

Review of DRAFT Issues and Options for Oxfordshire's Sustainable Community Strategy



This paper summarises the work to-date on Oxfordshire's Sustainable Community Strategy and proposes a draft set of issues and options for discussion at Oxfordshire Partnership workshops in September 2007.

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Developed from: *Oxfordshire Futures* paper
Report from the July workshops
Sustainable Community Strategy briefing papers prepared by thematic partnerships in Oxfordshire

Further information on this project and copies of the Sustainable Community Strategy briefing papers are available to download from the Oxfordshire Partnership website at www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk.

Data and information on Oxfordshire is available from the Oxfordshire Data Observatory also via the Oxfordshire Partnership site or at www.oxfordshireobservatory.info.

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What is a sustainable community?

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

For communities to be sustainable, they must offer:

- decent homes at prices people can afford
- good public transport
- schools
- hospitals
- shops
- a clean, safe environment.

People also need open public space where they can relax and interact and the ability to have a say on the way their neighbourhood is run.

Sustainable communities embody the principles of sustainable development. They do this by:

- balancing and integrating the social, economic and environmental components of their community
- meeting the needs of existing and future generations
- respecting the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally to make their own communities sustainable

Sustainable communities are diverse, reflecting their local circumstances. There is no standard template to fit them all. But they should be:

- Active, inclusive and safe - Fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities
- Well run - with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership
- Environmentally sensitive - providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment
- Well designed and built - featuring quality built and natural environment
- Well connected - with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services
- Thriving - with a flourishing and diverse local economy
- Well served - with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all
- Fair for everyone - including those in other communities, now and in the future

Communities and Local Government www.communities.gov.uk

I Introduction and background

In early 2007, the Oxfordshire Partnership began the process of developing Oxfordshire's Sustainable Community Strategy – a long term vision for the area that will set the priorities for the next Local Area Agreement, LAA2 (see following box).

The strategy is being developed in a series of phases or stages.

Stage 1: Discussion of long term trends affecting Oxfordshire



The Partnership published a discussion document *Oxfordshire Futures*¹ describing some of the important social, economic and environmental trends affecting the future of the county.



Organisations from the Partnership were invited to workshops held in early July to debate the implications of these trends and the important issues that the strategy needs to address.

Stage 2: Development of theme papers



Individual partnership groups and organisations have produced a series of 12 thematic briefing papers covering individual subjects such as Community Life, Community Safety and the Economy (see chapter 5 for the full list);

The theme papers describe the main issues under that theme and the work already underway in current plans. They propose options for the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Stage 3: Review of draft issues and options



The issues and options from the July workshops and the theme papers (stages 1 and 2) will be reviewed in two further workshops to be held in September 2007.

Stage 4: Public consultation



The draft strategy will be available for public comment.

This summary paper is intended for stage 3 in the process – the review of draft issues and options. It presents some of the key trends and issues affecting Oxfordshire's future (chapter 3), the output from the July workshop discussions (chapter 4) and the thematic briefing papers (chapter 5) and proposes a set of draft issues and options for debate (executive summary).

¹ Oxfordshire Futures Discussion Paper draft 25th June 2007

The Oxfordshire Partnership

The Oxfordshire Partnership is the countywide Local Strategic Partnership and acts as a forum for organisations with an interest in the economic, social and environmental well-being of Oxfordshire to come together to discuss key issues and agree priorities.

The Partnership includes representatives from Oxfordshire's local authorities, police, health, the business sector and the voluntary and community sector.

Sustainable Community Strategy

The Sustainable Community Strategy is a long-term, sustainable vision in an area that sets the agenda for priorities in the Local Area Agreement. It is a partnership plan and is developed by the Oxfordshire Partnership.

Local Area Agreements

A Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a three year agreement, based on the local Sustainable Community Strategy that sets out the priorities for a local area. The LAA is agreed between Central Government, represented by the Government Office (GO), and the local area, represented by the local authority and other key partners through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

The primary objective of an LAA is to deliver genuinely sustainable communities through better outcomes for local people. LAAs have the secondary objectives of:

- improving Central and Local Government relations
- enhancing efficiency
- strengthening partnership working
- offering a framework within which local authorities can enhance their community leadership role

Oxfordshire's first Local Area Agreement was signed in 2005 and covers the period April 2006 to March 2009.

The agreement contains 34 priority outcomes grouped around the four blocks or policy areas: children and young people; economic development and the environment; healthier communities and older people; safer and stronger communities.

The new local area agreement, LAA2, is due to be agreed in early 2008 for the period April 2008 to March 2011. The priority outcomes will be based on the issues and options from the Oxfordshire Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A wide-ranging and detailed evidence base

The process of sharing and debating evidence on trends and issues affecting the future of Oxfordshire has produced information from three different perspectives:

1. An initial analysis of data and evidence,
2. Workshop discussions,
3. Briefing papers produced by thematic partnerships.

As might be expected, this has resulted in a wide range of options for the Sustainable Community Strategy, each perspective having its own focus and strengths:

- The analysis of data and evidence was a description of high level and longer term trends and issues for the county. It does not describe current plans and policies and provides only limited interpretation – it acted as a start point for debate.
- The workshop discussions in July reviewed this evidence. Analysis of the output of the workshops shows that participants tended to concentrate in particular on issues affecting community life.
- The twelve main briefing papers produced by thematic partnerships are wide ranging and very detailed. They describe work already underway - typically reflecting activities over the short to medium term.

The major challenge in bringing all of this material together into a summary is how to provide a fair representation of the wide-ranging and detailed evidence base, but in a short and digestible form.

This is where the next stage in the process will become important – acting as a test to this summary and a further development of the strategy itself.

What can the strategy achieve?

As noted in chapter 4, representatives from the Oxfordshire Partnership at the July workshops could see a role for the Sustainable Community Strategy in:

- **improving communication** between Oxfordshire's organisations;
- **joining up work** and agreeing common targets between different agencies;
- encouraging a **longer term commitment** to projects;
- promoting (and rewarding) **best practice**;
- promoting **individual and community engagement**;
- audit and monitoring.

What are the priorities areas for action?

The following themes are developed from the evidence, the options from the theme papers and the workshop proposals.

THEME 1: Maintaining Economic Competitiveness

Economic prosperity is vital to the current and future well-being of individuals and communities

IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE...

- The global economy is becoming more competitive.
- Despite a strong economy, the county is only average on education attainment and skills. Skills levels are very low in some areas.
- Oxfordshire's environment – a key part of its economic success – is under pressure.
- Oxfordshire's infrastructure – critical to its economic future – is also under pressure and likely to become more so.
- Housing is continuing to become less affordable for workers in the county.

ACTIONS COULD INCLUDE..

Build on links with leading educational and research establishments.

Develop Oxfordshire's tourist industry and cultural tourism

Develop a better understanding of skills needs – what businesses want; hard to reach groups

Join up initiatives that address attitudes to learning.

Raise expectations in schools and encourage creative learning

Provide more flexible opportunities to train and opportunities to build confidence – the voluntary and community sector is well placed to help in this process.

Invest in continuous training (not limited by age) and better careers advice in and out of school

Reduce demand for water and encourage water use efficiency

Reduce production of waste – support the Waste Management strategy

Improve air quality by reducing the need to travel

Maintain Oxfordshire's character and built and natural heritage

Ensure adequate infrastructure is provided to support the economy and population

Ensure a mix of good-quality new homes are built

Develop new solutions for affordable housing

THEME 2: Mitigating and adapting to climate change

IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE...

- Adapting to climate change will be vital for the sustained effectiveness of high quality and resilient service delivery by organisations in the Oxfordshire Partnership.
- There is higher than average electricity and gas consumption in Oxfordshire's rural districts
- Increasing dependence on car travel
- Pressures on biodiversity

ACTIONS COULD INCLUDE..

Develop climate change as a unifying theme in the strategy

Increase awareness of changing eco-systems and widen access to environmental data

Promote small changes e.g. car sharing

Empower local leaders

Make the city West End project iconic for Oxfordshire

Reduce carbon footprint of new and existing housing

Promote more sustainable forms of energy production and reduce energy demand

THEME 3: Supporting and developing thriving communities _____

Communities – both geographical and communities of interest – affect all aspects of life and play an important role in social support.

IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE...

- Oxfordshire will need to accommodate a significant growth in housing over the next 20 years
- Fear of crime and a potential polarisation of communities appear to be issues in Oxfordshire.
- There is an increasing reliance on voluntary effort and (at the same time) potentially less time available for people to volunteer.
- Oxfordshire already ranks poorly on access to local services – a position which may get worse.

ACTIONS COULD INCLUDE..

Promote places and spaces for community facilities in new developments – encourage community engagement in developing these from the start.

Extend support to community-led planning

Use cultural activities to encourage community participation (e.g. Oxfordshire 2007)

Develop a multi-agency approach to address Community Safety issues, for example the link between unemployment, lack of housing and reoffending

Promote a sensible drinking culture

Reduce fear of crime

Develop a strategic approach to encourage volunteering

Promote corporate social responsibility

Join up work of agencies to reduce barriers to involvement

Promote and extend mobile services

Improve access to the countryside and green spaces

Celebrate and showcase good examples

THEME 4: Reducing inequalities and meeting the needs of vulnerable people ____

is included as a cross-cutting issue in all the thematic briefing papers but could be treated as a theme in its own right in the strategy.

IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE...

- Persistent inequalities can have significant implications for communities (as well as, of course, for individuals) and the economy.
- There is a major shift in the age profile of the population predicted – a significantly higher proportion of older people by 2026.
- Low educational attainment in specific communities
- Oxfordshire's population is growing more diverse
- There are increasing levels of obesity and alcohol consumption (national trend)
- Proportion of teenage conceptions well above Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours

ACTIONS COULD INCLUDE..

Develop a joint partnership approach to inequalities, map and share information

Shift emphasis to prevention of health problems

Improve information on where to get help

Support the development of strong communities and promote community-led solutions

Build capacity of voluntary groups to support people (including carers)

Build on potential for the private sector to invest in social well-being

Encourage inter-generational work

Involve young people

Support development of parenting skills – targeted to those excluded

Find ways to spread tolerance – a feature of good schools

Address skills gaps – reduce sense of exclusion

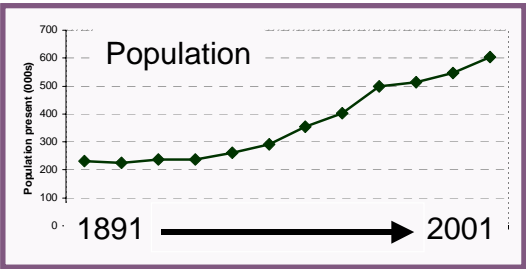
Strengthen support for black and minority ethnic (BME) groups

Address specific housing and transport needs of young people and the elderly



CHAPTER 3

Long term trends affecting Oxfordshire





3 Long term trends affecting Oxfordshire

The analysis of evidence on Oxfordshire's economic, social and environmental future looked at historical trends, future projections and, in some cases, geographical variations. The initial *Oxfordshire Futures* report is now supplemented by evidence from the individual theme papers.

Summary of trends highlighted by the evidence

Maintaining economic competitiveness	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rise of China, India and other emerging economies • Oxfordshire's relatively poor position on education and skills (when set alongside its economic strengths) • Pressures on the quality of Oxfordshire's environment • Pressures on infrastructure • The high cost of housing
Mitigating and adapting to climate change	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher than average electricity and gas consumption in Oxfordshire's rural districts • Increasing dependence on car travel • Pressures on biodiversity
Supporting and developing thriving communities	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodating the planned growth in housing • Meeting the challenge of demographic change • Address fear of crime and a potential polarisation of communities • An increasing reliance on voluntary effort affected by pressures affecting people's time to volunteer • Addressing poor and potentially worsening access to services
Reducing inequalities and meeting the needs of vulnerable people	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low educational attainment in specific communities • A population growing more diverse • Increasing levels of obesity (national trend) • Increasing alcohol consumption (national trend) • Proportion of teenage conceptions well above Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours



3.1 Maintaining economic competitiveness

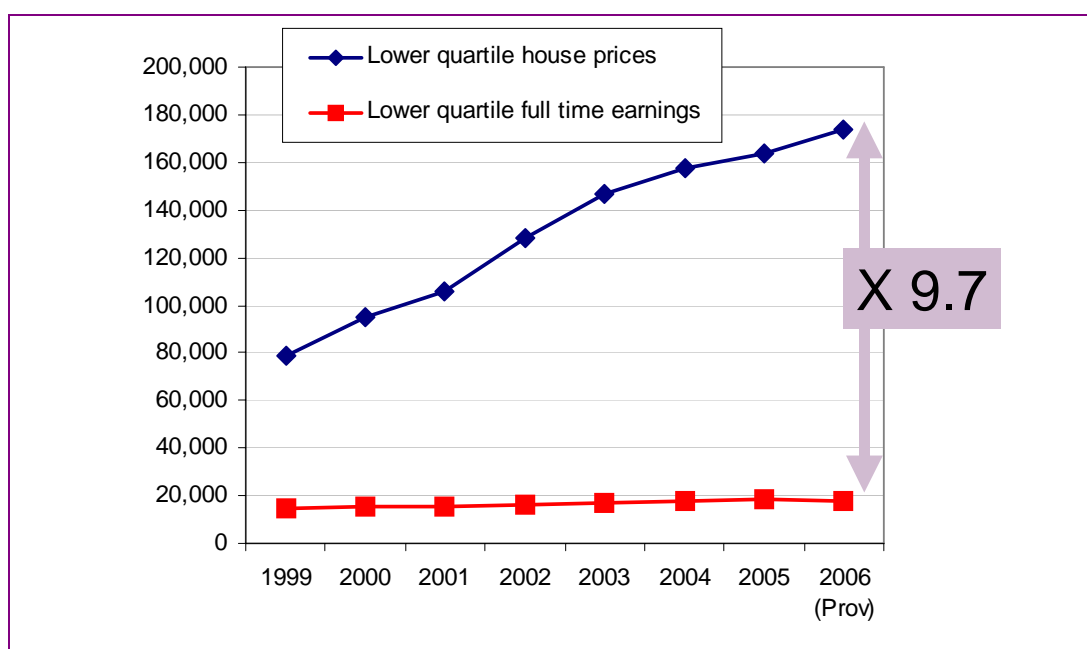
Oxfordshire's economy as a whole has performed well over the last six years across a range of headline economic indicators and, on many measures of enterprise and innovation, compares favourably with South East and national averages.

- For example, the growth in Oxfordshire gross value added per head (a measure of the total monetary value of the economy's output), between 1999 and 2004 was 32%, which is above the South East (29%) and England (28%) averages.

Key trends and issues which may affect this relatively strong position in the future include:

- **the rise of China, India and other emerging economies** as locations for production;
- **Oxfordshire's relatively poor position on education and skills** – especially apparent when set alongside the county's economic strengths:
 - Oxfordshire has a high percentage of graduates and low rate of unemployment, however, the county has 30 areas within the worst 10% in England on education, skills and training deprivation and three areas in Oxford ranked within the worst 1% in England on this measure;
 - Compared with its statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire is ranked poorly on GCSE results.
- pressures on the **quality of Oxfordshire's environment** – a key factor in its economic success;
- pressures on **Oxfordshire's infrastructure** including resources (e.g. water) and waste and physical infrastructure such as roads.
- the **high cost of housing** (see following chart), already affecting staff recruitment and retention.

