REPORT TO:	Information Report
REPORT NO:	COHE/60/21
DATE:	05 November 2021
LEAD MEMBER:	Cllr Mark Pritchard Lead Member for Organisation - Finance, Performance, Health and Safety & Governance
CONTACT OFFICER:	Rebeccah Lowry (Head of Service - Regeneration) Tel: (01978) 292615
SUBJECT:	Platinum Jubilee competition for City Status
WARD:	All

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To inform Members of the outcome of exploring the benefits for Wrexham of submitting a bid for City Status as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee competition as agreed at Executive Board in July 2021 (COHE/43/21) to support key discussions and decisions about applying for city status.

2 INFORMATION

(a) SUMMARY

2.1 In June 2021, the Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP, Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport launched the next round of City of Culture applications for City of Culture 2025. At the same time, he announced that Her Majesty The Queen has agreed for a competition to be held to grant the prestigious and rare civic honours of 'City Status' and 'Lord Mayor or Lord Provost Status', to a select number of worthy towns and cities in the United Kingdom.

2.2 The competition for City Status is a one-stage approach with a deadline of 8 December 2021. The application procedure requires a detailed case being made against the key criteria provided this is included in section (a) of this report.

2.3 At its meeting in July 2021 Executive Board agreed (COHE/43/21) for the Council to explore submitting a bid for City Status working with key stakeholders to identify the benefits for Wrexham. The deadline for applications for City Status is 8 December 2021.

2.4 In July 2021, an Information Report to all Members (COHE/47/21) described the process for this exploration forming part of a commission that whilst predominately focussed on developing a place-based strategy, the exploration of Wrexham becoming a city as discussed at Executive Board would also form a part of this work. Although referenced in July as being the exploration of 'Wrexham' as a city; for clarity any application for city status would include the wider county borough; not focussed solely on Wrexham town centre.

2.5 The first stage of this work concluded with a written report considering the 'Potential socio-economic impacts of the award of City Status', as appended to this report (Appendix 1).

2.6 In summary, the independent technical experts examined the economic impacts of city status for towns and cities of a similar size and character to Wrexham County Borough through both case studies and through analysing economic data pre and post awards of city status. The findings from the case studies show that towns that became cities did experience economic growth, specifically new cities that prepared plans and strategies for growth were able to use their new status as a city as a platform to promote investment and raise levels of ambition. Although the award of city status alone without local plans for growth is no guarantee of economic growth. Being a city is not about changing the name and identity of Wrexham County Borough, but increasing the opportunities that being a city can bring for *'Wrexham as a city'.*

2.7 The data analysis aspect of this work was unable to draw any direct correlation between city status and economic growth, as this research has not been previously undertaken. The overriding belief from the cities involved in this study was that becoming a city provided them and local institutions, universities and colleges, industrial clusters, and key economic sectors with the opportunity to use city status to raise their profile.

2.8 The second stage of the exploration commenced with an all member workshop and online survey on 19 October 2021 to gather people's views and ideas before making a decision. The online survey was open for 10 days and closed Friday 29 October 2021.

2.9 The outcome of this survey is contained Appendix 2 of this report. In summary, there were approximately 8,780 visits with 6,110 visits made by people who visited the site on more than one occasion; 458 individuals responded to the consultation either through completing the questionnaire or posting comments on the interactive map.

2.10 65% (273) of the 458 respondents felt that it is either quite or very important to better promote Wrexham. 19% (78) felt that better promotion was not or not very important; 23% (97) of respondents felt either quite or very strongly that Wrexham deserves to be a city; whilst 61% (258) felt not at all did Wrexham deserve to be a city and 11% (45) felt not very strongly.

2.11 The headline conclusion to draw from the comments is that people are concerned with the town centre – comments significantly outweighed any other individual theme and provided some very strong evidence for the 'place making' strategy and the need as is already being done to put in place a clear plan for investment with a range of projects that will benefit the town centre. People appear to link the 'deserve to be a city' question with 'we better sort out our problems first' narrative and there is an underlying sense that people lack confidence in their town. People have not connected the opportunities around city status with an opportunity to turn around the perception/improving and moving Wrexham County Borough forward which is what the socio economic report identified as the real opportunity of city status. City status allied to a clear vision and plans for economic regeneration potentially provides the platform for addressing people's concerns.

2.12 The table below summarises the results of the: (a) social economic work around benefits and disbenefits; (b) social economic work around case studies; (c) engagement work. In addition it adds the (c) Wrexham.com straw poll result as a simple poll; (d) an analysis of whether the key finding from socio economic result can be achieved i.e. a clear vision and plan for regeneration allied to city status provides the potential platform for economic growth; and (e) considers how does city status for an area in the North of Wales support national strategies and deliver identified national growth zones. A more detailed table with this information is included in section (d) of this report with additional information in appendix 1 & 2.

Category	**Conclusion**
Socio Economic (Independent Research)	(1) Case Study analysis identifies a range of economic benefits of city status – **supports city status** (2) No statistical economic dis-benefits identified e.g. increase in costs – **supports city status** (3) No statistical economic benefits identified – **does not support city status**
Engagement (Independent) 458 respondents	(4) 42% of respondents (176 people) felt it was very important and 23% (97 posts) felt it was quite that Wrexham should better promote itself which city status potentially helps achieve (total of 65% of posts 274 posts) **supports city status** (5) When asked if residents think Wrexham deserves to be a city. 61% (258 posts) felt not at all; 11% (45 posts) not very 21 posts were neutral (5%); 6% (24 posts felt quite strongly; and 17% felt very strongly that Wrexham deserved to be a city- **does not support city status**
Socio Economic (Maximising the benefits)	(6) Plans are in place to maximise the benefits of city status – **supports city status**
Engagement (Wrexham.com straw poll)	(7) 56% of respondents stated Wrexham CBC should make a city status application – **supports city status**
National Plan (Growth Zones)	(8) Wrexham and Deeside, North Wales, is the only national growth area not with a city at its heart to be able to drive economic growth – **supports city status**
SUMMARY	**6 – Supports City Status 2- Does not support**

2.13 Based on the summary above of the 8 decision factors considered in proceeding with an application for city status; 6 support an application; 2 do not support an application for city status.

2.14 These conclusions taking account of socio economic analysis and engagement provide a case for Wrexham Council to put forward a bid for city status on the basis that this can be part of an overall package to support the economic growth and recovery of Wrexham, address issues around the town centre concerns raised, as well as it benefitting the whole of Wrexham County Borough and a wider economic growth zone. If it is agreed to take the application forward more work will be done on building the case for why Wrexham County Borough deserves city status rather than just considering the recovery issues currently faced (which city status will potentially help address).

2.15 Un-evidenced concern has been raised in the engagement exercises that city status will cause cost increases e.g. house prices, Council Tax, wages, household insurance. These metrics are associated with economic and social demands (e.g. house prices, car thefts) not city status, but should be considered as areas to try influence for the benefits of all residents as part of the place making strategy. To assist a response to the concerns raised a Frequently asked Questions (FAQ's) has been compiled to respond to all the queries received to date. This is included at Appendix 3 of this report.

(b) Background - City Status

2.16 DCMS has launched a Civic Honours competition across the UK to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. The competition will bestow towns and cities with 'city status' and 'Lord Mayor or Provost Status' for the first time in 10 years. The deadline for applications 8 December 2021. The application form requires a summary proposal; and no more than 8 A4 sides to describe the proposal against each of the following key criteria.

Key Criteria

- Distinct identity;
- Civic pride;
- Cultural infrastructure, interesting heritage, history and traditions
- Vibrant and welcoming community;
- Record of innovation;
- Sound governance and administration;
- Associations with Royalty; and
- Other particularly distinctive features, age, residents or communities who have made widely recognised significant contributions to society and cultural infrastructure.

2.17 We anticipated there would be a variety of views that stakeholders express about the implications of gaining City Status, some based on the benefits that this may bring and some based on people's views about the perceptions associated with a 'town' and with a 'city'. The Council last bid for City Status in 2012 as part of the Queens Diamond Jubilee Honours. It is important if approval is given to explore a bid that there is stakeholder engagement (partners and community) in this application that is based on the benefits that city status will bring. Maximising economic benefits for Wrexham County Borough at a time of recovery from Covid 19 is critical to its future success. Key pieces of work that will be required include:

working with economic specialists to identify the benefits and any disadvantages associated with city status; engaging with stakeholders about these benefits to gain their views; identifying a key set of stakeholders who would work with the Council on advocating the bid.

2.18 At its meeting in July 2021 Executive Board agreed (COHE/43/21) for the Council to explore submitting a bid for City Status working with key stakeholders to identify the benefits for Wrexham County Borough. The deadline for applications for City Status is 8 December 2021. Further to this, in July 2021, an Information Report to all Members (COHE/47/21) described the process for this exploration forming part of a commission that whilst predominately focussed on developing a place-based strategy, the exploration of Wrexham becoming a city as discussed at Executive Board form a part of this work.

(c) PORPOSED APPROACH

2.19 The work is being undertaken in four phases, with phases 1 & 2 now complete:

First phase
An independent assessment of the benefits and dis-benefits (including but not limited to: economic, social, health & wellbeing) that are associated with the gaining of city status, as experienced by other similar towns in the UK, identification of benchmarking indicators and Wrexham County Borough's key attributes that support inward investment.

Second phase to be completed end of October 2021
Stakeholder engagement over the findings of phase 1, including Members, key stakeholders and the wider community.

Third phase up until 8 December 2021
Subject to the council's position on progressing an application for City Status, an application will be developed from point of decision to submission on 8 December 2022. In the meantime the Place Making Strategy development work will continue.

Phase 4 from December 2021 to end of March 2022
Continuation and completion of a Place Making Strategy to inform economic regeneration of Wrexham Town Centre.

2.20 The online survey went live on 19 October 2021 and ran for 10 days closing on 29 October 2021. The survey was structured around the DCMS criteria as listed in paragraph 4.1 of this report; and also asked if Wrexham should better promote itself; and if it deserved to be a city.

(d) OUTCOMES/CONCLUSIONS

2.21 An analysis of each element of the work, providing results and a conclusion is contained in the table below.

Category	Result	Conclusion summary
A Socio economic Evidence of Benefits Evidence of dis-benefits	The study has found that the towns awarded city status have experienced economic growth, but ONS data does not show an acceleration in the rate of growth following the award of city status. However, the comparative analysis of new cities and towns suggests there is a potential for benefit where city status has been used to strengthen other economic and regeneration initiatives in an area. As above – no statistical evidence of dis-benefits	(1) No statistical evidence of benefits – does not support city status (2) No statistical evidence of dis-benefits – supports city status
B Socio economic Case Study comparison	Helping to boost local pride which, in turn, may have economic benefits Providing a new platform to promote the city and raise ambitions Creating opportunities for anchor institutions, economic clusters, and sectors to raise their profile Enabling some cities to attract major projects such as a university and enterprise zone, which they might not otherwise have secured as towns Allowing relationships to be developed with other cities and helping them to collectively ‘punch above their weight’, securing both public and private investment and collaborating with Government on strategic issues, particularly in Scotland Providing a reason for, and focus for re-branding campaigns Perceived successes in attracting inward investment - attributed to city awareness and the infrastructure and facilities they offer e.g. business incubator, high-profile local businesses and organisations, alongside city status	(3) Range of Benefits supported as detailed – supports city status

	Higher expectations of 'place making' with cities thought of as more vibrant places to live, work, and invest Cities with an accessible rural hinterland are seen as very attractive places	
C Online Engagement results: How important is it that Wrexham better promotes its identify, history and sense of community?	Total respondents: 458 individuals (only one response allowable per email address) **Full report at Appendix 2 of this report** 65% felt it was either quite important or very important (42% of this was 'very important') 17% responses were neutral 19% felt it either wasn't important or not very important	(4) Supports the need for Wrexham to better promote itself which city status can potentially support – supports city status
Does Wrexham deserve to be a City?	17% (74 posts) felt quite strongly that Wrexham deserves to be a City; and 6% (24 posts) felt quite strongly 61% (258 posts) felt not at all and 11% (45 posts) felt not very; whilst 5% (21 posts were of neutral opinion.	(5) Does not support Wrexham being a City
Does Wrexham have the ambitions and plans to maximise the impact of city status?	Feedback through the engagement and knowledge of local plans identify: Glyndwr 2025 Campus Strategy A483 junction improvements Wrexham Gateway developments and General Station Improvements Wrexham Football club infrastructure and team plans Pontcysyllte World Heritage Site Heritage preservation and visitor development plans at the former Brymbo steelworks Western Gateway plans for further development of employment land a key gateway in to Wrexham Increase of developable space on Wrexham Industrial Estate Estate improvement plans at Wrexham Maelor Hospital Coleg Cambria previous and additional estate improvement plans at Yale Campus The evidence suggests the opportunity for a range of potential benefits for Wrexham from city status if it links such an award to delivering more ambitious place shaping plans and investment strategies, connected	(6) Supports the case study outcome that with ambition and plans for growth city status can acts as a platform for economic growth and an increase in confidence

	to local attributes such as the University, employment and transport infrastructure and cultural attractions.	
D Wrexham.com straw poll *"Do you think Wrexham Council should bid for City Status?"*	24 hour online straw poll Over 3,500 votes with 55.6% 'Yes' and 44.4% 'No' split.	(7) Supports City Status
E Do national strategies for growth support a benefit of City Status?	The Welsh Government National Plan identifies 3 national growth zones, the first two focussed around cities, the third does not have a city at its centre: (i) Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys (ii) Swansea Bay and Llanelli (iii) Wrexham and Deeside in the north.	(8) The evidence above resulting from the case study work suggests that city status for Wrexham could maximise benefits as being the significant place/conurbation 'Capital' in the North Wales growth zone - Supports City Status

BACKGROUND PAPERS	LOCATION	WEBSITE INFO.
Government website information in relation to Platinum Jubilee Honours competition	Website	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prestigious-civic-honours-to-be-awarded-by-her-majesty-the-queen-for-first-time-in-10-years

HARDISTY JONES ASSOCIATES
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A Place Making Strategy for Wrexham

Potential Socio-Economic Impacts of the Award of City Status

Prepared for Wrexham County Borough Council

OWEN DAVIES CONSULTING

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Executive Summary

i. The UK Government's application form for city status invites a town to demonstrate why it deserves city status by providing information on the profile, key features, and impression of the area. Although the application process does not ask a town to provide evidence of the economic benefits of city status, much of the discussion in Wrexham and elsewhere in the UK has been framed in economic terms.

ii. There is no published evidence on the economic benefits (or disbenefits) of the award of city status, so to address this gap Wrexham CBC commissioned this independent study to specifically examine the potential economic benefits for towns like Wrexham.

iii. The study has found that the towns awarded city status have experienced economic growth, but ONS data does not show an acceleration in the rate of growth following the award of city status. However, the comparative analysis of new cities and towns suggests there is a potential for benefit where city status has been used to strengthen other economic and regeneration initiatives in an area.

iv. The comparative case studies shows that areas which have been successful in gaining city status identify a range of benefits including:

- Helping to boost local pride which, in turn, may have economic benefits
- Providing a new platform to promote the city and raise ambitions
- Creating opportunities for anchor institutions, economic clusters, and sectors to raise their profile
- Enabling some cities to attract major projects such as a university and enterprise zone, which they might not otherwise have secured as towns
- Allowing relationships to be developed with other cities and helping them to collectively 'punch above their weight', securing both public and private investment and collaborating with Government on strategic issues, particularly in Scotland
- Providing a reason for, and focus for re-branding campaigns
- Perceived successes in attracting inward investment - attributed to city awareness and the infrastructure and facilities they offer e.g. business incubator, high-profile local businesses and organisations, alongside city status
- Higher expectations of placemaking with cities thought of as more vibrant places to live, work, and invest
- Cities with an accessible rural hinterland are seen as very attractive places

v. The evidence suggests the opportunity for a range of potential benefits for Wrexham from city status if it links such an award to delivering more ambitious place shaping plans and investment strategies, connected to local attributes such as the University, employment and transport infrastructure and cultural attractions.

