

Rotherham Plan Consultation Report

March 2026



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1. Introduction and background

Rotherham Together is a partnership which brings together 8 core local partner organisations—Rotherham Council, Rotherham North Notts Group, Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust, South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber Foundation Trust, South Yorkshire Police, Voluntary Action Rotherham, and Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce. Together, these partners work collaboratively to improve life across the borough.

The Rotherham Plan 2025, which sets out the partnership's strategic direction and priorities in relation to five themes—a place to be proud of, an inclusive economy, climate and environment, health and wellbeing, and building stronger communities - is due to expire at the end of the 2025/2026 financial year.

To support development of a more ambitious 10-year Rotherham Plan, the Strategic Partnership Group met in late summer 2025 to review shared ambitions and agree the proposed engagement approach with partners and residents. The discussion focused on where collective action could add the greatest value over the next decade.

A 10-week consultation was subsequently undertaken to gather views on the proposed gamechanger priorities - the key projects which the partnership has identified will have the biggest impact for the borough over the next decade. These include: a fair and thriving economy, a vibrant town centre, strong and thriving communities, and Rotherham Gateway and the Don Valley. The partnership will not only drive these developments but seek to ensure that all residents can see and feel the benefit of them.

The consultation aimed to identify existing activity already underway, surface emerging issues requiring partnership intervention, and understand public perceptions in relation to these priorities. This engagement was essential for ensuring the new plan reflects local needs and to understand how the gamechangers can deliver broader benefits and address inequalities across the borough.

This report outlines the methodology used, the engagement profile of respondents, an executive summary of the main themes emerging from the consultation and the qualitative analysis of consultation output.

2. Methodology

Following a discussion with the Strategic Partnership Group on 29th October to scope the parameters for engagement, the consultation began on 7 January 2026 and concluded on 17 March 2026. During this period, Rotherham Together facilitated a series of workshops involving stakeholders from across the partnership, and Spirul was commissioned by the partnership to conduct interviews with residents. Full details of the groups involved are provided in section 3 (engagement profile) below.

2.1 Resident interviews:

In March 2026, Spirul carried out three days of hall-test interviews with residents across Dinnington, Wath upon Dearne, and Rotherham Town Centre. These sessions were designed to capture a broad and diverse range of perspectives by engaging people in accessible, high footfall locations. Each interview was structured around the four proposed gamechanger priorities, enabling the partnership to gather insights on how residents experienced these issues in their daily lives, the extent to which the priorities resonated with local needs, and any additional challenges or opportunities they felt should be reflected in the partnership's future plans.

This approach provided valuable qualitative evidence that complemented the stakeholder engagement and ensured that resident voices were central to shaping the emerging priorities. It also provided depth of insight into the awareness or perceptions held by residents in relation to the gamechangers, which will inform development of the condensed plan which will be distributed to all households, as well as the development of a new partnership communications strategy.

2.2 Stakeholder workshop sessions:

The workshop sessions provided space for semi-structured, open conversations with local stakeholders, enabling discussion of the key issues facing the borough which require a coordinated partnership response. Facilitators were provided with discussion prompts to support the flow of conversation and ensure coverage of the key topic areas. These prompts included:

- What activity is planned or progressing in relation to each of the proposed gamechangers by partner organisation or board?
- What more could be achieved in relation to this gamechanger?
- Who needs to collaborate, and how can they work together to make this successful?
- How would the partnership know if this was successful?

Following the close of the consultation, all notes and written comments were analysed to identify common themes and shared priorities across each of the four gamechangers.

3. Engagement profile

3.1 Resident interviews

A total of 23 interviews were conducted with **28** respondents. The tables below set out the number of interviews conducted by day and location, as well as equalities monitoring information of participants including age and employment status (respondents provided consent for this to be used by the partnership).

| Location | Date | No. interviews |
|-----------------------|----------|----------------|
| Dinnington | 11 March | 6 |
| Wath-Upon-Dearne | 12 March | 10 |
| Rotherham Town Centre | 13 March | 7 |

| Age | No. interviews |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 20-34 years | 6 |
| 36-49 years | 4 |
| 50-64 years | 8 |
| 65 years and over | 10 |
| Employment status | No. interviews |
| Employed | 9 |
| Business owner | 2 |
| Unemployed | 6 |
| Retired | 9 |
| Carer | 2 |

Due to the small sample sizes and the nature of qualitative research, this consultation wasn't expected to be representative of the whole borough, but rather to explore perceptions of residents in greater depth than surveying would allow. However, despite a small sample size there were clear themes emerging from the discussions with residents, which were closely aligned with the themes arising from the stakeholder workshop sessions.

Stakeholder workshop sessions

A total of 131 stakeholders participated in 8 stakeholder workshops. Respondents demonstrated a strong willingness to work collaboratively with the partnership in shaping the new plan, accompanied by a clear sense of optimism about the potential for meaningful and lasting change over the next decade.

