

Introduction to Workshop Sessions

Sustainability Wheel

'Working towards Sustainable Communities'.

The Sustainability Wheel featured below was developed by the Government to illustrate different elements that contribute to improving quality of life for everyone, both now and for generations to come. Developing and implementing our North Somerset Community Strategy is one of the ways that we can work towards sustainable communities.

The wheel shows how all the elements fit together. For a community to be truly sustainable all the elements must be considered equally. At the NSP stakeholder event each workshop considered two elements of the wheel as they relate to the themes of the Community Strategy. Workshop participants worked together to identify what working towards sustainable communities could mean when developing and implementing the Community Strategy for North Somerset.



Introduction to Workshop Sessions

Each participant selected two workshop sessions in the morning. Ten workshops were run reflecting the nine themes of the Community Strategy plus one workshop introducing the 'Compact' for North Somerset.

During session one each thematic workshop worked on a sustainability component to explore in relation to their theme, as follows:

- Communities and People – **'Well Run'**
- Community Safety – **'Active, Inclusive and Safe'**
- Culture, Leisure & Recreation – **'Active, Inclusive and Safe'**
- Economy and Employment – **'Thriving'**
- Environment – **'Environmentally Sensitive'**
- Health and Wellbeing – **'Well Served'**
- Housing – **'Well Designed and Built'**
- Learning and Skills – **'Well Served'**
- Transport – **'Well Connected'**

During session two all thematic workshops were asked to develop work undertaken in the first session by looking at how the 'Fair for Everyone' sustainability component could be applied to the work documented so far. Workshops also considered how local people and communities might be engaged in shaping these areas of work further.

A sustainable community that worked towards being **Fair for Everyone** would include the following aspects:

- a) recognise individuals' rights and responsibilities
- b) respect the rights and aspirations of others (both neighbouring communities, and across the wider world) also to be sustainable
- c) have due regard for the needs of future generations in current decisions and actions.

Workshop Group 7 – Housing

Session 1

The Housing Workshop considered how the sustainability component 'Well designed and built' applied to this theme.

A **Well designed and built** community would include the following aspects:

- a) a sense of place (e.g. a place with a positive 'feeling' for people and local distinctiveness).
- b) user-friendly public and green spaces with facilities for everyone including children and older people.
- c) sufficient range, diversity, affordability and accessibility of housing within a balanced housing market.
- d) appropriate size, scale, density, design and layout, including mixed-use development, that complement the distinctive local character of the community.
- e) high quality, mixed-use, durable, flexible and adaptable buildings, using sustainable construction materials.
- f) buildings and public spaces which promote health and are designed to reduce crime and make people feel safe.
- g) accessibility of jobs, key services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling.

All aspects would contribute to developing sustainable communities that have a quality built and natural environment.

Housing workshop notes

Reflecting on Achievements over the last 12 months

- ✓ Private houses built but are they affordable.
- ✓ Density build (aesthetics and design?).
- ✓ Revamping terrace no outside toilets?
- ✓ Fit for Ikea?
- ✓ Housing Association have built houses (much better space/build).
- ✓ Provision of affordable housing.
- ✓ Moved population Bristol to Weston super Mare.
- ✓ New Town.
- ✓ Houses of Multiple Occupation work.

Identifying issues to address to ensure that we are all working towards a well designed and built community

- Affordable Housing.
 - Higher % of housing new build needs to be affordable housing – needs to be 25%-50% - housing for special needs recognised in this %.
 - More affordable Homes for life.
 - Specialised housing (Learning Disability, Disabled).
 - Not just to buy but to run.
 - Developers should go above standard requirements.
 - Set higher standards and enforce – no negotiation
- Location of Housing.
 - Avoid having green fields sites.
 - More use of brown field sites.
 - Better use of empty homes.
 - Refurbishment.
- Tackling homelessness.

- New initiatives.
- More choice.
- Infrastructure.
 - Should come before house building i.e. facilities (shops etc).
 - Developers should carry out (be forced to) more detailed environmental investigations.
- Environmental Impact.
 - Environmental and safety issues.
 - Enforcing compliance with no bartering.

Identifying key issues to be addressed through a partnership approach

- Affordable Housing.
- Infrastructure.
- Environmental impact.