1 The Impacts of City Status

1.0.1 This paper looks at the evidence for the socio-economic impacts of the award of city status. It comprises three parts:

- Consultations with cities, including some that have been awarded city status since 2002, and others that have been cities for longer
- Analysis of socio-economic data on the performance of places that have been awarded city status since 2002
- Comparative analysis of the socio-economic performance of new cities against long-standing cities, unsuccessful bidders for city status, and towns that have never bid for city status

1.1 Perceived impacts of city status

1.1.1 We have undertaken consultations with five new cities and several longer-established cities to identify the perceived impacts of city status. The new cities are: Chelmsford, Newport, Perth, Preston, and Stirling. The established cities are Carlisle, Hereford, Lancaster, and Worcester.

1.1.2 The messages from these consultations are set out below.

Economic performance

1.1.3 None of the cities consulted have undertaken research into the impact of city status, so they cannot attribute their economic performance directly to this. Whilst all have seen growth, this is credited to a range of factors, including local activity as well as the performance of the national and global economies. Some consultees think that their status as a city has helped them to attract major projects such as a university and an enterprise zone, which they might not otherwise have secured as towns.

1.1.4 Most consultees have suggested that it is functions such as universities, enterprise zones, business incubators and others that drive further economic growth, so there may be a virtuous circle in which high-level functions and city status reinforce each other.

Expectations of the benefits of city status

1.1.5 Most consultees have mentioned city pride as the main reason for bidding, and the main benefit of city status. This may, in-turn, have some economic benefits.

1.1.6 In Newport there was broad support for bidding for city status, with a view that most residents wanted it. The successful bid followed an earlier unsuccessful one. It was thought that there might be some economic benefit from city status, but this was not a significant reason for bidding. City status was sought as recognition of the history, functions, recent profile, and pride in the place, rather than to try and stimulate these.

Making the most of city status

1.1.7 Newport ran an awareness-raising campaign when bidding for city status, and then used it as part of a re-branding campaign once successful, marketing itself as the 'gateway city' into Wales. The marketing campaign was more about the attributes and advantages of Newport than city status per se.

1.1.8 Perth has obtained many benefits from city status, but these are mostly specific to its Scottish context and are discussed further below. Preston has used city status as a marketing tool, and this is discussed further below.

Inward investment

1.1.9 Many of the cities consulted have been successful in attracting inward investment. Their success is largely attributed to awareness of them and the infrastructure and facilities they offer (e.g. university, enterprise zone, business incubator, high-profile local businesses and organisations), although city status was seen as helpful alongside these. It has been suggested that city status creates higher expectations of a place, and cities are thought of as more vibrant places to live, work, and invest.

1.1.10 The award of city status to Perth allowed it to join the Scottish Cities Alliance which lobbies for its members and markets them as investment locations. Working alongside six other cities means that Perth is able to play a part in marketing activity (e.g. MIPIM in Cannes and other global marketing opportunities) that it could not do on its own. It also features its city status in its own marketing material.

Securing Government support for economic development

1.1.11 In Wales and England city status does not confer access to any dedicated funding.

1.1.12 Whilst the UK Government's recent focus has been on promoting regeneration in towns, some places' status as a city has not prevented them from securing support. This suggests that Government is pragmatic about the status of settlements, and is interested in needs and opportunities, so city status is neither a help nor a hindrance in securing support.

1.1.13 In Scotland the award of city status to Perth gave it access to the Cities Investment Fund. The total fund is £7 million, so the amounts secured have been relatively small. However, these have been used to carry out feasibility studies and match and unlock other funds (including EU funding) and secure pilot study funds which have then had a greater impact. This would not have been achieved without city status.

Tourism

1.1.14 Historical and modern attractions, the quality of the built environment, the range of leisure and hospitality functions in a settlement and its proximity to attractive natural environments are thought to be more important than city status in attracting tourists. However, Preston has used its city status and royal crest in its tourism marketing. This was done gradually over time when refreshing materials rather than incurring a significant cost immediately. Preston did brand itself as 'England's newest city' for a decade until others were awarded city status. It is considering using the 20th anniversary of its city status as a marketing theme.

1.1.15 Established cities have made use of historic attractions to appeal to tourists. Carlisle is a part of the Historic Cities group and has used its long history to brand itself. Similarly, Worcester collaborates with the nearby cathedral cities of Gloucester and Hereford for joint marketing purposes.

1.1.16 When Perth secured city status Visit Scotland included it in its marketing for city breaks and ScotRail used it in its marketing, thus increasing external awareness. These helped to create an increase in short breaks to Perth before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Inter-city collaboration

1.1.17 City-status has allowed Perth to join the Scottish Cities Alliance (SCA). Membership of the SCA has allowed Perth to punch above its weight, securing both public and private investment, and collaborate with Scottish and UK Government on strategic issues. Membership of the SCA is exclusive to cities, which means that city-status is a necessary condition for collaboration in this group.

1.1.18 Worcester has benefited from collaboration with cities of a similar size, including Gloucester and Hereford. Collaboration has allowed Worcester benefit from these cities sharing experience and knowledge with one another. The Three Choirs festival is a music festival, whose location rotates between the cathedrals of each of these three cities, furthering cultural and economic ties. Carlisle similarly benefits from being a member of the Historic Cities group which advertises cathedral cities together to heighten awareness of them. Whilst there is likely to be an economic benefit of this collaborative activity, it is difficult to measure.

1.1.19 Carlisle is also part of the Key Cities group. Since joining, membership is thought to have brought benefits to the city. However, membership of this body is not contingent on the legal status of being a city. Wrexham, for instance, is a recent member of this organisation despite it not having city-status.

Rural hinterland

1.1.20 Being a city with an accessible rural hinterland is seen as an important attribute by some. With the Covid-induced move towards more working from home, the ability to live in a rural area with easy access to the facilities of a city is seen as very attractive.

1.1.21 From a tourism perspective, the combination of city and rural attributes is a helpful marketing message.

No negative impacts

1.1.22 None of the cities that were recently awarded this status have seen any negative impacts from it.

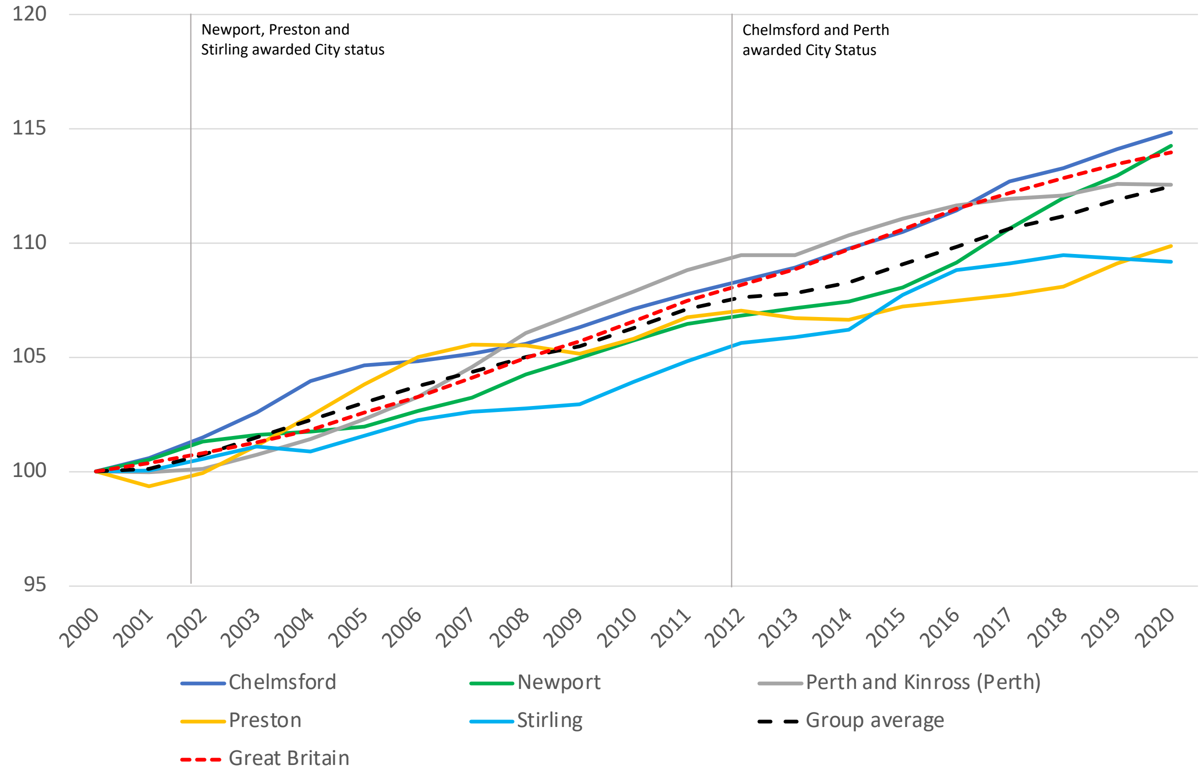
1.2 The performance of new cities

1.2.1 We have looked at five cities that have been awarded city status since 2002: Newport, Perth, and Stirling which received city status in 2002; and Chelmsford and Preston which received city status in 2012. These are the most similar to Wrexham of the nine cities that have been awarded city status since 2000.

Population change

1.2.2 All five of these new cities have seen ongoing population growth since 2000, and the award of city status does not appear to have had an impact on this.

Figure 1.1: Population Change in New Cities, Indexed to 2000

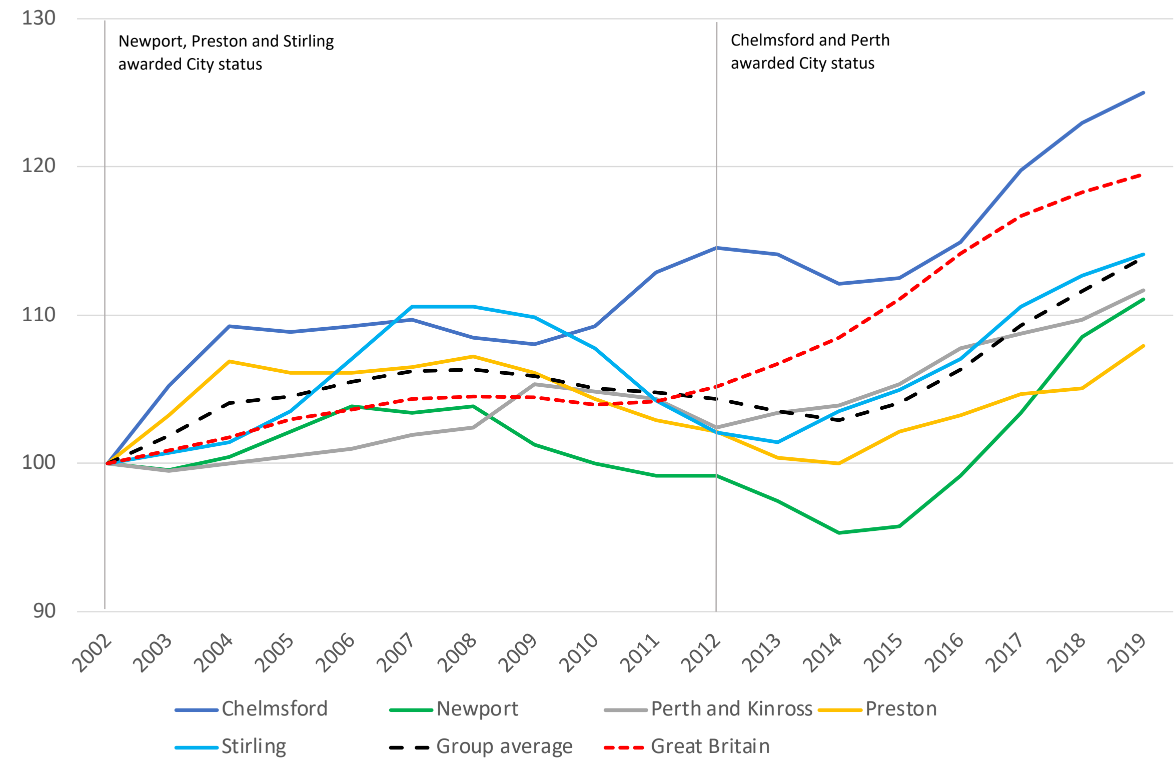


Source: ONS, Population Estimates 2021

Employment change

1.2.3 Employment change has been more turbulent than population growth over the period, but all five of the new cities have seen overall growth between 2000 and 2019. The award of city status has not impacted on the pattern of employment change in the new cities.

Figure 1.2: Rolling average total jobs of New Cities, Indexed to 2000

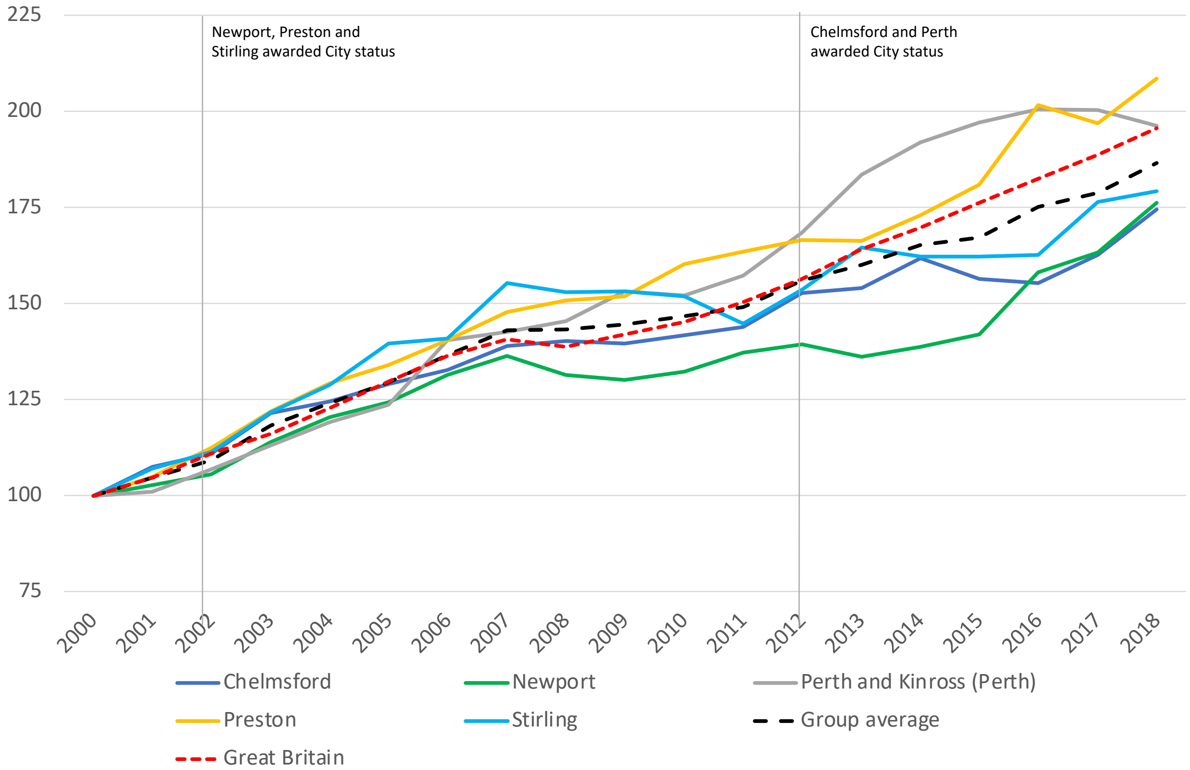


Source: ONS, Jobs density 2020

Economic change

1.2.4 Economic output is considered in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA). Since 2020. Since 2020, all the new cities have seen fairly consistent growth in GVA. The award of city status does not appear to have had an impact on the trajectory of GVA growth.