Participants were representatives from across the thematic boards of the Rotherham Together Partnership and reflecting a range of protected characteristics. Their feedback was gathered to help shape the proposed gamechanger priorities and the emerging vision for the new plan.

| Ref. | Date | Name of group | No. of attendees | Membership/groups attending | Online/ in person |
|------|-------------------------------------|---|------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | 7 January 2026 and 11 February 2026 | Rotherham Together Partnership Chief Executive Officers Group | 9 | Voluntary Action Rotherham, Rotherham Council, Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust, South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust | Hybrid: both online and in person |
| 2 | 14 January 2026 | Stakeholder focus group session 1 at Voluntary Action Rotherham | 13 | Rotherham Council, Clifton Learning Partnership, Crossroads Care Rotherham, Shiloh Rotherham, South Yorkshire Housing Association, Rotherham Business News, NHS | In person |
| 3 | 15 January 2026 | Stakeholder focus group session 2 at Rotherham Town Hall | 17 | Age UK Rotherham, Rotherham Council, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub, Healthwatch, South Yorkshire Police, Maltby Learning Trust | In person |
| 4 | 19 January 2026 | Stakeholder focus group session 3 at Rotherham Town Hall | 18 | Rotherham Council, Voluntary Action Rotherham, Places for People Leisure, Rotherfed, Rotherham North Notts Group, South Yorkshire Police, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority | In person |

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--|---|--|-----------|
| 5 | 26 January 2026 | Children and Young People's Partnership Board at Rotherham Town Hall | 14 young people, plus 6 Rotherham Council staff who supported the facilitation of activities and discussions. | A forum for children and young people to discuss the Rotherham Plan priorities that matter most to them and for local partner organisations to seek support, challenge, and share insight helps ensure that children and young people's views and voices have a meaningful impact. | In person |
| 6 | 24 th February 2026 | RTP Apprenticeship Working Group | 6 | A forum that brings together representatives from the 8 core partners of Rotherham Together Partnership to discuss workforce development, including the creation of apprenticeships for new employees and upskilling opportunities for existing staff to address skills gaps. | Online |
| 7 | 26 February 2026 | Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust Senior Leadership Team | 30 | A meeting that brings together the Trust's operational management team responsible for setting the strategic direction of the organisation. | In person |
| 8 | 17 th March 2026 | Business Growth Board | 18 | A forum that brings together private sector-led partners aimed at driving the borough economic strategy, focusing on job creation, skills development, and regeneration. | In person |

Any specific issues raised in these workshops have been fed back to relevant services, and the detailed priorities and findings are outlined in section 6.2 – 6.6.

4. Executive summary

Across all methods of engagement, there is consistent and compelling evidence to indicate that the proposed gamechanger priorities represent the right areas of focus for the partnership to pursue to deliver meaningful change and improve outcomes for local communities.

4.1 A Vibrant Town Centre

Respondents reported approaching the Town Centre with some caution due to unease about its atmosphere and, at times, safety, although recent developments such as Forge Island, the markets, new housing and the expansion of Grimm & Co were viewed positively and seen as strengthening its long-term potential. Engagement identified four areas where the partnership can have the greatest impact: enhancing service provision, improving public transport, strengthening community safety and adopting a more coordinated approach to place marketing.

Residents and stakeholders emphasised the need to broaden the leisure and cultural offer and create safe, inclusive spaces, particularly for young people to support increased footfall and improve perceptions of the Town Centre. Reliable, accessible and safe public transport was highlighted as critical for widening access to jobs, education, services and leisure. Strengthening community safety through visible policing and preventative measures, along with improved place marketing, was seen as essential for building confidence and promoting the borough's strengths.

The success of this gamechanger will depend on strengthening communication and engagement with communities, expanding the range of activities on offer, and improving perceptions to encourage greater participation and spending. Respondents also recognised the need for clear, measurable indicators, such as increased visitor numbers, community participation, improved perception scores and stronger economic activity to track progress and demonstrate impact.

4.2 Rotherham Gateway and Don Valley

Rotherham Gateway station was broadly welcomed for its potential to improve direct transport links, although awareness of the project varied and many residents were unsure how it would benefit them. The overriding priority for respondents was improving everyday connectivity to employment, essential services and the Town Centre. Stakeholders also highlighted the need for stronger links to Rotherham Hospital and the Advanced Manufacturing Park, recognising these connections as vital for widening access to high-quality jobs and supporting economic growth.

Stakeholders additionally emphasised the importance of climate-adaptation measures along the Don Valley Corridor, including resilience-focused design and strengthened green-industry supply chains. Improved engagement with schools and colleges to develop future skills pipelines and the continued delivery of mixed-tenure housing were also seen as important for inclusive growth.

Overall, the gamechanger received strong support, with reliable transport links viewed as essential for improving access to opportunities, boosting local economic activity and enhancing the overall experience of Rotherham. Complementary measures identified included building civic pride, strengthening climate action efforts and expanding business support to maximise long-term, inclusive benefits.

4.3 Strong and Thriving Communities

Residents generally feel safe in their neighbourhoods, supported by strong local connections, community spirit and access to good-quality green spaces. However, this sense of pride does not always extend to the wider borough, and younger and working-age residents reported feeling less connected to community life. Respondents highlighted the need for more accessible social spaces and activities, particularly for young people as well as better use of existing community assets and more targeted support for areas experiencing higher levels of need. Strengthening place marketing was also seen as important for improving perceptions and attracting future opportunities.

The success of this gamechanger will depend on increasing opportunities for participation, improving the visibility of community activity and promoting more positive narratives about the borough. Stronger partnership working between statutory services and the voluntary and community sector was viewed as essential for coordinating support, aligning resources and delivering projects that build civic pride and strengthen community cohesion.

4.4 A Fair and Thriving Economy

Residents recognise that employment opportunities exist locally and across the region, but many feel it is difficult to access the right roles, particularly those offering progression. Entry-level positions are often not visible or readily available, especially for younger people. Stakeholders echoed these challenges and highlighted the need to expand post-16 education provision, strengthen pathways for Level 2–3 learners, and increase access to apprenticeships and traineeships.

While commuting, particularly to Sheffield is common, limited transport options and varying levels of confidence mean that opportunities outside Rotherham are not equally accessible, creating a gap between where jobs are located and who can realistically reach them.

