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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



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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.