

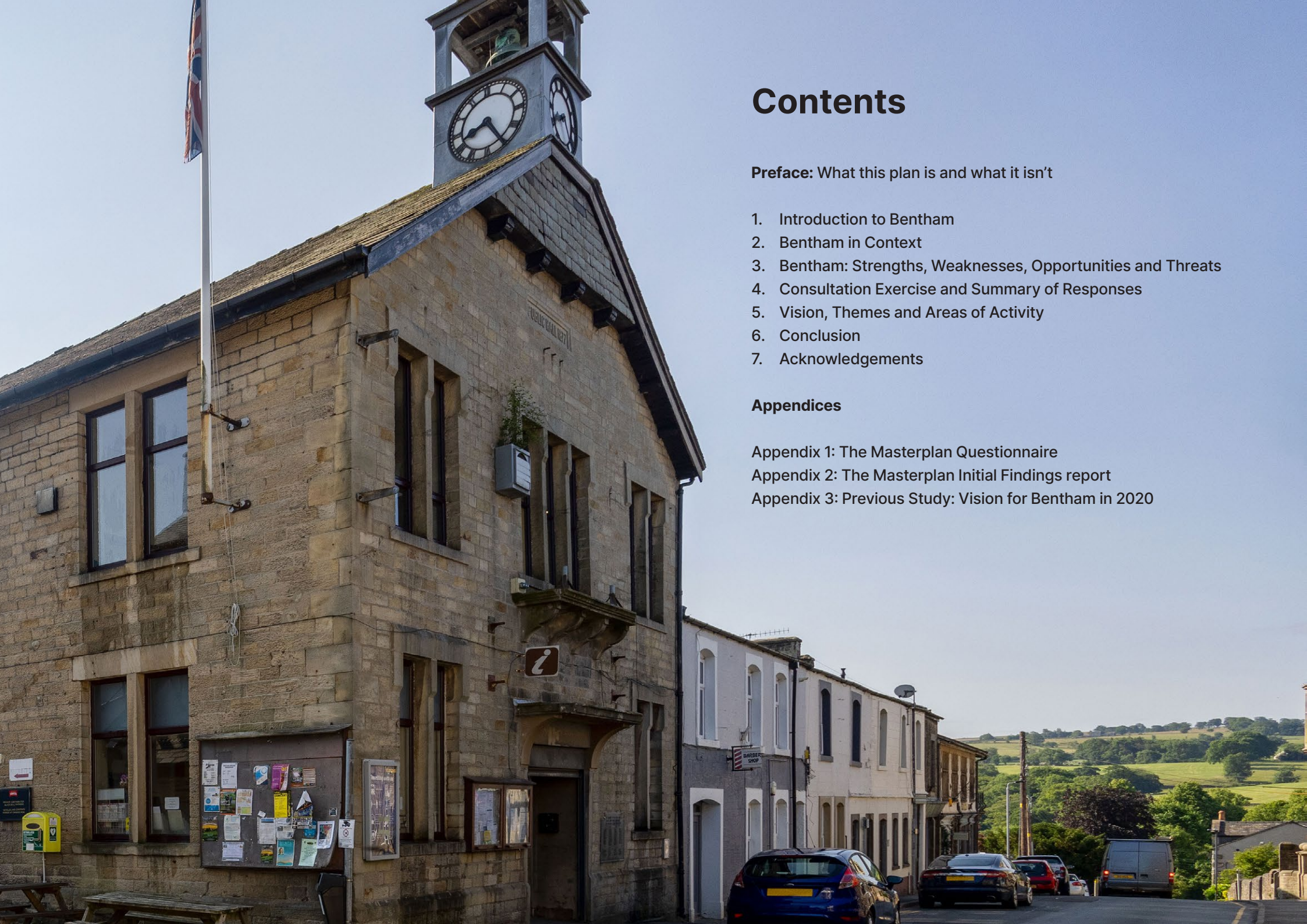


# Bentham

MASTERPLAN

**Creating a Distinctive Future**

March 2024



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# Preface:

## What this plan is and what it isn't

The Bentham Masterplan was researched, prepared and largely written by a group of volunteer residents of the town with an impressive range of professional backgrounds and with the best interest of the Bentham community as their primary emphasis throughout. The initial impetus had been a Craven District Council attempt to recruit a consultant to undertake the work to devise a plan "For the rejuvenation of the Town Centre and set out a clear vision for the future development of Bentham." As it had not proved possible to find a consultant, we offered to undertake the work on a voluntary basis.

We were determined that the plan should, as far as possible, represent the views and aspirations of local people and we decided to use a survey of local opinions as the foundation for its recommendations. We were rewarded by receiving a very high response rate to our survey and are thus able to confidently state that this plan is based on the views of the Bentham community.

We know that many of our recommendations are not new. Bentham has seen many reports and plans produced over the years supposedly for its benefit. The most recent was a study in 1994 by the Civic Trust Regeneration Unit (Appendix 3) to prepare a regeneration strategy for Bentham, entitled "Vision 2020". Many of the problems and opportunities then were similar to those we still have today.

We are grateful for North Yorkshire officers' help in preparing this final plan in a form which is intended for adoption by both Bentham Town Council and North Yorkshire Council. We hope that they will recognise its distinctive nature and respect it as an accurate representation of the views of the community. It is written with the intention that both authorities will find it useful when planning future services for the town. More importantly, we hope that it will be used by organisations within the town to support their funding bids to other agencies.

This Masterplan is not a neighbourhood plan and so does not include work on spatial planning for housing, recreation or business developments. Nor is it a blueprint for funding. It does not give estimates of costs to achieve its objectives and will not immediately release money from any source. But it is intended to provide an evidence base for those seeking resources from local or central government or other funding agencies to deliver improvements for the town into the future.

We hope all those reading and using this document can accept its limitations and make the most of its recommendations. We are particularly anxious that Bentham people should feel it does represent their hopes for the future development of the town and we are very grateful for all the contributions made by them to assist in its production.

### **Bentham Masterplan Team**

Elizabeth Adlington, Shirley Brown, Phil Gerrie and Jim Munday

# 1. Introduction to Bentham

**Bentham is in the north west of the Craven area of North Yorkshire approximately 37km northwest of Skipton, 25 km north east of Lancaster and 36 km southeast of Kendal. It lies right on the western edge of North Yorkshire, 5km south of the main A65 from Skipton to Kendal and is the nearest North Yorkshire town to the M6.**

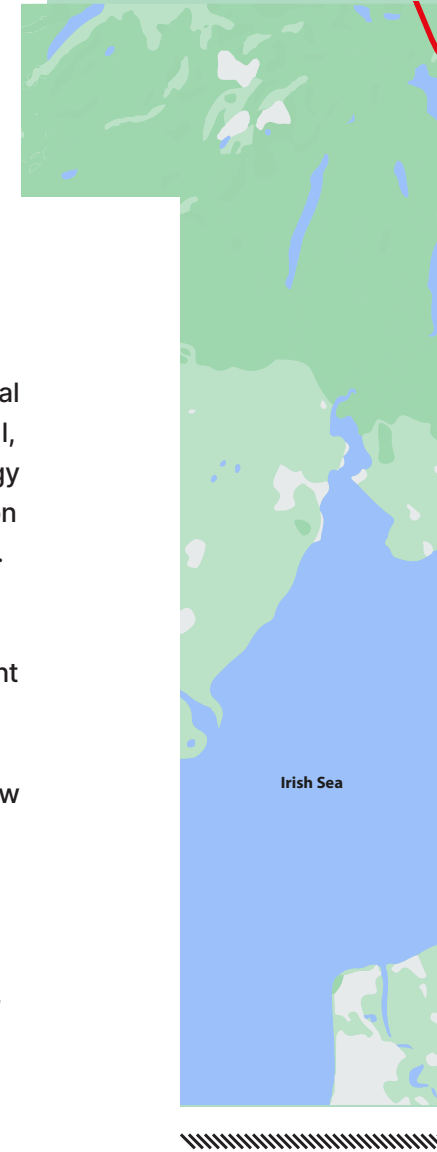
Its separation from the strategic road network, however, means that the town is relatively isolated but, nevertheless, is a Key Service Centre for a wide geographical area across the county boundaries into Lancashire and Westmorland and Furness.

