

## **NWDC Response to Wiltshire Sustainable Community Strategy (subject to approval by CMB and Executive)**

### *Introduction (pages 2-3)*

*The introduction describes the main, overarching, aims of the Strategy, which are to create strong and sustainable communities in Wiltshire. This section describes what the characteristics of such communities would be.*

### **Question 1**

Do you agree that the aim of creating strong and sustainable communities in Wiltshire provides the Strategy with a powerful, unifying purpose? If not, what should the overall aim of the Strategy be?

Yes we agree with the aim – what is not clear is whether or not an aim worded in such a way is relevant, understandable and engaging to an audience wider than local government officers and elected Members. Within the LAA development process the debate over ‘What is stronger?’ has proven to be a time consuming distraction.

The strategy must be clear and articulate in setting out the direction in which all partners will be working. The bullet points go some way to describing this. It may be helpful to provide very real examples of what this will mean to communities in addition to the rather generic examples.

### *What is changing Wiltshire? (pages 4-5)*

*This section sets out the broad societal trends that are shaping Wiltshire, and provides a context for the more detailed analysis of specific issues that follows later in the document.*

### **Question 2**

Can you give us one broad trend which is significantly shaping Wiltshire, but which we have missed? (You can, of course, give us more than one theme if you wish).

1. An ageing population. Demographically nationally and locally the age structure of the population is changing with a higher proportion of the population aged over 50. This is a trend set to continue which will have an impact on the way services are delivered and the demands on local services

2. Rising house prices in relation to incomes. Again this is a national trend but particularly marked in the South West. (e.g. 5 years ago, the average house price represented 3 x the average income. In x the average house price represents 8 x the average income). This threatens the sustainability of communities as well as the diversity and mix of communities and local economies.

### *Wiltshire is already a good place in which to live, work and visit (pages 6-7)*

*This section celebrates the fact that Wiltshire is already a good place in which to live and work, and sets out a range of factors which demonstrate this.*

### **Question 3**

Are there other aspects of Wiltshire life that we should be celebrating in this section?

There are key areas where there have been improvements to service provision and quality of life for example in Housing

1. Homelessness presentations and acceptances in Wiltshire are decreasing year on year due to the focus on proactive prevention of homelessness rather than reacting to homelessness once it has happened

2. The use of unsuitable temporary accommodation, including B&B, for homeless households has reduced year on year
3. Improvements have been made year on year to housing conditions in the county
4. Improvements to the energy efficiency of residential accommodation continue to be achieved throughout the county

There are also successes as a result of the strength and variety of partnership working, local communities and local community groups. This is an opportunity to acknowledge the contributions that arise as the result of partnership working.

- The Wiltshire wide Compact
- The 20 community plans across the County
- The levels of participation in sport and physical activity as highlighted by the Active Places research
- The levels of volunteering

The included statistics as they are presented may not set Wiltshire apart from other Counties as somewhere that people would want to work, live and visit. The extensive consultation that formed this document and the District Level Strategies contains much of this information that could be detailed in the document.

*What aspects of Wiltshire life are not currently moving in a sustainable direction? (pages 7-9) This section seeks to identify trends which will detract from the quality of life in Wiltshire, if we do not take effective action to address them. In other words what factors have the potential to weaken our communities and make the County, overall, less sustainable?*

#### **Question 4**

Have we identified the main trends and factors which could, if not addressed, weaken our communities and make the County, overall, less sustainable?

Under "Economy" add;

- house price inflation at a rate far above wage inflation continues to price many unskilled, skilled and professional workers out of the local housing market. It will become increasingly difficult for businesses and organisations to recruit and retain the staff they need with long term consequences for the local economy.
- The future of agricultural practices
- Concerns over whether or not Wiltshire is sufficiently prepared for changes in employment – what sectors can we diversify into or specialise in. Questions over whether or not there are appropriate sites to accommodate employment demand.