Figure 1.3: New Cities Gross Value Added at Current Base Prices, Indexed to 2000



Source: ONS, Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry 2021

1.3 The relative performance of new cities

1.3.1 This section tests whether the award of city status has had any measurable effect on the socio-economic performance of settlements (i.e. towns and cities) that are similar in size, economic structure, and urban form to Wrexham. To test for differences, the performance of four groups of settlements has been compared over the last 20 years. These four groups are:

- **New cities** – five places which have been awarded city status within the last 20 years
- **Past bidders** – five towns that bid for city status but were not successful
- **Cities** – five places that have had city status for more than 20 years
- **Towns** – five places that have not bid for city status within the last 20 years

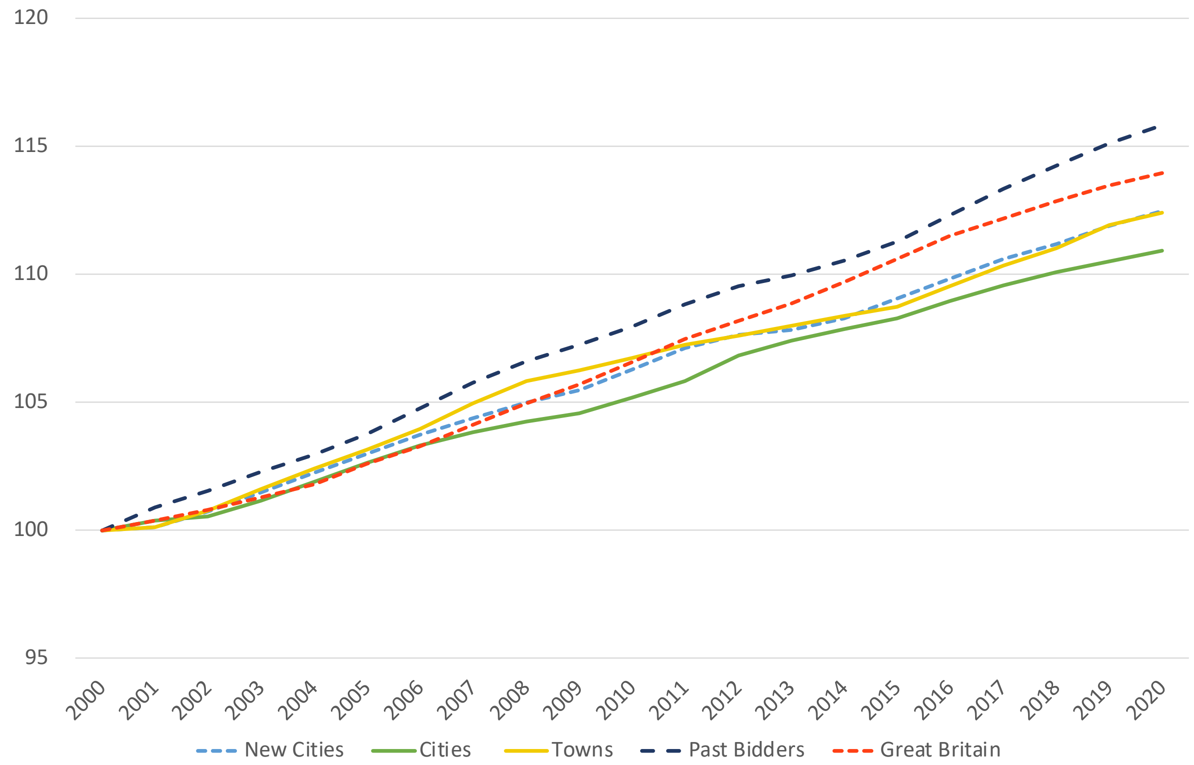
New cities	Past bidders	Cities	Towns
Chelmsford	Aberystwyth	Carlisle	Barry
Newport	Blackburn	Hereford	Bridgend
Perth	Corby	Lancaster	Kidderminster
Preston	Shrewsbury	Lincoln	Scunthorpe
Stirling	Telford	Worcester	Stafford

1.3.2 Three socio-economic variables have been compared for these four groups: annual change in population, annual change in employment, and annual change in Gross Value Added (GVA). All data used for the comparisons has been sourced from the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Change in population

1.3.3 There is some variation in population growth within each of the four groups. However, when the average growth of each of the four groups is compared, there is a very strong correlation between them. ***New cities*** have not out-performed the other groups, and ***past bidders*** have seen higher population growth over the last 20 years than new cities. Settlements did not experience a change in population growth rate after the award of city status. Therefore, there is no evidence that the award of city status has led to increased growth in population.

Figure 1.4: Change in Population of the Four Comparator Groups



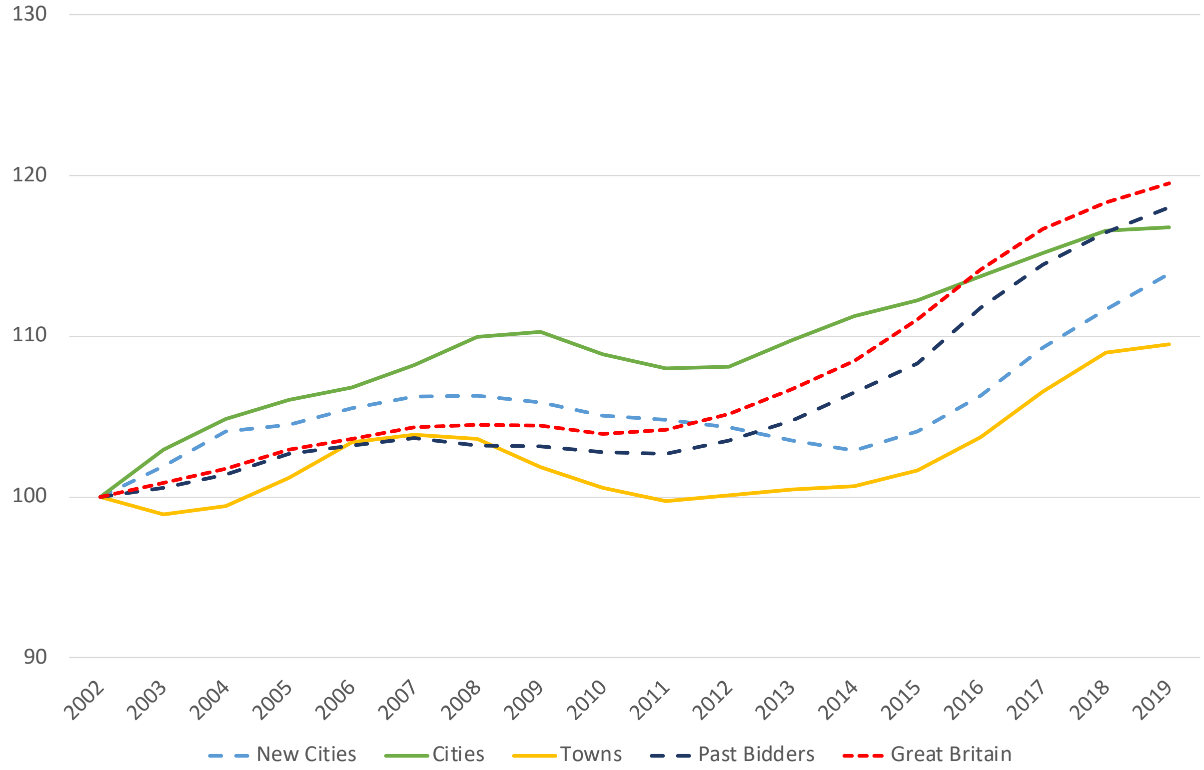
Source: ONS, Population estimates 2021

Change in employment

1.3.4 Data on change in jobs is more volatile than data on change in population, so it has been smoothed over a three-year period for the purposes of presentation. All ***new cites*** have experienced growth in jobs over the last 20 years, but there is no evidence that the award of city status led to any change in the trajectory of jobs growth in these places.

1.3.5 When compared to other three groups, ***new cities*** have not on average performed better than ***past bidders*** or ***cities***. Therefore, there is no evidence that the award of city status has led to increased growth in employment.

Figure 1.5: Change in Total Jobs of the Four Comparator Groups



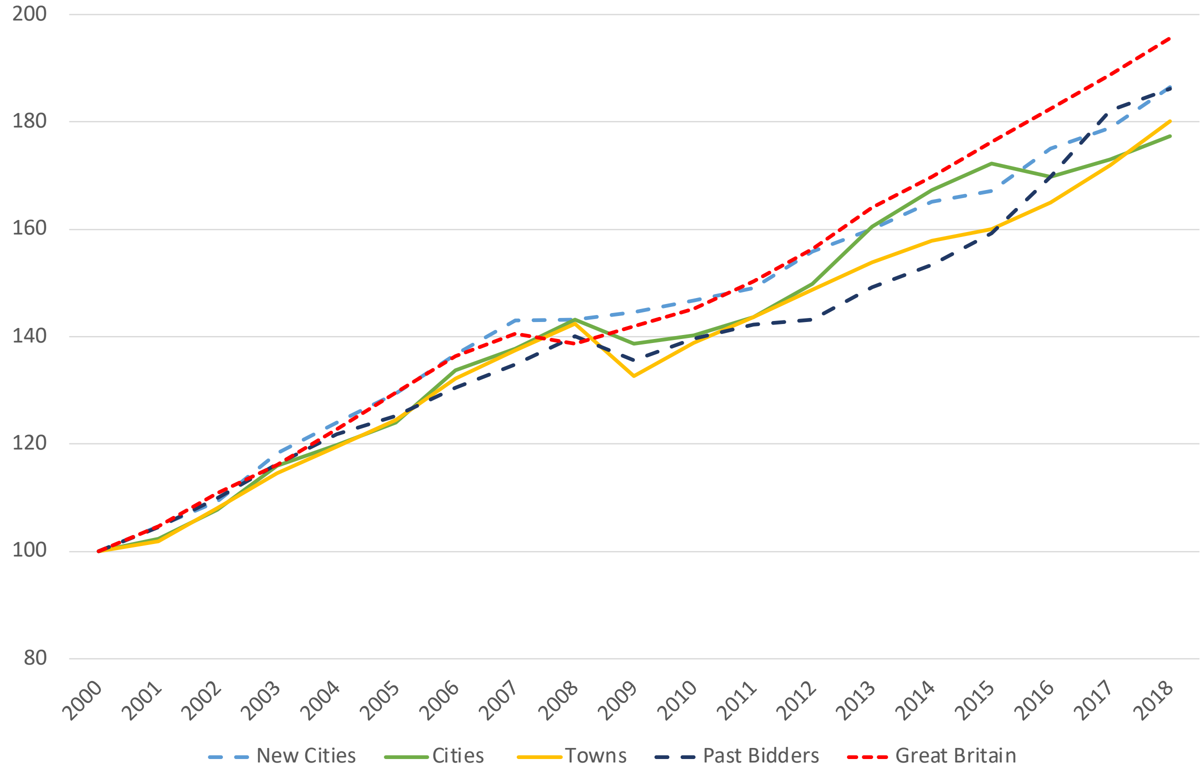
Source: ONS, Jobs Density, 2020

Change in Gross Value Added (GVA)

1.3.6 GVA is a measure of the value added by businesses and workers in a local economy. All the ***new cities*** saw a growth in GVA over the last 20 years, but there is no evidence that the growth in GVA changed after the award of city status. When compared to the other three groups, new cities have not seen a statistically significant difference in growth over the period.

1.3.7 Therefore, there is no evidence that the award of city status has led to increased growth in GVA.

Figure 1.6: Gross Value Added at Current Base Prices for the Four Comparator Groups



Source: ONS, Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry 2021

Overall message from comparative data analysis

1.3.8 The analysis of ONS data on the change in population, jobs, and GVA across 20 settlements that are similar in size and nature to Wrexham does not provide any evidence that the award of city status has had any impact on growth. ***New cities*** have not seen a statistical difference in performance to ***past bidders***, ***cities***, and ***towns***.

2 Appendix 1: Selection of Comparator Settlements

2.0.1 Since 2000 the award of city status has been decided through a competitive bidding process. There have been three rounds of bidding for city status since 2000 - one to celebrate the millennium, one for the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002, and one for the Diamond Jubilee in 2022. Across these three competitions 48 settlements in Great Britain applied for city status[1].

2.0.2 We examine the economic performance of settlements across two categories:

- Those that have applied for city status and been successful (hereafter referred to as ***new cities***)
- Those that have applied for city status and not been successful (hereafter referred to as ***past bidders***)

2.0.3 We will also look at the performance of two control groups:

- Cities that had city status prior to 2000 (hereafter referred to as ***cities***)
- Settlements that have never applied for city status (hereafter referred to as ***towns***)

2.0.4 to make the analysis relevant to Wrexham we have identified settlements that have similar characteristics; notably:

- Have a similar population to Wrexham (in terms of Built-up Area, Local Authority Area, and the scale of these relative to each other)
- Have a similar industrial structure to Wrexham
- Are a discrete settlement within a local authority area that has an otherwise rural hinterland i.e. is not part of a larger conurbation

2.0.5 We look at a total of five settlements in each category. The following section sets out how we have selected these settlements with further details on the key assets of the ***new cities*** and ***past bidders*** set out in Appendix 1.

2.1 New Cities

2.1.1 There have been nine successful applications for city status since 2000 from settlements across Great Britain - two from Wales, three from Scotland, and four from England, set out in Figure 2.1 below.

2.1.2 Immediately excluded from consideration as comparator areas are St Asaph (due to its population of approximately 3,500 people), and Inverness in the Scottish Highlands (due to its remote location).

2.1.3 For the remaining settlements we have examined the population of both the Built-up Area and the local authority area, and the industrial structure of the local authority.

[1] Note that we have excluded settlements in Northern Ireland due to difficulties in obtaining comparable data with which to conduct analysis.

Figure 2.1: New Cities

Millennium (2000)
Brighton & Hove
Inverness
Wolverhampton
Golden Jubilee (2002)
Newport (Wales)
Preston
Stirling
Diamond Jubilee (2012)
Chelmsford
Perth
St Asaph

Figure 2.2: Population of and Industrial Structure of New Cities

	Built-up Area Population (2019)	Local Authority Population (2020)	Similarity of Local Authority Industrial Structure[2]
Brighton & Hove	244,917	291,700	0.66
Chelmsford	118,759	179,500	0.78
Newport	136,078**	156,447	0.89
Perth	*	151,900	0.71
Preston	135,677	144,100	0.78
Stirling	*	94,100	0.66
Wrexham	**65,356**	**136,100**	**1.00**
Wolverhampton	246,247	264,400	0.93

*Built-Up Area definitions are not available for Scottish locations

**This is for the Built-Up Subdivision Area of Newport

Source: ONS Population Estimates, 2021; ONS Business Register & Employment Survey, 2019; modelling by Hardisty Jones Associates

2.1.4 From analysis of the data set out in the figure above, and based on the selection criteria in paragraph 2.0.4, we propose to exclude Brighton & Hove and Wolverhampton from consideration due to their size. Therefore, the proposed comparators in the ***new cities*** category are:

- Chelmsford
- Newport
- Perth
- Preston
- Stirling

[2] This number has been calculated by taking the percentage employment in each broad industrial group across each Local Authority and comparing it to Wrexham. A score of 1 would be a perfect match and a score of zero would indicate no similarities

2.2 Past Bidders

2.2.1 39 settlements have unsuccessfully applied for city status in Great Britain since 2000, shown in the figure below.