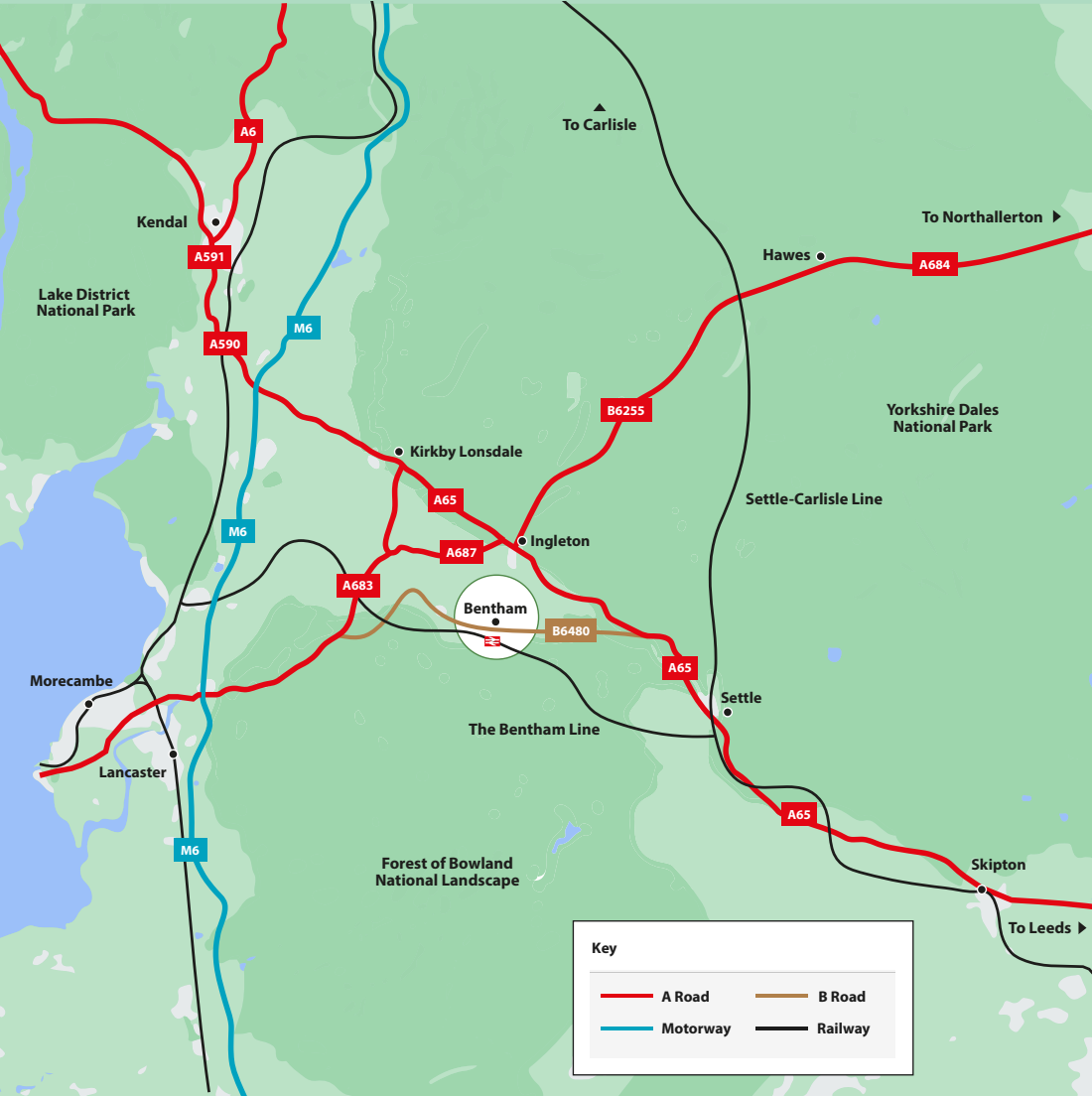
Bentham's population has grown slowly, only doubling over the last 220 years, from 1,487 in the 1801 census to 3,035 at the 2021 census (2,865 in 1991). Despite this slow rate of growth, it remains larger than surrounding settlements – Ingleton 2,186, Settle 2,714 and Kirkby Lonsdale 1,968.

Approximately 57% of the population are of working age and the same percentage are economically active, matching exactly the percentage for those in work across the whole of North Yorkshire.

Bentham has a strong tradition of manufacturing allied to its function as a market town. It continues to service the large local rural economy by providing access to agricultural, professional, maintenance and retail services such as agricultural technology and equipment, vehicle and building supplies. Bentham Auction Mart is one of the largest sheep and cattle markets in England. Angus Fire, a global leader and supplier of fire safety products to a hundred countries worldwide, and Atkinson Vos, a world leader in all-terrain vehicles, are both based in the town. Recent arrivals include Bowland View, a large Extra-Care housing development run by Housing 21 and the office of an In-Home health care provider, Care Legacy. All these businesses are now offering job opportunities in the town as well as successfully providing services for customers and clients.

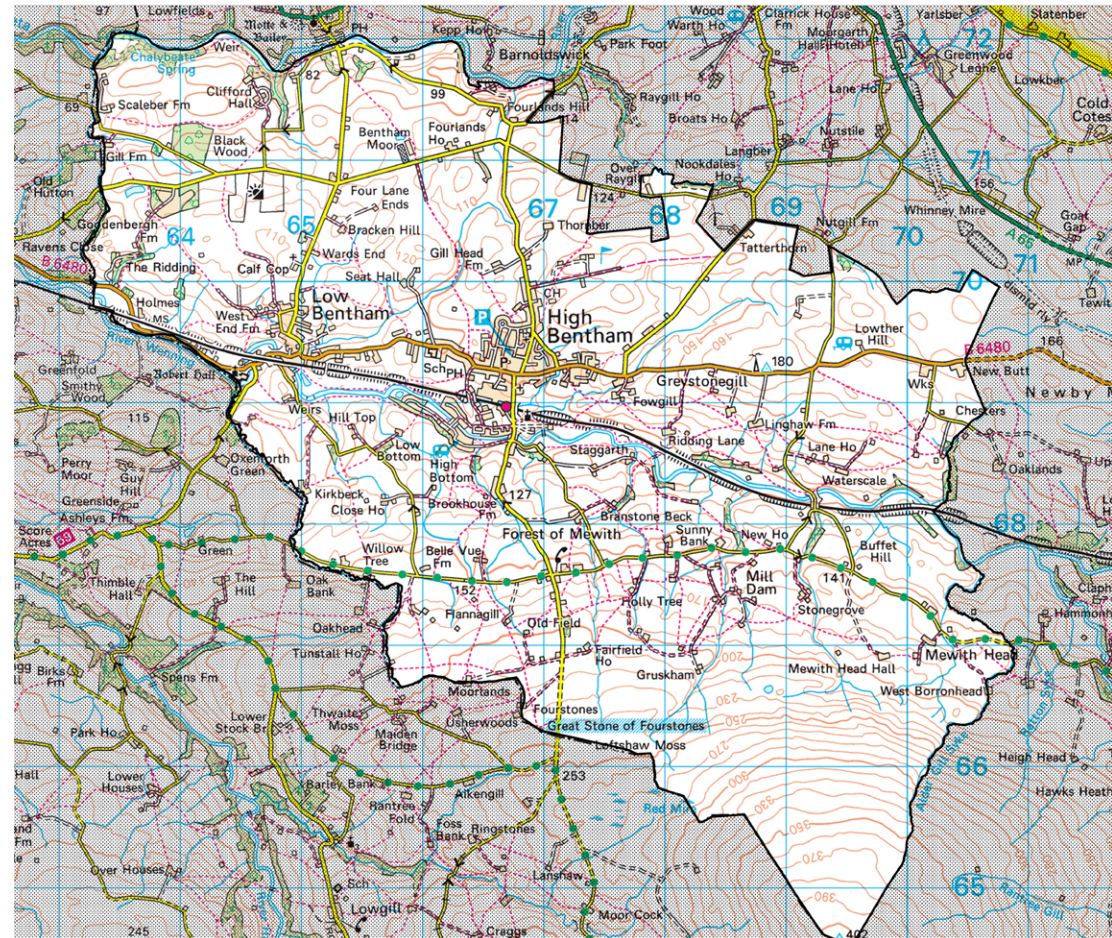
However, much of the economic activity in the town is rooted in the wide range of skilled tradespeople who are based there, significantly more than the average for North Yorkshire as a whole. Similarly, the percentage of small employers and own account workers exceeds that for North Yorkshire. These smaller enterprises also offer a myriad of job opportunities mostly at a local level.