A key difference in feedback between residents and stakeholders was stakeholders' emphasis on maximising social value and strengthening business support. They highlighted opportunities to use procurement, commissioning and investment to create wider community benefits, such as local job creation, support for small and voluntary-sector organisations and increased use of local supply chains. Consistent and accessible business support was seen as essential for helping organisations grow, adopt sustainable practices and contribute to a stronger local economy, ensuring economic opportunities translate into real benefits for residents.

The success of this gamechanger relies on ensuring that employment opportunities are accessible, visible and aligned with residents' needs. Improving entry-level opportunities, strengthening pathways into work, and enabling inclusive access to jobs across the region will be essential. Positive experiences of local business support provide a strong foundation on which to build.

5. Summary of findings from resident interviews

5.1 A Vibrant Town Centre

Residents feel safe in their own neighbourhoods but are more cautious in the Town Centre, where unease is driven by atmosphere and observed behaviour rather than direct experiences. The Town Centre is widely seen as quieter than in the past, with reduced activity making it feel less inviting and giving people fewer reasons to visit.

Recent and planned investments, such as Forge Island, the Arc Cinema and the new library are viewed positively, but their impact is still emerging, and the Town Centre does not yet feel cohesive. Some areas are attractive, while others feel less welcoming, contributing to a fragmented experience.

“My daughter and her family love the cinema and make a trip of it. That’s the kind of thing you need - something that brings people in and gives them a reason to come.”

“There are parts of it that are nice, definitely, but then you move into other areas, and it just feels completely different.”

“It doesn’t feel as safe as it used to. There used to be more people about, more going on, and that made it feel better.”

Overall, the Town Centre lacks the activity, consistency and appeal that residents want. Increasing footfall, improving the feel of the place and strengthening links between new developments will be important for boosting confidence and supporting local businesses.

5.2 Rotherham Gateway and Don Valley

Residents consistently emphasised the importance of connectivity for accessing employment, services and the Town Centre. Many commute to Sheffield and other areas, but limited and unreliable transport options make journeys difficult and restrict access to opportunities, including those at the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre.

“It’s not that the opportunities aren’t there, it’s that they’re not easy to get to and that makes a big difference.”

Connections between key destinations, particularly Parkgate and the Town Centre are viewed as challenging, and residents often rely on Sheffield for wider rail access.

“People will go to Parkgate because it’s easy, but there isn’t really that link back into town. It feels like two separate places rather than something that works together.”

The proposed Rotherham Gateway station is welcomed for its potential to improve direct links, although awareness of the project is mixed. The Town Centre is also described as fragmented, highlighting the need for better internal movement as well as improved regional connectivity.

Overall, residents see stronger, more reliable transport links as essential for accessing opportunities, supporting local economic activity and improving how Rotherham is experienced, but there is work to be done by the partnership in communicating the benefits of the investment in Rotherham Gateway and development across the Don Valley.

“You hear about things happening, but you don’t always know what it’s going to be like or what difference it will make.”

5.3 Strong and Thriving Communities

Residents generally feel safe in their own neighbourhoods, with familiarity and knowing people locally providing reassurance. While many are aware of incidents in their area, this experience is usually indirect and lead to increased caution rather than a wider sense of being unsafe. Some residents link concerns to a la

ck of structured activities for young people, though this tends to influence awareness and avoidance rather than overall confidence in their community.

Residents frequently describe friendly interactions and informal daily contact, but this does not always translate into a strong sense of belonging to a wider community. Community is often experienced in smaller groups or through specific activities, such as sports or arts clubs, rather than as a shared identity across the wider area.

Opportunities to meet others are perceived as more limited than in the past, with fewer places and activities that naturally bring people together. Libraries and similar accessible spaces remain valued for enabling low-cost social contact.

Younger and working-age residents are less likely to feel part of a broader community and often describe community as something they would need to actively seek out. Across all groups, there is also a sense that local views are not always heard or acted upon, contributing to weaker engagement.

While residents often feel attached to their immediate area, this does not consistently translate into pride in Rotherham as a whole. People tend to describe the borough in neutral or cautious terms, particularly when speaking to those unfamiliar with it. Some choose to reference nearby places, such as Sheffield or South Yorkshire rather than Rotherham directly, reflecting awareness of external perceptions.

Overall, community connections exist but are uneven, feelings of safety are grounded in familiarity, and pride in Rotherham is limited beyond the immediate local context.

Strengthening opportunities for participation, increasing visibility of community activity and supporting more positive narratives about the borough may help build a more shared and confident sense of place.

“I do think there’s a sense of community around here. You know people, you see the same faces, and you stop for a chat, it’s that kind of place. You’re not on your own; you always feel like there are people around, and if anything happened, someone would help. But it’s not like it used to be. People were out more, talking more, it felt busier. Now it’s a bit quieter and people keep to themselves more, but it’s still there underneath.”

5.4 A Fair and Thriving Economy

Residents recognise that employment opportunities exist locally and across the wider region, but many feel that accessing the right opportunities, particularly those offering progression, is difficult. Entry-level roles are not always visible or readily available, especially for younger people, creating a sense that starting out in the local labour market is challenging.

Although commuting, particularly to Sheffield, is common, the ability to travel is not universal. Limited transport options and varying levels of confidence or awareness mean that opportunities outside Rotherham are not equally accessible to all. This contributes to a gap between where jobs exist and who can realistically reach them.

Residents also report that pathways into work and career progression are unclear. While opportunities are acknowledged, they are not always well-signposted or easy to navigate, leading many to feel that building a sustainable career often requires looking beyond the borough.

Overall, residents describe a fair and thriving economy as one where employment exists that is accessible, visible or aligned with their needs. Improving entry-level opportunities, strengthening pathways into work and ensuring inclusive access to opportunities across the region will be essential. Positive experiences of local business support provide a strong foundation on which to build.