Figure 1 Oxfordshire lower quartile house prices vs lower quartile earnings



Source: Lower quartile house prices from CLG; Earnings from Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ONS)



3.2 Mitigating and adapting to climate change

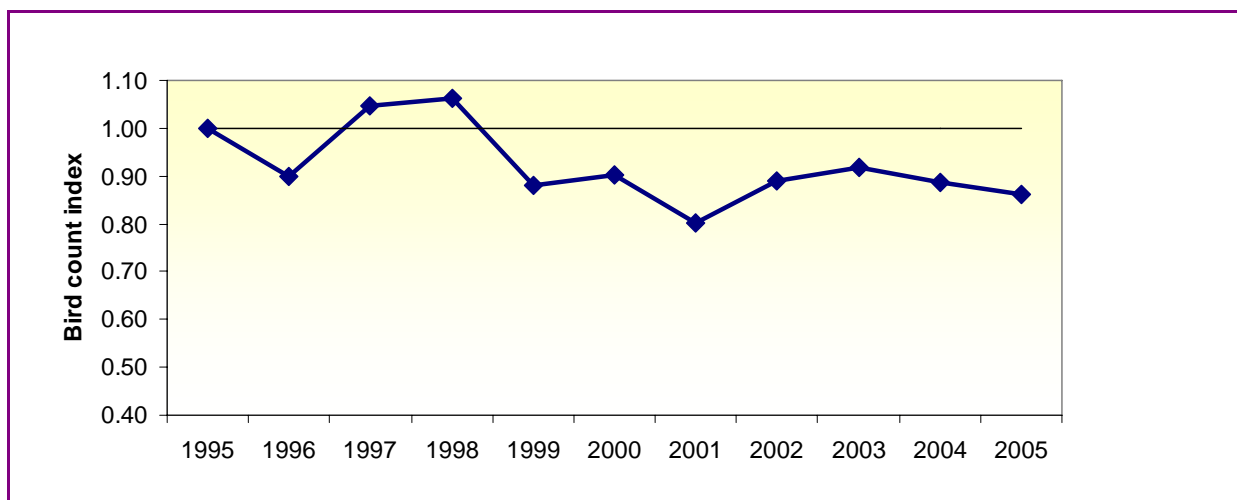
According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment Report (2007) :

Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global average sea level.

Key trends and issues which may need addressing as part of a response to climate change in the future include:

- Higher than average **electricity and gas consumption** in rural districts of Oxfordshire;
- Expected continued increase in car ownership and increased **dependence on car travel**;
- Pressures on **biodiversity** in the county.
 - Changes have already been observed in breeding seasons for birds, fruit and vegetable production, impacts on fish and breeding patterns of frogs and newts.
 - The farmland bird index (a recognised measure of biodiversity and one of the government's headline sustainability indicators) showed an overall reduction in Oxfordshire from 2004 to 2005, and has remained below the 1995 baseline for the seventh consecutive year.

Figure 2 Oxfordshire Farmland Bird Index, 1995 to 2005





3.3 Supporting and developing thriving communities

Oxfordshire is predominantly a rural county with its population distributed between the city of Oxford (22%), the major towns of Banbury, Bicester, Abingdon, Didcot and Witney (25%) and smaller towns and villages (53%)².

Key trends and issues which may affect Oxfordshire's communities in the future include:

- **accommodating the planned growth in housing;**
 - The county has seen historical population growth well above the average and further housing growth is planned, predominantly in and around the county's urban centres.
- **meeting the challenge of demographic change** – and the significant growth in the older population:
 - between 2006 and 2026, Oxfordshire's total population is forecast to grow by 11% with the population group aged 75 and over expected to grow by 61% over the same period. This change is expected to particularly affect smaller rural communities.
- supporting community life – addressing **fear of crime** and potential **polarisation of communities;**
 - Surveys show that Oxfordshire's residents consistently rank community safety as the most important factor in community life. There are indications that fear of crime and community cohesion are issues for Oxfordshire's communities particularly outside Oxford city.
 - Polarisation or lack of communication can happen between settled and new populations and/or between different communities, e.g. younger people and older people.
- an increasing **reliance on voluntary effort** to plan for and support local people, but **social pressures** affecting people's time to volunteer.
- addressing the issue of poor (and potentially worsening) **access to local services;**
 - around one fifth of Oxfordshire is ranked in the worst 10% of areas in England on access to services. This is likely to worsen if the trend towards centralisation of services continues.

² as of 2005, Oxfordshire County Council small area forecasts released 2007 (Oxfordshire Data Observatory)



3.4 Reducing inequalities and meeting the needs of vulnerable people

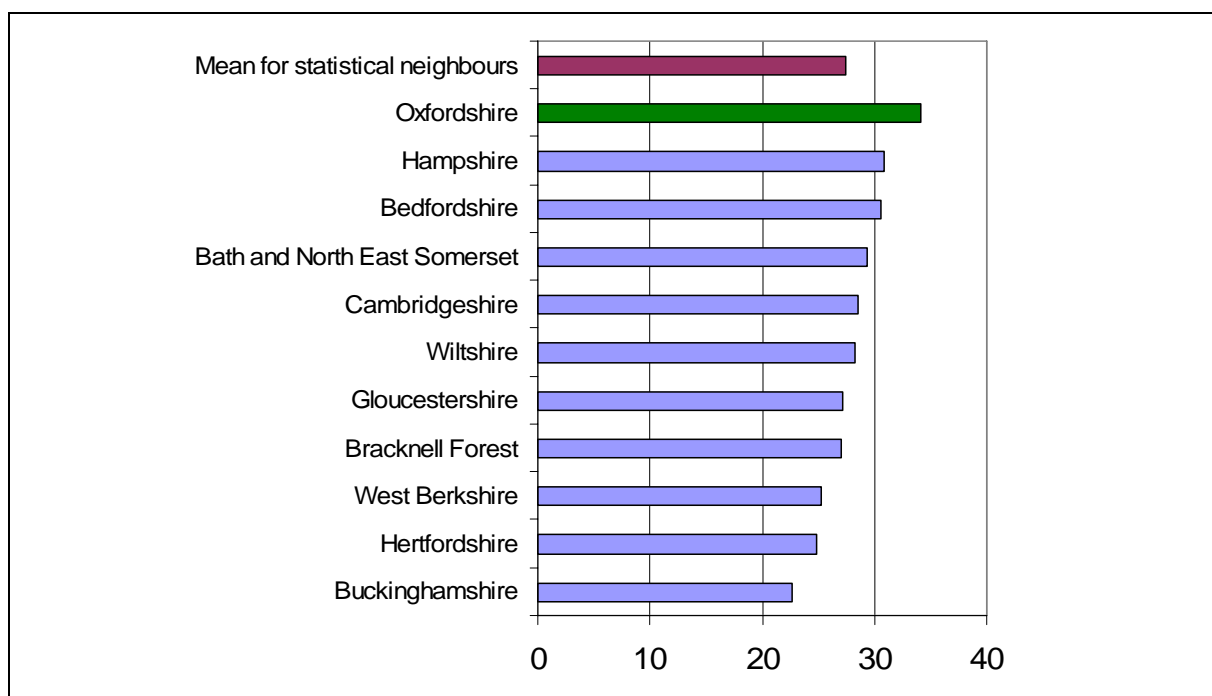
Although overall an affluent county, there is evidence of inequalities across Oxfordshire.

- Oxfordshire has an average life expectancy significantly higher than England, but still shows a 15 year difference in life expectancy between wards.
- There are thirteen areas of urban Oxfordshire – parts of Oxford city and Banbury – that rank in the worst 20% of areas in England on the index of multiple deprivation.

Key trends and issues which may affect inequalities and vulnerable people in the future include:

- **Low educational attainment** in specific communities.
 - Families on lower incomes are less likely to have children with good GCSE results.
 - There were 19 areas of the county, including parts of Oxford, Abingdon, Banbury, Berinsfield, Bicester and Witney, where more than 40% of adults had no qualifications at the time of the Census 2001 survey.
- Oxfordshire's population is expected to become **more diverse** with a growing ethnic minority population and a growing number of economic migrants.
- National **levels of obesity** have increased markedly since the mid-1980s despite a decline in daily food intake. There has been a steady decrease in walking and cycling.
- **Alcohol consumption** is increasing. Young drinkers aged 11 to 15 in England doubled their average weekly consumption of alcohol during the 1990s.
- The proportion of **teenage conceptions** in Oxfordshire is well above the county's statistical neighbours.