Location of Bentham

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The Bentham Parish

## 2. Bentham in Context

The Parish of Bentham has many similarities with North Yorkshire when initial data from the 2021 Census for the two regions is compared (as shown opposite) even though Covid-19 may have affected the reliability of some of the data available. The tables show some differences in the age profile of Bentham, such as a slightly older population, and a general trend for greater distances travelled to work and an increased reliance on car usage. Although, unlike most towns in North Yorkshire, Bentham has a railway station, the percentage of those travelling to a workplace by train is similar to the North Yorkshire percentage. In terms of occupation Bentham has an identical employment status distribution to the rest of North Yorkshire, (56% economically active and 41% economically inactive) but with a higher percentage of people employed in skilled trades, caring and leisure occupations than North Yorkshire and with a lesser percentage employed in senior, professional and technical occupations. This pattern is similarly reflected in the socio-economic classification of the Parish. Finally, the levels of educational qualifications of Bentham residents are similar to the North Yorkshire average.

Of topographical and historical interest, the Parish of Bentham is situated in beautiful rolling farmland in the Wenning river valley, moments from the Yorkshire Dales National Park to the north and the Forest of Bowland National Landscape (formally known as an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty') to the south. The town is the setting of several highly rated caravan and holiday lodge parks, which are popular and bring valuable income into the town.

However, there are, of course, as well as the strengths and opportunities, some weaknesses and threats that may affect the future development of the town.



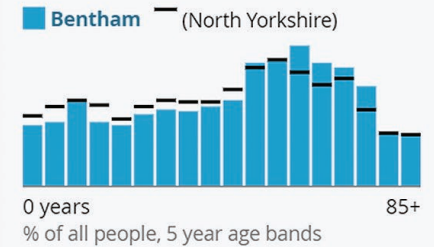
# Socio economic profile of Bentham compared to that of North Yorkshire

Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

Population  
**3,000**  
people

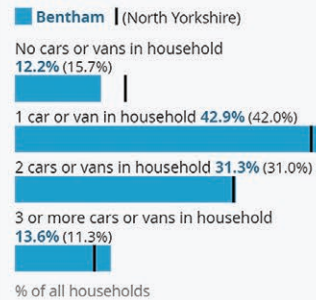
**615,500** people in North Yorkshire  
Rounded to the nearest 100 people

## Age profile

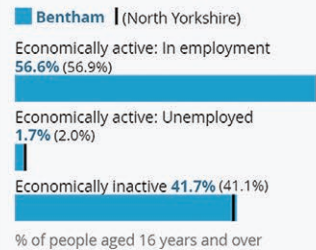


Bentham values indicated as a blue bar.  
North Yorkshire value indicated as a vertical or horizontal black line

### Number of cars or vans



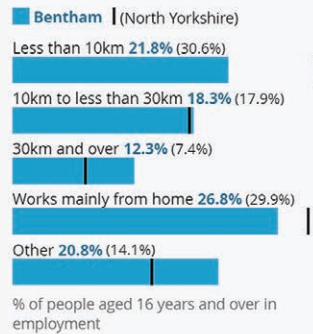
### Economic activity status



### Highest level of qualification



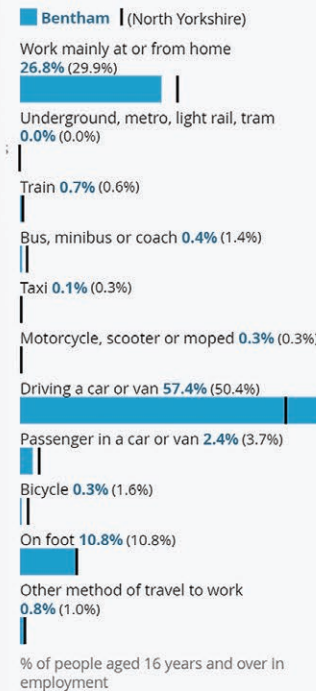
### Distance travelled to work



### Occupation



### Method of travel to workplace



### Socio-economic Classification (NS-SeC)



# 3. Bentham: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

## Strengths

- Strong, self-sufficient and resilient local identity
- Key Service Centre for a wide agricultural hinterland
- Flexible, skilled local workforce
- Highly rated services, including a large medical centre
- The Bentham Line rail service to Leeds, Lancaster, Morecambe and beyond
- Beautiful countryside
- Good value and increasing housing stock
- Access to good schools
- Large range of community groups and activities
- New businesses locating in the town
- Multiple community spaces for development
- High occupancy levels of existing employment space

## Opportunities

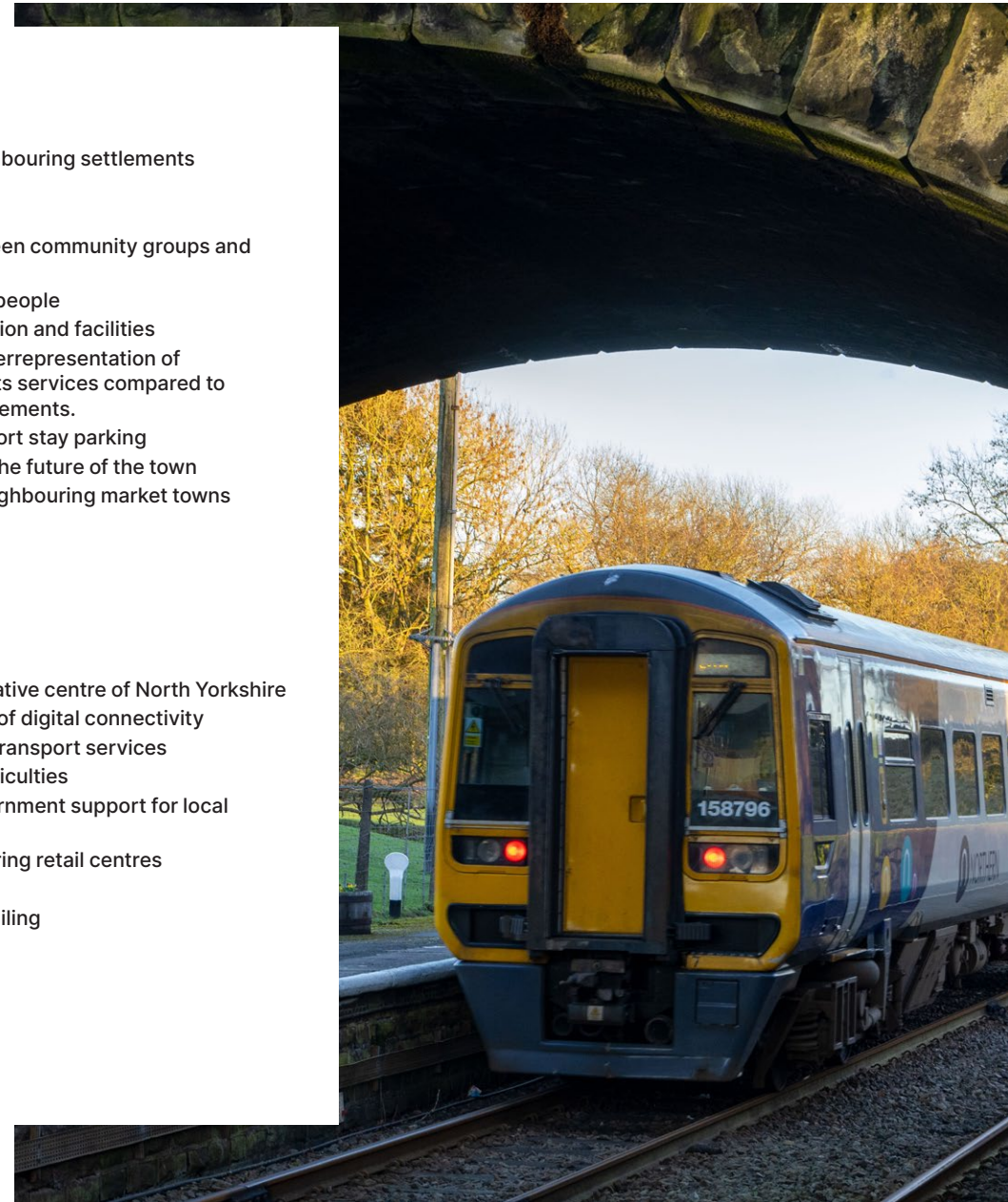
- To increase small business activity
- To increase the extent and frequency of rail and bus services
- To improve links across county boundaries, including with Lancaster University and the Eden Project in Morecambe
- To develop the attractions of the natural environment, heritage and local history.
- To support the development of new and affordable housing
- To improve the provision of support and services for young people.

