

3. Leverage Logistics demand into higher value jobs and productive local firms

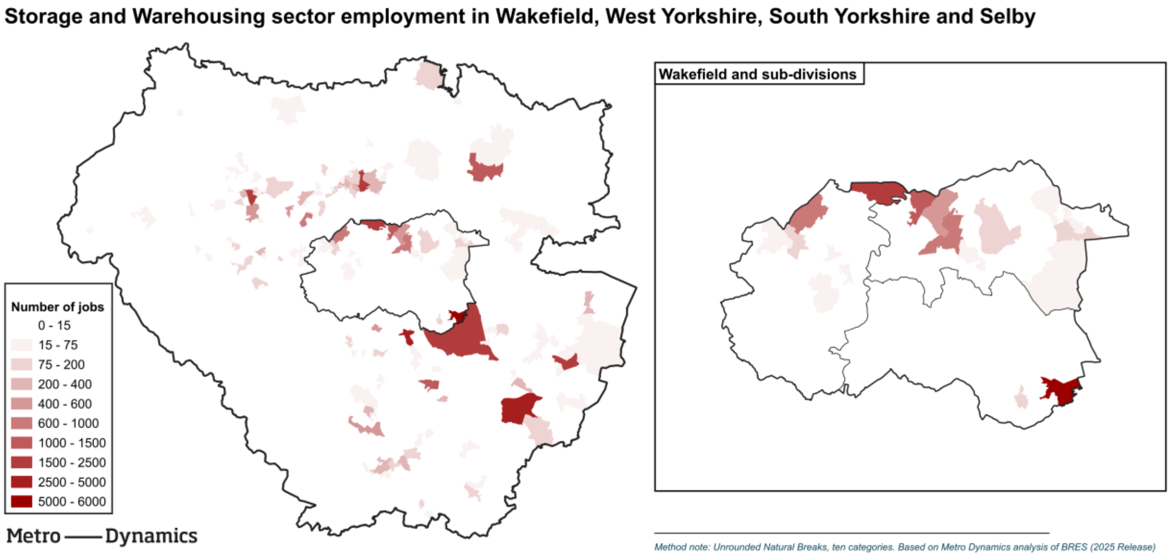
Objective – Increase the productivity of Wakefield's logistics sector by attracting higher-value business functions, such as headquarters and professional roles, while building on the district's strong connectivity and affordable land

The logistics sector is a fundamental pillar of Wakefield's economy, employing 21,230 people and ranking just behind health and social care in terms of workforce size. Over the period from 2018 to 2023, employment in logistics grew by 4.2%, reflecting the sector's resilience and ongoing expansion.

While logistics is not part of the Government's designated IS-8 list of priority sectors, it represents a real comparative advantage for Wakefield as a district, based on Wakefield's excellent road and rail-based connectivity. It is therefore necessary to review the opportunities to provide good jobs in Wakefield by pushing Logistics functions up the value chain.

This growth has been accompanied by persistently low vacancy and availability rates for logistics units, signalling sustained demand and a tight market for industrial space. The level of demand for logistics in Wakefield is comparable to that seen in the nationally significant "Golden Logistics Triangle" spanning the Midlands down to Milton Keynes, which is renowned for its concentration of distribution facilities.

Figure 17. Logistics employment in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Selby