Figure 3 Under 18 conception rate 2005



Source: DfES Children's Services Statistical Neighbour Benchmarking Tool version 5; Rates are per 1,000 female population aged 15 - 17

CHAPTER 4 
Priorities from Workshop Discussions



4 Priorities from workshop discussions

Three consultation events were held by the Oxfordshire Partnership in July 2007 and attended by a total of 146 people – predominantly from Oxfordshire's local authorities (61% of participants) and the voluntary and community sector (28%).

Each workshop followed the same format and started with a presentation of the key trends and issues affecting the future of Oxfordshire.

The interactive part of the workshop and the main debate was structured under the headings of:

- Safe and secure
- Healthy
- Prosperous
- Confident in a sustainable future
- Happy and included
- Anything else

Participants were asked to think about what they hope for in the long term for Oxfordshire and identified issues which needed most attention from the Sustainable Community Strategy.

A very wide range of comments were made which are fully recorded in the workshop report (available to download from the Oxfordshire Partnership website). The following is an extract of key points from the discussions of relevance to the strategy under each workshop heading. Note that some of the problems have been grouped together and therefore may not map exactly to the original workshop report.

The role of the strategy

Workshop participants could see a role for the Sustainable Community Strategy in:

- **improving communication** between Oxfordshire's organisations;
- **joining up work** and agreeing common targets between different agencies;
- encouraging a **longer term commitment** to projects;
- promoting (and rewarding) **best practice**;
- promoting **individual and community engagement**;
- audit and monitoring.

What the Sustainable Community Strategy might include

Many of the problems (and solutions) that workshop participants felt the strategy should include were related to communities and volunteering. Health, the needs of older people, skills and climate change also featured strongly.

Things that *need attention* from the Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy included...

... **'SAFE AND SECURE'**

- Barriers to community involvement and the decline in volunteering;
- Lack of services for young people;
- Negative social consequences of alcohol abuse.

... **'HEALTHY'**

- The need to focus on prevention of health problems;
- Pressures on health provision for the elderly;
- Need for investment in sport, active recreation and culture for all.

... **'PROSPEROUS'**

- Affordable housing;
- Address skills gaps;
- Vulnerable groups (long term unemployed, deprivation).

... **'CONFIDENT IN A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE'**

- Dealing with climate change;
- Protection of eco-systems and the countryside;
- Access to services and public transport.

... **'HAPPY AND INCLUDED'**

- Volunteering under pressure and more volunteers likely to be needed in future;
- Disaffected young people;
- Community cohesion;
- Planning in local hands and green spaces.

The following tables highlights some of the actions proposed from the group discussions.

4.1 "Safe and secure"



The problem	What could the strategy do?
<p>There are barriers to community involvement and volunteering is in decline</p>	<p>A strategic approach to encourage volunteering</p> <p>Promote corporate social responsibility</p> <p>Join up work of agencies to reduce barriers to involvement e.g. Criminal Records Bureau checks</p> <p>Help communities take on a wider role (e.g. provide training for parish councillors)</p> <p>Promote places and spaces for community facilities in new developments and community engagement in developing these from the start</p> <p>Use cultural activities to encourage community involvement (e.g. Oxfordshire 2007)</p> <p>Celebrate and showcase good examples</p>
<p>Lack services for young people – especially in rural areas</p>	<p>Look at new ways of providing transport for young people</p> <p>Promote mobile "outreach" services</p> <p>Identify areas of need</p> <p>Join up work between agencies</p>
<p>Negative social consequences of alcohol abuse</p>	<p>Provide clear consistent messages about alcohol</p> <p>Encourage appropriate relationships with alcohol</p> <p>Ask young people what they think</p> <p>Improve availability of treatment</p>

4.2 "Healthy"



The problem	What could the strategy do?
<p>Need to focus on prevention – healthy minds, bodies, supportive communities</p>	<p>Promote walking/cycling and better work/life balance</p> <p>Promote and develop local services</p> <p>Influence children whilst at school (children influence their parents)</p> <p>Target resources on preventing ill health (screening etc)</p> <p>Involve people in identifying solutions</p> <p>Improve access to sport/culture and information across service boundaries</p> <p>Make use of agencies able to reach “hard to reach” groups including young families</p>
<p>Pressures on health provision for the elderly – more older people, higher expectations of health services, pressure on funding</p>	<p>Improve communication and set up clear joint targets between agencies</p> <p>Promote simple messages on exercise to help the elderly prevent ill-health</p> <p>Develop a joint approach (local authorities, registered social landlords, developers) to provision of housing for the elderly</p>
<p>Need for investment in sport, active reaction and culture for all</p>	<p>Recognise link between recreation and health – use recreation as a prevention and treatment</p> <p>Share recreational resources – buildings/people</p> <p>Promote better use of and access to the natural environment (urban and rural)</p> <p>Generate clear targets</p> <p>Publicise and reward success and good practice</p>

4.3 "Prosperous"



The problem	What could the strategy do?
Affordable housing	New solutions for affordable housing Community ownership of land Join up services Increase skills to help people improve their income and access housing
Address skills gaps	Clear direction of travel and targets Better understanding of skills needs – what businesses want; hard to reach groups Raise expectations in schools Join up initiatives that address attitudes to learning Invest in continuous training (not limited by age) and better careers advice in and out of school Provide more choice/diversity in education
Vulnerable groups (long term unemployed, deprivation)	Develop a joint approach Improve information on where to get help Support the development of strong communities Build capacity of voluntary groups to support people including carers Build on the potential for the private sector to invest in social well-being Provide opportunities to build confidence – voluntary and community sector can help in this process More flexible opportunities to train

4.4 "Confident in a sustainable future"



The problem	What could the strategy do?
Dealing with climate change	Develop climate change as a unifying theme in the strategy Education and awareness raising Think about opportunities for businesses and individuals Mix of information, regulation, incentives and support Encourage local suppliers and markets Make the city West End an iconic project for Oxfordshire Promote more sustainable forms of energy production and energy efficiency Encourage local/home working
Protection of eco-systems and the countryside	Monitoring/audit through a biodiversity information bureau Increase awareness Improve access to the countryside Provide environmental data to planning and policy development
Access to services and public transport	Develop a Sustainable Community Strategy for Oxfordshire which is community-led Empower local leaders Support community plans Better communication and information Join up planning and services Promote small changes e.g. car sharing Promote and extend mobile services Forecasting and forward planning

4.5 “Happy and included”



The problem	What could the strategy do?
Volunteering under pressure and more volunteers likely to be needed in future	Volunteering is an enabler and a cross-cutting issue Map activity and share information Promote young people as volunteers Encourage inter-generational work Promote community-led solutions Longer term financial planning to support volunteering element in SCS
Disaffected young people	Longer term commitment to projects Promote engagement, involvement and self-help Involve young people Provide role models Promote active, healthy bodies/minds – delivery by partnerships Support development of parenting skills – targeted to those excluded
Community cohesion	Find ways to spread tolerance that is a feature of good schools Address skills gaps – reduce sense of exclusion “Horizon scanning” – regular review of evidence on issues for communities
Planning in local hands	Encourage devolution to parish and community level for planning and implementation
Green spaces	Engage local communities in green space design for new and existing developments



CHAPTER 5

Options from the thematic briefing papers



5 Options from the thematic briefing papers

Twelve theme papers and three supplementary papers have been produced for the Sustainable Community Strategy evidence base by partnerships and organisations in Oxfordshire (see below).

	Theme	Broad content
THEME PAPERS		
1	Community Life	Active communities, community-led planning, contribution of volunteers
2	Community Safety	Community safety, crime, fear of crime
3	Economy	Employment, income, businesses, change in key industry sectors
4	Children & Young People	Needs of children & young people
5	Learning and skills	Skills for the economy; skills for individuals
6	Environment	Climate change; resources (including waste, water, energy, air quality, countryside, land)
7	Health, care and wellbeing	Lifestyles, older people, long term conditions, vulnerable people
8	Housing	Affordability, housing for vulnerable groups, eco-homes
9	Population and migration	Ageing population, long term and short term migration trends
10	Access to services and travel	Road congestion, accessibility, safer roads, air quality, street environment
11	Recreation, leisure and culture	Participation in culture, sport, leisure activities, internet
12	Spatial Oxfordshire	South East plan, Local Development Frameworks, planning policy; rural, market towns, urban
SUPPLEMENTARY PAPERS		
S1	Community-led plans and their potential contribution to strategic planning	by Gloucestershire University (May 2007) Analysis of the priorities from 30 community-led parish and market town plans completed in past 5 years in Oxfordshire
S2	Priorities from Oxford Area Action plans	by Oxford City Council (July 2007) Priorities from six Oxford City area action plans
S3	Oxfordshire Rural Framework (2007-2010)	by Oxfordshire Rural Forum (July 2007) Challenges and priorities for rural Oxfordshire

Each paper has proposed issues and options for the Sustainable Community Strategy and the following table provides a summary of the options followed by full extracts from each paper.