## Weaknesses

- Poor road access
- Poor transport links to neighbouring settlements
- Shabby town centre
- Poor digital connectivity
- Lack of co-ordination between community groups and societies
- Limited activities for young people
- Limited tourist accommodation and facilities
- Poor infrastructure and underrepresentation of hospitality, leisure and sports services compared to other comparable local settlements.
- Lack of easily accessible short stay parking
- Lack of a coherent plan for the future of the town
- Low profile compared to neighbouring market towns

## Threats

- Isolation from the administrative centre of North Yorkshire
- Continued lack of provision of digital connectivity
- Further reduction of public transport services
- Unresolved road access difficulties
- Perceived lack of local government support for local initiatives
- Competition from neighbouring retail centres
- Ageing population
- Competition with online retailing





## 4. Consultation Exercise and Summary of the Responses

The masterplan team were determined that the final plan should accurately reflect the views, aspirations and concerns of Bentham residents, and thus ensure everyone was supportive of its intentions. To get as full a response as possible from local people, a simple questionnaire was drafted for distribution on paper and online.

The questionnaire format was kept short, simple and open, one version for individuals and a slightly varied version for businesses and organisations. Respondents were provided with space to answer the questions as they thought fit and not offered a limited number of responses. They could also leave contact details if they wished to remain involved in the next stages. Copies were distributed to all households in October 2022 in the monthly Bentham News and were available online on its website. Organisations and businesses were contacted separately. Hard copies were also available at several retail outlets in the town. Public notices, press releases and social media were also used to encourage maximum response rates. The survey was closed after two and a half months, before Christmas 2022.

Three hundred and eighty-five completed questionnaires were received from individuals and a further forty from organisations, groups and businesses, including sports clubs, churches, voluntary organisations, service providers and businesses. This represents over 10% of the Bentham population. This could be increased by the responses from groups and organisations, which will include the views of others who did not fill in the questionnaire. Whilst this cannot be said to give a precise picture of the views of the whole town, it is a very good response rate,

(perhaps not far short of 20%) for an untargeted survey, and considerably more than those of a number of other recent audits conducted in the county. The gender distribution from individual respondents was 54% female, 39% male, 6.6% unknown, 0.4% other. Almost 90% were Bentham residents, the others being workers or visitors. Over 40 respondents left contact details so they could remain informed and involved in future action to implement the plan's proposals. Some of these people are already involved in development groups to improve digital connectivity, public transport and the town centre appearance.

The questionnaire returns provided details of what residents and others like and don't like about Bentham but also suggestions of what changes in the short and longer terms they would like to see. The responses were then grouped into a large number of categories so they could be entered into a database under flexible headings, covering, for example such things as public transport, the natural environment, recreation facilities, the town centre appearance etc. This gave a broad picture of what respondents thought and the ability to present the results as pie charts. All the questionnaire returns were saved for further consultation if necessary.

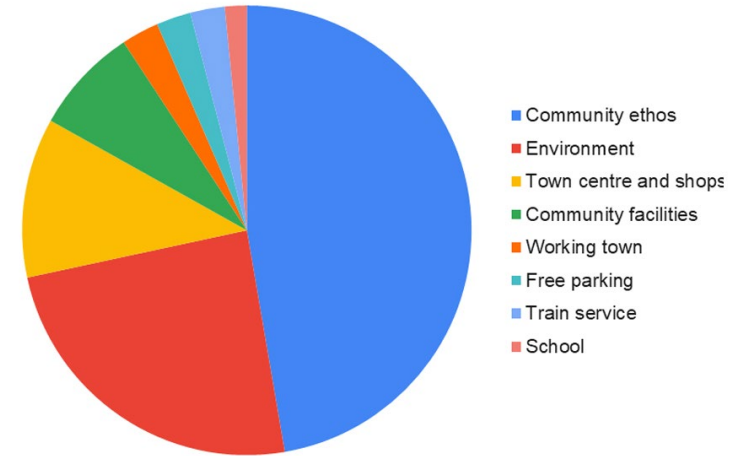
# Consultation Responses from Individuals

## What is the best thing about Bentham?

The pattern of responses was clear. Almost half of the respondents chose the friendliness and helpfulness of people and a further quarter chose the local natural environment.

These two headings were therefore considered by almost three quarters of the respondents to be the best things about Bentham.

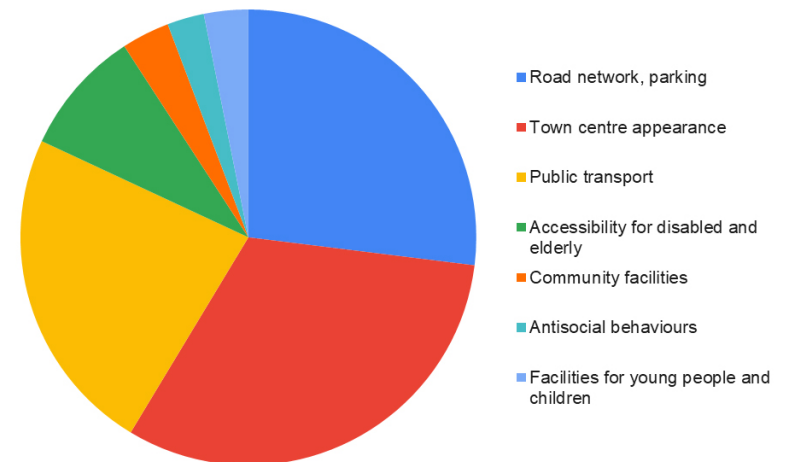
Smaller numbers recommended the facilities available such as the range of shops, specialist interest groups, services and organisations. Others mentioned the benefits of free parking, the good train service and the fact that Bentham retains its status as a solid working town.



## What is the worst thing about Bentham?

Again, there was notable agreement, a third chose the dowdy town centre appearance and another third the roads, traffic congestion and parking problems as the worst thing.