“There are good jobs out there, places like the AMRC and things like that, but not everyone can get to them. If you have got transport and can travel, it opens things up. But if you haven’t, or it’s not straightforward, those opportunities might as well not exist. It’s not just about the jobs being there; it’s whether people can actually reach them”

6. Summary of findings from stakeholder workshops

6.1 Children and Young People’s Partnership Board (reference focus group session 5)

Members contributed their vision for the Rotherham Plan by sharing how they would like the borough to look by 2036 and outlining the actions local partner organisations can take to support improvement. This was explored through the children and young people writing a postcard from 2036, imagining that the gamechangers had been successfully delivered, and followed by a discussion. They provided a wide range of suggestions, including:

- **Education:**
 - inclusive teaching; better access to home-schooling; modern technology across schools and libraries.
 - a wider range of post-16 and higher-education courses, with subjects such as animal care.

- greater access to affordable, healthy food.
- **A thriving Town Centre:**
 - more activities and spaces designed specifically for them
 - repurposing empty units, introducing a wider range of alternative shops, expanding cinema options, broadening dining choices, and providing opportunities to showcase student artwork.
- **Town Centre library:**
 - modern study spaces, quiet zones, games clubs and themed areas to make the new library appealing for learning and socialising.
- **Community safety:**
 - tackling crime, gang activity and drug misuse
 - expanding anti-bullying campaigns to support young people.
- **Public transport:**
 - Concerns about safety and accessibility, requesting better train and tram links, a more modern and well-lit bus station with visible staff, and support to help them feel confident using public transport.
- **Environment and green spaces:**
 - importance of protecting parks, reducing litter and rodent issues, expanding woodland, and creating new nature trails.
- **Inclusive economy:**
 - young people called for fair access to good jobs and apprenticeships, stronger support for vulnerable groups, and a commitment from employers to pay the real living wage.
- **Housing:**
 - increasing the availability of accessible and disability-adapted homes to support independent living.
- **Health and wellbeing:**
 - concerns included long GP waiting times, limited mental-health support, lack of awareness of hidden disabilities, and the need for stronger prevention efforts around vaping.
- **Residents' voice:**
 - greater involvement in shaping local strategies and services, particularly for people with lived experience.
- **Things to do:**
 - more exercise areas, additional football pitches, themed sports days, and new attractions at Clifton Park such as a zip line and larger year-round events.
- **Investment:**
 - continued investment in local places, including aspirations for a new town centre theatre.
- **Accessible services:**
 - services should remain inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all residents.

- an environment full of nature
- no rats
- more people homeschooled
- more young people travel busses
- school should be cancelled or
is + teachers with respect



- **Placing community at the centre** – a plan rooted in local needs and aspirations, using co-production and empowering communities to drive change.
- **Ambition, civic pride and clearer communication** – respondents called for a bold plan that builds pride, supported by better communication so residents feel informed and included.
- **Health, wellbeing, inclusion and future growth** – improving health and inclusion while planning effectively for the borough’s long-term development.



Other priorities which were mentioned included:

- Continued Town Centre regeneration
- Improved public transport
- Greater community empowerment
- Strengthening key local centres such as Dinnington High Street
- Showcasing major developments, including the new markets
- Rotherham Gateway station
- Need for investment in education and skills, including support for schools, more apprenticeship opportunities and stronger promotion of assets such as University Centre Rotherham
- Attracting new businesses
- Enhancing neighbourhood working
- Progressing housing improvements, particularly bringing empty properties back into use

Following the initial exercises, stakeholders were asked to reflect on the proposed vision for the four ‘gamechangers’ and to identify the key opportunities and challenges that must be addressed to ensure the new plan effectively responds to local needs.

6.3 A Vibrant Town Centre

6.3.1 “What should the vision of Town Centre gamechanger be?”

When asking participants what they thought the vision for the Town Centre should be, respondents suggested that the vision should be confident, positive, and people-focused, emphasising what residents and visitors can enjoy while ensuring the area feels safe, welcoming, and a source of local pride. They highlighted the importance of attracting and growing businesses, encouraging those currently based in Parkgate to return to the Town Centre, and more effectively showcasing key assets such as the cinema, Empire Theatre, markets, restaurants, and emerging cultural venues.

Culture should remain central to the vision, with co-production playing an important role in shaping the look, feel, and future use of Town Centre spaces. New housing was viewed as

essential for creating a lively, sustainable place throughout both the day and evening, supporting footfall and contributing to long-term vibrancy.

Respondents also emphasised the need to align health priorities, Town Centre investment, economic growth, and retail development so that the borough's ambitions reinforce one another and deliver a coherent, long-term vision.

6.3.2 “What activity is planned or progressing in relation to the Town Centre gamechanger?”

Respondents highlighted a wide range of initiatives already supporting the Town Centre vision:

- South Yorkshire Police are increasing their presence through additional Police Community Support Officers and regular engagement with young people
- the Council's Street Safe Team continues targeted work to address drug use and street drinking.
- Major developments, such as Forge Island, the new library and markets complex, and the Town Centre Health Hub were highlighted as modern, accessible investments that can help rebuild confidence and attract more visitors.
- Emphasised the importance of acting on resident feedback, praising the role of Healthwatch Rotherham in capturing community insight and recognising improvements already made, including the introduction of a single contact number for the Homelessness Team.
- A new decarbonisation standard is now guiding Council building projects, ensuring that sustainability is embedded within future capital investments. Alongside this, a feasibility study for a Rotherham Heat Network is exploring options for low-carbon district heating, with particular consideration given to heritage sites where reducing emissions while preserving character is critical.
- Respondents emphasised strengthening perceptions of Rotherham by showcasing visible regeneration, riverside improvements, expanded cultural events and enhanced green spaces. Clear communication was seen as vital to managing disruption during construction.

