

**Re-Development of the Wayland House site:  
A Business, Community and Leisure Centre based around digital and creative media**

In 2019 the Wayland Chamber of Commerce identified an opportunity to develop a new business capability within Wayland based around digital and creative media. Following a review of possible sites and needs for such a centre, and taking advice from Hethel Innovation (who manage on behalf of NCC, business incubators across Norfolk), led to discussions with the Wayland Partnership about re-developing the Wayland House site for this purpose. The discussions led to an initial proposal, that provides for:

- A new fit-for-purpose facility and art gallery for the Partnership to undertake and expand its community and business services
- Job creation and training opportunities for entrepreneurs in digital and creative media as part of the business incubator/serviced office accommodation and meeting rooms
- An anchor building to attract footfall for retailers at the western end of the High Street
- New facilities for the Norfolk Constabulary
- Leisure facilities for all ages and abilities based around a 100-seater cinema/e-sports arena, a gaming-space for virtual reality and video games (including a family suite), podcast/video studio's, a bistro cafe, an atrium space for live events, and reception/management and security

Partners involved in the initiative - the Wayland Partnership, Norfolk Library Service, Norfolk Police, Hethel Innovation, New Anglia LEP, Wayland Parish Councils, Breckland District and Norfolk County Council - plus businesses such as Lotus, FX Home, SKC (Haverhill) and organisations such as British e-Sports Association, Norfolk Game Developers, Norwich Amiga and Norwich Nintendo.

State of Play: A Project management team was established and a proposal developed. This led to a Strategic Outline Case (needs of the community)/ Business Case studies/ Wayland Academy Survey, Game Developer Survey; Residents consultation - a survey to go to Wayland residents in next few weeks and a report from the Norfolk Constabulary.

Financing: the business and commercial activities at the Centre will generate a surplus, which opens up the full range of investment options. BUT primarily we are seeking a Government Levelling-up grant and possible UK Investment Bank loans through Breckland, and exploring both philanthropic and private investment.

Thanks go to Breckland Council and Hethel Innovation who have provided information and people to pull the information together, particularly Alice Reeve CEO Hethel innovation; Andrew Holdsworth and Jack Fulham of Breckland Council, but also Andrew Saunders of Norfolk Police and George Freeman MP. Special thanks to our own Town Councillors and particularly Tina Kiddell and Claire Bowes who have championed and supported the initiative at all levels.

This is an exciting initiative that can bring new business, jobs, and footfall to Watton High Street as well as much needed leisure activities that will put Wayland on the map, in Norfolk and across East Anglia.

Dr David Dent  
Chair Wayland Chamber of Commerce