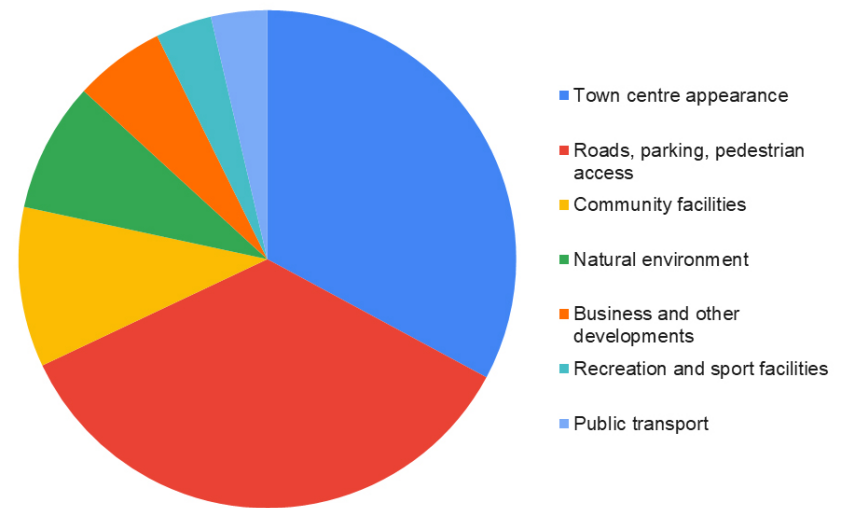
The lack of public transport, difficulties of access both physical and digital and the lack of facilities for young people were all also common complaints.



## What small thing would make the centre of Bentham better and what change would you like to see immediately?

Responses to these two questions were broadly similar, though not always 'small things'. More than two thirds desired improvements to the roads, pavements and parking, the appearance of the town centre and better public transport.

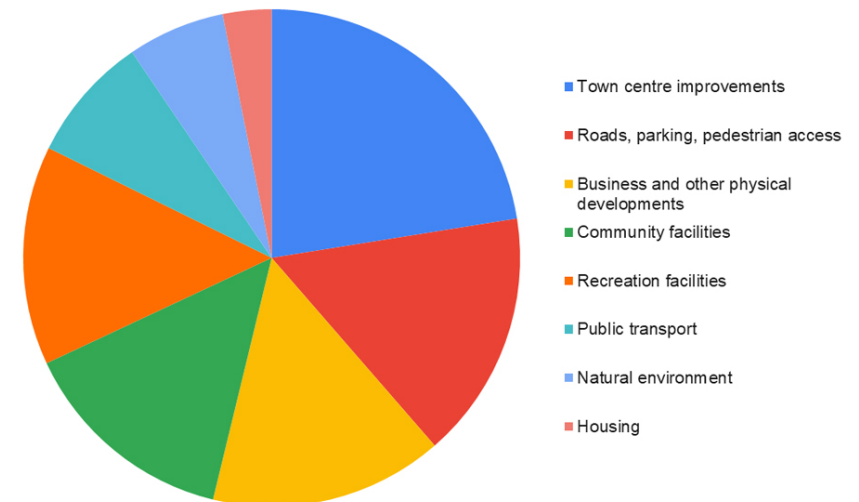
Residents asked for pedestrian crossings, improved access to the car parks; renovation and reuse of empty properties; creating a tidy, attractive and clean Main Street; and the replacement of the bus service to Lancaster which has recently been removed.



## What one change would you like to see over the next 10 years?

Longer term aspirations were more varied but similar, including town centre improvement; roads, parking and pedestrian access; business developments; community and recreation facilities; public transport and care for the natural environment.

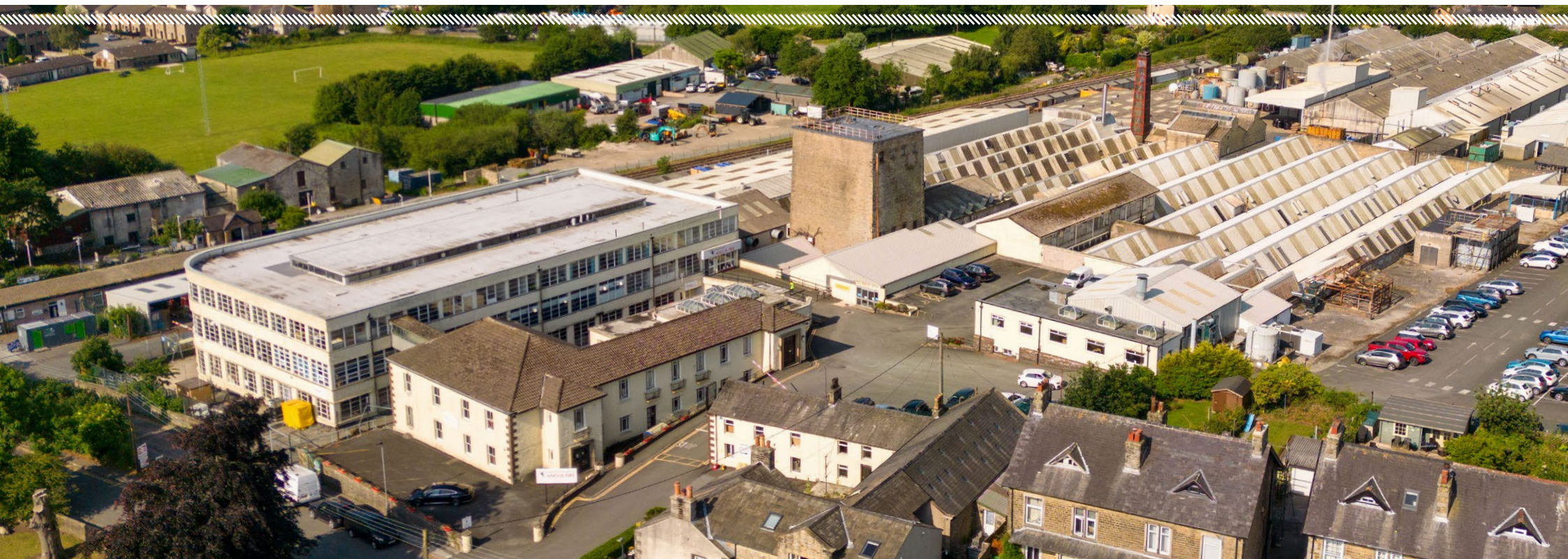
The most common were the first two of these. However, many more specific and precise suggestions were made, and all would be worthy of further consideration.



# Consultation Responses from Businesses and Groups

Many of the responses from businesses and voluntary organisations were very specific to the different respondents, often concerning the adequacy and accessibility of their premises and affordable alternatives. However, some consistencies were obvious. They reiterated the general feeling that the best thing about Bentham is the community ethos and its support for local businesses and organisations.

The worst thing about the town was felt by these groups to be the roads and parking, and the uncared-for appearance of the town centre. The most urgent improvements to the centre of the town were felt to be tackling the traffic, roads and parking, especially along Main Street. Bentham Auction Mart said that the most inhibiting factor to their business is the road network leading to the town. The importance of a vibrant, local retail and commercial sector, access to fast Wi-Fi and public transport were also stressed as necessities to ensure businesses and residents do not have to look elsewhere to meet their needs.