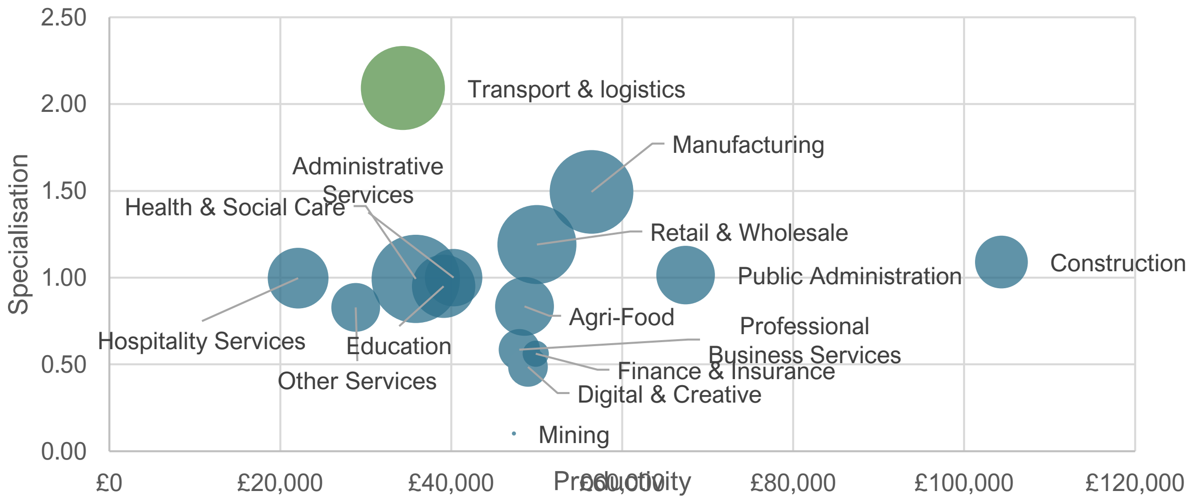


Several economic factors underpin Wakefield's attractiveness as a logistics hub. The district benefits from excellent national connectivity, with direct access to major motorways such as the M1 and M62, enabling efficient distribution across the UK. Wakefield's strong record of housing delivery over the past decade has resulted in high levels of affordability, making it easier for workers to live locally. This, combined with slightly lower-than-average commercial rents for industrial and office space, enhances the district's appeal to both employers and employees. These locational and cost advantages have attracted major firms, including

Amazon, Evri, Newcold, and Next, to establish significant operations in Wakefield, further driving sectoral growth.

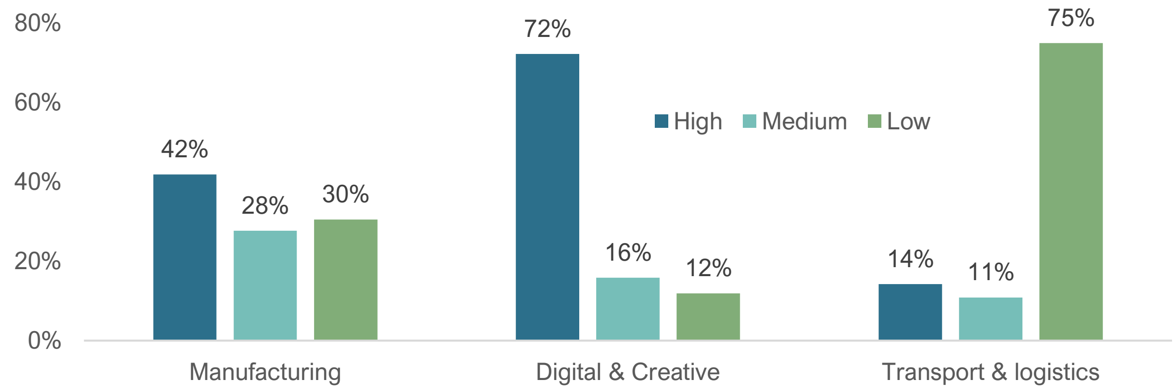
Despite its scale and specialization, the logistics sector in Wakefield is more than twice as concentrated as the national average, the sector's productivity remains below par. Workers in logistics generate an average of £34,338 in gross value added (GVA) per year, which is £20,963 less than the average for all sectors in Wakefield. This productivity gap is notable, especially when compared to other logistics hubs such as Milton Keynes and the Midlands, where higher productivity is often linked to a greater presence of skilled, professional, and administrative roles. In Wakefield, by contrast, the occupational structure of the logistics sector is dominated by low-skilled, operational roles such as warehouse operatives and drivers. This limits the sector's value-added per worker and constrains wage growth.

Figure 18. **Logistics sector productivity compared to local specialisation**



In other regions where logistics is a specialism, higher productivity is achieved through a more diverse occupational mix, including a larger share of managerial, professional, and office-based roles. These roles are often associated with the presence of national or regional headquarters and related business functions, which bring higher value-added activities into the local economy.

Figure 19. **Skill level of occupations within key Wakefield sectors**



For Wakefield, there is a clear opportunity to leverage its locational advantages and land supply to attract and enable higher-value logistics activities. By facilitating infrastructure development and planning approvals for headquarters and professional service functions, Wakefield can build on the success of firms like TK Maxx, which have combined warehousing with office-based operations. Pursuing this approach would diversify the sector's occupational structure, create more opportunities for career progression, and raise average productivity. Over time, this could also foster greater innovation within the sector, enhancing Wakefield's competitiveness as a logistics hub.

Translating priorities into projects: Flagship projects and principles

We are committed to translating these delivery priorities into practical projects that deliver positive outcomes for residents in the medium-term. A selection of key project and opportunities that have emerged during the writing of this plan are as listed below, with a mixture of current and emerging project opportunities.