6.3.3 “What more could be achieved in relation to the Town Centre gamechanger?”

Five key areas for further development were identified:

1. Improving public transport systems

Transport was identified as a key priority, with participants highlighting the need for better routes, more frequent bus services, and faster, more reliable journey times. Respondents emphasised the importance of strengthening engagement with a wider range of partners, including the voluntary and community sector, local businesses, students, and The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust to ensure that transport planning reflects diverse needs and supports increased access to the Town Centre.

2. More effective partnership working

Respondents highlighted a need to strengthen collaboration by reducing duplication between Town Centre and neighbourhood boards, suggesting that streamlining governance structures could create clearer roles and more efficient decision-making. They also identified significant opportunities to expand preventative health services and to relocate more provision into the Town Centre, noting that these changes would support accessibility, increase footfall, and encourage more integrated partnership approaches.

3. Strengthening service provision

Respondents emphasised the need for more effective partnership working and engagement. Stronger collaboration with the voluntary and community sector was viewed as essential, alongside closer coordination between partner events teams, cultural venues and community-engagement leads to improve promotion and accessibility.

Greater collaboration with local businesses and investors was highlighted as vital for supporting growth and increasing footfall, backed by meaningful community engagement and well-informed councillors who can advocate confidently and effectively. Ensuring safe, welcoming transport interchanges was identified as a shared responsibility, with a key role for the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority.

The importance of integrated working across partner organisations, including sharing information, coordinating resources and shaping priorities collectively was recognised. To support this, the introduction of a governance diagram mapping thematic boards was recommended to improve clarity and reduce duplication.

6.3.5 “How would the partnership know if this was successful?”

Respondents identified three key focus areas:

1. Strengthening communications and engagement with communities

Respondents emphasised the need for clear accountability, robust impact measurement and consistent communication. They felt that success should be visible to residents through purposeful projects that deliver tangible outcomes. Suggested indicators of progress included an increase in Town Centre events led by local organisations, higher visitor numbers, greater levels of local spending, strengthened civic pride and more positive media coverage.

2. Increasing the range of things to do

Expanding free, safe activities for children and young people, such as games clubs in libraries and cafés alongside improving reliable, well-connected public transport was identified as a priority.

These actions should be supported by wider improvements, including better mental health outcomes, stronger community resilience, greater tree equity, and enhanced mapping of flood and heat risks.

3. Improving perceptions of the Town Centre to encourage greater spend

Sustaining new businesses, reducing crime and improving feelings of safety were seen as key signs of progress. Town Centre footfall and spending were highlighted as the primary measures of success.

6.4 Rotherham Gateway and Don Valley development

6.4.1 “What should the vision of the Rotherham Gateway and Don Valley gamechanger be?”

Themes among respondents included:

- Investment in the Don Valley Corridor and the development of the Rotherham Gateway are fundamental to unlocking major private investment and driving long-term regeneration.
- The Don Valley Corridor narrative should showcase opportunities not only in advanced manufacturing but also across logistics, innovation and other high-growth sectors.

- New housing linked to the Gateway Station will be a significant economic catalyst, further enhanced by improved transport connections to Leeds, Sheffield and Rotherham.
- respondents also highlighted the need for a clear, visually compelling vision that communicates the scale of transformation and demonstrates the station's pivotal role in linking the Town Centre with Parkgate, while supporting wider regeneration ambitions.

6.4.2 “What more could be achieved in relation to the Rotherham Gateway and Don Valley development gamechanger?”

Respondents identified two key focus areas:

1. Climate change

Respondents emphasised that the Gateway Station must prioritise low-carbon design, strong sustainability standards and universal accessibility. This includes integrating climate-resilient features such as flood-mitigation measures and protections against extreme heat to ensure long-term adaptability.

An early opportunity was also identified to upgrade the canal towpath, creating a green-blue active-travel route connecting Rotherham Central to the Gateway site. This would enhance sustainable travel choices, improve biodiversity and provide a high-quality, low-carbon link between key destinations.

2. Improving transport connectivity

Public transport links between the Town Centre and Rotherham Hospital remain challenging, and respondents highlighted the need for stronger connections to the Advanced Manufacturing Park Research Centre. Although Rotherham Gateway Station is strongly welcomed, stakeholders emphasised the importance of accompanying climate-adaptation measures along the corridor, including strengthened green-industry supply chains and resilience-focused design.

Respondents also called for improved engagement with schools and colleges to build skills pipelines that align with emerging sectors, alongside the delivery of mixed-tenure housing to support inclusive growth. Better connectivity from Eastwood to both the station and the Town Centre was viewed as essential to ensuring equitable access to new opportunities.

Bassingthorpe was identified as needing a stronger community presence, supported by well-planned infrastructure to create a cohesive and sustainable neighbourhood. Raising

Rotherham’s innovation profile and increasing the visibility of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), pathways were also highlighted as key priorities for long-term economic transformation.



6.4.3 “Who needs to collaborate, and how can they work together to make this gamechanger successful?”