# Consultation Conclusion

**Bentham's distinctiveness lies in its desire to retain its role as a Key Service Centre for its own community and those of neighbouring settlements in the west of North Yorkshire and adjoining counties.**

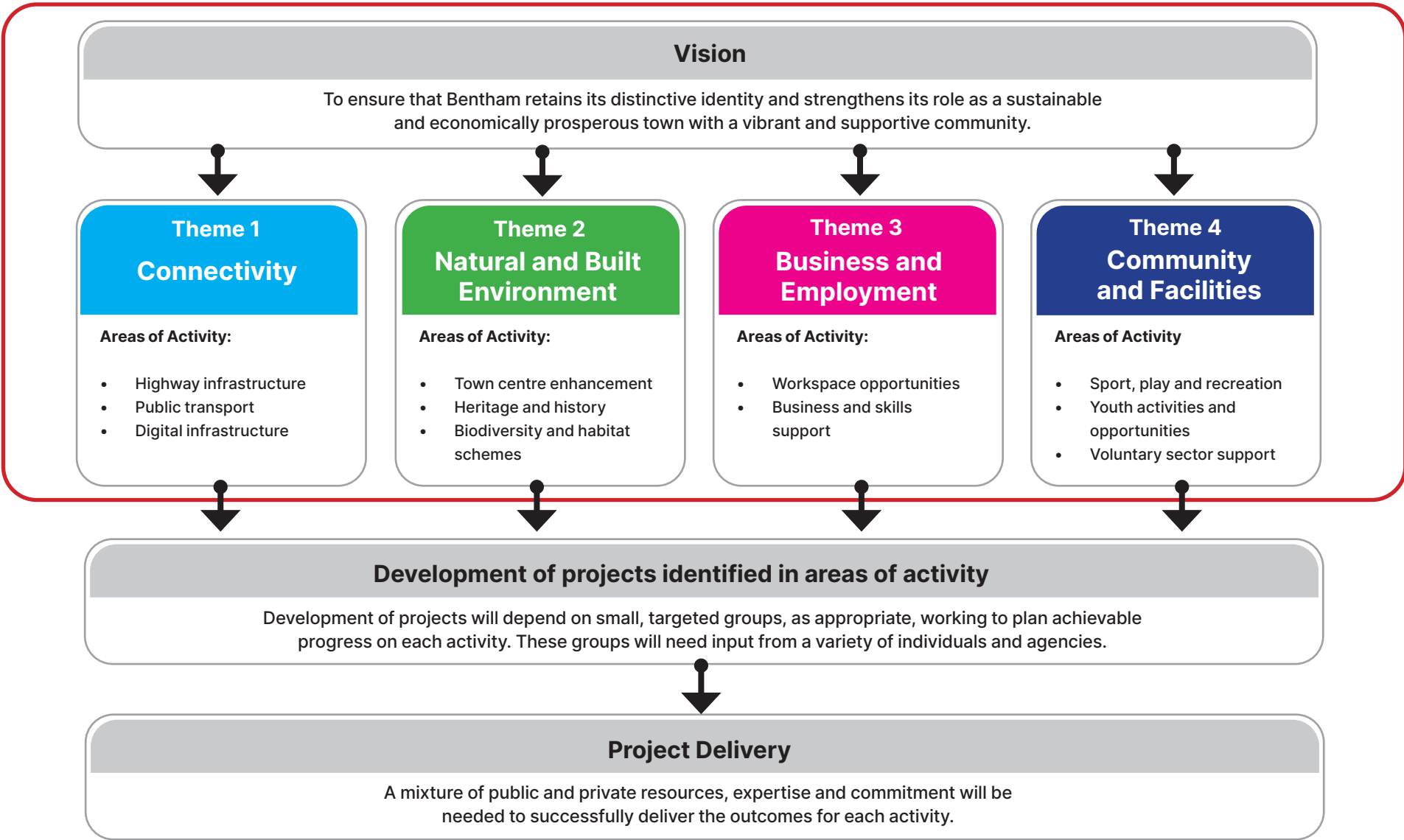
This ambition is bolstered by its determination to deliver the goods, opportunities and services local people and visitors are looking for. Bentham provides much of what its residents, businesses and hinterland need. It is noticeable that the towns' retailers and suppliers are anxious to respond positively and quickly to local demands.

This responsiveness is perhaps only possible in a relatively small community, but it means that the town can meet local, regional, national and international challenges, whether these are economic or social, with unusual speed and resilience. Bentham is successful as a small market town and in areas where services are lacking residents are quick to create voluntary organisations to support and assist their neighbours. There are currently more than 80 voluntary groups operating in the town.

Overall, the image presented by responses to the questionnaire was one of a community anxious and willing to see changes that would improve Bentham as a residential and economically active rural market town. Respondents did not want radical changes but could see that the current infrastructure and town management needs an overhaul to ensure it is able to retain its role as a local hub and Key Service Centre delivering 21st century services and opportunities.



# 5. Vision, Themes and Areas of Activity



Extent of The Bentham Plan - activities outside this border are beyond the scope of the core Plan document

# Theme 1: Connectivity

Area of Activity	Highway Infrastructure		
Rationale	Outline of Activity	Delivery Approach	Outcomes
<p>The highway network of Bentham within the town centre is served by a number of rural roads, each with their own constraints and issues.</p> <p>Within the historic built environment of the town, the conflict between vehicles and pedestrian access is unavoidable. Access to all town centre facilities including car parks, railway station and shops is continuously hampered, especially for those with a disability or using a pram or buggy.</p> <p>It is recognised that very little can be done quickly or locally to solve these problems, which will need to be considered through the highway scheme prioritisation process, but they are fundamental to improving the aesthetic impression and economic and social viability of the town.</p>	<p>This area of activity will focus on identifying and encouraging opportunities to improve the highway network of Bentham including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with representatives of the Local Highway Authority, Town Council and the Masterplan Group to understand upcoming maintenance works, the reporting and prioritisation process and the possibilities of small-scale improvement works in Bentham town centre.</li> <li>• The development of appropriate, easily accessible, well signed routes through and around the town including those for cycling and walking.</li> <li>• Input and engagement with longer term, strategic plans to inform the transformational improvement of the highway network in Bentham.</li> </ul>	<p>Likely to be a mixture of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally led development and implementation where possible.</li> <li>• Local authority led schemes and lobbying for improvements.</li> </ul>	<p>A network of new and improved sustainable connectivity routes.</p> <p>Improved condition of the highway and pavements.</p> <p>Improved management of town centre car parks and rationalisation of parking on the streets.</p> <p>Improved access for businesses and services to their premises and supplies.</p>

# Theme 1: Connectivity

Area of Activity		Public Transport	
Rationale	Outline of Activity	Delivery Approach	Outcomes
<p>Public transport to and from Bentham is limited to the regular but infrequent railway service and a very infrequent and short local bus service.</p> <p>Residents, visitors and employees lack useful and flexible services to reach work, shops, professional and medical services and the wealth of local recreational opportunities.</p> <p>The paucity of local public transport increases car usage and discriminates against all those lacking private transport.</p>	<p>This area of activity will focus on work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To re-establish a more flexible and regular local bus service.</li> <li>• To improve integration of bus and train services across the region, wherever possible.</li> <li>• To reduce car usage for work and leisure.</li> <li>• To investigate opportunities to fund public transport from new development.</li> <li>• To lobby to improve public transport infrastructure to encourage increased usage.</li> </ul>	<p>Local discussion and activity is already underway and will draw on local authority expertise and assistance as necessary.</p> <p>Working across local authorities and agencies to develop financially viable public transport improvements that meet the needs of the Bentham community.</p>	<p>Better physical connectivity for all – residents, visitors and business people.</p> <p>Easy access to additional work, educational and business opportunities.</p> <p>Access to local recreational facilities for those without private transport.</p> <p>A reduction in car usage and associated pollution.</p>



# Theme 1: Connectivity

Area of Activity	Digital Infrastructure		
Rationale	Outline of Activity	Delivery Approach	Outcomes
<p>Digital connectivity is crucial to the rural nature of Bentham, its hinterland, and the rural economy.</p> <p>Ensuring that all residents, businesses, and visitors have access to the best digital connectivity available; whether ultrafast broadband, town centre WiFi or reliable voice and mobile data, these services are vital to support Bentham's business, education, and leisure needs.</p> <p>Within Bentham and the surrounding area there is ongoing investment in connectivity through the private sector, public sector funded initiatives and community led activity. This investment should be seen as an ongoing process with continual improvement necessary to ensure Bentham continues to be an attractive place to live, work, learn and relax.</p>	<p>This area of activity will increase the development, delivery, and support for improved digital infrastructure including ultrafast broadband, WiFi and mobile connectivity including activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of and support for ultrafast broadband connectivity infrastructure.</li> <li>• Work to establish the options for the deployment of town centre WiFi.</li> <li>• Lobbying to achieve improved mobile telephony coverage.</li> </ul>	<p>Implementation of activities in this section are likely to be promoted and delivered by a range of stakeholders including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally led development and implementation</li> <li>• Commercial rollout</li> <li>• Local authority led schemes.</li> </ul>	<p>More opportunities for local businesses to increase productivity, improve efficiency and grow through access to new markets.</p> <p>Greater use of broadband connectivity for home and remote working.</p> <p>Mobile access to local services and information.</p>