Figure 20. Select projects and commitments to deliver against this strategic priority

Project Name	Project Summary
Support expansion of firms with WY or UK operations HQ potential	*(Ongoing) Our excellent road connectivity is an opportunity to attract higher-value logistics activities. One route to doing so is to continue supporting the expansion of current logistics firms in clusters like Newmarket Ln, who are best placed to maximise head office and professional work, which in turn will broaden the occupational profile associated with the sector.*
Industrial Automation Research Centre	*(Emerging) Wakefield has genuinely world-leading automated processes with some major firms in the region, and a strong need to increase productivity to maintain competitiveness. This preliminary project concept will explore the opportunity of automation within the local economy.*
Wakefield Futures Centre	*(Emerging) The Wakefield Futures Centre is a proposed output of the Wakefield Futures report. We will use the Wakefield Futures Centre as a vehicle to address the cross-cutting engineering and process improvement skill shortages which stand as a current choke point for growth in this and other sectors, and in doing so contributing to high value, high skill work.*

Outcomes and measures of success

Delivering the above projects and furthering the relevant strategic priority would result in positive movement in the following outcomes;

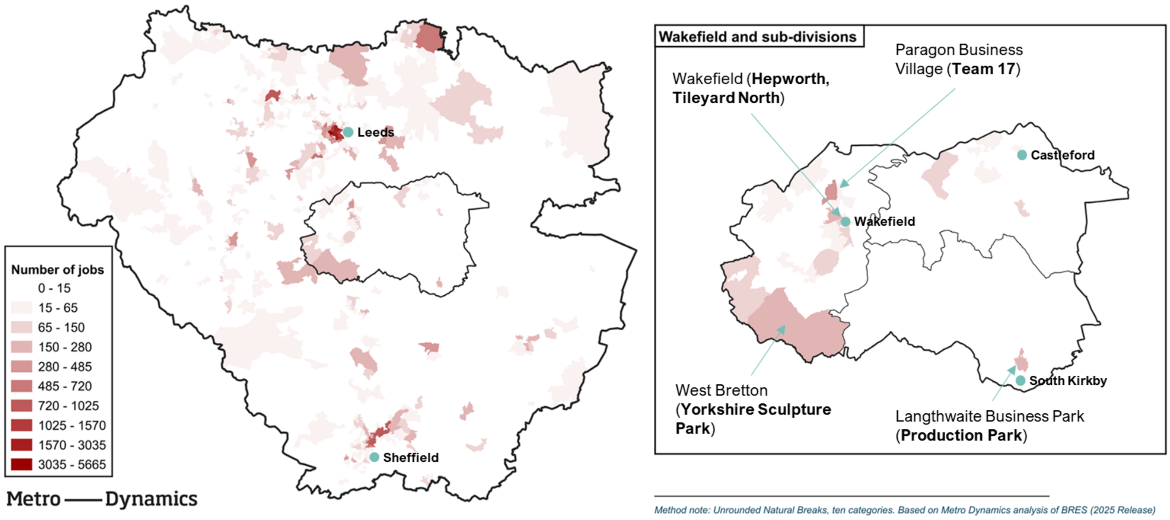
- **Business diversification** – more logistics firms establish headquarters or professional service functions in Wakefield
- **Career progression** – Improved opportunities for advancement within the sector
- **Innovation** – increased adoption of new technologies and business practices
- **More high-value roles** – Growth in the number and share of managerial, professional, and office-based jobs within logistics

4. Integrate the growing local Creative sector into the heart of Wakefield's urban centres

Objective – To strengthen Wakefield's creative and digital sector by fostering urban integration and clustering of its key assets, capitalising on the sector's positive spillover benefits for place and regeneration potential

Wakefield's Creative and Digital sector is a small, but increasingly distinctive for its concentration of highly-skilled professionals. Unlike Manufacturing and Transport & Logistics, productivity in the Creative and Digital sector has increased in recent years, driven by output growth and efficiencies. Creative activity specifically is particularly concentrated centered around a handful of key assets: the Production Park, Tileyard North, WX, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, and Hepworth.