Figure 2.3: Past Bidders

England	Wales	Scotland
Millennium (2000)		
Blackburn, Blackpool, Bolton, Chelmsford (later awarded), Colchester, Croydon, Doncaster, Dover, Guildford, Ipswich, Luton, Maidstone, Medway, Middlesbrough, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Preston (later awarded), Reading, Shrewsbury & Atcham, Southend on Sea, Southwark, Stockport, Swindon, Telford, Warrington	Aberystwyth, Machynlleth, Newport (later awarded), Newtown, St Asaph (later awarded), Wrexham	Ayr, Paisley, Stirling (later awarded)
Golden Jubilee (2002)		
Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Bolton, Chelmsford (later awarded), Colchester, Croydon, Doncaster, Dover, Greenwich, Guildford, Ipswich, Luton, Maidstone, Medway, Middlesbrough, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Reading, Shrewsbury and Atcham, Southend-on-Sea, Stockport, Swindon, Telford, Warrington, Wirral.	Aberystwyth, Machynlleth, Newtown, St Asaph (later awarded), Wrexham	Ayr, Dumfries, Paisley
Diamond Jubilee (2012)		
Bolton, Bournemouth, Colchester, Corby, Croydon, Doncaster, Dorchester, Dudley, Gateshead, Goole, Luton, Medway, Middlesbrough, Milton Keynes, Reading, Southend, St Austell, Stockport, Tower Hamlets	Wrexham	

2.2.2 Given the large number of settlements in this category we have immediately removed settlements in Scotland and the South of England from consideration as comparator areas.

2.2.3 This leaves 14 settlements to select from, shown in the figure below. As with the selection of the ***new cities*** above, we examine the population of these settlements relative to Wrexham and the industrial structure of the Local Authority.

Figure 2.4: Population of and Industrial Structure of Past Bidders

	Built-up Area Population (2019)	Local Authority Population (2020)	Similarity of Local Authority Industrial Structure[2]
Aberystwyth	16,476	72,895	0.57
Blackburn	120,932	150,030	0.97
Blackpool	145,821	138,381	0.78
Bolton	180,134	288,248	0.88
Corby	65,985	350,448	0.79
Doncaster	116,834	312,785	0.86
Dudley	84,813	322,363	0.93
Gateshead	122,249	201,950	0.84
Goole	22,574	343,201	0.92
Machynlleth	2,248	133,030	0.65
Middlesbrough	177,354	141,285	0.80
Newtown	11,222	133,030	0.65
Northampton	230,031	406,733	0.76
Shrewsbury & Atcham	76,621*	325,415	0.83
Stockport	111,694	294,197	0.76
Telford	152,222	181,322	0.91
Warrington	172,684	209,397	0.58
Wrexham	**65,356**	**136,100**	**1.00**

*The Built-up Area population is just for Shrewsbury

Source: ONS Population Estimates, 2021; ONS Business Register & Employment Survey, 2019; modelling by Hardisty Jones Associates

2.2.4 Using the selection criteria set out in paragraph 2.0.4 we have selected the following five settlements in the ***past bidders*** category:

- Aberystwyth
- Blackburn
- Corby
- Shrewsbury
- Telford

2.3 Cities

2.3.1 In total there are 50 ***cities*** across England and Wales, shown in the figure below.

Figure 2.5: Cities in England and Wales prior to 2000

Welsh Cities	English Cities
Bangor Cardiff St David's Swansea	Bath, Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Carlisle, Cambridge, Canterbury, Chester, Chichester, Coventry, Derby, Durham, Ely, Exeter, Gloucester, Hereford, Kingston-Upon-Hull, Lancaster, Leeds, Leicester, Lichfield, Lincoln, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Norwich, Nottingham, Oxford, Peterborough, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Ripon, Salford, Salisbury, Sheffield, Southampton, St Albans, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland, Truro, Wakefield, Wells, Westminster, Winchester, Worcester, York

2.3.2 In keeping with the selection criteria used in Para 2.0.4 we have eliminated ***cities*** in the South of England from consideration. We have also chosen to eliminate those ***cities*** with a population greater than 300,000 and less than 18,000.

2.3.3 This leaves 19 ***cities*** for consideration, shown in the table below.

Figure 2.6: Population of and Industrial Structure of Cities

	Built-up Area Population (2019)	Local Authority Population (2020)	Similarity of Local Authority Industrial Structure[2]
Bangor	18,322	125,171	0.69
Carlisle	78,416	108,524	0.87
Chester	94,339	343,823	0.76
Derby	280,001	256,814	0.94
Durham	55,507	533,149	0.93
Gloucester	162,489	129,709	0.83
Hereford	63,783	193,615	0.83
Kingston-Upon-Hull	288,028	259,126	0.95
Lancaster	51,932	148,119	0.76
Lichfield	34,169	105,637	0.83
Lincoln	106,415	100,049	0.86
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	287,535	306,824	0.70
Oxford	173,893	151,584	0.52
Peterborough	178,805	202,626	0.75
Salford	102,763	262,697	0.70
Stoke-on-Trent	278,137	256,622	0.92
Wakefield	107,546	351,592	0.88
Worcester	102,791	100,265	0.86
York	164,369	211,012	0.74
Wrexham	**65,356**	**136,100**	**1.00**

Source: ONS Population Estimates, 2021; ONS Business Register & Employment Survey, 2019; modelling by Hardisty Jones Associates

2.3.4 Using the selection criteria set out in Para 2.0.4 we have selected the following five ***cities*** for the control group:

- Carlisle
- Hereford
- Lancaster
- Lincoln
- Worcester

2.4 Towns

2.4.1 There is no definitive list of ***towns*** in England and Wales, so the process of identifying towns for consideration began by looking at settlements in a suitable location, and with a suitable industrial structure. This process resulted in a list of 13 towns as shown in the figure below.

Figure 2.7: Population of and Industrial Structure of Towns

	Built-up Area Population (2019)	Local Authority Population (2020)	Similarity of Local Authority Industrial Structure[2]
Barry	57,920	147,539	0.85
Bridgend	62,510	150,030	0.82
Burnley	154,212	89,344	0.94
Crewe	79,070	386,667	0.83
Grimsby	133,055	159,364	0.95
Hartlepool	90,074	93,836	0.91
Kidderminster	59,418	101,139	0.76
Llanelli	50,963	190,073	0.91
Merthyr Tydfil	45,109	60,424	0.95
Redditch	83,393	85,568	0.90
Stafford	71,999	137,858	0.91
Scunthorpe	83,583	172,748	0.93
Worksop	45,055	118,280	0.95
Wrexham	**65,356**	**136,100**	**1.00**

Source: ONS Population Estimates, 2021; ONS Business Register & Employment Survey, 2019; modelling by Hardisty Jones Associates

2.4.2 Using the selection criteria in Para 2.0.4 we have selected the following five ***towns*** for consideration:

- Barry
- Bridgend
- Kidderminster
- Scunthorpe
- Stafford

3 Appendix 2: Comparison of Recent Performance

3.0.1 To examine the socio-economic performance of settlements across the four categories we have looked at population, employment, and Gross Value Added (GVA). We examine the change in each of these metrics from the year 2000 (indexed to 100) for each of the five settlements within the four groups to assess changes within each group. We then calculate the average change across each metric for the four groups and compared these changes.

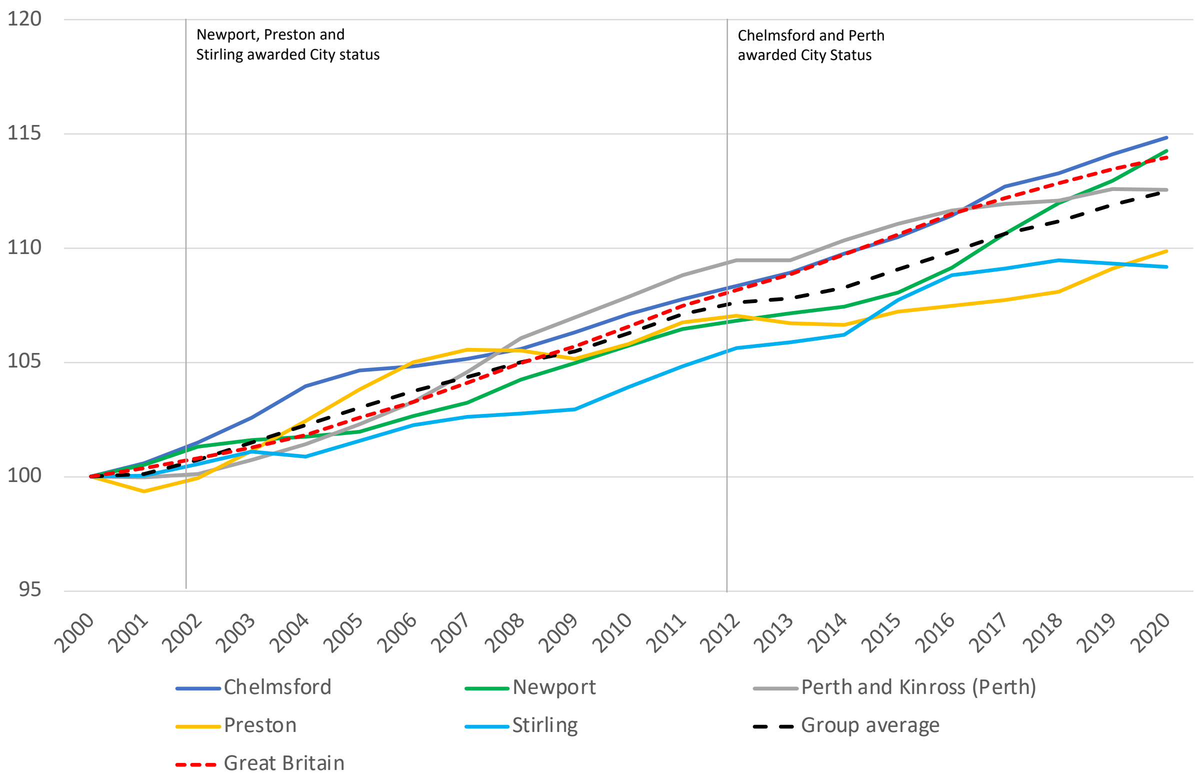
3.1 Population

3.1.1 ONS Population Estimates data from 2000 to 2020 has been used to conduct the analysis in the following section.

New Cities

3.1.2 Within the ***new cities*** group, there is little variation in population growth between 2000 and 2020 with approximately five percentage points separating the highest growth (Chelmsford) and the lowest (Stirling).

Figure 3.1: Population Change in New Cities, Indexed to 2000



Source: ONS, Population Estimates 2021

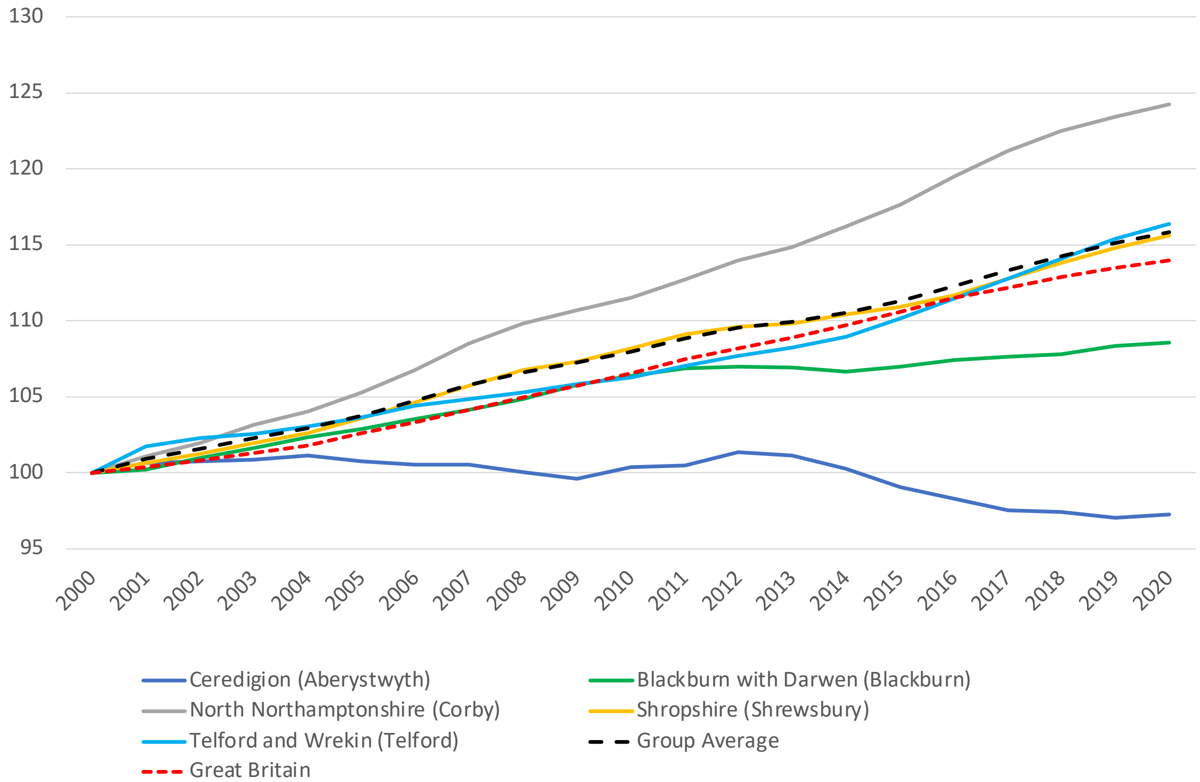
3.1.3 The group as a whole experienced a slightly lower rate of population growth than the national average over the period, but there was some variation around the benchmark with two of the five places seeing a greater increase and three seeing a lower increase.

3.1.4 Notably, the upward trend did not diverge after a place was awarded city status, and generally their populations grew at the same rate throughout the period.

Past Bidders

3.1.5 Population growth in the ***past bidders*** group has varied more than the in the ***new cities*** group between the years 2000 to 2020. Of the 20 settlements in this study, the only settlement to see a decline in its population was Aberystwyth (minus 3%), whilst Corby experienced the highest population growth, with a rise of 24%.

Figure 3.2: Population Changes of Past Bidders, Indexed to 2000



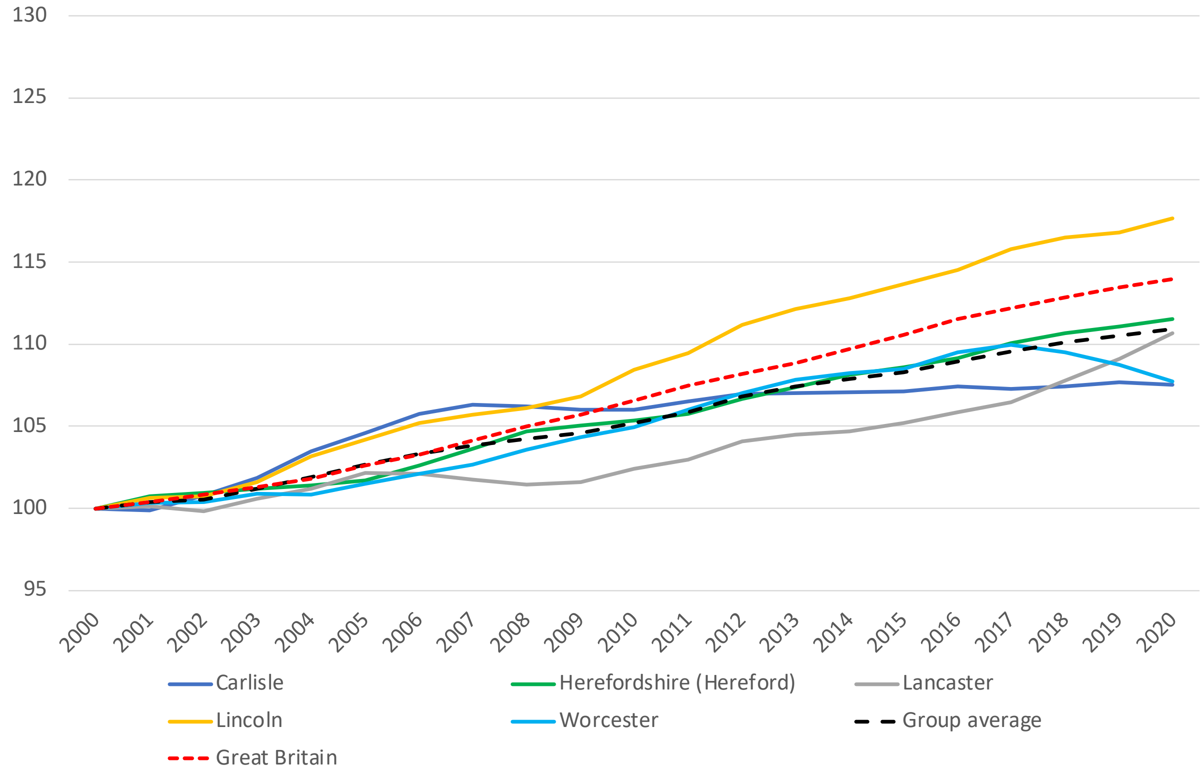
Source: ONS, Population Estimates 2021

3.1.6 Generally, the population each of the ***past bidders*** group grew at different rates however, the average for this group is in-line with that of GB as a whole.