Under "Housing" add;

- the ageing population in the County requires remodelling and re-provision of the current housing stock to meet the future needs of the population
- vulnerable households require more flexible accommodation and support solutions to enable them to live independently in the community
- housing waiting lists and identified housing needs continue to increase
- there is significant in-migration e.g. for retirement, second homes, holiday homes and some economic migrants from the European Union putting additional pressure on the housing market and housing services

Under "Transport" add;

- Travel patterns – linked to the location of jobs and homes
- Inadequate facilities for cyclists and pedestrians – not just increased traffic levels

Under “Environment” add;

- The reasons for development weighed up against the protection of the environment.
- The cost of recycling acting as a deterrent
- Poor contribution to regional climate change targets – heating and lighting from renewable sources.

By its nature a ‘sustainable strategy’ should address the root cause of issues not just the problems and symptoms that arise out of the root cause. There is a major issue across Wiltshire associated with access – access to services, access to opportunities and gaining access in a rural County – how far will this strategy go to addressing root causes such as this? If it does not how will it be sustainable?

What should be the aims of a Sustainable Community Strategy for Wiltshire? (pages 9-15)  
This section starts to gather together the potential aims of the Strategy, given the previous analysis. The aims are drawn from the following three sources:

The long list of LAA outcomes, agreed by WiSB on 11 September 2006, as a basis for negotiation with the Government Office for the South West (GOSW)  
Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) targets (2005/2008) already agreed with Government, which if achieved will bring performance reward money to Wiltshire.  
Other aims, drawn from service plans and strategies.

The aims of the Strategy should reflect the main issues, root causes and needs of the County both now and looking to the future.

### Question 5

Are these the high-level aims that a Sustainable Strategy for Wiltshire should be pursuing? If not, what aims need to be added or removed? (You may wish to focus on one or a small number of themes).

The high level aims do in the main begin to address the issues highlighted earlier in the document. There is however a lack of detail over action and what will actually be done to address those areas. A number of areas will be included in the LAA what about those that will not there is little or no action against areas such as Transport and Housing two of the most fundamental challenges and issues facing Wiltshire today and looking to the future.

What will be the mechanism for developing and delivering actions in areas that are not included within the LAA?

How has a relative priority as to what is most important in Wiltshire and therefore what will be addressed first been established?

Where will information about resources be provided – again for areas both in and outside of the LAA.

The themed list overlapping the LAA blocks is confusing and unhelpful. It makes it difficult to see what is being proposed. What will happen to the bullet points that are not emboldened?

### Question 6

Do you support the selection of outcomes (in bold text) that have been chosen as a basis for developing the Wiltshire LAA? If not, which outcomes are not supported and why?

The outcomes of the LAA are ambitious and go far beyond the outcomes that are required by each LAA. Are these additions to the mandatory outcomes the most appropriate and the most relevant to Wiltshire? How will these be prioritised relatively if all cannot make it to the final list?

Not all of the major issues facing Wiltshire are included in the LAA list.

The key issues in North Wiltshire relate to Housing and Transport. Both these areas feature strongly in the early pages of the document but are absent from the LAA list.

### **Question 7**

Are there any additional outcomes which should be considered for inclusion in the LAA? Please state what they are and why they should be considered for inclusion.

Given the importance of Housing issues not only in North Wiltshire but across the County we would like to suggest.

### **Increase opportunities and accessibility to affordable housing in Wiltshire for all sections of the community.**

Not only could this include the LPSA work which is around young peoples issues, but issues of access to affordable housing in both rural communities and towns, and the specific needs of other aspects of our communities such as gypsies and travellers - and more. This links strongly to appropriate development and the consideration of infrastructure – key in a County with three strategically significant Cities and Towns.

There should be further work around an outcome that seeks to improve transport and transport links across the County. Promoting more sustainable travel, access to services and combating the increasing isolation of villages.

### **Additional Comments**

Accepting that the Local Area Agreement cannot set out to address all the key issues facing the County when will the Strategic Board give consideration to those issues and how will they be addressed?

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