Creative sector employment in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Selby



Method note: Unrounded Natural Breaks, ten categories. Based on Metro Dynamics analysis of BRES (2025 Release)

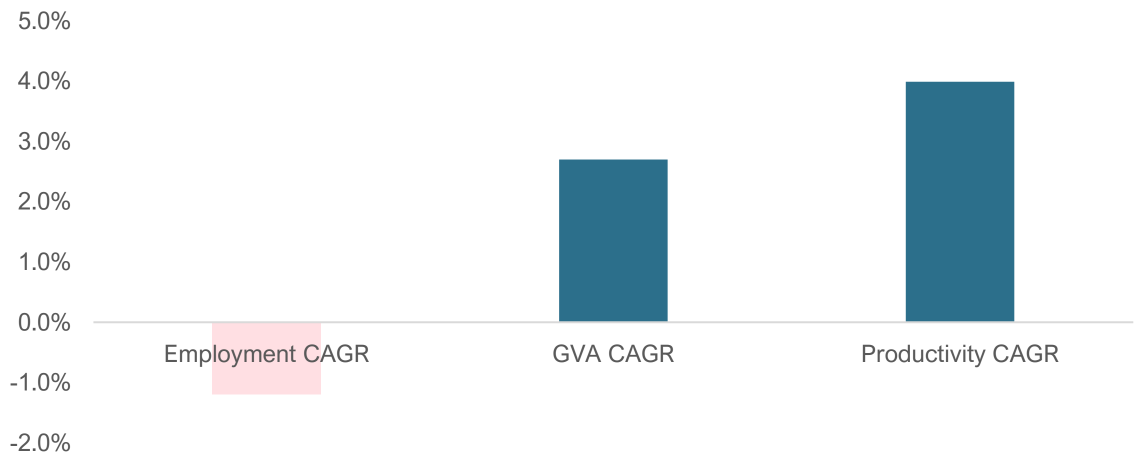
Located in South Kirkby, Production Park is a fast-growing creative industries campus, focused on film, TV and corporate projects, that has tripled its studio capacity over the past decade and is currently planning further expansion. Wakefield Council has played and continues to play a critical role in growing Production Park, especially through the 2022 XPLOR programme, by leading the successful European funding bid and managing compliance, which enabled the creation of a dedicated R&D hub on site. Production Park has recently launched CoStar Live Labs, which is a collaborative research and innovation initiative with the University of York focused on advancing immersive and interactive technologies for the creative industries.

There are also specific funding opportunities (these are reviewed in more depth in the companion Sector Deep Dive for this work). Wakefield Council has a track record of supporting wider funding attraction to the area through £4.38m from the Cultural Development Fund in 2019, but there are now a range of opportunities to align with national funding and support mechanisms in the wake of the governments identification of Creative Industries and Digital Technologies as part of the IS-8, the UKRI Creative Industries Strategy and the £1.5bn Arts Everywhere Fund package announced in January 2026. One Creative North and the Creative Places Growth Fund offer regional opportunities, and Creative Wakefield can continue to play an influential role on the ground locally in providing the support needed to connect individuals across the creative and digital space with each other and the necessary funding.

While Wakefield boasts strong and dynamic creative assets, these resources are geographically dispersed across the district. For example, Production Park is located at the southern edge of the district, and Yorkshire Sculpture Park is approximately one hour from the city centre by public transport. Research from Creative Industries PEC shows that creative enterprises typically form concentrated clusters within urban areas. These micro-clusters allow businesses to benefit from proximity to other creative firms, skilled professionals, and essential infrastructure, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Currently, although there is creative activity present in Wakefield's urban centre through Tileyard North and the Hepworth and recent investment into assets such as WX have been successful in attracting Arts Council funded activity to the centre, the sector could benefit further from clustering dynamics. This presents an opportunity to integrate the emerging creative sector into the district's urban fabric by strategically releasing and repurposing urban sites and cultivating an environment that supports creative start-ups and scale-ups.

Figure 21. **Creative & Digital productivity dynamics (2018-2023)**



Physically and functionally connecting urban creative micro-clusters between Production Park, the city centre, and existing cultural institutions could amplify clustering effects, attract complementary creative and knowledge-intensive firms, and enhance Wakefield's appeal as a place to live and work. Previous research commissioned by the Arts Council has outlined how these efforts would also generate positive spillover effects as creative and cultural activity plays a direct role in placemaking and regeneration by acting as an anchor within city centre clusters, improving the attractiveness, vibrancy and economic performance of places. Clear examples of this have been seen in Salford with the development of The Lowry driving residential and business growth with the ultimate opening of Media City, attracting large organisations such as the BBC and ITV, and with Tate in Liverpool acting as a catalyst for the regeneration of the Albert Dock area. We have heard through engagement that cultural developments such as WX have contributed to increased footfall in the centre, again indicating the importance of bringing creative and cultural activity into the urban areas.

Translating priorities into projects: Flagship projects and principles

We are committed to translating these delivery priorities into practical projects that deliver positive outcomes for residents in the medium-term. A selection of key project and opportunities that have emerged during the writing of this plan are as listed below, with a mixture of current and emerging project opportunities.