Cities

3.1.7 Within the ***cities*** comparator group, there is some variation in population growth. Carlisle had the lowest change in population, an 8% increase over the period, whilst the highest growth was seen in Lincoln, where the population rose by 18%.

Figure 3.3 Population changes of Cities, Indexed to 2000



Source: ONS, Population Estimates 2021

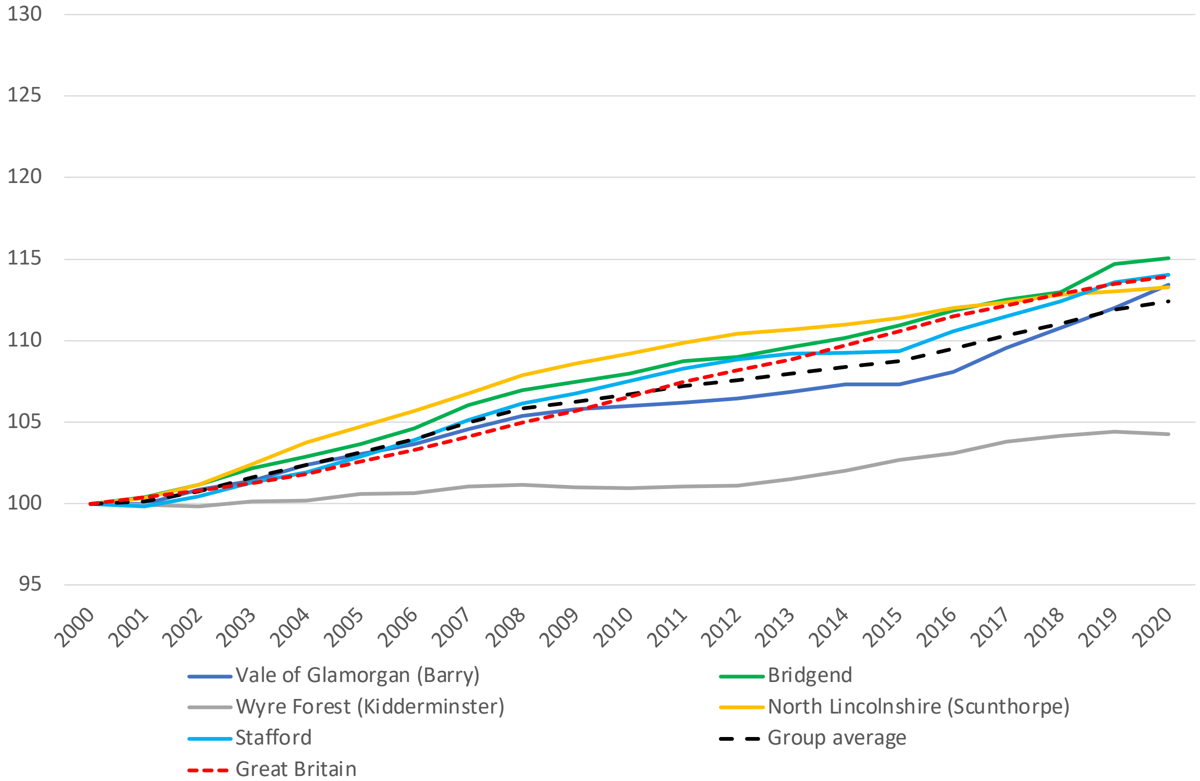
3.1.8 Lincoln is the only city that had consistently higher population growth than the national average throughout the period. By 2020, the population change experienced by the four other cities was less than the average population growth in Great Britain.

Towns

3.1.9 Within the group of ***towns***, only Kidderminster followed a different trend to the main pattern of population growth. The settlement saw a 4% rise in population over the period, whilst the majority of settlement's populations grew by around 13%.

3.1.10 Compared with Great Britain's average population change in the years 2000 to 2020, most ***towns*** saw populations grow at a faster rate.

Figure 3.4: Population changes of Towns, Indexed to 2000

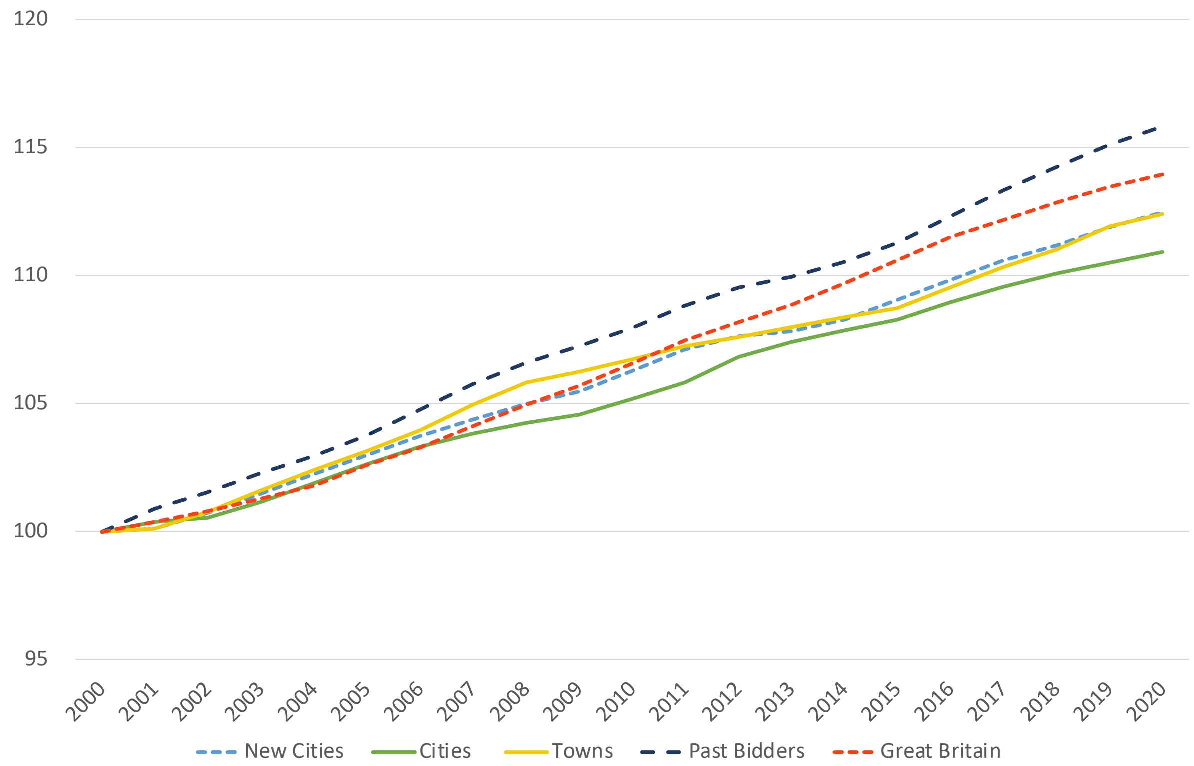


Source: ONS, Population Estimates 2021

Comparing the four groups

3.1.11 The average population of each group has increased at a relatively similar rate over the period 2000 to 2020. Although there is slight variation between the rates of change, the overall range of growth is narrow. The fastest growing group (***past bidders***) experienced growth at two percentage points higher than the national average whilst the slowest growing group (***cities***), saw growth only three percentage points lower than the national average.

Figure 3.5: Average Change in Population of Comparator Groups



Source: ONS, Population estimates 2021

3.1.12 Correlation calculations confirm the trend shown in the chart above. There is a correlation of more than 0.99 for the annual change in population between all four groups. This means that the average annual population change within each group has followed a similar growth trend over the period.

Figure 3.6: Correlation of Annual Population Change

	New cities	Cities	Towns	Past bidders
New cities	1.000			
Cities	0.998	1.000		
Towns	0.997	0.992	1.000	
Past bidders	0.999	0.997	0.997	1.000

Conclusion

3.1.13 There is some variation of population growth rates within each group, but the group averages were not significantly different. This suggests that the average annual growth rate in the population of ***new cities*** was not significantly different to that of ***past bidders***, or the control groups (***cities*** and ***towns***).

3.2 Total Employment

3.2.1 Analysis in the following section has been conducted using total jobs data from the ONS Jobs Density dataset. This is a workplace-based measure and includes employees, self-employed, government-supported trainees, and HM Forces.

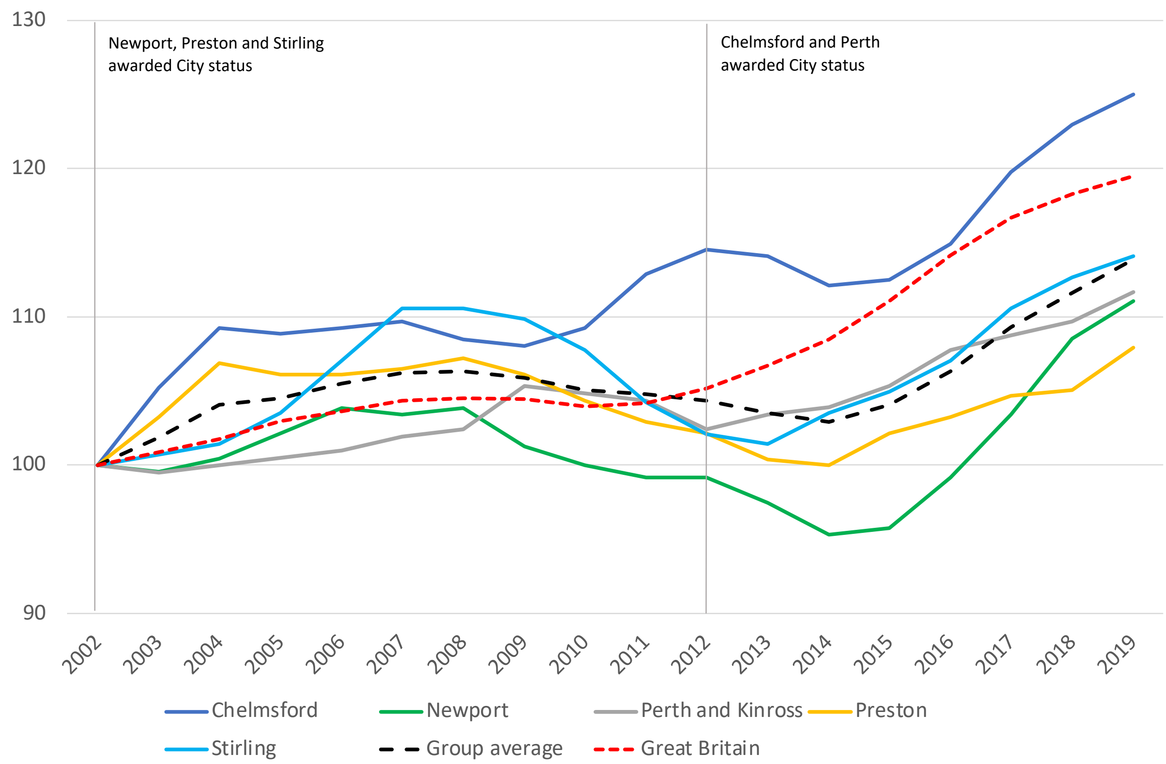
3.2.2 Data for smaller places tends to exhibit more volatility than data from larger areas due to smaller sample sizes. To account for this the data has been 'smoothed' to a three-year rolling average. This also helps show longer term trends in the data.

New Cities

3.2.3 All five ***new cities*** have experienced an increase in employment over the period from 2000 to 2019. Across all areas (including Great Britain) there is a notable difference between the trend seen between 2000 and 2010 and the following nine years.

3.2.4 Over the period, only Chelmsford experienced jobs growth (25% increase in 2019 on 2000) at a rate higher than Great Britain. This could likely be explained by its South East location and the benefits of the agglomeration effect of London. The smallest increase in total jobs was seen in Preston where there was an 8% increase.

Figure 3.7: Rolling average total jobs of New Cities, Indexed to 2000



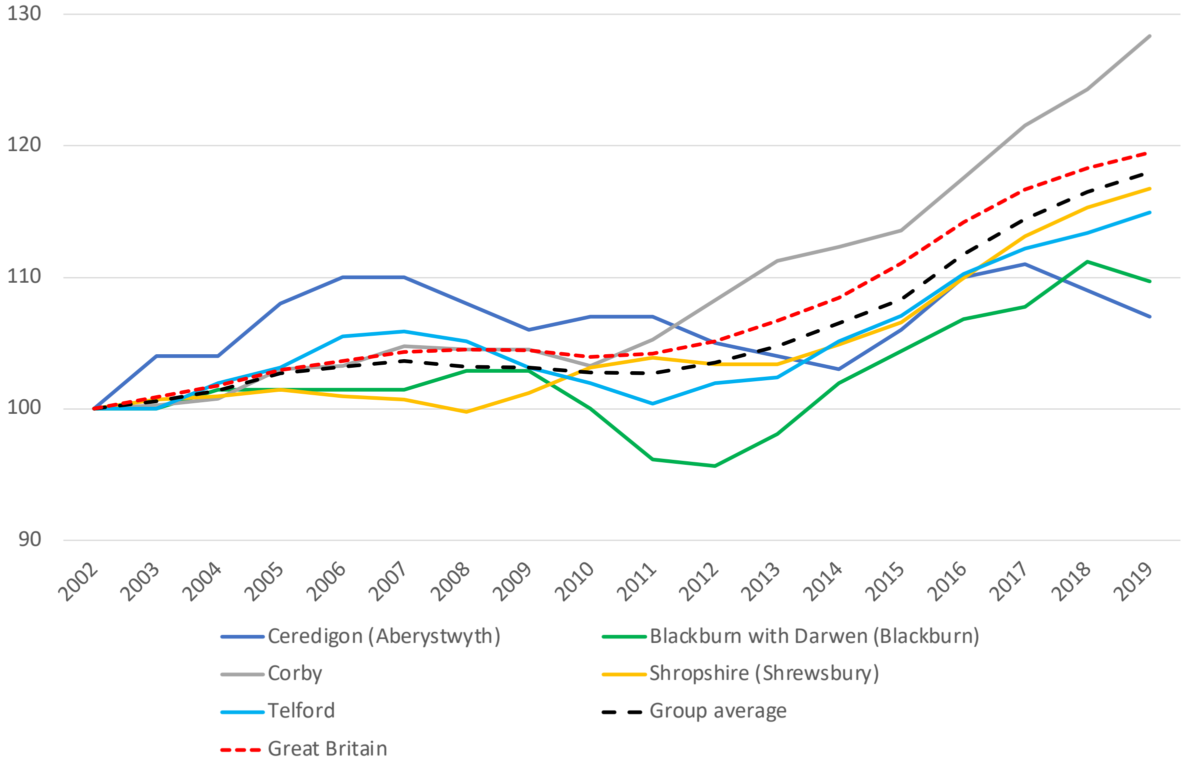
Source: ONS, Jobs density 2020

3.2.5 Following the award of city status in 2000 (2002 on the chart due to the use of rolling average), Newport, Preston and Stirling did not experience a divergence from their existing upward job growth trajectory. Following the award of city status Chelmsford and Perth did see job growth, however, this was in-line with the trend seen in Great Britain and likely reflects wider structural changes.