Summary of options from theme papers

The following table summarises the options proposed by each of the main theme papers prepared for the Sustainable Community strategy.

Community Life	Community Safety	Economy	Children & Young People	Learning & Skills	Environment	Health, Care and Well-being	Housing	Access to Services and travel	Recreation, leisure & culture	Spatial Oxfordshire
<p>Extend support to community-led planning</p> <p>Review options and targets for volunteer brokerage</p> <p>Strengthen support for BME groups (including from mainstream agencies)</p> <p><i>NOTE: There are other issues under this heading already being addressed by the Infrastructure Development plan see section 5.1</i></p>	<p>Dealing with Prolific and Priority Offenders in the community</p> <p>Diversionary schemes for Young Offenders</p> <p>The Respect Agenda and Anti- Social Behaviour</p> <p>Public Perceptions and Fear of Crime</p> <p>Drug misuse</p> <p>Dealing with alcohol-related harm</p> <p>Developing the county Domestic Violence Strategy</p>	<p>Maintaining and enhancing Oxfordshire's competitive position</p> <p>Improving the county's skills base</p> <p>Finding creative and sustainable ways to address the needs of disadvantaged groups</p> <p>Developing the tourist industry</p> <p>Seeking to ensure that adequate infrastructure is provided to support growth</p> <p>Ensuring a mix of good-quality new homes are built to meet economic needs.</p>	<p><i>Raising educational achievement</i></p> <p><i>Sexual health</i></p> <p><i>Emotional/ mental health</i></p> <p><i>Support for families 'at risk'</i></p> <p><i>Improve outcomes in deprived areas</i></p> <p><i>Ongoing engagement of children, young people & families</i></p> <p>Housing – affordable housing, young people in temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Transport – affordability, accessibility and safety</p> <p><i>already included in Children & Young People plan</i></p>	<p>Employers, schools and colleges to develop a Learning & Skills charter</p> <p>Major construction and other developments to work to employ and develop local staff</p> <p>Communities to be challenged to mobilise their members to engage in learning & skills issues.</p>	<p>Reduce energy demand</p> <p>Reduce demand for water and encourage water use efficiency</p> <p>Reduce production of waste – support the Waste management strategy</p> <p>Improve air quality by reducing the need to travel</p> <p>Maintain Oxfordshire's character and built and natural heritage</p>	<p>Meeting the challenge of demographic change</p> <p>Breaking the cycle of deprivation</p> <p>Preventing and Tackling Obesity</p> <p>Addressing cross cutting factors to reduce inequalities</p>	<p>Supply</p> <p>Affordability</p> <p>Older people's housing needs</p> <p>Younger people's housing needs</p> <p>Supported housing</p>	<p>Reducing emissions</p> <p>Adapting to climate change</p> <p>Accessibility to services and facilities</p>	<p>Increasing participation</p> <p>Creative learning</p> <p>Cultural tourism</p>	<p>Shaping thriving communities</p> <p>Accommodating housing growth in a sustainable way that benefits everyone.</p>

5.1 Community Life

Prepared in consultation with:	Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action Oxfordshire Rural Community Council The Oxfordshire Voluntary Sector Development partnership
Covering:	a) Oxfordshire's local communities – development and needs b) Volunteering

The priorities of the Oxfordshire Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Development Plan are:

- Developing support for volunteering;
- Improving information resources (for the voluntary and community sector);
- Supporting organisational development (within the voluntary and community sector);
- Supporting community capacity building;
- Promoting diversity and equality;
- Using the expertise and resources of the larger Faith Communities for the benefit of the wider voluntary and community sector (VCS);
- Enhancing networks and partnerships, and promoting the (VCS) sector to partners and the wider community.

Issues highlighted by the Community Life paper:

- Lack of agreed partnership processes and dedicated resources for supporting community-led planning in urban and rural communities of all sizes.
- Lack of volunteer brokerage services in Oxfordshire (only survived through national funding).
- Lack of progress of work on equality and diversity by the VCS, statutory and private sectors.

Options for the strategy

- Review and extend support to community-led planning to include all types of community across the county.
- Review options and targets for volunteer brokerage.
- Strengthen support for Black and Minority Ethnic groups (Oxfordshire Voluntary Sector Development Plan ref 5.12)
- Work with mainstream agencies to ensure they become more accessible and inclusive of BME and other groups at risk of exclusion.

5.2 Community Safety

Prepared in consultation with:	Oxfordshire Safer Community Partnership Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships Thames Valley Police
Covering:	Crime, fear of crime, community safety

The **issues and options** below reflect the key issues for Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) across Oxfordshire, cross-cutting issues across the sustainable community strategy themes, and also issues that have an impact on all local area agreement blocks.

Dealing with Prolific and Priority Offenders in the community

- The recommendations emerging from the National Prolific and Priority Offender (PPO) evaluation, in particular that “PPOs appear to have specific needs in terms of accommodation, drug misuse, education, training and employability problems when compared to other offenders. As such, it is beneficial that a multi-agency approach is taken – although it is crucial that the appropriate services are involved (for example housing and drug treatment).” The issue here is the link between unemployment, lack of housing and the drift back into re-offending.

Diversions schemes for Young Offenders

- Young offenders leaving custody have particularly poor attendance in education, training and employment (50% of under 16s leaving custody have inadequate provision. The figure rises to 75% for over 16s.) The local Diversion Scheme for children in public care has been very successful, and whereas three years ago in Oxfordshire young people looked after were almost 10 times more likely to get into trouble than their peers, the local scheme has brought this down to less than three times as likely. The Youth Offending Service, the police and Children's Social Care are extending the scheme to other vulnerable groups from June 2007. There will be significant resourcing issues to ensure this work is sustained beyond 2008/09.

The Respect Agenda and Anti- Social Behaviour

- The Respect Agenda, in particular environmental issues such as graffiti, noise, criminal damage and anti-social behaviour. These do not necessarily always translate into criminal offences but they do have a significant impact on quality of life and the fear of crime, especially amongst the older or more vulnerable population. This issue links into the above point about extending diversionary schemes for young people.

Public Perceptions and Fear of Crime

- Fear of crime in Oxfordshire seems disproportionately high given the low levels of criminality in the county. This is particularly the case in rural communities where difficulties in accessing services, transport and activities for young people can fuel fears. The issue here is one of public perception and how it can be improved by making communities more resilient. Community safety options include designing out crime, designating No Cold Calling Zones, and encouraging greater public involvement e.g. widening use of Neighbourhood Watch schemes encouraging involvement in Neighbourhood Policing/Management. The increased use of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and community wardens can provide additional reassurance.

Drug Misuse

- The availability of illegal drugs in Oxfordshire is on a par with equivalent counties. Oxfordshire does not have the gun crime and violence associated with drug turf wars which can be seen in other areas. The county has one of the most efficient and effective treatment ratings (Healthcare Commission Review) managed through the Drug and Alcohol Team (DAAT). However, the majority of the treatment budget is spent on adults and whilst it is important to maintain a high level of support to this vulnerable group there is a question about the balance with that spent on young people. Early intervention schemes, both for drugs and alcohol, targeted at young people are available. Co-ordination between all agencies dealing with vulnerable young people to agree treatment priorities need to be developed further.