Figure 22. Select projects and commitments to deliver against this strategic priority

Project Name	Project Summary
Support integration of key creative sector assets with urban centres	*(Ongoing) Wakefield has key creative sector assets with expansion plans; we will continue to support their expansion, in particular where they have the potential to better integrate their activities with key urban centres (eg Wakefield, South Kirkby), and influencing devolved funding resources (eg CRSTs) to improve those connections.*
Wakefield Futures Centre [To confirm post Chris Husbands input]	*(Emerging) The Wakefield Futures Centre is a proposed output of the Wakefield Futures report (see more at the end). We will use the Wakefield Futures Centre as a vehicle to address the cross-cutting engineering and process improvement skill shortages which stand as a current choke point for growth in this and other sectors, and in doing so contributing to high value, high skill work.*

Outcomes and measures of success

Delivering the above projects and furthering the relevant strategic priority would result in positive movement in the following outcomes;

- **Integrated creative clusters** – established physical and functional connectives between Production Park, the city centre, and cultural institutions
- **Growth of creative start-ups and scale-ups** – increased number of creative and digital businesses operating within Wakefield’s urban core
- **Enhanced collaboration and innovation** – stronger partnerships between creative firms, universities and research hubs
- **Culture and economic spillover** – increased cultural vibrancy and placemaking benefits contributing to local economic growth

5. Mobilise investment and partnerships to build a skilled, healthy workforce for the future

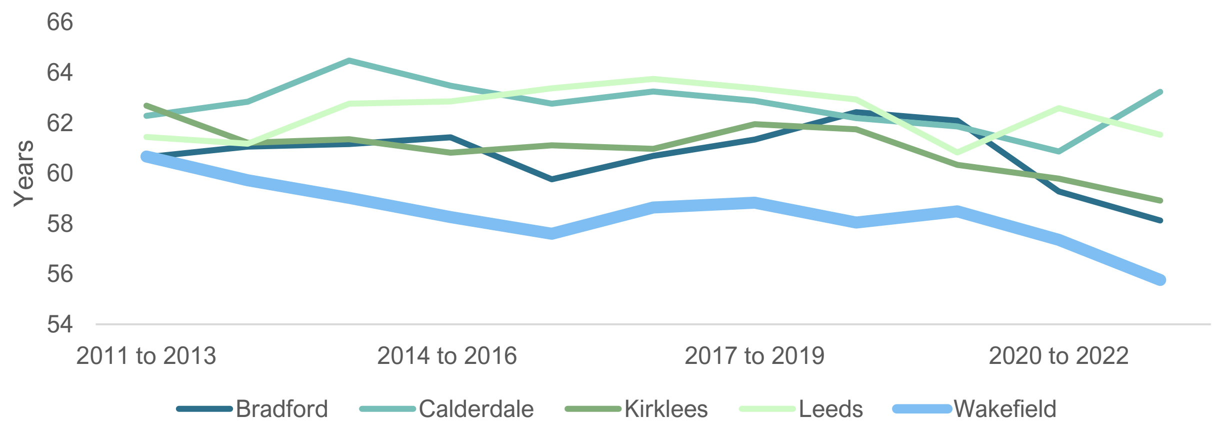
Objective: Create and maintain improved health among the working age population, through supporting people in work and out of the labour market, by combining economic development and health levers to increase incomes, good jobs, access to services, and a healthier lived environment.

The low-skill low-productivity equilibrium in Wakefield both indicates underlying issues and reinforces impact on the quality of residents' lives. Beyond increasing GVA output, productivity, and incomes, this plan aims to align actions around prosperity and good health for individuals and communities in Wakefield.

By examining both labour market structure and population health, we see how residents' wellbeing affects economic potential, and in turn, how economic performance shapes people's lives. Wakefield's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, along with public health initiatives and collaborative efforts with the West Yorkshire ICB, focus on identifying specific health challenges within Wakefield's communities, such as reducing preventable hospital admissions and improving children's health. This discussion highlights the key issues that most directly relate to the economy and workforce.

Wakefield faces significant challenges with healthy life expectancy, which is negatively affected by various long-term factors such as income levels, job quality and stability, decent housing, service accessibility, and aspects of the environment like air and food quality. Among all local authority areas in West Yorkshire, Wakefield has the lowest healthy life expectancy and the highest rates of obesity, both of which are higher than the regional and national averages.