Past Bidders

3.2.6 There is a modest pattern of jobs growth amongst the ***past bidders*** group. Corby was the only settlement to end the period with higher growth in jobs than the average increase in Great Britain. Aberystwyth saw the lowest percentage increase in jobs, and by 2019 saw job growth of 7%.

Figure 3.8: Rolling average change in total jobs of Past Bidders, Indexed to 2000



Source: ONS, Jobs density 2020

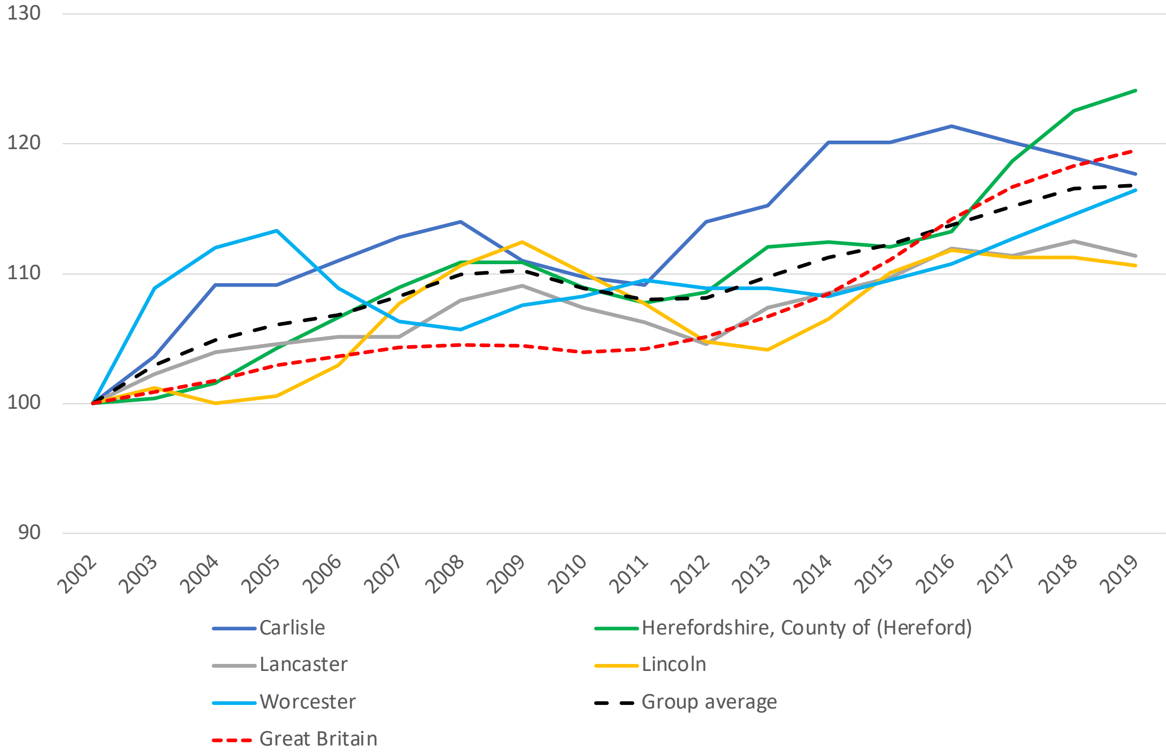
3.2.7 Aside from the final two years of the period where Aberystwyth and Blackburn saw a decline in jobs, the overall trend of each settlement is relatively similar.

Cities

3.2.8 There is some volatility in jobs growth throughout the period in each of the ***cities***. The largest difference was seen in 2014 when there was a 13-percentage point difference in jobs growth between Carlisle and Lincoln.

3.2.9 There is large variation in total jobs growth experienced by cities over the period from 2000 to 2019. However, for most of the period, cities outperformed the GB average.

Figure 3.9: Rolling average change in total jobs of Cities, Indexed to 2000

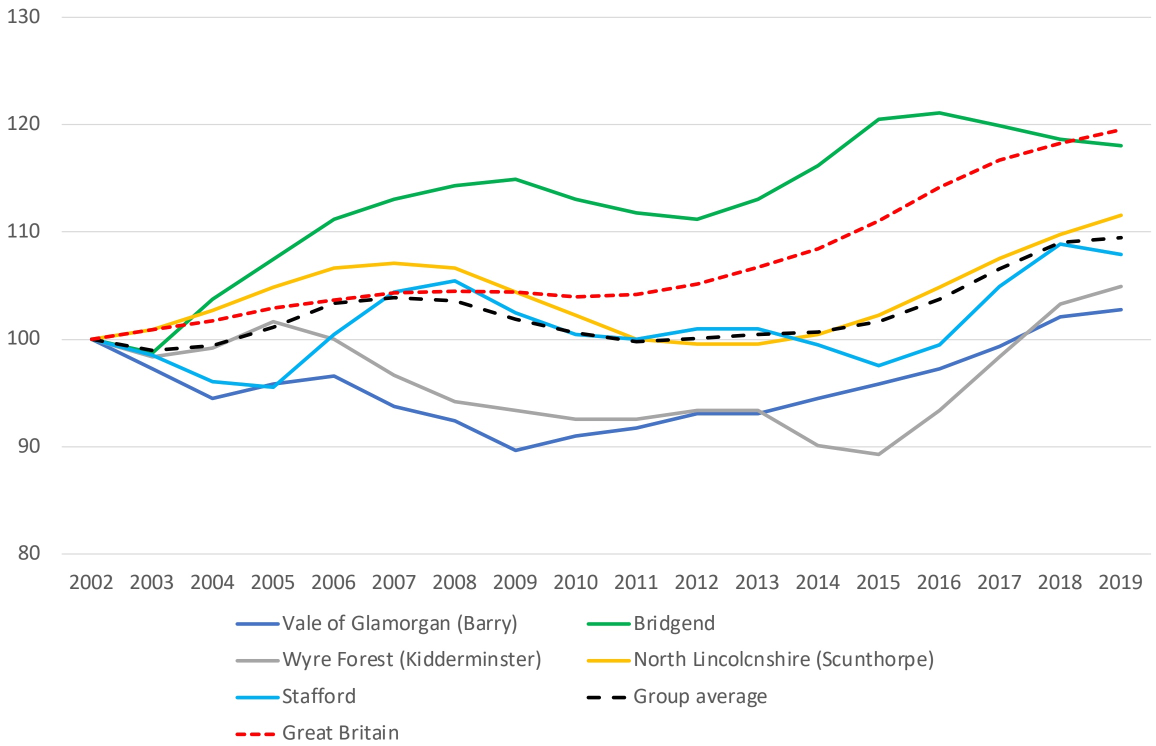


Source: ONS, Jobs density 2020

Towns

3.2.10 All ***towns*** saw a lower rate of growth than the national average by 2019. Notably, jobs in Bridgend did grow at a rate higher than the national average for much of the period but fell below in 2019. The group of towns also includes Barry, the lowest performing settlement (+3%).

Figure 3.10 Rolling average change in Total Jobs of Towns, Indexed to 2000



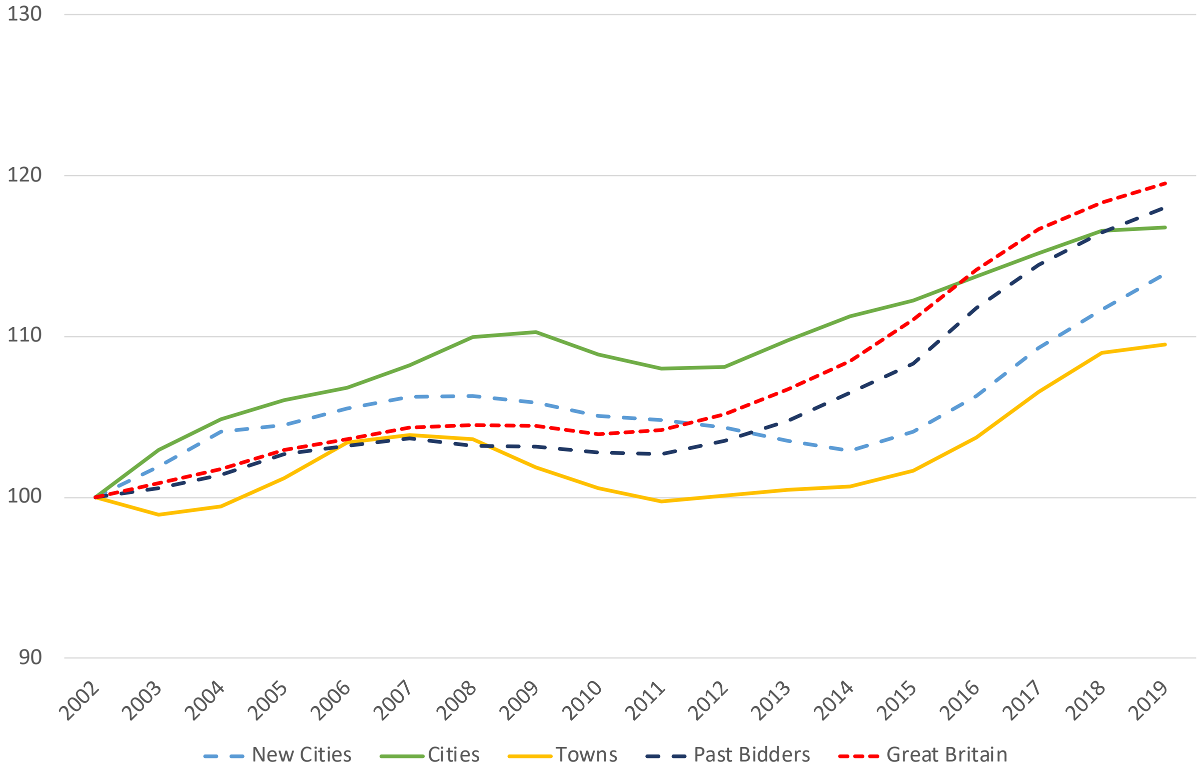
Source: ONS, Jobs density 2020

3.2.11 Overall, the group of ***towns*** did not experience high job growth over the period from 2000 to 2019. Four ***towns*** experienced a decline in the number of jobs at various points throughout the period, which is the highest number in any category.

Comparing the four groups

3.2.12 The average number of total jobs has increased in all categories over the period, albeit at varying rates. ***Cities*** and ***past bidders*** experienced an increase in jobs of approximately 18%, whilst ***new cities*** and ***towns*** saw a rise of 14% and 7%, respectively.

Figure 3.11: Grouped rolling average change in total jobs, Indexed to 2000



Source: ONS, Jobs Density 2020

3.2.13 Over the period there is a higher correlation of jobs growth between ***new cities*** and ***past bidders*** than ***new cities*** and ***cities***. This suggests that the award of city status has not significantly changed the number of jobs in ***new cities***.

3.2.14 Of all combinations of settlement types, the weakest correlation exists between ***cities*** and ***towns*** which is expected.

Figure 3.12: Correlation of Jobs Growth

	New cities	Cities	Towns	Past bidders
New cities	1.000			
Cities	0.821	1.000		
Towns	0.812	0.706	1.000	
Past bidders	0.856	0.864	0.842	1.000

Conclusion

3.2.15 In the years between 2002 and 2011, job growth in ***new cities*** exceeded national job growth, but by 2019 its growth in jobs was lower than both ***cities*** and ***past bidders***. This suggests that the award of city status is not a significant factor in the performance of an area with respect to jobs growth.

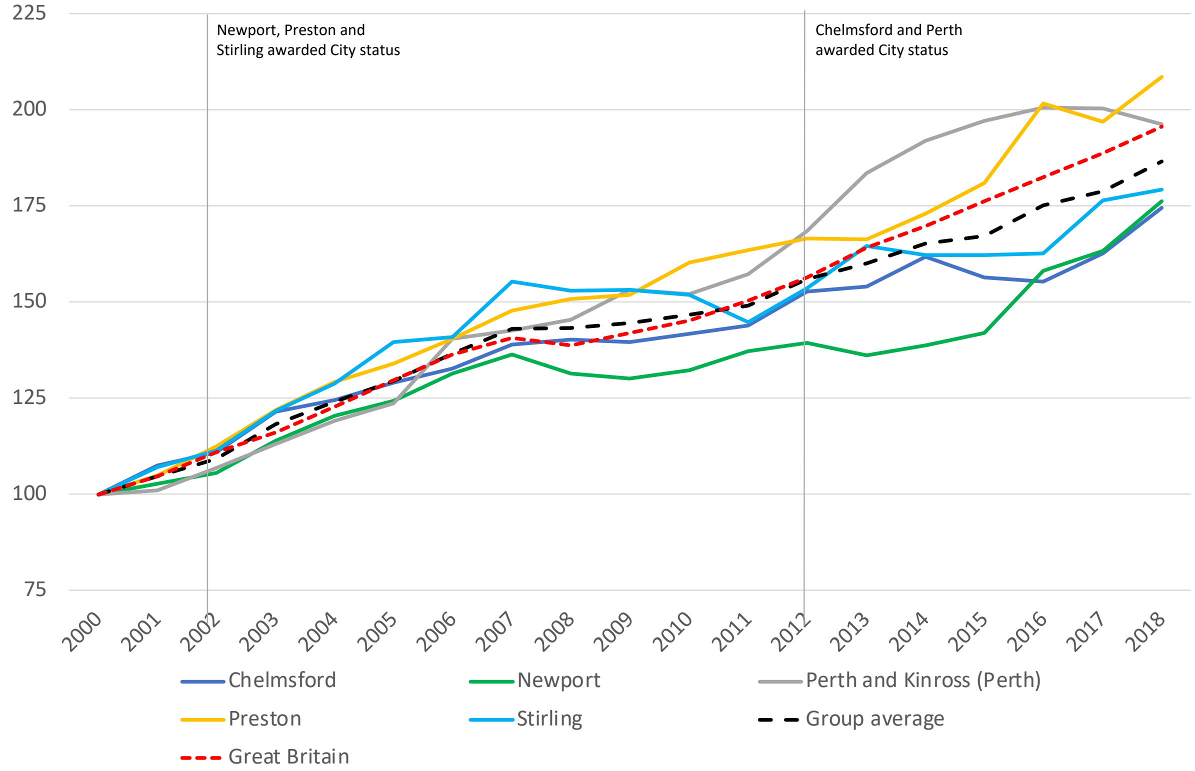
3.3 Gross Value Added

3.3.1 Gross Value Added (GVA) is a measure of the value added by businesses and individuals in the local economy (a simple definition is wages plus profits). Data is presented for the years from 2000 to 2018 in current base prices (which includes the effects of inflation) indexed to 2000.

New Cities

3.3.2 Within the group of ***new cities*** there is moderate variation in overall GVA growth over the period from 2000 to 2018, ranging from 76% in Newport to 108% in Preston. Only Perth and Preston experienced a greater overall rise in GVA than the national average.

