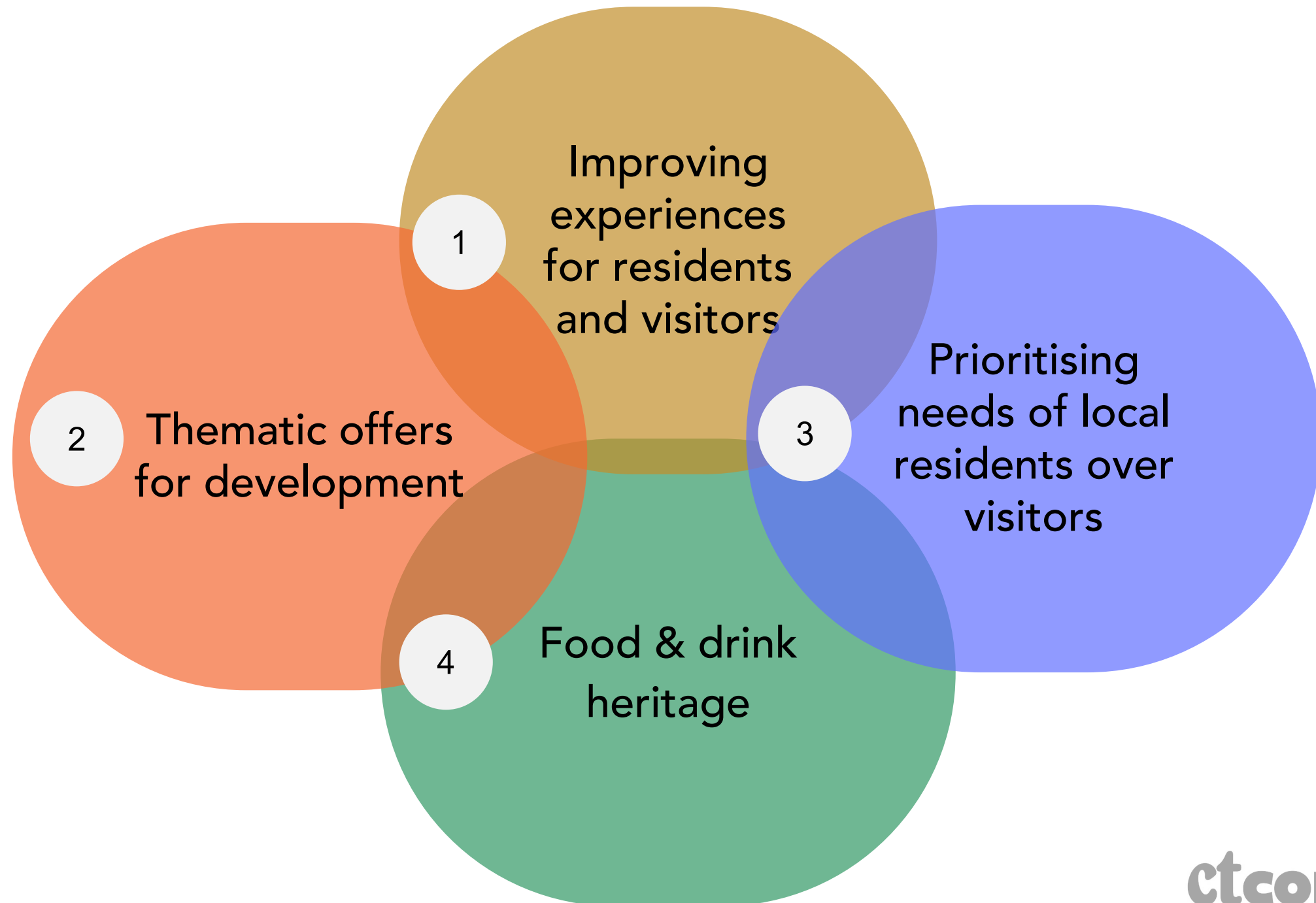


# Babergh & Mid Suffolk Cultural Heritage & Visitor Economy Strategy Workshop



## Improving experiences for residents and visitors

*"What is the main selling point for those that live and work and visit? I don't know."*

Need for data and insight to better understand audiences and their behaviours.

Need to broaden audience / visitor demographics.

Visitor number pressures in certain areas, especially around Stour Valley, Dedham Vale.

Issues with visibility of offer for residents and visitors.

*"Some people don't want more people to come, but I'd like it to be more vibrant."*

*"A lot of people who have lived there their whole life – so lack of comparison to other places. They're making comparisons to the past rather than other places."*

*"If you support creative industries then it will pay back for the long term and will generate ancillary spend."*

*"As a resident I've always thought that there isn't enough promotion of existing assets on our doorstep."*

*"We have too many visitors, so we want to improve experience and engagement rather than attract higher numbers. Capacity is an issue."*

How can the visitor experience be more localised?

What are local residents proud of? Where do they take their friends and relatives when visiting the area?

How can the local offer be more visible – to residents and to visitors?

What cultural & heritage assets could be used as hooks for hotspots and itineraries?

What does the 'off season' offer in B&MS look like, for residents and visitors?