Dealing with alcohol- related harm

- Alcohol is a contributory factor in violent crime, DV, disorder, criminal damage and fear of crime. At present there is no dedicated Government funding for this area. Central government published their new national alcohol strategy in June 2007 entitled "Safe, Sensible, Social." The strategy offers no new funding opportunities, but has a new focus on promoting a sensible drinking culture, preventing under-age sales, and increasing help for people who want to reduce their drinking.

Developing the successful county Domestic Violence Strategy

- The success of the county's domestic violence strategy rests in large part on a strong partnership and capacity to identify opportunities and add value to existing resources. Some specific investment has also been required: a full time county coordinator post, a one day a week Champion network coordinator post and a contribution to support services for victims at high risk. If the strategy is to be sustained, sources of funding will be needed for these in future. There is an important gap to be filled, namely early intervention and in particular programmes for perpetrators which will require significant additional funding.

5.3 Economy

<i>Prepared in consultation with:</i>	Oxfordshire Economic Partnership District Economic Development Officers
<i>Covering:</i>	Economic performance, key sectors Deprivation

The briefing paper points to the following as **key issues** for the Oxfordshire economy:

- Maintaining and enhancing Oxfordshire's competitive position, particularly in the high-tech and knowledge-based sectors, building particularly on the links with the leading educational and research establishments
- Improving the county's skills base, particularly amongst those of below degree level
- Finding creative and sustainable ways to address the needs of disadvantaged groups so that they can more fully benefit from and contribute to the county's prosperous economy
- Developing the tourist industry, with an emphasis on increasing the length of individual stay and per capita spend
- Seeking to ensure that adequate infrastructure is provided to support the growth in the economy and population
- Ensuring a mix of good-quality new homes are built to meet economic needs.

Addressing these issues will mean ensuring that we have the right governance structures to enable effective delivery.

5.4 Children & Young People

Prepared in consultation with:	Children and Young People Board
Covering:	Needs of children and young people

The Children and Young People's Plan has identified a number of cross cutting priorities on the basis of an analysis of progress towards outcomes, the needs identified and feedback from children, young people and families.

The aim will be for all agencies to work together collaboratively to achieve these outcomes. This will involve a major shift in culture and behaviour towards a more integrated and preventative approach. The engagement of children, young people and families as equal partners in addressing these priorities is key.

The priorities are:

1. Raising the educational aspiration, achievement and enjoyment of all pupils with a particular focus on vulnerable and/or underachieving groups of children and young people.
2. Improving sexual health, reducing unwanted teenage conceptions and improving support for teenage parents.
3. Strengthening support to improve the emotional/mental health and well being of all children and young people thereby reducing the incidence of behaviour difficulties, conduct disorders, mental health difficulties and bullying.
4. Preventative and early intervention support for children and families "at risk" in need (e.g. at risk of harm, care, exclusion or truancy from school, offending, drug and alcohol misuse, teenage pregnancy, NEET).
5. Improving outcomes for children, young people and families in areas of deprivation including rural deprivation.
6. Ongoing engagement and participation of children, young people and families in the development of services.

Additional to these, it is recommended that the Oxfordshire Sustainable Community strategy should support the following priorities:

- **Housing** – this crosses the spectrum from affordable housing for all families to the more targeted resource needed for young people leaving care. It also includes the issues of teenage parents in temporary accommodation and vulnerable parents in temporary accommodation.
- **Transport** – this is an issue for all children and young people and has emerged most strongly from the work on improving "things to do". It includes issues of affordability, accessibility and safety and is important in both rural and urban areas.

5.5 Learning and skills

<i>Prepared in consultation with:</i>	Learning & Skills Council, Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action, Oxfordshire County Council
<i>Covering:</i>	Importance of skills Oxfordshire's skills base & future needs

Issues

- It is notable from the review of community plans in Oxfordshire that communities themselves do not see adult education and workforce skills as a priority.
- What can the Sustainable Community Strategy do to address the issues of aspirations and attitudes towards learning and skills in Oxfordshire especially in deprived communities?
- There are huge changes happening in the funding and governance of Learning & skills – how will the Oxfordshire Partnership engage with these changes to deliver what the county needs?

Options

- Employers, schools and colleges develop a Learning & Skills charter.
- Major construction and other developments work to employ and develop local staff.
- Communities be challenged to mobilise their members to engage in learning & skills issues.

5.6 Environment

<i>Prepared in consultation with:</i>	Oxfordshire County Council – transport, waste, climate change Oxfordshire Waste Partnership District Environment Officers
<i>Covering:</i>	Climate change Resources Heritage

Climate Change

The extent of the threats and opportunities highlighted in the previous chapter show climate change as a central issue for the Sustainable Community Strategy. There are two aspects of dealing with climate change that can be addressed by the SCS: mitigation and adaptation.

1. **Mitigating climate change** (reducing emissions of greenhouse gases) by:

- Encouraging energy efficiency in existing housing stock
- Encouraging zero carbon new builds
- Encouraging community energy schemes and appropriate use of renewable energy sources
- Encouraging businesses to reduce their carbon footprint, e.g. with support from the Carbon Trust and Oxfordshire Sustainable Business Partnership.
- Encouraging the general public to reduce pollution through effective advice and support
- Reducing the need to travel
- Encouraging use of local produce and reducing food miles
- Supporting local projects that protect and enhance biodiversity
- Encouraging comprehensive, sustainable policies to be incorporated into the Local Development Framework.

2. **Adapting to climate change:**

Work carried out by the UK Climate Impacts Programme and Oxfordshire County Council has shown that the impacts of climate change and the consequent adaptation issues are highly significant for all the themes covered in the SCS briefing papers. Adapting to climate change will also be vital for the sustained effectiveness of high quality and resilient service delivery across the County and partner organisations.

The SCS should consider policies that enable adaptation, for example:

- more efficient use of water resources
- efficient flood defence measures;
- changes in housing stock to cope with changing weather patterns (building programmes to include passive cooling in their design; adequate guttering to cope with heavy downpours);

- promoting the use of community response plans to extreme weather events;
- support for businesses to adapt to threats and benefit from opportunities provided by a changing climate;
- care of vulnerable groups by the community, particularly in extreme weather events;
- provision of accessible good quality cool, shady outdoor spaces in urban areas;
- conserving biodiversity.

The SCS could play a key role in increasing environmental awareness and promoting local community action. Partnership working is identified by UKCIP as a key element in adapting to climate change.³

Use of resources

Issues for the Sustainable Community Strategy:

- to reduce waste,
- to reduce energy demand,
- promote energy efficiency and
- encourage more sustainable means of energy production.

Options for the SCS:

- Reduce energy demand by encouraging increasing energy efficiency in homes and businesses as well as supporting more sustainable means of energy production.
- Reduce demand for water and encouraging water use efficiency
- Reduce waste production and promoting more sustainable waste management through:
 - supporting the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership aims of reducing total waste production and increasing recycling. Encouraging community involvement in waste reduction schemes (e.g., Community Action Groups);
 - Need for SCS to promote Waste Management Strategy and further encourage development of community and individual action to reduce waste. The Oxfordshire Joint Waste Management Strategy is an excellent example of partnership working and engaging communities – there are currently 19 community action groups in Oxfordshire, involving about 60 core volunteers and many other participants.
- Meet the need for construction minerals without damaging the environment, including increasing the use of recycled and secondary aggregates in place of land-won minerals
- Improve air quality by reducing need to travel.

³ UKCIP, 2007. Identifying adaptation options

Heritage

- Encourage sympathetic development to maintain and enhance area character and avoid loss of important historic and archaeological resource.
- Maintain character of Oxfordshire's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Theme Paper 12, Spatial Oxfordshire, recognises three types of community in the county: Oxford City; other towns; and rural areas. This differentiation applies equally to climate change and other environmental issues which can be addressed by the SCS. The nature of the threat or opportunity will vary with locality and this will need to be reflected in the strategy, for example recognition that in rural areas travel and in particular mode of travel will be a much greater issue than it is in Oxford.