Figure 3.13: New Cities Gross Value Added at Current Base Prices, Indexed to 2000



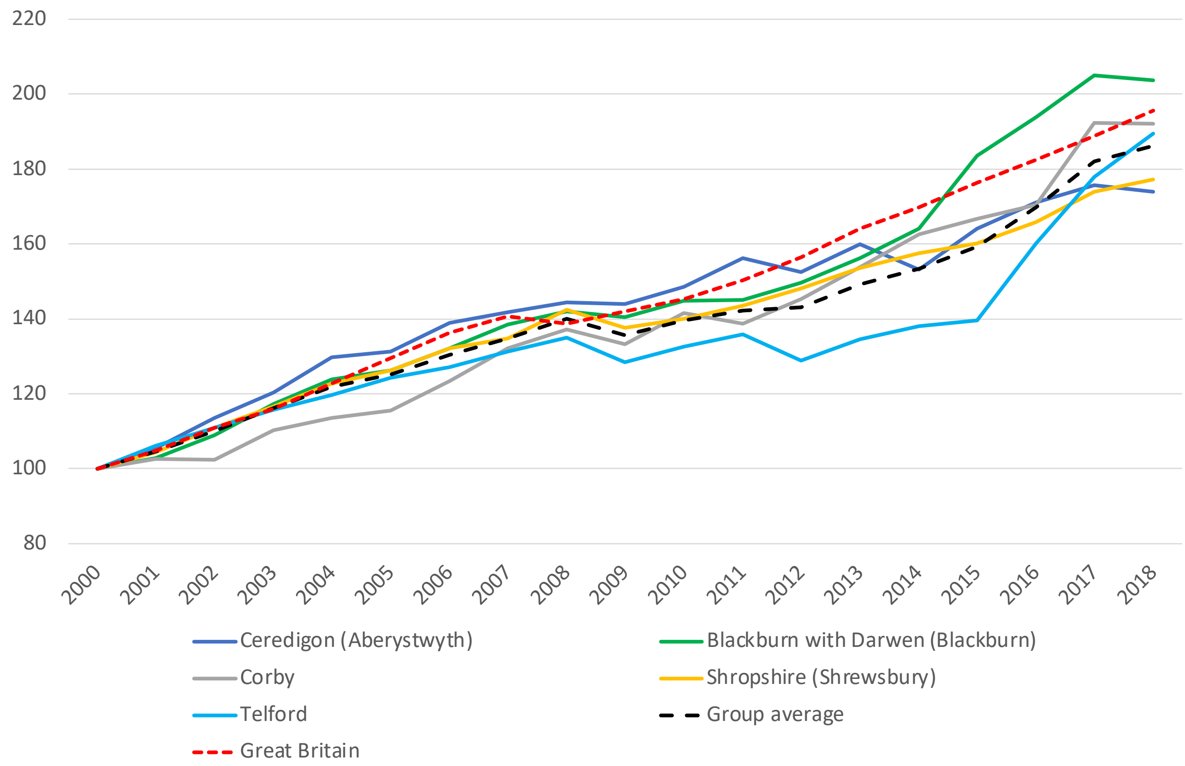
Source: ONS, Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry 2021

3.3.3 No ***new cities*** saw a significant rise in their GVA following the award of city status in 2002. In 2012, Perth saw a rise in GVA, before it returned to the GB average. Chelmsford did not see the same rise in GVA after the award of city status. On average, new cities as a group grew just above the GB average until 2013 when they dropped below this benchmark.

Past bidders

3.3.4 Of all groups, ***past bidders*** had the narrowest variation in GVA growth rates, with 30 percentage points separating the highest grower, Blackburn, from the lowest, Aberystwyth. Blackburn was the only past bidder to experience higher overall GVA growth than the Great Britain average.

Figure 3.14: Past Bidders Gross Value Added at Current Base Prices, Indexed to 2000



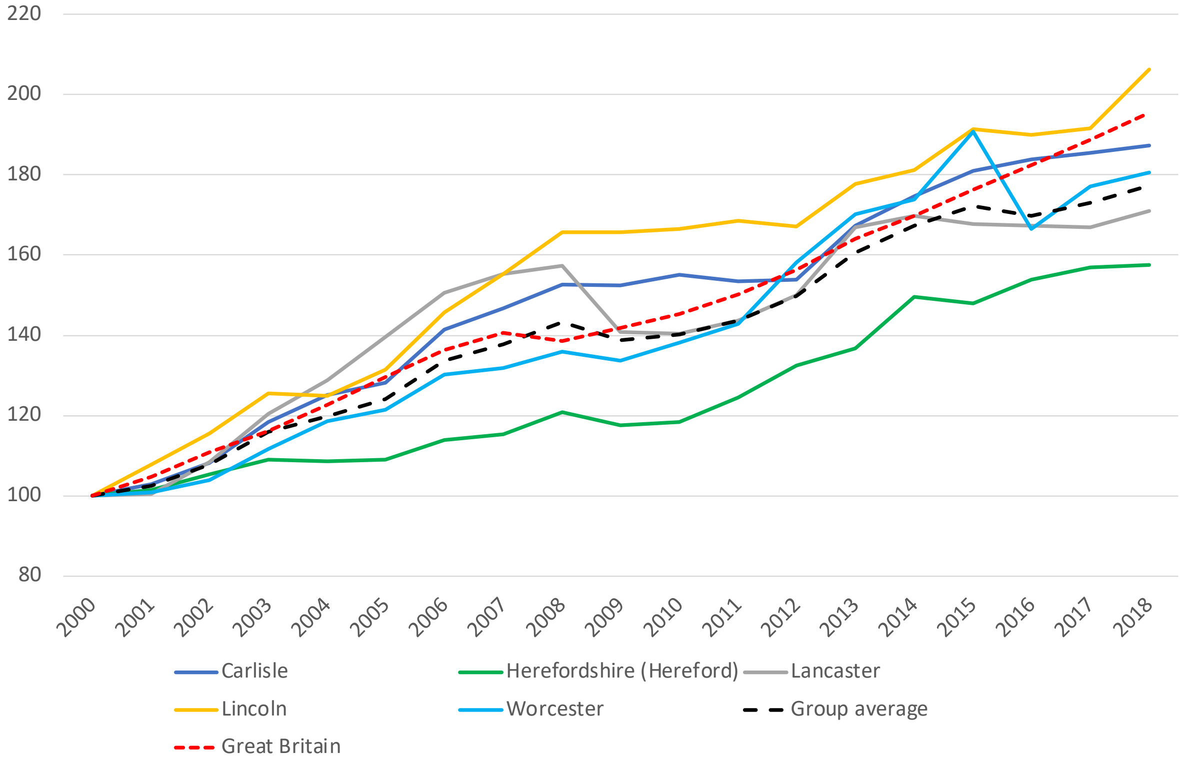
Source: ONS, Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry 2021

3.3.5 The pattern of growth within the group of ***past bidders*** was relatively uniform throughout the period, with each experiencing peaks and troughs in similar years.

Cities

3.3.6 ***Cities*** have experienced variable GVA growth over the period. Lincoln experienced the largest overall growth in GVA (106%) whilst Hereford experienced the smallest (58%). Only Lincoln had consistently higher rates of GVA growth than Great Britain's average throughout the period, and the remaining four saw a lower GVA increase than the national average by 2018.

Figure 3.15: Cities Gross Value Added at Current Base Prices, Indexed to 2000



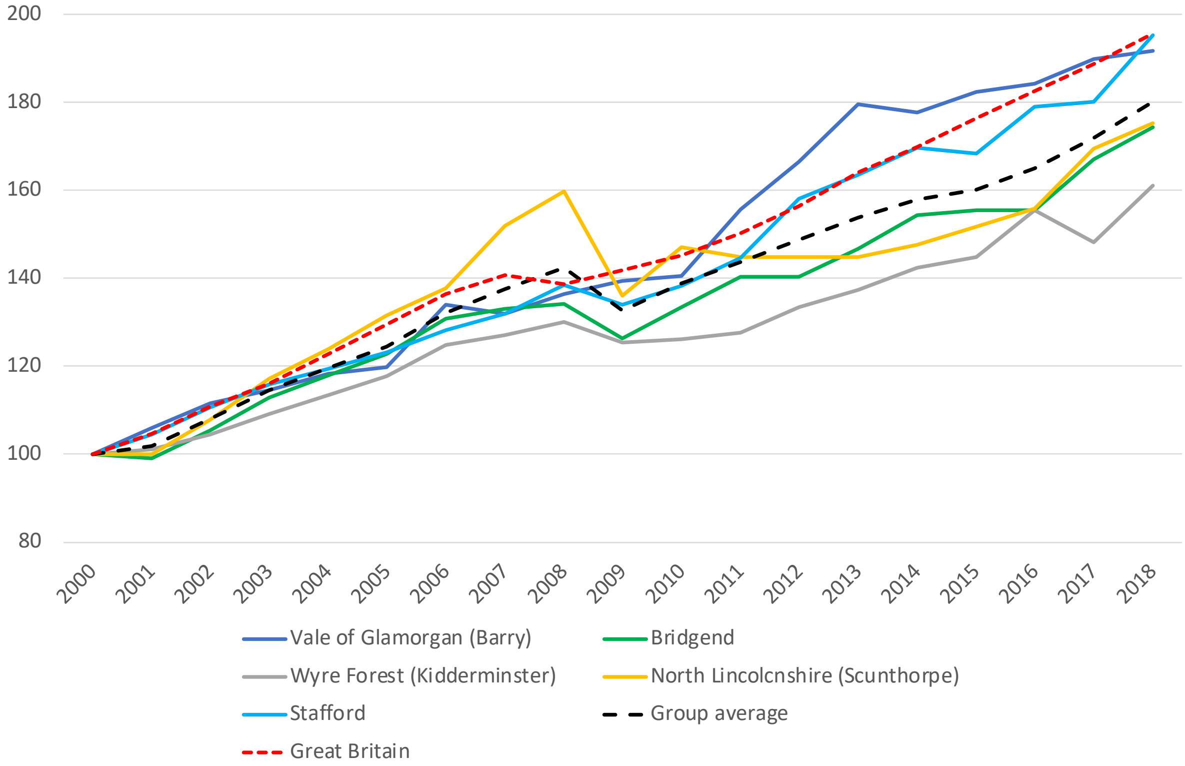
Source: ONS, Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry 2021

3.3.7 The GVA growth rates follow different patterns of growth across the period. On average the trend across the ***cities*** group was in-line with the trend seen in GB until 2015 when the performance of Worcester brought the average down.

Towns

3.3.8 The ***towns*** followed a relatively similar pattern of growth until 2009 after which GVA increases diverged. By 2018, the greatest increase in GVA was experienced by Stafford (95%), whilst the lowest was seen by Kidderminster with a 61% increase in GVA from 2000.

Figure 3.16: Towns Gross Value Added at Current Base Prices, Indexed to 2000



Source: ONS, Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry 2021

3.3.9 By the end of the 20 year period, all ***towns*** had experienced a lower overall rate of growth than the national average. Two of the five settlements experienced short periods of growth that exceeded the national average, but generally the group's GVA growth was below the average for Great Britain throughout.

Comparing the four groups

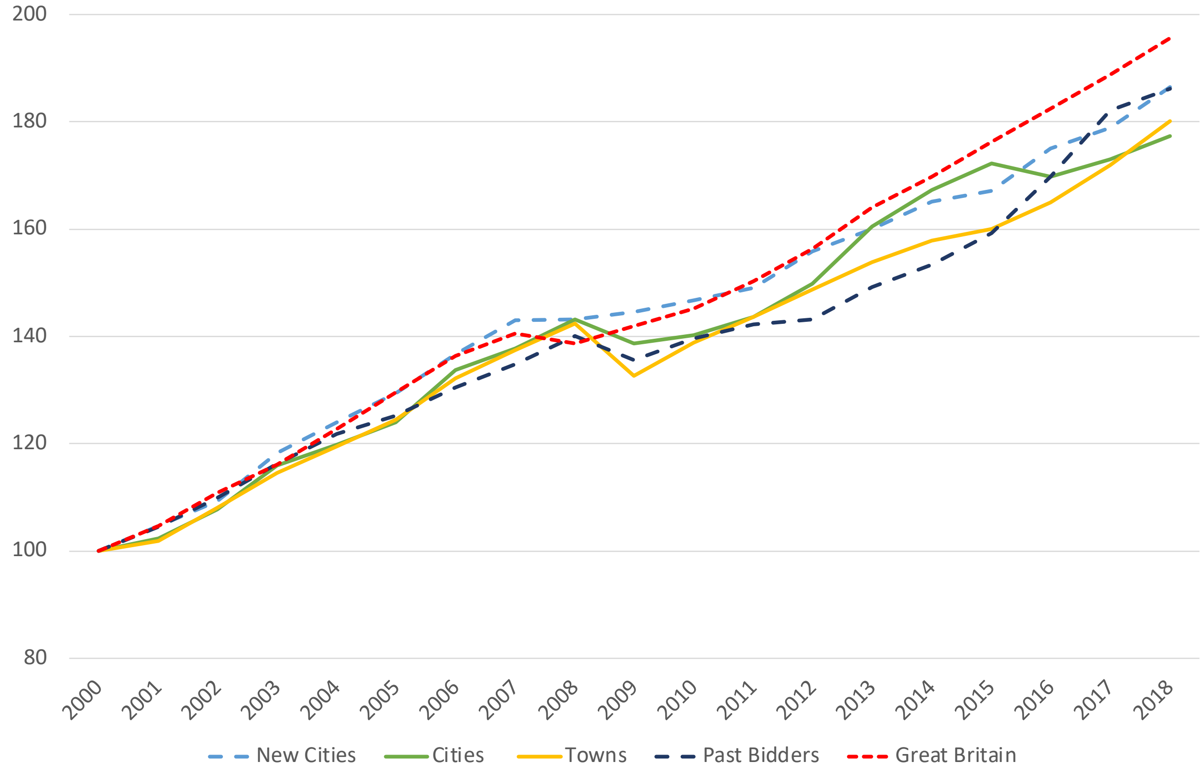
3.3.10 Over the period 2000 to 2018, each group's average GVA followed a similar upward trend. Each group has experienced an increase in GVA of over 75% on the 2000 figure. However, since 2012 the rise in average GVA for each group has remained below the national average increase. The group with the highest average GVA growth were ***new cities*** and the lowest rise was experienced by the ***cities***.

3.3.11 There is a very strong correlation between the GVA increase across each group, which is unsurprising given their near parallel upward trends. This confirms that all types of settlement have experienced similar increases in GVA throughout the period.

Figure 3.17: Correlation of Annual GVA Change

	New cities	Cities	Towns	Past bidders
New cities	1.000			
Cities	0.990	1.000		
Towns	0.995	0.990	1.000	
Past bidders	0.984	0.968	0.987	1.000

Figure 3.18: Grouped average Gross Value Added at Current Base Prices Indexed to 2000



Source: ONS, Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry 2021

Conclusion

3.3.12 Between 2000 and 2018 GVA increased in all four of the groups, with a high correlation between them. None exceeded the overall rate of growth in Great Britain. Despite varying annual changes over the period, ***past bidders*** and ***new cities*** ended up with almost the same overall levels of growth over the full period, and this was higher than for ***cities*** and ***towns***.

CITY STATUS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT - SHARE YOUR VIEWS AND IDEAS SUMMARY OF FINDINGS - OCTOBER 2021

1 - BACKGROUND

The Wrexham community were invited to take part in an online discussion held between 18th - 29th October. The purpose was to gather responses that would help steers the decision on city status as well as inform the wider placemaking strategies for Wrexham.

Members were encouraged to promote the consultation through their local communities and strategic stakeholders agreed to promote through their members and local networks. Wrexham Councils communications and PR team used local media and social media channels to encourage participation across the two-week engagement period.

The engagement was run through an independent community insights platform that encouraged engagement from stakeholder and local community through their phones, tablets, or laptops https://wrexhamplacemaking.info. It used interactive tools to gather community ideas, insight, and feedback on the City Status proposals and the placemaking opportunities for Wrexham. The platform included:

- Surveys/questionnaire
- An interactive 'pin-drop' map to gather place-based suggestions and ideas (e.g ability to post photographs identifying features that best represent Wrexham)
- Email sign-up and contact forms

Participants were provided with a link to the UK Governments published application criteria concerning city status as well as a copy of the recent study examining the Potential Socio-Economic Impacts of the Award of City Status (October 2021).

