

Northern Area Committee

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REPORT

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Community Area Plans & Local Plan Activity

1. Report Summary

As requested by the Community Leadership Focus Group provide an over view of both **area and local plan** activity across South Wiltshire.

2. Background

The following is an explanation of the community planning tools available to communities for producing local level plans.

1. Amber Skyring led development of the **Community Planning Toolkit** with Community First and the three district councils. The Toolkit assists communities in developing their own **local plans** and was born out of the community planning workshops held back in 1999 as a mechanism to guide communities through the process of producing a local plan.
2. At about the same time that the Toolkit was developed The Countryside Agency launched its **Vital Villages** project, which has a similar aim to that of our own Community Planning Toolkit. **Both** seek to empower active and inclusive communities **helping them to devise solutions to local priorities, at the same time building their own capacity**. The only difference between the initiatives is the boundary of the plan; Vital Villages request the plan to be developed on a Parish level where our own Toolkit will work with 'communities' in the wider sense.
3. In addition, we now have **town plans** being developed which follow the same principle of our local community or parish plans but are focused around a market town. **The Market & Coastal Towns Initiative** supports these plans with funding from the Rural Development Agency (RDA).

These different funding streams are simply providing a mechanism for communities to produce local plans. While their boundaries may be different and their funding criteria varies ultimately they achieve the same; a **local plan**, produced by **local people** to address **local need**. This process not only focuses local action but can also be used to lever improved service provision from statutory, voluntary or private agencies.

4. In addition to the three methodologies above we also have the **Village Design Statement (VDS)**, which can be described as a single issues initiative aimed at improving the quality of new building development within a community. The statement should

describe local character as a guide to those planning new development and can be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

All of the above **inform and influence the area community plans** being developed at this time providing a truly bottom up approach.

3. Present Working

It is important **not to cause confusion or duplicate** work across the area. To help achieve this Amber Skyring of the Salisbury District Councils Community Initiatives Unit, Marion Raynor of Community First and John Meeker of Salisbury District Councils Forward Planning team have been **working closely together**. This includes making joint presentations to Parish Councils on producing local level plans and the options available to them.

4. Local Plans Across South Wiltshire

Often the deciding factor for communities is **funding** and this dictates where support initially comes from, although it should be said that Amber Skyring can be involved at various times throughout any of the methods in her role as Principle Community Development Officer for the District. The following is a **summary** of activity across South Wiltshire with a number due for completion imminently (also see attached spreadsheet for further information).

Village Design Statements (VDS)	7
Parish Plans with VDS	2
Parish Plans	2
Town Plans	2
Have expressed, or are, interested	6
Total	19

This is extremely impressive especially when you consider the funding that has been brought into the District (approximately in excess of £25,000 and set to increase) for plan development and capacity building.

Developing communities at this very local level creates greater opportunity for funding to be secured to undertake projects within the local plans.

The **activity is across the six community areas** with village design statements featuring predominately in the Tisbury area.

5. Area Plans Across South Wiltshire

A total of **six community area plans** are being produced across the District one for Amesbury, City, Downton, Mere, Tisbury and Wilton. Where local plans are at the early stages of development reference to them should be found within the appropriate area plan and may even influence activity as a direct result of the plan at a later date.

The Alliance Board recently agreed a staggered approach to **consultation on the draft plans**, which are on schedule for distribution in April 2004. Being made available in the first instance to Parish, District & County Councillors in April and presented at Area Committee in May.

Next steps include consultation by the units and departments of Alliance partner organisations, the People's Voice panel and finally the South Wiltshire Action Against Poverty Partnership to review the documents with regard to being **inclusive**.

Community Planners will also consult with the members of working groups originally set up in each area to develop the plans.

6. Benefits of Local Level Plans

- A plan developed by local people that can influence the services and facilities that are provided to the community
- Community development to ensure sustainable projects
- Funding applications supported by robust data to corroborate community need
- Offer a very bottom up approach for communities to have their say
- Can develop community spirit
- A plan that is specific to the needs of the community e.g. type of plan produced
- Community solutions to community problems to encourage ownership and support sustainability
- A statement of how the community sees itself developing over the next few years

7. Benefits of Area Community Plans

- Bring together local need under one document for each area so that service units or departments review 6 documents compared with 76 (the number of parishes)
- Projects developed using the community development methodology should have an exit strategy when projects become totally community led and driven, so releasing agency resources
- Grass roots data is provided to the Alliance partners for use in policy and strategy development
- Ability to highlight strategic solutions to need that crosses a number of parishes or even community areas
- Opportunity to bring funding into the area to address shared issues
- Provides evidence for South Wiltshire agencies from a very local level to focus work program
- Community area plans informed by local level plans which in turn feed into the District Community Strategy and into the Wiltshire Strategy

8. Recommendations

- That Councillors will encourage Parish Councils to comment on draft community area plans when they are available
- The Area Committee will provide feedback to the Partnership Team Manager on the draft community area plan when available
- Councillors and Area Committee will continue to advocate local level and area community planning