Themes among respondents included:

- Emphasis of the need for stronger and more coordinated partnership working across organisations, sectors and communities.
- Greater involvement of the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) in advancing the Rotherham Gateway, particularly through land acquisition, preparatory works and securing the necessary investment. It was also recommended that leads for climate, social value, employment and skills, and adult social care be actively involved in the business-case process.
- The importance of understanding accessibility needs, especially for residents who currently do not travel to ensure future interventions are inclusive and effectively targeted.
- The Health and Wellbeing Board was viewed as central to promoting active travel and embedding a health-in-all-policies approach across local decision-making. Respondents highlighted the need to clarify partner responsibilities for home adaptations, ensuring support is timely, coordinated and accessible.
- Highlighted the importance of learning from the experience at Waverley to avoid fragmented community development in future projects.
- The impacts on the voluntary and community sector should be carefully considered when planning major infrastructure, recognising the sector’s vital role in supporting residents and maintaining community cohesion.
- Stronger community engagement was viewed as essential, with colleges, neighbourhood networks, voluntary and community sector organisations, and the Council’s Neighbourhood Team identified as key partners in shaping and delivering future plans.
- The importance of recognising neurodiverse needs and involving specialist partners to ensure the inclusive, sensory-aware design of places- seen as critical to creating environments that are accessible, welcoming and supportive for all residents.
- Need for close collaboration with key infrastructure and utilities partners, including EON Energy, Northern Powergrid, ESO, Network Rail, Department for Transport and Transport for the North to support delivery of the innovation campus, tram-stop development and wider rail improvements.

- Creating local advocates, as the Children’s Capital of Culture Traineeship has, and developing consistent messaging aligned with the “Live Here, Go Far” narrative, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods (Eastwood highlighted)
- Importance of understanding demographic change and planning infrastructure accordingly, noting that without clear evidence of population growth, securing additional GP provision for new neighbourhoods may be challenging and limit the ability to meet their needs and support long-term development.

6.4.4 “How would the partnership know if this was successful?”

Respondents identified four distinct areas of focus:

1. Building civic pride

Securing additional grant funding and delivering major projects is essential to strengthening regional connectivity and enhancing civic pride across our communities. By attracting investment and advancing impactful initiatives, the partnership can create high-quality places, improve local infrastructure, and foster a stronger sense of identity and pride among residents.

2. Supporting residents

Supporting residents requires a strong focus on good-quality employment, fair pay, secure contracts, and meaningful social-value outcomes, including the completion of apprenticeships. Ensuring that transport does not restrict access to work, education, or training is also critical.

A well-connected active-travel route through the Don Valley Corridor was identified as essential to improving accessibility and enabling sustainable travel choices. In addition, providing mixed-tenure housing that meets local needs will help support long-term stability and create inclusive, resilient communities.

3. Climate change

Environmental sustainability was seen as a key priority, with emphasis placed on reducing carbon emissions, strengthening flood-risk management, improving air quality, and enhancing local biodiversity. Together, these indicators support a resilient, low-carbon future and contribute to healthier, more sustainable communities.

4. Business support

Strengthening the local economy requires targeted support for business growth, including the attraction of new firms, the expansion of existing enterprises, and the retention of employers. Workforce stability is also a key priority, underpinned by clear numerical targets and ongoing monitoring of social-value outcomes to ensure sustained, measurable impact.

6.5 Strong and Thriving Communities

6.5.1 “What should the vision of the Thriving Communities gamechanger be?”

Respondents called for a clear and purposeful vision that explains exactly what the partnership wants to achieve. They recognised the importance of defining what a “strong community” means in practice, linking it to neighbourhood working, improved health and wellbeing, and measurable outcomes, such as increased uptake of health checks.

Respondents emphasised the need for a vision that includes a firm commitment to reducing antisocial behaviour, creating safe and cohesive neighbourhoods, and ensuring that

communities are actively represented in decision-making. They strongly supported more community-led approaches, in line with national expectations around local empowerment.

Strengthening neighbourhood-level data and insight was seen as essential for understanding local needs and engaging effectively, especially with communities that feel disconnected. While ward plans already reflect resident priorities, respondents felt this intelligence could be used more consistently and effectively across the partnership to inform shared action.

6.5.2 What activity is planned or progressing in relation to this gamechanger by partner organisation or board?"

Respondents highlighted a wide range of ongoing work across the partnership to support residents and strengthen neighbourhoods:

- Rotherham United Community Sports Trust has restructured to form a Communities and Inclusion Department, strengthening links with local groups, although many projects still depend on short-term funding.
- The Safeguarding Adults Board has set its 2025–2028 priorities around building stronger communities, improving engagement and prevention, strengthening multi-agency leadership, promoting personalised safeguarding, and sharing learning across the system.
- The Health and Wellbeing Board is progressing work on loneliness, mental wellbeing and chronic pain, while the Rotherham Recovery Community continues to support residents affected by drug, alcohol and gambling harms.
- At neighbourhood level, joint Police and Neighbourhood Teams are working together to address community cohesion, hate crime, antisocial behaviour and youth support.
- The Safer Streets Team is working closely with Family Hubs, health hubs are providing additional wellbeing support, and The Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy is being refreshed, including further investment in fraud prevention and digital inclusion.
- The Strategic Housing Forum plays a key role in improving the quality of social housing across the borough. The partnership between Energie and the Council brings together housing repairs, maintenance and energy-efficiency improvements, helping to reduce household bills, tackle fuel poverty, and create more sustainable, high-quality homes for residents.
- Age UK Rotherham and carers' groups play an important role in reducing isolation and amplifying the voices of older residents. Strengthened relationships with the Roma community are improving safeguarding awareness and access to services.
- Flux Rotherham continues to deliver community-led cultural activity through Arts Council funding, tenant engagement is supported through a TARA liaison contract, and grant-funded programmes are contributing to the cost-of-living response and the Open Arms initiative.

6.5.3 "How should the partnership be talking to residents about the NHS Neighbourhood Working pilot?"

Developing a strong, recognisable brand for neighbourhood-based health services was seen as essential, mirroring the public familiarity of the A&E (accident and emergency care) brand. Respondents recognised the need to embed patient voice throughout the plan, so actions reflect what works for communities, not organisational priorities.