# Theme 2: Natural and Built Environment

Area of Activity		Town Centre Enhancement	
Rationale	Outline of Activity	Delivery Approach	Outcomes
<p>Bentham's Main Street needs cosmetic changes to enhance the experience of everyone; residents, employees, customers and visitors.</p> <p>Roughly a third of the respondents to the Masterplan Survey considered the town centre appearance to be the worst thing about Bentham.</p> <p>The appearance of the town centre reduces the attractiveness of the town as a retail and commercial hub. It limits visitor and customer numbers and inhibits informal socialisation.</p>	<p>Some desirable improvements could be achieved relatively easily including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouragement and support to businesses, owners and residents to improve the appearance of properties along Main Street.</li> <li>• Regular cleaning and weeding including the removal of litter and dog waste.</li> <li>• The renovation and reuse of some empty properties to provide enhanced services and opportunities.</li> </ul> <p>Others will need additional funding and expertise to realise, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of recreational spaces and seating for informal socialisation.</li> <li>• Space for and planting of street trees, flower beds and public art.</li> <li>• Improved availability of public conveniences.</li> <li>• Better signage to local facilities and services.</li> </ul>	<p>A mixture of public and private resources, expertise and commitment will be needed.</p> <p>The population of Bentham will be encouraged to take ownership of the appearance of the town and to improve it where they can. This activity will be supported by the Town Council.</p> <p>Working with North Yorkshire Council and other agencies to find opportunities to enhance the environment of the town centre, creating an inviting public realm which will encourage shoppers, residents and visitors to enjoy all the local amenities the town has to offer.</p>	<p>Bentham Town Centre will become a busy hub accommodating the needs of the local community and an attractive venue for visitors. It will be an interesting, inviting and welcoming place, providing an improved cultural, leisure and retail offering.</p> <p>Success will be assessed by residents' and visitors' satisfaction, footfall, vacancy rates, levels of investment, new business start-ups and stakeholder involvement.</p>

# Theme 2: Natural and Built Environment

Area of Activity	History and Heritage		
Rationale	Outline of Activity	Delivery Approach	Outcomes
<p>Bentham has a long history of human settlement and some old and interesting buildings. These range from the parish church to 17th century houses on Main Street and old industrial buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries. The geology of the Craven area surrounding the town is similarly of historical interest. But, at present, the town makes little use of its heritage to contribute to broader objectives such as economic development, tourism, leisure activities or formal and informal education.</p> <p>Ownership and management of local assets is often complicated and coordination to maximise the benefits of the range of heritage assets is difficult to arrange.</p> <p>However, North Yorkshire Council plan to designate Bentham town centre as a conservation area and there is an active local history group, The Ewecross Historical Society, which promotes the study of the local area.</p>	<p>Work with partners will ensure the town identifies opportunities to make more use of its heritage assets for both leisure and economic benefit.</p> <p>These could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An audit of significant buildings and locations and consideration of the 'listing' of those of merit.</li> <li>• A regular assessment of those needing renovation, reuse and/or protection.</li> <li>• A programme of activities in collaboration with local history organisations and educational institutions to encourage residents and visitors to understand and enjoy the town's heritage.</li> <li>• Production of a plan for sustainable development of heritage assets, including possible funding streams.</li> <li>• Building partnerships with other bodies and institutions to assist local groups.</li> </ul>	<p>A number of existing initiatives show that there is interest in the history of the town.</p> <p>The local Ewecross Historical Society meets regularly to hear speakers.</p> <p>There are established heritage walks around the town and out into the neighbouring countryside.</p> <p>The community library holds a paper archive of books and other materials on the history of the town.</p> <p>North Yorkshire are actively considering creating a conservation area in the town.</p> <p>These established resources could be further developed with support from external partners such as Lancaster University's Regional Heritage Centre. The drafting of a Heritage Plan would guide future activities and ensure benefits would accrue for the visitor and commercial sectors.</p>	<p>Bentham will become known for its history and heritage. Local people will have a better understanding of, and pride in, the town's past and aspirations for its future.</p> <p>Regular audits of progress and work to be undertaken will create opportunities for individuals to develop interests, knowledge and skills in heritage work.</p> <p>The visitor experience will be enhanced and, with more short-term accommodation in Bentham, the town can become a central destination for visitors wishing to better understand the deep archaeological, cultural and geological history of this part of Craven.</p>

# Theme 2: Natural and Built Environment

Area of Activity	Biodiversity and Habitat Schemes		
Rationale	Outline of Activity	Delivery Approach	Outcomes
<p>A quarter of the respondents to the Masterplan Survey said they considered the local natural environment to be the best thing about Bentham. This appreciation can be used to encourage interventions, research and innovation to enhance and protect the biodiversity and beauty of the area for future generations. Support to and funding for existing groups can ensure that coordinated work, environmental education, community action and participation are promoted to build a sustainable and protected natural environment for the future.</p>	<p>Work will be undertaken to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement in relevant policy consultations</li> <li>• Action with partners to survey and improve knowledge of local habitats, species and the threats to them.</li> <li>• Mapping, protection and enhancement of sites, habitats and features of recognised biodiversity value, including designated wildlife sites, and other undesignated areas of ecological interest.</li> <li>• Developing contacts and collaboration to establish ecological networks and routes through the area to enable wildlife to move and flourish.</li> <li>• Continual review of progress, opportunities and developing threats to the natural environment.</li> </ul>	<p>Delivery will depend on establishing partnerships to include local organisations such as BEST, the River Wenning Group and local agricultural interests as well as regional bodies such as North Yorkshire Heritage Services Team, The Three Counties Lune Valley Scheme, and the myriad of other local and regional organisations that promote environmental diversity and protection.</p> <p>Joint working with higher education environment departments will ensure best practice and comparability of projects.</p>	<p>The progress and impact of specific initiatives will be assessed through ongoing monitoring.</p> <p>This evidence-based approach will ensure that action is achieving desired ends. Best practice and successful initiatives can then be adopted more widely, whilst any initiative not delivering the desired results can be adjusted or enhanced.</p> <p>The natural environment in and surrounding Bentham can, with care, become a sustainable model for other areas and communities.</p>

# Theme 3: Business and Employment

Area of Activity	Workspace Opportunities		
Rationale	Outline of Activity	Delivery Approach	Outcomes
<p>Access to suitable employment premises and workspace, when combined with appropriate connectivity and support services, is key to retaining employment opportunities within Bentham.</p> <p>With over 25% of those aged 16+ in employment mainly working from home in Bentham, the opportunity to access flexible co-working and complementary facilities, potentially through the extension or reuse of existing facilities, has the potential to retain employment in the town whilst aiding productivity, networking opportunities and vibrancy within the town centre.</p> <p>In addition, although the current Craven Local Plan 2012 – 2032 has not specifically allocated new employment land within the Bentham Parish, Policy EC1 and EC2 supports the retention and development of existing employment land, enabling the opportunity for reuse of underused land, complementary industries and employment growth.</p> <p>Further to this Policy EC3 supports employment and business growth opportunities in the Rural Economy for reuse and repurposing of existing buildings for workspace.</p>	<p>This area of activity will focus on encouraging and facilitating opportunities for business growth by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigation into the need and opportunities for the provision of flexible / co-working facilities and workspace using existing employment or community facilities where possible.</li> <li>• Investigation into the demand and feasibility of additional employment units and floorspace that supports and complements the local economy of North Yorkshire and existing employers within Bentham.</li> <li>• Assisting local entrepreneurs in finding access to funding, mentorship, and other resources needed to grow their businesses.</li> </ul>	<p>Likely to be a mixture of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private and / or community sector, locally led development and implementation.</li> <li>• Local authority led schemes, reports and feasibility studies.</li> </ul>	<p>Self-employed, home working and small businesses with access to flexible workspace opportunities.</p> <p>Greater opportunity for collaborative working.</p> <p>Income opportunities for community facilities within Bentham.</p>