2 - ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The structure of the consultation followed 5 key areas designed to gather views that inform a city status application as well as wider placemaking ambitions.
:

1. What does Wrexham need to do to help grow its profile and prosperity? (written response)

2. How important is it for Wrexham to better promote its distinct identity, history, and sense of community? (range: not important – very important)

3. Based on the application criteria how, strongly do you feel that Wrexham deserves to be a city? (range: not important – very important)

4. If a city status application was prepared, what information would you include to demonstrate
   a. Distinct identity;
   b. Civic pride;
   c. Cultural infrastructure, interesting heritage, history and traditions
   d. Vibrant and welcoming community;
   e. Record of innovation;

f. Sound governance and administration;
g. Associations with Royalty;
h. Residents or communities who have made widely recognised significant contributions to society and cultural infrastructure.

5. The community were encouraged to post photographs of permanent features that give the best impression of Wrexham and the town centre (rather than events or people), with brief captions describing what is shown.

3 - LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

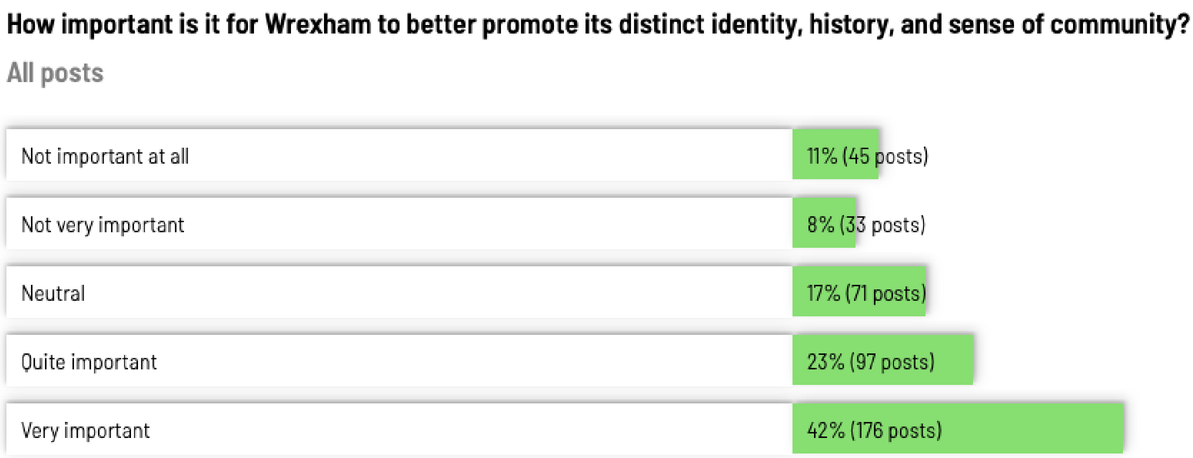
Approximately 8,780 visits were made to the consultation platform with 6,110 visits made by people who visited the on more than one occasion. Respondents were only allowed to complete the survey once but could add comments to the interactive map on multiple visits. Facebook provided the primary source of referrals to the platform with other important sites including wrexham.gov and leaderlive.co.uk. Approximately 60% of participants accessed the site through their mobile phone.

Despite the high levels of engagement achieved, just 458 individuals responded to the consultation either through completing the questionnaire or posting comments on the interactive map. It is possible that opinion polls started by local media at the same time, whilst providing useful insights of community opinion, also diverted people away from participating in the formal consultation (wrexham.com ran an online opinion poll but did not feature within the top 10 referral sites driving people to the engagement platform).

4 - KEY FINDINGS

How important is it for Wrexham to better promote its distinct identity, history, and sense of community?

The chart shows that 65% of respondents felt that it is either quite or very important to better promote Wrexham. 19% felt that better promotion was not or not very important.



What does Wrexham need to do to help grow its profile and prosperity?

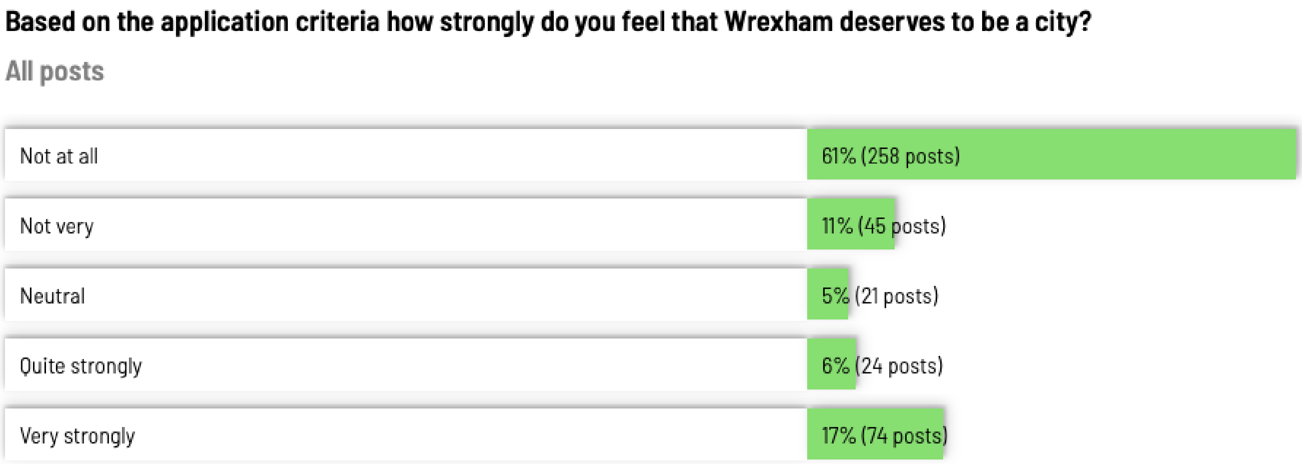
The majority of comments focused on the placemaking issues that people considered are wrong and needed improving. Comments concerning to the town centre significantly outweighed any other individual theme with over half of the observations identifying problems with the quality and performance of the town centre including the range of shops, appearance of the buildings, and levels of investment. Comments frequently appear to emphasise the need to address the town centre problems before considering city status.

The second most identified issue was the reputation of the town center with issues of ASB, drugs, visible street drinking and homelessness which appears to put people off the centre and underline the sense of decline. The third most identified issue related to a range of problems with traffic, parking, and the quality of the roads.

Other core themes emerging from the responses included the need to build confidence and self-belief in the town centre as well as transforming the reputation of the town, so residents are willing to use it more often. Opportunities for improving the way in which the centre is currently managed including street cleanliness, branding and promotion were also referenced. Respondents wanted to see the markets improved with frequent messaging around the importance of the 'market town'. Other themes included higher quality public realm, green spaces, creating a better variety and quality of shops. Wider opportunities to promote the towns heritage, cultural identity were identified as key opportunities, as well as securing better quality jobs and encouragement of new enterprises in Wrexham as a County Borough.

Based on the application criteria how, strongly do you feel that Wrexham deserves to be a city?

The chart shows that 23% of respondents felt that it is either quite or very strongly that Wrexham deserves to be a city. 72% felt not or not very strongly.

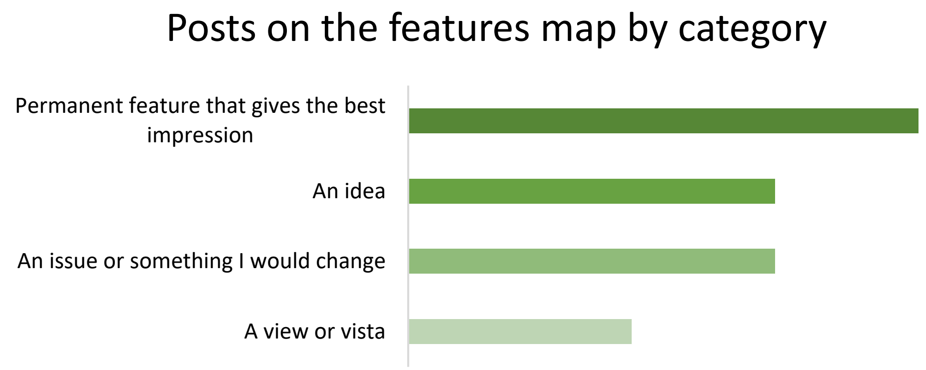


If a city status application was prepared, what information would you include…?

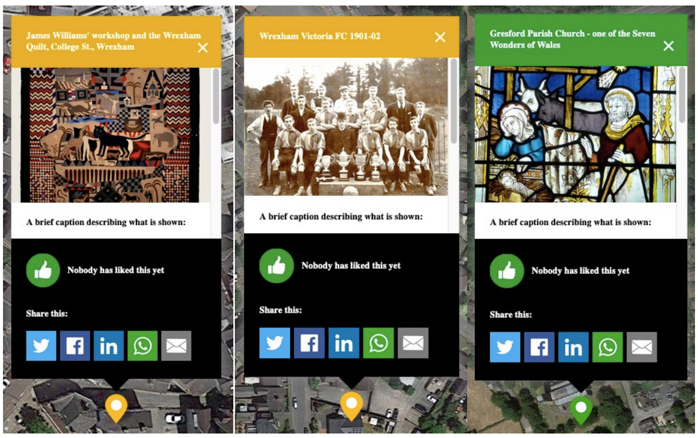
The purpose of question 4 A-H was to gather facts that could inform an application for city status. The information received included a range of factual insights, less serious observations, and negative comments about Wrexham as place. In terms of addressing the questions the contributions made provides helpful information to inform a city status application some of which was also cross referenced with the interactive map.

Interactive map

The interactive features map enables people to drop comments, ideas and images on specific locations on a digital map. Approximately 100 posts were made on the map, which are broken down by category below:



The majority of posts were focused on local history, emphasising the sites and events that form part of the area's rich heritage. Examples include posts about the Wrexham Quilt, John Wilkinson, Hightown Barracks, St Giles and historical features in the wider borough, such as the All Saints Church in Gresford. These examples highlight the significant heritage of the area and the pride many local residents have in this heritage, as well as its influence on the identity of Wrexham today.



Beyond local history and heritage, several posts included images of the environment and landscape in and around Wrexham, such as along the River Dee.

Around a fifth of the posts were critical and raising issues in and around Wrexham, which included a number along the A525 and others concerning the hospital and Eagles Meadow. These posts raised a range of issues which highlighted specific sites that community members wanted to see managed differently, revitalised or otherwise acted upon. Approximately 5 posts were inappropriate and as a result were removed from the site.

Question	Answer
1. How much is City status going to cost Council tax payers in Wrexham?	City Status is a civic award based on meeting the criteria in the application form. The Gov.uk website states "*The Civic Honours competition will provide local authorities with the chance to showcase their civic pride, interesting heritage and record of innovation - putting their hometowns on the map and bringing greater prosperity of opportunity.*" It is as much about the attributes, institutions and past achievements as it is about the future. This does not in itself increase any costs. The Gov.uk FAQ section actually states the following "*The Government does not want local authorities to incur any undue expense entering the competition.*" The Council is not incurring specific costs associated with the city status work and if city status is awarded there are no requirements to incure future additional cost. [Prestigious civic honours to be awarded by Her Majesty The Queen for first time in 10 years - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)]
2. Will Wrexham be called Wrexham City?	City Status is a civic award based on meeting the criteria in the application form. There is no requirement to change the name of the place. Not all recently awarded cities have taken on that title, although many have used the status within marketing campaigns, etc. It is the case that some towns (e.g. Dunfermline) decided to call themselves a City without being awarded the status…they just did as it was felt to be right for the place and its aspirations.
3. Will my Council Tax go up if Wrexham is awarded City Status?	The Council sets the level of Council Tax annually, based on the amount it needs to raise to fund local services. The level of annual increase in Council Tax will vary from year to year and depend on many factors, including increases in demand, the cost of providing services and the level of funding provided by the Welsh Government each year. Achievement of City Status would not be a material

	consideration when determining the level of Council Tax as any direct costs to the Council associated with it are expected to be minimal. [How domestic properties are assessed for Council Tax bands - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](www.gov.uk)
4. Will the cost of my insurance, such as car and household go up if Wrexham is awarded City Status?	No. Insurance premiums are calculated to reflect risk. Insurance companies look at a range of risk factors that indicate the likelihood of them having to pay out on a claim – for car insurance the risk factors include: age of driver, time since passing test, address, where the vehicle is parked, occupation, driving history, make and model of car, annual mileage and claims history of the individual. Effectively the data behind these factors enables the company to calculate how likely you are to have an accident or make a claim. The more likely you are to claim, the higher the premium you are charged. The address is used as the majority of accidents take place within 5 miles of the driver's home. Insurance companies look at the average number of claims for that area, crime rate (e.g. theft / vandalism) and how busy the place is. Large inner city areas such as Bradford, Liverpool and Birmingham have amongst the highest premiums in the UK because they have the highest risk factors. https://www.abi.org.uk/ For home insurance it is a similar story – the premiums relate to a number of risk factors that determine how likely the insurance company is to have to pay out on a claim. The address allows the company to look at burglary rates, subsidence and soil types (key for flooding). Other factors include presence of security features, rural or urban setting, proximity to flood plains and the claims history of the individual.

5. Who has paid for the initial consultation and latest report and how much has that cost?	The Council is currently working on a Place Making Strategy that will identify key interventions and support improvements in the Town Centre and the whole of the County Borough irrespective of whether City Status is applied for or awarded. The economic impact report was one single element of this work. This work is funded by Welsh Government's Transforming Towns programme, no Council money has been spent on Place Making or City Status elements. All work on city status will contribute to the place making strategy which was planned before the opportunity for bidding for city status was announced as part of the roadmap towards Wrexham's economic recovery.
6. If City status is granted does that increase funding for infrastructure, etc?	The independent consultant's report found that there is no clear evidence due to the lack of research in this area between city status as a factor and economic growth. However, when City Status is considered alongside robust, deliverable plans for regeneration and economic development it can help create favourable conditions for growth and inward investment. Case study analysis showed towns who had been awarded city status identified there were a range of economic benefits.
7. Will Officers and Cllrs be paid more money?	No. Elected Member pay is determined by an Independent Remuneration Panel, which sets a basic salary for Elected Members. Additional payments are available to those Elected Members with additional responsibilities (Scrutiny Committee Chairs, Executive Board Members, etc.) which are based on population bandings set by the independent panel. Payments to elected members: Principal councils | GOV.WALES City status will not influence the decision making about officers pay. The approach to pay for Council Officers is set out in the Employee Pay & Reward

	Policy, which is reviewed every 3 years and reflects collective agreements. The Council determines the level of annual salary for employees on NJC, JNC Chief Executives and JNC Chief Officers, using established job evaluation schemes. Job evaluation has established a pay and grading structure that clearly defines roles, responsibilities and job size for every post. All posts subject to the National Joint Council (NJC) conditions for Local Government Services will be evaluated in accordance with the Greater London Provincial Council (GLPC) Job Evaluation scheme. The job evaluation scores will determine the appropriate grade for each post. Officers are able to attract increments within their grade on the basis of evidencing successful performance against set objectives in the annual appraisal process.
8. The Council says it has no money for vital services so where will the money come from if Wrexham becomes a City.	City Status does not require additional Council services as it is a Civic honour awarded on the basis of successfully meeting the criteria in the application form at that point in time. If the Council was to positively use City Status to promote economic growth, this activity would be met from existing Council resources. Prestigious civic honours to be awarded by Her Majesty The Queen for first time in 10 years - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
9. Can City status be rejected but Cultural City status be granted?	These are two separate competitions taking place as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. They are not linked or dependent on each other. The City of Culture 2025 is awarded to a place, this can be a town a city or a County depending on how the application is targeted. The guidance from UK Government states "*We welcome bids from across the UK. We will adopt a flexible approach to agreeing which areas can bid. There is no minimum population requirement but there must be a clear central focus and identity to the area, with sufficient existing cultural*

	and digital infrastructure (or credible plans to develop them) to make a compelling case, and provide the critical mass for a year-long programme to be successful. This could be a city or large town, or a cohesive area made up of two or more neighbouring or closely linked cities or towns." UK City of Culture 2025 Expression of Interest: guidance for bidders - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)