Considering potential solutions to key issues identified

Affordable Housing

- Means Testing.
- Better definition of affordable housing.
- Encouraging co-operative housing/construction.
- Better consideration for all types of individuals.
- Establish needs/necessity from background (social/ethical).
Should private housing be built as buy to lets and sold to private landlords?
More emphasis on moral obligation away profit making.
Legislation to monitor 2nd homes and holiday homes?
- Affordable to run and maintain as well as to purchase or rent – (general consensus across the group).
- Higher standards for private developers (like with Housing Associations).
- Higher standards should be set and enforced.

Infrastructure

- Needs to appear before or at the same time as housing otherwise too late.
- Better phasing of development.
- Use brownfield sites.

Environmental Impact

- Private developers do the minimum environment development.
- Private Developers should be forced to do more environmental impact assessments e.g. affordable housing contracts.

Car parked suggestions

Clarification of issues and solutions to be considered:

- Supported housing and supported housing initiatives.
- Private developers cutting too many corners.
- Moral obligations – discourage rather than controlling (central govt) and in context with new housing act standards.

Workshop Outcomes

The Housing workshop suggested issues and potential solutions to help develop 'well run communities' in North Somerset. This work was presented as part of the sustainability wheel built by all participants at the Stakeholders event.



HOUSING

Key Issues

1. Affordable should mean affordable to run and maintain as well as to buy-rent.
2. Infrastructure (schools, recreation etc) is arriving too late for new developments.
3. Private developers do the minimum towards environmental development.
4. Lack of affordable housing.
5. Houses being built in the wrong location.
6. Homelessness.

Key Solutions

1. Set and enforce higher standards for private developers (as with Housing associations).
2. Better phasing of development projects.
3. Private developers should be forced to do more environmental impact work.
4. Need high percentage of affordable housing (50%?) including a higher percentage for special needs.
5. Make better use of brown field sites and empty homes.
6. Need new initiatives, more choice and more affordable housing (HOMES FOR LIFE).

Housing Session 2 – Considering the Sustainability Component: Fair for everyone

Views on what applying the principle of Fair for Everyone means in relation to the Housing theme.

- Affordability
 - Is it about affordability or quality and access to reasonable accommodation (widest sense)?
 - Desire to buy and own – aspirations – not suitable for all, to be fair invest in quality.
 - What is affordable for one is not affordable to another.
- Measure income
 - Means test income to test what is affordable for them.
 - Need to define what affordable housing is better.
 - More co-operative approach and shared ownership – a wide range of options needed – one size doesn't fit all.
 - Establish needs from background.
 - Challenge the “acceptable norm” the ownership culture.
- Homelessness
 - impact of decisions outside North Somerset need to flag up major impact on North Somerset.
- Managing estates – tackling social problems.
- The more you prioritise – the more some groups will be excluded.
- Sufficient housing and price everyone can afford and access to the market.
- Generational issue – affordability taken out of the control of young people.
 - Young people are spending on luxuries e.g. car, colour tv, not housing. We are being driven by consumer driven society. What is the point? Mortgage/ pensions. Support young people to develop life skills for running a home, managing finance and developing social responsibility.
- Improve standards in Houses Multiple Occupation – everyone has access to decent housing.
- Education – Equality for everyone?
 - Not everyone wants it.
 - How to run a home efficiently.
 - Loss of family support to educate children to manage their own home – life skills.
- Minimum standards could lead to fairness for people across all tenures.
- Private housing for buy to let.
 - Problems of taking advantage.
 - Need more monitoring and control required.
 - Need to maintain a balance.
- Need more emphasis on promoting good practice amongst developers – moral obligation.
- People having a stake in their homes – how do we do this? Education.
- Important that private developers work within an integrated housing programme.

Issues and solutions identified by the group when applying the sustainability principle of 'Fair for Everyone' to the Housing theme. The work below was included in the sustainability wheel produced at the event.

FAIR FOR EVERYONE

1. Need to invest in quality and give access to accommodation in its widest sense. What is affordable for one is not affordable for all.
2. Need to measure income – what is affordable for them?
3. Need a clearer definition of what 'affordable housing' means.
4. A wider range of options is required e.g. cooperative approach or shared ownership.
5. One size doesn't fit all – challenge the 'accepted norm' i.e. ownership culture.
6. Educate the young on how to run a home/manage a mortgage etc.
7. More control of buy-to-let required.
8. Need more emphasis on controlling private developers.