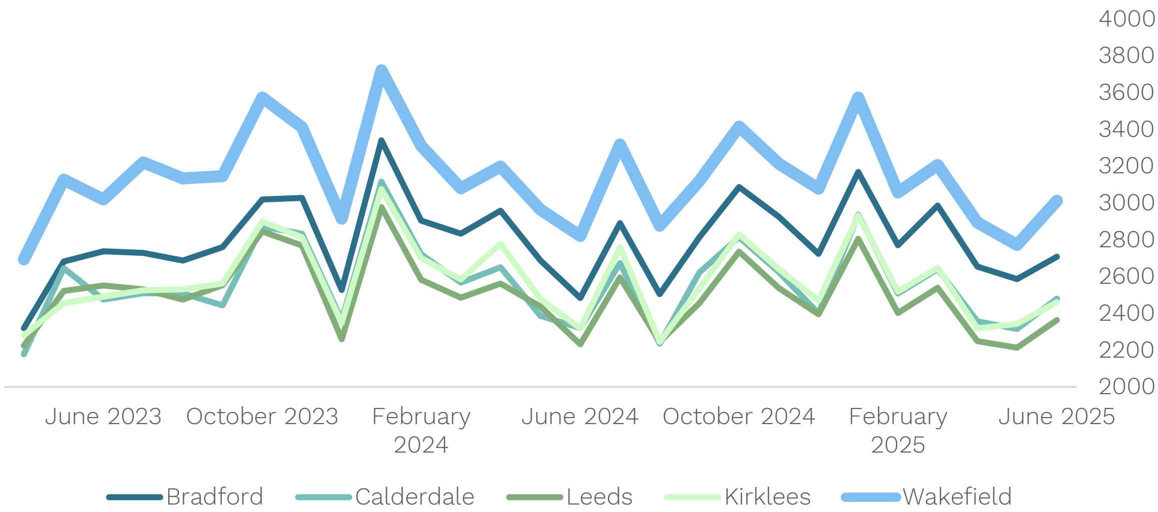
Figure 23. Female Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth



Data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) indicates a direct correlation between low income and poor health outcomes. Wakefield's reduced life expectancy is consistent with national trends attributed to income deprivation, highlighting absolute deprivation as a primary factor. The median annual income in Wakefield falls below both the England and Yorkshire and The Humber averages. Additionally, Wakefield demonstrates the narrowest income disparity between its highest and lowest earners, with overall income distribution slightly lower than the regional average.

Wakefield's economy is heavily centred on manufacturing, warehousing, and other manual sectors, with far fewer jobs in professional services. This occupational mix is linked to higher levels of work-related ill health, reflected in Wakefield consistently having the highest rate of GP-issued fit notes in the region.

Figure 24. Number of fit notes per 100k GP Practice Population of 18 to 65 year olds



Although employment is strong and unemployment has fallen to 2.5%, the district still faces lower average incomes. Economic activity stands at 75%, slightly below national levels, and while long-term sickness is less dominant than regional, it is still rising. The combination of historically weaker employment, lower wages, and exposure to physically demanding occupations highlights the importance of supporting good health as a core component of Wakefield's economic development approach.

Wakefield's Health and Wellbeing Strategy prioritises targeted prevention, from reducing tobacco use to early-years health support through healthcare, children's services and education. Alongside this, the ICB's Health and Work Strategy and the Get West Yorkshire Working plan focus on more integrated approaches to tackling economic inactivity, bringing together the Combined Authority, local authorities, DWP, Jobcentre Plus and the ICB.

Wakefield also operates its own practical programmes that directly address the district's interlinked health and employment challenges. STEP-UP, the council's flagship employment and skills service, provides tailored support that improves residents' confidence, wellbeing and financial stability, with robust evidence of reduced anxiety, improved resilience, and better long-term employment outcomes. Complementing this, the Wakefield Workplace Health & Wellbeing Charter supports employers to create healthier, safer and more supportive working environments, offering a structured framework for improving physical and mental health at work.

The implementation of Wakefield's economic plan will join up these local authority, NHS and education-led approaches with a coherent *health in all policies* framework, ensuring that every economic lever, from inward investment to skills, transport, planning and business support, contributes to better health outcomes. By mobilising investment, aligning programmes such as STEP UP and the Workplace Health & Wellbeing Charter, and deepening partnerships with the ICB, employers, and regional agencies, Wakefield can directly influence the conditions that shape people's health and capacity to work. This integrated approach will help break the district's low-skill, low-productivity cycle by building a workforce that is not only better trained, but also healthier, more resilient and able to participate fully in a growing economy. In doing so, Wakefield positions improved health not as a by-product of economic success, but as a central driver of productivity, prosperity, and long-term economic renewal.