More consistent communication was viewed as vital, as many residents are unaware of positive work already happening. Building pride of place and creating visible opportunities for young people were highlighted as key to retaining the next generation.

6.5.4 "What more could be achieved in relation to this gamechanger?"

Respondents identified four key areas for further focus:

1. Improving communication and place marketing

Among the Business Growth Board, place marketing was considered an important priority which would help develop the borough's identity. Respondents noted that it will require dedicated resource and sponsorship to further develop the Rotherham Story and ensure consistent, high-quality promotion.

Respondents also emphasised the importance of challenging negative perceptions of Rotherham by sharing positive stories and delivering heritage-focused events that build local pride. Clear, solution-focused communication was seen as essential to ensuring residents feel informed, involved and confident in the borough's future.

The strength of the South Yorkshire People's Network should also be reflected, demonstrating the value of collaboration, alignment and integrated working across the region. Improved transport links, combined with coordinated regional effort, were seen as important for creating a more connected, accessible and inclusive borough.

The Safeguarding Adults Board is also strengthening collaboration across community safety, housing and children's services and making better use of existing forums, contributing to more joined-up and effective local support.

2. Making better use of community assets

Respondents emphasised the importance of making the most of existing community assets and securing long-term funding for both well-established organisations and smaller neighbourhood groups. This was seen as essential for building local resilience and ensuring communities can continue to lead and shape activity in their areas.

They also highlighted the need to challenge negative perceptions of Rotherham by sharing positive stories and delivering heritage-focused events that help strengthen local pride. Clear, solution-focused communication was viewed as critical to keeping residents informed, involved and confident in the borough's future.

The forthcoming Health and Care Estates Strategy was identified as another key opportunity. Respondents felt it would play an important role in ensuring buildings are used more effectively and in strengthening The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust's role as an anchor institution, including by improving employment pathways for local people.

Pharmacies were also highlighted as an underused community asset, with the potential to contribute more to prevention, early help, and wellbeing across neighbourhoods.

3. More targeted support

Targeted initiatives such as baby packs, warm-winter packs, the Maltby Community Food Hub, and multicultural events delivered by Rotherham United Community Sports Trust were highlighted as examples of good practice that should be shared more widely.

Respondents also valued programmes like Moving Rotherham and suggested learning from successful external models, such as Well Doncaster, particularly in relation to achieving sustainable long-term funding. Involving older adults as mentors and visibly responding to community feedback were seen as important steps in building trust and strengthening local engagement.

While regeneration of local towns and village centres is progressing, respondents recognised a continued need to improve public transport across the whole borough. Better, more reliable connectivity was viewed as essential to ensure residents can easily access employment, education, and leisure opportunities, and to support more inclusive growth.

4. Addressing deprivation

Reducing deprivation especially in Eastwood and Masbrough and increasing social housing remain ongoing priorities. Respondents also emphasised the need to improve climate resilience through natural solutions, including expanding green community spaces, and called for a clearer shared understanding of priorities across partnership boards to align with wider borough ambitions.



6.5.5 “Who needs to collaborate, and how can they work together to make this successful?”

Respondents emphasised the need for stronger collaboration with the voluntary and community sector, recognising these organisations as essential channels to residents’ voices. While community development is well-established, many groups, particularly those supporting asylum seekers and refugees require sustained funding and more professional support.

Partnership working across the borough is effective, however respondents highlighted the need for greater support to help local businesses stay sustainable and for greater private-sector involvement in the Rotherham Together Partnership. Increased business engagement and attracting new investors were seen as key opportunities to driving economic growth.

The Safeguarding Adults Board was cited as a strong example of effective coordination across public, voluntary, private and national partners. Respondents also called for wider access points by better utilising partners’ community touchpoints. They encouraged the Rotherham Together Partnership to move from consultation to genuine collaboration, share feedback with focus groups, promote positive community stories and increase the visibility of local services and facilities.

6.5.6 “How would the partnership know if this was successful?”

Respondents highlighted three clear areas of focus for measuring progress:

1. Strengthening communication with communities

Improving long-standing negative perceptions of Rotherham was seen as a key priority. Despite recent investment, respondents felt the borough’s reputation continues to be a challenge. They emphasised the importance of promoting local heritage, positive stories, and visible achievements to help build confidence, pride and stronger community engagement.

Clear and meaningful communication was viewed as essential. Respondents said that progress should be demonstrated through visible local improvements, such as better litter

management paired with the effective use of digital platforms to showcase activity, share updates and respond to community feedback.

2. Visible improvements within neighbourhoods

Increased participation in events and consultations, better health outcomes, and fewer community safety concerns reported to South Yorkshire Police were also seen as important signs of progress. Respondents highlighted the value of well-maintained green and blue spaces that help to improve perceptions of the borough, alongside improvements in green-space quality and tree-equity scores, as further indicators of success.

Building trust at neighbourhood level remains vital. Respondents stressed the need for stronger links with schools and colleges, greater professional support for community groups to become established and sustainable (e.g. support to access funding), and a more visible presence from Neighbourhood Teams to strengthen insight and demonstrate action. They also emphasised the importance of person-centred engagement beyond digital channels and highlighted the need to increase social housing to help ease pressures on local services.

3. More effective partnership working

A clearer shared understanding of priorities across partnership boards is needed to align with borough-wide ambitions. Stronger collaboration between statutory partners and the voluntary and community sector was seen as essential for delivering coordinated, effective support.

6.6 A fair and thriving economy

6.6.1 “What should the vision of the economy gamechanger look like?”

respondents highlighted a major gap in opportunities for 16–18-year-olds, who were seen as particularly vulnerable. They called for more meaningful opportunities for this age group, linked to the Town Centre regeneration and the Council’s Employment and Skills Strategy.