5.7 Health, care and wellbeing

<i>Prepared in consultation with:</i>	Oxfordshire PCT and Oxfordshire County Council Healthier Communities and Older People Partnership
<i>Covering:</i>	Health needs, long term conditions Lifestyles Older people

It is recommended that the four broad themes set out below be adopted as priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy:

1. **Meeting the challenge of demographic change** – Securing long and healthier life for the adult population and shifting the emphasis to primary and secondary prevention
2. **Breaking the cycle of deprivation** – Securing long and healthy life for children and young people
3. **Preventing and Tackling Obesity**
4. **Addressing cross cutting factors to reduce inequalities**

Detailed objectives that will help meet these challenges will be set out in the Oxfordshire Public Health Strategy which has been circulated for discussion (July 2007). However, the following overarching objectives are included along with the recommendations above as important elements for the Sustainable Community Strategy:

- Increase, sustain and target funding to shift the emphasis to prevention and target interventions to the localities or community groups in most need
- Address factors that are linked to poor health including
 - poor housing, homelessness, poor housing stock condition
 - fuel poverty
 - low educational attainment,
 - low income and employment
 - Crime and fear of crime.
 - Environmental factors
 - Transport and access to services
 - Access to support and assistance to enable independent living
 - Low levels of participation in physical activity across age groups
- Reduce the gap in life expectancy
- Work across organisations and sectors, refer across agencies and share information.

5.8 Housing

<i>Prepared in consultation with:</i>	Housing Market Assessment Team Heads of Housing Oxfordshire Housing Partnership
<i>Covering:</i>	Affordability Housing for vulnerable groups Housing and climate change

The Oxfordshire District Heads of Housing identified **5 key issues** for the Sustainable Community Strategy in the process of commenting on this paper:

- Supply
- Affordability
- Older people's housing needs
- Younger people's housing needs
- Supported housing

Specific challenges that emerge from the evidence presented in this paper are:

- Affordability
 - Achievement of affordable housing targets set out in Local Plans and Local Development Frameworks.
- Vulnerable people
 - Prevent homelessness and improve provision of assistance and accommodation for those accepted as homeless
 - How to support existing work on tackling homelessness, particularly amongst 'vulnerable groups'.
- Older people's needs
 - The impact of an increasingly aging population on the housing situation in Oxfordshire.
- Sustainable housing
 - Improve housing standards, including condition, energy efficiency, and reducing the carbon footprint of Oxfordshire's existing housing stock.
 - Ensuring new homes, both market and affordable housing, are built to a high standard in terms of energy efficiency and sustainability.

5.9 Population and migration

<i>Prepared in consultation with:</i>	Oxfordshire Data Observatory
<i>Covering:</i>	Ageing population Migration

Issues

- Ageing population
 - Implications of changes in the age profile (particularly increases within the older age groups) of the population, especially for smaller rural communities.
- Migration
 - Economic migration from existing and new European countries.
 - Internal migration trends e.g. people moving from London to Oxfordshire.
 - Impact of international and internal migration on Oxfordshire's communities.

Options

- **Continue to improve the accessibility of the latest population data and trends so that plans are informed by consistent evidence.** Promote the Oxfordshire Data Observatory as the central source of population data and social statistics.
- Set up an **annual process of refreshing and reviewing** population data to feed into service and strategic planning.
- **Research specific issues** of relevance to the Oxfordshire Partnership - for example the impact of economic migration on population growth; changes in ethnic diversity.

5.10 Access to services and travel

<i>Prepared in consultation with:</i>	Oxfordshire County Council transport team Rural Transport Partnership
<i>Covering:</i>	Congestion, accessibility, safer roads, air quality, street environment

Oxfordshire County Council has recently adopted its second Local Transport Plan (LTP). The new LTP covers a five-year period from April 2006 - March 2011 and sets out a vision for transport in Oxfordshire. It focuses on five priority areas:

- tackling congestion
- delivering accessibility
- safer roads
- better air quality
- improving the street environment

The main areas of common ground between the *Access and Travel* theme and the other themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy are **reducing emissions** and **adapting to climate change** (in the Environment Paper) and **accessibility to services and facilities** (in the Spatial Oxfordshire Paper).

Reducing emissions, given resource constraints and the national context, may have to rely on encouraging members of the Partnership – particularly employers – to adopt green travel plans and facilitate more home working. Local communities could also encourage local people to use what bus, train and cycle facilities there are in order to improve their viability and help secure their continued existence either as separate initiatives or through the development of a Community Travel Plan.

An assessment of patterns of social deprivation and inclusion formed part of the basis of our Framework Accessibility Strategy. Some problems in the application of this approach were identified in the pilot schemes set out in our LTP Accessibility Strategy. As a consequence of this we are currently reviewing the strategy to ensure that the most appropriate areas are chosen for future action and that the correct stakeholders are involved in developing local action plans.

5.1.1 Recreation, leisure and culture

<i>Prepared in consultation with:</i>	Oxford Inspires Oxfordshire County Council Cultural services District leisure officers
<i>Covering:</i>	Participation in culture, leisure and recreation Needs of vulnerable people

In choosing what to prioritise, and what will require partnership working to be effected, the following are suggested for inclusion in the Community Strategy.

Increasing participation. Research shows that active participation is more effective than simply watching in creating positive effects on individuals self esteem, skills and confidence and on communities in building cohesion and a sense of place. Widening and increasing participation in culture, recreation and leisure would have benefits impacting on other areas e.g. economic well-being, health as well as integral positive impact for quality of life. Individual participation might take the form of getting involved in organised sport or arts, could be part of Adult Learning, or informal active recreation and hobbies with potential benefits to health and mental and physical well-being. Community events and festivals, large scale sporting events and one off spectacular events like “Luminox” in Oxford in March 2007 create a sense of inclusion and pride in place. Along with this would go a need to ensure adequate places and facilities for people to actively participate – whether through traditional village halls, community halls within new housing developments, new uses for churches and other community buildings.

This option has special relevance to areas experiencing changes in the local community – such as expansion through housing growth. Valuing the distinctive locality, enhancing it through public art and urban design, can involve the public in determining and highlighting what is special about their community.

The London Olympics in 2012 provide a catalyst for work to broaden engagement in sport and the arts through the profile of the Olympics and Paralympics themselves and through the opportunities created across the UK from a national Olympic Cultural Festival due to take place from 2008 – 12. In prioritising participation Oxfordshire would primarily be investing in people and their activity.

Creative learning. The recognition that creative approaches to teaching and learning are effective in promoting more positive engagement among children, motivate teachers and can help to raise aspiration and attainment has become much more widespread in the past 5 years. This is, in part, due to the success of the national pilot programme of “Creative Partnerships”. OFSTED and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority both now commend creative approaches to teaching and learning. The expansion of “Creative Partnerships” across the country planned for 2008 onwards provides an opportunity for Oxfordshire which would also bring new resources to schools for this way of working.

Many schools in Oxfordshire have developed creative learning independently and provide models of good practice. Increased networking between schools, training for teachers and creative practitioners and robust evaluation could be developed.

Cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism, especially for short breaks. There is already an aspiration to increase high value tourism (which this is) and encourage overnight stays and repeat visits. Oxford is a “world brand”

with potential to attract visitors across the county on the strength of that brand which will get further attention in the run up to the 2012 London Olympics. The county's peerless heritage culture and landscape provide a great asset in attracting visitors which could be enhanced through building on the county's rich mix of sporting events and arts festivals, growing existing events or starting new ones to attract new types of visitors throughout the year.

Each of the options above will require greater capacity in the culture, recreation and leisure sector to engage with more people, perhaps in new ways and in new settings. Engaging with the capacity building issues would be a necessary part of pursuing these priorities for development in the Community Strategy.

5.12 Spatial Oxfordshire

<i>Prepared in consultation with:</i>	District Local Strategic Partnerships officers and planners
<i>Covering:</i>	South East Plan, Structure Plan, Local Development Frameworks City, urban and rural spatial strategy

This section summarises **issues and options** which the Oxfordshire Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy should address on spatial strategy. This focuses particularly on areas which are not yet adequately covered or are considered to need attention in the future.