Translating priorities into projects: Flagship projects and principles

We are committed to translating these delivery priorities into practical projects that deliver positive outcomes for residents in the medium-term. A selection of key project and opportunities that have emerged during the writing of this plan are as listed below, with a mixture of current and emerging project opportunities.

Figure 25. Select projects and commitments to deliver against this strategic priority

Project Name	Project Summary
Employment support	*(Ongoing) Wakefield will continue delivery of core employment support programmes including Stepup and the Economic Accelerator, working with West Yorkshire partners to more closely integrate targeted health provision into employment support programmes, spanning existing provision and future devolved funding and levers.*
Occupational health in the workforce	*(Emerging) Wakefield will work to bolster engagement with employers on supporting occupational health provision and primary health issues most prevalent in core sectors and occupations, tailoring for specific health issues, SMEs, and joining up with the VCSE sector and wider public services. This could also include alignment of Wakefield's workplace and schools wellbeing charter with West Yorkshire,*
Neighbourhood health approaches	*(Emerging) Trial neighbourhood approaches with care services and the NHS, targeting specific cohorts with severe conditions, and strengthening access to primary and community care closer to home and work, linking to employers to bridge occupational health for the working age population.*

Outcomes and measures of success

Delivering the above projects and furthering the relevant strategic priority would result in positive movement in the following outcomes;

- **Higher wage levels** – Growth in average wages in manufacturing jobs, narrowing the gap with regional and national benchmarks
- **Job quality and quantity** – Creation of new high-skill, high-wage roles in advanced manufacturing sub-sectors
- **Healthier lived environment** – clean air, healthy and affordable food choices available, decent quality and affordable housing,
- **Reduced sick leave levels among the working population** – relative to the high current levels visible in the district's health outcomes

4 Delivering the Economic Growth Plan

Delivering positive change in Wakefield

With the publication of this Economic Growth Plan, Wakefield will now move forward to starting the process of economic growth and change.

The Strategic Priorities outlined in the prior section are not intended to provide a rigid delivery plan for Wakefield, nor will they preclude capitalising on opportunities that may arise outside of the five priorities reviewed in this plan. As new funding resources become available, they should be aligned with the priorities within this plan. Over the long-term, this will drive economic change within the district, increasing local incomes and moving demand towards high-skill, high-value work.

The role of the Wakefield Futures Centre in driving change in Wakefield's economy

The Wakefield Futures Centre will be the primary vehicle for Wakefield Council to drive positive change in the local economy, in line with the recommendations of the Wakefield Futures Report. Based on the analysis summarised here and the engagement conducted in the drafting of this Economic Growth Plan, the Wakefield Futures Centre may focus on addressing the cross-cutting process and engineering skill shortages that hold back the growth of the district's most complex, specialised and high-value firms.

Wakefield Council will now look to secure funding and resource to progress the development of the Wakefield Futures Centre by working with regional partners.

Wakefield as a test-bed for new approaches

Wakefield will remain open to trialling new approaches within the district with regional and national partners. In particular public service reform, children's and young peoples services, are key opportunities to improve outcomes for Wakefield residents in line with the objectives of the wider Economic Wellbeing Strategy.

Wakefield will commit to exploring opportunities to work with national and regional partners to implement partnership approaches on a trial basis.

Monitoring success in Wakefield: GDHI as a key metric

Each of the five strategic priorities reviewed in this plan come with their own suggested metrics. However, against the overarching success of the plan, Gross Disposable Household Income (adjusted for the size of the working age population to account for an ageing population, which is a pressure Wakefield will face sooner than some other areas), will form the primary metric through which this plan is monitored and evaluated against.

This would not preclude review of other key indicative metrics which would suggest that progress is being made against the five strategic priorities. A full list of these metrics is include, but some key indicators are as below;

- Number of Wakefield residents with 45min commute access to regional economic centres in Leeds and Sheffield City Centre
- Advanced Manufacturing share within Manufacturing GVA share
- Logistics occupational composition of professional and managerial grades
- Creative sector employment; district wide and within urban centres
- Economic inactivity due to ill-health and youth employment rates

Progress within these metrics would demonstrate positive progress aligned to the theory of change of this Economic Growth Plan, and should in the longer term result in increases in household incomes.

Supporting economic change in Wakefield over the long-run

Economic change is a gradual process. Wakefield has already begun the process of economic transformation, weathering the post-industrial transition much more effectively than many other cities, and is now seeing benefits for local residents. It did so by achieving close to full employment and high levels of economic activity, and the breadth of this achievement should not. This will need to be maintained. However, simply adding additional jobs will not achieve aggregate productivity increases.