Respondents recognised the need for better support and stronger incentives for businesses to employ young people, ensuring they have clear and accessible routes into training and work.

Collaborative delivery was seen as essential to the plan’s success, with partners emphasising that the Council cannot achieve its ambitions alone and that cross-sector involvement is crucial.

6.6.2 “What activity is planned or progressing in relation to this gamechanger by partner organisation or board?”

A wide range of activity is already taking place to improve skills and support residents into work:

- SYMCA funding is being used to improve adult skills and support young people who are NEET (not in education, employment or training). Volunteering opportunities and supported placements for people aged 16+ are also helping to build stronger pathways into employment.
- The Council’s Employment Solutions Service, Pathways to Work, and the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer continue to play an important role in reducing barriers to work, particularly for disabled and autistic residents, ensuring people receive the tailored support they need to find and sustain employment.
- Retaining local talent remains a concern, as limited opportunities risk graduates and investment being drawn elsewhere. Employers are also experiencing funding

pressures, and while improved regional connectivity is positive, it may shift spending out of the borough, highlighting the need for a strong and competitive local offer.

- There are new developments helping to strengthen local skills and employment pathways. These include a new artificial intelligence and automation apprenticeship delivered by the Rotherham North Notts Group, and programmes that bring industry professionals into education, supported by the South Yorkshire Apprenticeships Hub. These initiatives aim to equip local people with the skills needed for future industries and help businesses access a more highly skilled workforce.
- Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance is improving community cohesion but requires long-term funding, and SYMCA is exploring more consistent ESOL (English speakers of another language) provision.
- Tenant engagement through groups such as Rotherfed seen as key – importance of stabilising household income and sustaining cross-service collaboration
- RDaSH (Rotherham, Doncaster and South Yorkshire Huber Trust) is expanding volunteering and peer support and developing a Poverty Strategy focused on community outreach and better mental health access. Shiloh’s multi-agency drop-in was identified as an example of good practice.
- The Council’s social value work aims to retain wealth locally, while the Local Area Energy Plan and UK Shared Prosperity Fund support SMEs (small to medium enterprises) to reduce costs and adopt renewable technologies.
- Major climate investment includes retrofitting 10,000 homes to EPC Band C by 2030 and expanding EV (electric vehicle) charging across communities.



6.6.3 “How do you think apprenticeship partnership activity complements the gamechanger?”

Respondents said that current section 106 agreements (requiring contractors to offer at least one local apprenticeship) are a good starting point but could go further. Respondents felt these opportunities should be expanded to create targeted apprenticeships for young people with SEND (special educational needs) or EHCPs (education, health and care plan), as well as for ethnic minority groups who often face additional barriers to work.

Respondents also highlighted the value of apprenticeships for upskilling existing staff, noting that they are a cost-effective way for employers to build skills within their workforce. They suggested that providing employers with a simple, well-structured menu of apprenticeship options would make it easier for businesses to get involved and ensure opportunities better match local needs.

6.6.4 “What more could be achieved in relation to the gamechanger?”

Improving visibility and engagement between public- and private-sector organisations was also identified as a priority. Increasing participation in strategic initiatives and investment platforms, such as UKREiIF (UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum), would help attract new partners, raise Rotherham's profile, and highlight key development opportunities.

2. Maximising social value

To maximise social value, engagement with local businesses, including those around Rotherham Gateway station needs to be strategic, consistent and well-coordinated. Respondents highlighted strong examples from across South Yorkshire that demonstrate what can be achieved. Doncaster has increased its local spend to 68 percent through prioritised procurement and dedicated resources, while Sheffield has reached 65 percent, presenting a significant opportunity to retain far more economic benefit within the borough and strengthen the impact of local investment.

3. Expanding training and employment opportunities

The partnership was also encouraged to strengthen how it promotes the outcomes it is already delivering, not just its future plans. Respondents highlighted good practice such as the RNN employer academies, where local employers help shape curriculum design. Expanding this model would support residents to gain the skills needed for local jobs and ensure businesses can access a strong, reliable workforce.

Expanding access to jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships was seen as essential for supporting local growth and ensuring residents benefit from new opportunities. Respondents also emphasised the value of promoting the real living wage and encouraging fair pay across sectors, helping to retain economic value within the borough while improving quality of life for local workers.

4: Enhancing business support

Respondents identified opportunities to strengthen business support across the borough. Respondents highlighted the potential to encourage more sustainable business practices, which can improve workforce wellbeing and, in turn, help reduce pressure on local health services. Strengthening the borough's retail offer was also seen as important, including attracting a wider range of shops and exploring more community-focused retail models, such as "free shops", to meet local needs and create more inclusive high streets.

6.6.6 "How would the partnership know if this was successful?"

Three distinct areas of focus were identified for developing the measures:

1. Supporting residents

Respondents highlighted several important measures, including creating a Care Leaver Employment Strategy with clear pathways into work, embedding work experience across all school curriculums, and expanding employment support for vulnerable residents. They also emphasised the need to increase completion of accredited training, reduce homelessness, strengthen financial resilience, and support more residents to enter and stay in good-quality employment.

2. Improving skills, training and green jobs

Respondents highlighted the importance of monitoring traineeships, education and training opportunities, and the creation of new roles within the green sector. They also identified broader indicators of progress, including increased investment in local organisations, fair and

equitable access to support across all communities, and growth in inclusive economic activity throughout the borough.

3. Strengthening the local economy

Respondents emphasised the importance of monitoring business confidence and economic growth, particularly where this is linked to local investment. They emphasised the need to retain more wealth within Rotherham and increase local spending.

Measures of success should be clear and measurable, with a strong focus on outcomes such as reducing deprivation gaps, improving productivity, and raising household incomes.