What infrastructure is needed to improve visitor experiences?

Which demographics are not attending culture / heritage / tourism attractions?

What barriers are there to them attending currently? How can those barriers be overcome?

How can we be more joined-up across the culture, heritage and tourism sector? Why?

Who is managing audiences / visitors – and their experiences – well?

Where is the sector leadership in B&MS?

How could B&MS disperse visitors from honeypot areas?

# Thematic offers for development

*"Babergh and Mid Suffolk is clunky, it doesn't have a cohesive identity"*

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*"There is an artistic heritage worth celebrating."*

*"Culture needs punk people not cabinet meetings."*

Visual arts heritage

Prioritising outdoor pursuits / water-based activities

Emphasising B&MS' unspoilt quietness as a place to get away from it all and recharge

*"Many artists and writers have lived and worked here over time, but they are seen as individuals, but not as a cluster or movement. We should be championing the region as a centre of landscape to abstraction art."*

*"Babergh & Mid Suffolk is a Cinderella place – it has good opportunities but it's in the shadow of Bury, Newmarket and Ipswich."*

*"Unspoilt, quiet, get away from it all, recharge, cosy, pastoral, soft, beautiful, quaint, pretty, charming, 'twee but attractive'."*

*"There is a personal appeal, a soul to events here. Not WOW moments but we like to be small, be personal, intimate. Mid Suffolk is not grand or overpowering, it's about individual character."*

B&MS has an 'unspoilt quietness' is a place 'to get away from it all and recharge.' Is this the right message? If so, how could this be emphasised? If not, how could it be changed?

How can B&MS make the most of its artistic heritage? What partners are needed to make this successful? What infrastructure needs to be developed or improved?

Growing interest in outdoor pursuits has caused some friction between visitors and residents. Is it better to be on the front foot and better manage outdoor pursuits, or to try and dissuade visitors? Why? How could this be implemented?

What does this mean for residents? What projects and programmes are needed to help residents better engage with these themes?

What's missing from this list? Are there any opportunity areas we have overlooked? What are they?

Suffolk has an ambition to be the 'greenest' county in the UK (greensuffolk.org) but Mid Suffolk is the 4th worst local authority in England for access to public green space.\*

## Prioritising needs of local residents over visitors

NHS Suffolk & North East Essex ICP is a national leader in social prescribing.

"There are loads of special arts societies (for middle class, retired people), but they're not tapping into everyday people, children and families"

Lack of opportunities for culture / heritage / tourism pathways, study, work experience, paid early career work – young people move away to gain this.

Rural communities and transport challenges make a hyperlocal cultural offer more important  
Suffolk Libraries are national leaders in cultural projects.

*"People are a lot more aware of benefits of spending time outdoors in green and blue spaces and for health and wellbeing, recharging, time out to do simple things. Access to countryside exists across the district but have to try harder to find it."*

*"Those small interactions provide structure to the week and reduce isolation. Local regular things are just as vital as bigger venues."*

*"Mid Suffolk lacks heart because it doesn't make culture part of people's everyday lives."*

*"The area is becoming increasingly attractive, to new residents and tourists. Local pride needs to be generated to help both – and help not to neglect existing communities."*

How can the sector reach and resonate more with residents?

What venues can be utilised for better access to cultural participation?

How can more opportunities for creativity in the outdoors be developed?

What skills development and early career opportunities could be developed for young people?

How can creative engagement be better utilised for promoting improved health and wellbeing?

What partnerships are needed to help tackle rural isolation?

What does being 'the greenest' place mean for the culture, heritage and tourism sector?

Are cultural opportunities evenly distributed, visible, shared? What could or should change in order to rebalance this?

\* ONS – Access to public parks and green spaces dataset 2020 - an average distance of 689.33m to access public green space. Babergh is 40th with 533.15m.

# Food & drink heritage

A growing wine production industry in B&MS.

Links with the environment, sustainability and biodiversity

Existing food-related attractions such as Jimmy's Farm & Suffolk Food Hall.

The Food Museum has the potential to grow national significance.

Two Food Enterprise Zones in Stowmarket and Wherstead.

*"There are lots of food attractions developing quickly. It's very encouraging."*

*"Connecting with food, nature and the environment should be exciting. We want to take away the drudgery of preparing food and make it inspiring"*

*"Culture-led development is the only game in town. Retail is not the future. Experiences are."*

*"You don't get big collaborative ideas between heritage sector, never joined up offer."*

*"Huge number of visitors have expectations about sustainable visit – currently a niche market"*

Is this 'the joined-up offer' to prioritise? Does it adequately reflect B&MS' unique identity?

Does this theme balance the needs of residents and visitors? How? (If not, why not?)

How can the sector develop local understanding of B&MS' agricultural heritage? How can the connection with and pride in this heritage grow?

Sharing food is a way to build relationships – how can the local food culture be used to tackle local social issues?

How could this theme explore issues around climate change, biodiversity and appreciation of Suffolk's unique environment?

What partnerships and resources are needed to make the most of this theme?

How can the tourism sector capitalise more on local food heritage and contemporary production?

B&MS could be a sustainable tourism area. What would enable this to grow?