To further increase local incomes, a qualitative shift is now required. This is intended to push up local incomes, and to do so by moving economic activity in Wakefield further up existing value chains, while capitalising on the opportunities posed by regional growth. This plan sets out a route to doing so.

Annex I: Full list of projects identified

This Economic Growth Plan has identified a series of game-changing investment and delivery propositions which will form the basis of implementation of the strategic priorities involved in this work.

Project Name	Project Summary
Wakefield City Centre Masterplan/Muse Regeneration Partnership	*(Currently underway) A coordinated regeneration programme for Wakefield's city centre, focused on repositioning the centre as place to live-work-shop, bringing forward new homes, a stronger leisure/culture offer, greener public spaces, and better connections between key areas and stations.*
Castleford Town Centre Masterplan	*(Currently underway) A regeneration programme repositioning Castleford town centre as a mixed-use destination; shifting beyond a retail-only offer toward town-centre living, culture/leisure, repurposed heritage buildings, and higher-quality streets and spaces, with stronger links to the riverside.*
Wakefield Retail Park Regeneration	*(Emerging) Wakefield Retail Park presents a mixed-use regeneration opportunity on the edge of the City Centre boundary, within walking distance of Wakefield Kirkgate station, and consolidated Council-led ownership. This could repurpose current retail-led space with excellent basis connectivity, and link*
Expansion of existing anchor manufacturing firms	*(Currently underway) Wakefield's current manufacturing anchor employers have scope and appetite for expansion, in places like Castleford and Wakefield Industrial Estate. Wakefield will support their growth as much as market demand will allow, using available levers around planning, land, and grid capacity.*
Supporting local energy production to reduce grid burdens	*(Emerging) Wakefield will commit to exploring innovative approaches to reducing the energy burden on the local grid, which is a choke point for future growth in this and in other energy-intensive sectors. Many local firms are exploring routes to local production – through solar, wind, or potentially more innovative routes around energy-to-waste and hydrogen – which would reduce grid burdens and insulate business from cost pressures.*
Support expansion of firms with WY or UK operations HQ potential	*(Ongoing) Wakefield's excellent road connectivity is an opportunity to attract higher-value logistics activities. One route to doing so is to continue supporting the expansion of current logistics firms in clusters like Newmarket Ln, who are best placed to maximise head office and professional work, which in turn will broaden the occupational profile associated with the sector.*
Support integration of key creative sector	*(Ongoing) Wakefield has key creative sector assets with expansion plans; Wakefield Council will continue to support their expansion, in particular where they have the potential to better integrate their activities with key*

assets with urban centres	*urban centres (eg Wakefield, South Kirkby), and influencing devolved funding resources (eg CRSTs) to improve those connections.*
Wakefield Futures Centre	*(Emerging) The Wakefield Futures Centre is a proposed output of the Wakefield Futures report (see more at the end). Wakefield Council will use the Wakefield Futures Centre as a vehicle to address the cross-cutting engineering and process improvement skill shortages which stand as a current choke point for growth in this and other sectors, and in doing so contributing to high value, high skill work.*
Industrial Automation Research Centre	*(Emerging) Wakefield has genuinely world-leading automated processes with some major firms in the region, and a strong need to increase productivity to maintain competitiveness. This preliminary project concept will explore the opportunity of automation within the local economy.*
Employment support	*(Ongoing) Wakefield will continue delivery of core employment support programmes including Stepup and the Economic Accelerator, working with West Yorkshire partners to more closely integrate targeted health provision into employment support programmes, spanning existing provision and future devolved funding and levers.*
Occupational health in the workforce	*(Emerging) Wakefield will work to bolster engagement with employers on supporting occupational health provision and primary health issues most prevalent in core sectors and occupations, tailoring for specific health issues, SMEs, and joining up with the VCSE sector and wider public services. This could also include alignment of Wakefield's workplace and schools wellbeing charter with West Yorkshire,*
Neighbourhood health approaches	*(Emerging) Trial neighbourhood approaches with care services and the NHS, targeting specific cohorts with severe conditions, and strengthening access to primary and community care closer to home and work, linking to employers to bridge occupational health for the working age population.*

At Metro Dynamics, we **care** about places, our clients, and our colleagues.

We are an **independent** organisation, **curious** about our work, and **collaborative** in our approach. We strive to **make a difference** in all that we do.

3 Waterhouse Square

138 Holborn

London

EC1N 2SW

020 3865 3082

metrodynamics.co.uk

1 St Peter's Square

Manchester

M2 3DE

0161 883 3736

Metro —— Dynamics

wakefieldcouncil