The main spatial challenges are:

1. **Shaping thriving communities** (places that work for people now and in the long term).
 - Successful development is not just about bricks and mortar, but about how to foster thriving communities.
 - Partnership working (local authorities, health, police, voluntary organisations) on spatial planning and place shaping could help to connect separate initiatives and harness resources to achieve better results for people more effectively and cost-effectively (e.g. town centres, better transport networks, attracting employers to business parks, access to services).
 - Plans and strategies with spatial implications (from community plans to regional and government guidance, covering a wide range of issues) need to interact and overlap coherently.
 - The impact of increased storms, flooding and droughts on the built environment, landscape and wildlife due to climate change will need to be factored into spatial planning and place-shaping. There are likely to be economic impacts from climate change mitigation policies including higher energy costs which could lead to worsening deprivation and isolation of people in villages and rural areas that may not have adequate or affordable public transport.

2. **Accommodating growth** in a sustainable way that benefits everyone.
 - Accommodating the levels of growth that are likely to be required under the South East Plan in a sustainable way requires housing/employment balance. Countywide, housing and employment are reasonably well balanced but a key issue is that employment needs to continue to keep pace with population and housing growth at key urban centres (including the country towns) and to offer high skilled highly paid jobs to reduce the growth in long-distance commuting. In-migration provides a vital supply of labour, and is concentrated in particular locations with implications for community cohesion and service provision.

- Timely infrastructure provision (e.g. east-west rail, public transport, leisure facilities, green infrastructure, children's facilities). Future planned growth will create further pressures for timely infrastructure development such as town centres, public transport, schools and leisure facilities. Infrastructure and service provision needs to be delivered together with future housing growth and to meet pressures from past and committed growth.
- Smart growth in high quality environment. Oxfordshire has a prosperous and diverse economy. A priority for the county council is to 'help the economy to grow as fast as possible with a real choice of access to jobs, homes, leisure and services and in a way that does not prejudice the future of our environment'. The spatial strategy for the economy is to maximise the productive value of resources including human capital, land and natural resources (South East Plan policy RE5). To this end Oxfordshire is emphasising "smart growth" including encouraging high technology firms in preference to warehouses and low-skilled manufacturing.

Supplementary paper I – Community-led plans

Paper prepared by: Countryside & Community Research Unit, University of Gloucestershire on behalf of the Oxfordshire Partnership (May 2007)

RECOMMENDATIONS. Given the various benefits that can and do commonly spin off from community-led, very local, planning we recommend that at the strategic level:

- (i) Unequivocal encouragement and support is given to the launch and undertaking of such planning, focussing specifically on parish and town councils (primarily to give the exercises the legitimacy that would be lacking if just *ad hoc* groups of residents were responsible, as was often the case with 'village appraisals') and on any disadvantaged parishes where 'little or nothing seems to happen'.
- (ii) Such support may have several aspects e.g.
 - ensuring the provision of sufficient professional advice and guidance at the individual parish (or other locality) level,
 - making available small sums of money to help defray the expenses of preparing and publishing a Parish (or similar) Plan (while not forgetting that the parish precept can and perhaps should cover some or all of this and thereby help to ensure parish council 'buy-in'),
 - facilitating networking and mutual support and learning between parishes undertaking parish planning and those contemplating such ventures,
 - demonstrating in various ways that it is 'worth the effort'. This should involve producing clear evidence that strategic bodies take these plans seriously, and that real benefits accrue to local communities,
 - instigating a 'conditional promise of funding' process whereby the top priorities expressed in Parish Plans of appropriate rigour and quality have a reasonable chance of getting at least partial funding.
- (iii) Putting in place clear procedures and machinery so that community-led plans can be properly received and acted upon. Chapter 4 of the authors' 'Bridges report (CCRU, 2004 and Appendix 3) suggested a number of 'components of effective bridging' including: providing clarity about bridging; identifying the roles and responsibilities of participants; creating effective structures linked to the LSP / Community Strategy machinery; improving bridging processes; identifying appropriate resources and support for bridging; and monitoring its effectiveness. One key issue concerns the pros and cons of also having machinery at an intermediate geographical area (i.e. between parish and county) designed to receive and respond to parish plans emanating from local parishes (as with the 'community areas' used in the cases of Wiltshire and Dorset).
- (iv) One specific suggestion in that report, which we repeat in the present context, is that once all of the above is undertaken, a 'Guide to Bridging' is produced and widely circulated (see Appendix 3). In the context of Oxfordshire this might include:

Oxfordshire – the Bridging Context This section should include a clear user-friendly explanation of how the LSP / Community Strategy process works and how effective bridging to/from the very local level is envisaged. Reference will be needed to the variety of strategic planning and resource-allocation exercises that might be relevant to parish planners;

A Bridging Protocol for Oxfordshire This section should specify what is expected of all partners in the exercise. Also a note should be included on the support that parish planners might expect in both the preparation and implementation of their plans;

A Bridging Template for Oxfordshire This section would comprise a tool to identify the 'fit' between the relevant proposals of a completed community-led plan and the objectives and proposals of the LSP; it would then serve as a basis for the strategic response to those proposals.

- (v) Addressing a number of 'human resources' issues, in particular:
- ensuring adequate staffing at the strategic level – 'adequate' to ensure that the above proposals are undertaken in a timely and efficient way;
 - capacity building at the local level, especially in those places poorly endowed with community leaders;
 - clarifying the role of elected (district and county) councillors in this process who, at worst, may feel bypassed, or more positively, may become better placed to champion the needs and priorities of their constituents. The current enquiry into strengthening the role of rural councillors by the Commission of Rural Communities⁴ is relevant here.
- (vi) On the assumption that at least a dozen or so community-led plans are produced in the county each year, produce an annual 'State of the County's Communities' report, distilling the main substantive messages of the latest crop of plans (and perhaps also reporting on the tangible results flowing for the previous crop of such plans).

⁴ The Commission for Rural Communities 'Inquiry into Strengthening the role of Rural Councillors' – interpreting that term to include parish and town councillors, and 'rural' councillors at the district and county levels - is due to report in the autumn.

Supplementary paper 2 – Priorities from Oxford Area plans

Oxford City Council has prepared material for a supplementary paper for the Sustainable Community Strategy which lists the priorities identified by each of the six area action plans in Oxford.

The priorities are grouped under the SCS theme headings and the relevant extracts are included in the individual SCS thematic briefing papers.

Please refer to the full supplementary paper for the Oxford area priorities.

Supplementary paper 3 – Oxfordshire Rural Framework

Oxfordshire Rural Framework 2007-2010, prepared on behalf of the Oxfordshire Rural Forum (July 2007)

The challenges for rural Oxfordshire

Many of the social, economic and environmental pressures affecting rural Oxfordshire are relevant to urban areas as well. However, these pressures can be felt very differently in rural areas. In developing a rural framework the aim has been to identify the ways in which rural areas are affected differently from other (urban) areas, and opportunities for appropriate responses to these issues. For example:

- with a lower density of population, reduced access to services in some rural areas may affect only a small minority of people, and therefore require a more specific and flexible response appropriate to the needs of this vulnerable group.
- some effects of predicted climate change will be very different in rural areas, where changes in crop production are likely to have a major and lasting impact on the appearance of the countryside and on biodiversity.

The debate on the priorities for this framework identified six challenges for the future of rural Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire's Rural Challenges

1. Access to services and facilities
2. Affordable housing
3. Countryside and environment
4. Climate change and resource use
5. Economy and enterprise
6. Vulnerable people

Recommendations from the rural framework

At its meeting on 12 June 2007, the Public Service Board agreed the following recommendations:

- a) to endorse the draft Rural Framework for Oxfordshire as a first step in setting out the challenges that need to be addressed in rural Oxfordshire.
- b) to invite the Oxfordshire Rural Forum Steering Group to explore innovative solutions to address the challenges identified.

The Oxfordshire Rural Forum Steering Group therefore proposes to:

- Consider with other partners on the rural forum a prioritised plan of action in response to the rural framework challenges.

- Ensure arrangements are in place to monitor, review and communicate progress on rural issues across Oxfordshire on a regular basis.
- Develop a business plan setting out the costs and requirements for ORCC to provide a secretariat and leadership for the Oxfordshire Rural Forum, and ensure that appropriate and innovative actions to take forward the rural framework challenges are developed and implemented.