# Theme 3: Business and Employment

Area of Activity	Business and Skills Support		
Rationale	Outline of Activity	Delivery Approach	Outcomes
<p>In the responses received from groups, businesses and other organisations the majority of comments relate to physical change or improvement to Bentham.</p> <p>Even so, the importance of developing organisational and individual capacity is critical to ensuring successful businesses with the necessary skills and knowledge required to adapt and change.</p> <p>There is already a strong business support offer in North Yorkshire overseen and delivered through the 'York &amp; North Yorkshire Growth Hub' (YNY Growth Hub) including access to online resources, events, seminars, and one to one business advisors.</p> <p>Although already operating in the North Craven area there are opportunities to increase awareness and access to this and complementary services and, where required, supplement with locality specific activity.</p>	<p>This area of activity will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring and increasing awareness of the availability and benefits of available support for Bentham's businesses.</li> <li>Widening knowledge of opportunities for skills development in Bentham and the wider North Craven area.</li> <li>Commissioning of a business survey to understand needs and requirements of businesses in North Craven.</li> <li>Through the YNY Growth Hub request and facilitate initiatives that raise awareness of how to access business support services already available to North Yorkshire businesses.</li> <li>Development of collaborative initiatives that support the growth of the retail, leisure, and complementary business sectors.</li> </ul>	<p>Promotion of business support services will be via the York &amp; North Yorkshire Growth Hub and in partnership with the Local Authority and local groups and organisations.</p>	<p>Businesses with increased skills and awareness.</p>

# Theme 4: Community and Facilities

Area of Activity	Sport, Play and Recreation		
Rationale	Outline of Activity	Delivery Approach	Outcomes
<p>Whilst Bentham has a large and popular open playing field the existing buildings there are unusable and need to be demolished. The town lacks a suitable facility for the delivery of indoor sporting activities. Some groups, such as badminton and dance, can use other community buildings, but these are generally not ideal.</p> <p>Other outdoor facilities are similarly limited and activity specific.</p> <p>Children's play provision is outdoors and there are no suitable facilities in winter for young children outside of the primary school.</p> <p>The playgroup has a temporary base in the Town Hall, but it has no outdoor space.</p> <p>The town needs to develop both indoor and outdoor spaces to provide access for all ages and interest groups to a range of sport, play and recreation activities.</p>	<p>Work already underway includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Bentham Playing Fields Association (BPFA) are developing plans to replace their existing derelict buildings with a new purpose-built sports and community building on the current site. This would provide an accessible facility to enable sports to expand their range and enhance skills.</li> <li>Space would also be provided to accommodate play and recreational groups.</li> <li>Additional multipurpose spaces could offer facilities for a wider range of local groups and interests to develop and prosper.</li> <li>The building will be as eco-friendly as possible to minimise running costs.</li> </ul>	<p>BPFA is a volunteer led group who hold the lease for the playing fields, which has recently been extended. They provide a range of not-for-profit events for the local community including sports, children's activities, music and celebratory events.</p> <p>They receive much support from the local population, businesses and the town council and are currently building links with North Yorkshire Council's community sports department.</p> <p>To succeed in their aspirations, they will require substantial support, both financial and expertise, from regional and national bodies and charities.</p> <p>Partnerships of this kind will allow Bentham to develop sports and recreational facilities to serve other communities and not the town alone.</p>	<p>The Town would have a purpose-built sports and community hub essential if residents and visitors of all ages are able to develop and enjoy their sporting and recreational skills without having to look for appropriate facilities in other towns and villages.</p> <p>It would encourage use for competitive and friendly events from local visiting teams and communities throughout the year.</p> <p>Increased footfall would benefit local businesses and encourage the development of good, localised transport routes.</p> <p>Additional parking space could also potentially free up some of the congestion issues in the town.</p>

# Theme 4: Community and Facilities

Area of Activity		Youth Activities and Opportunities	
Rationale	Outline of Activity	Delivery Approach	Outcomes
<p>Over 20% of the population of the Bentham area is under 25 years of age. At present the provision of services for this age group is limited to a part time programme of activities offered when volunteers are available. The junior club, based temporarily in the Town Hall, attracts mainly those under 15. There is no provision for older ages to actively encourage their participation and ownership. There is no Young Farmers Group in Bentham, nor a club linked to the North Yorkshire Youth organisation.</p> <p>Bentham needs to be able to build on the energies and aspirations of its young people to secure its future. At present many feel there is little in the town to help them respond positively to the challenges of modern life.</p>	<p>Activity in this area will involve work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish a permanent location that can be used by young people to meet and support one another socially.</li> <li>• To find more secure funding for the employment of a youth worker to support work with young people.</li> <li>• To establish a more secure pattern of volunteering, using the specialist skills and experience of local people.</li> <li>• To understand the needs and aspirations of the young people of Bentham and respond to them appropriately.</li> <li>• To offer a range of learning experiences to enhance the life skills, employment opportunities and leisure interests of local young people.</li> </ul>	<p>Work will be undertaken within the town to establish a dedicated location, open regularly for young people to meet and share their experiences, problems and aspirations with one another.</p> <p>Links will be established with local colleges, countywide youth bodies and the National Youth Agency for support and advice.</p> <p>Links with local specialist agencies will be established to ensure advice and guidance is available to young people where they can access it and when then need it.</p>	<p>Local provision that is both attractive and useful to the young people of the town.</p> <p>A place where young people feel comfortable meeting together.</p> <p>Activities and opportunities that will open routes to further education, training, work and careers that will help them to develop their skills and knowledge to become active citizens able to help to build a fairer and more resilient local community.</p>



# Theme 4: Community and Facilities

Area of Activity		Community Facilities	
Rationale	Outline of Activity	Delivery Approach	Outcomes
<p>Although Bentham has a wealth of voluntary sector bodies providing health, sport, charity and other services, these often do not recognise the benefits to be gained from working together. There is no co-ordinating body, leading to duplication of premises and reinvention of both content and management.</p>	<p>Activity in this area will involve work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide information, advice and professional services to existing and new voluntary bodies in the town.</li> <li>• To discover funding opportunities to employ a volunteer co-ordinator.</li> <li>• To provide an overview of premises and equipment available for use by voluntary organisations.</li> <li>• To assist individual residents to find volunteering opportunities at all levels and employment opportunities within the voluntary sector.</li> </ul>	<p>Partnership working with Community First Yorkshire, North Yorkshire Council, The Two Ridings Community Foundation and their successors.</p> <p>At the same time to develop the collaborative approach within the town to fund, retain and develop local voluntary service provisions.</p>	<p>Easier access for voluntary organisations to local and regional information and help.</p> <p>Smooth access to available opportunities, training and vacancies for those wishing to work in or offer time and experience to the voluntary sector.</p>

## 6. Conclusion

This plan aims to reflect the views of Bentham.

Its aim is to “build upon what is special about the town, to take account of the opportunities it presents and meet the aspirations of local stakeholders”.

Bentham has much to be proud of and many strengths, but there are also challenges and problems that need addressing. The Bentham Masterplan puts these into context and proposes activities necessary to strengthen the town and assist it to address and overcome the challenges of the future. To achieve its aims will require the joint commitment of Bentham people and local, regional and national agencies.

It is hoped that the Masterplan provides ambitious ideas, encouragement and support to all those who wish to ensure that Bentham retains its distinctive character, whilst responding to the demands and opportunities of the changing world.





## 7. Acknowledgements

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