

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE
A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE
RURAL ACTION

North Warwickshire Community Partnership

May 2006

Statement by the North Warwickshire Community Partnership.

Key Principle

'The Framework for Sustainable Rural Action is about equality, diversity and choice for all who live and work in the rural area which is North Warwickshire. It will inform the development of the North Warwickshire Community Plan and the Local Development Frameworks and these processes will complement each other'.

North Warwickshire Community Partnership makes the following pledges in respect of this Framework for Sustainable Rural Action

- *North Warwickshire is a rural area. The Market Towns directly serve rural communities. We will promote this in all we do.*
- *We will consider the needs of North Warwickshire as a whole when reviewing and developing services and seeking additional funding.*
- *Unless there is a clear and justified reason for doing so, we will avoid developing area based projects with strict geographical boundaries. These create exclusion and our population is too small and dispersed to justify this.*
- *Where external funding criteria specify that strict boundaries must be set, this will not preclude us from applying but we will lobby as a partnership to change the criteria for the future*
- *New projects will have a clear strategy for taking forward delivery when the funding ends. Where this is not possible or not necessary, the fact that the project has a limited lifespan will be made clear from the outset*
- *Service delivery decisions will take account of any relevant consultation with local communities. Partners will share the results of consultations which are undertaken.*
- *Actions will be 'rural proofed' to ensure we are making a positive and demonstrable difference in our communities.*
- *Local communities (based on geography and / or common interest) will be encouraged and enabled to voice their aspirations, needs and priorities.*
- *The Framework for Sustainable Rural Action will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development both locally and more widely, with local goals and priorities relating, where appropriate, to regional, national and even global aims.*
- *The Community Plan and Local Development Frameworks will take account of the issues highlighted in the Framework for Sustainable Rural Action and ensure they influence the way in which its actions are delivered.*

INTRODUCTION

North Warwickshire

A Framework for Sustainable Rural Action

Rural North Warwickshire: the challenge

How we live is shaped by *where* we live. However, people still want the same basic things; jobs, a healthy economy, a stable and safe society, a pleasant and healthy environment, good public services; opportunity and choice for all.

People want to have a say in what happens in their community and to shape their own future. The character, vitality and beauty of our countryside are important to us all, however, rural communities are going through difficult changes as some basic services have become over stretched. In traditional industries such as farming, incomes are falling and jobs are disappearing, there is pressure for development, wildlife diversity has declined, post offices are disappearing, council houses sold off, rural schools closed and village bus services cut. Change in the countryside is nothing new, but over the last twenty years the pressures have become acute

We need to get the balance right to give rural communities a fair deal but to do so in a way which does not undermine the qualities that make the countryside unique. We need to address the needs of all who live and work in rural North Warwickshire by maintaining and improving basic local services, adapting to change and supporting new enterprises, and by giving local people the chance to shape their own future.

Why a Framework for Sustainable Rural Action?

North Warwickshire is a rural area, 110 square miles in size. Its population of 61,860 (Census 2001) is dispersed between the three small market towns of Atherstone, Coleshill and Polesworth and a number of villages and smaller settlements, many of which are former mining communities.

North Warwickshire is surrounded by urban areas; Nuneaton and Coventry to the east and Birmingham and Solihull to the south west. Regeneration activity is intensive in these urban areas which receive large amounts of money to address problems of deprivation: designated 'Regeneration zones' are earmarked as a top priority for such activity.

Yet rural areas have their own issues which need to be addressed. Because their populations are smaller and more dispersed they are in danger of being overlooked. Rural issues are being recognised through Government strategy and policy, and there is even a Rural Regeneration Zone to the west of the West Midlands region. However, smaller rural areas such as North Warwickshire receive very little recognition, but the problems they face are no less significant for their communities.

The North Warwickshire Community Partnership has developed this Framework for Sustainable Rural Action as part of its wider role in preparing the Community Plan. The Framework is intended to help organisations check their policies and initiatives for their impacts on North Warwickshire using the structure of the Commission for Rural Communities 'Rural proofing the Shared Priorities: a decision makers' guide' (July 2005). The Framework will also help to address gaps or make improvements.

The Framework will:

- ***Improve understanding of rural needs and issues***
- ***Draw attention to the rural issues within each of the Community Plan themes***
- ***Provide a useful tool to scrutinise the Community Plan action plans***

Timescale

This document complements the Community Plan and the emerging Local Development Frameworks. It has been designed as a pack which serves to highlight rural issues and ensure that they are fully taken account of and integrated into the Community Planning process and the Local Development Frameworks. Inserts to the pack can then be modified and updated as situations change, ensuring that the most appropriate methods of rural proofing are always applied. Delivery of specified aspirations will be the responsibility of the North Warwickshire Community Partnership Theme Groups, and it is they who will be tasked with ensuring that rural targets are achieved, through their annually revised Action Plans. Further details are contained in the Theme Group Delivery Plan.

The national and regional context

National Context

Rural Issues are increasingly being recognised by Government. A White Paper – ‘Our Countryside: the future’ was produced in 2000 and subsequently reviewed in 2004. In addition, a ‘Rural Delivery review’ was carried out by Lord Haskins in 2003 and in the same year the Countryside Agency produced ‘Rural Economies: Stepping Stones to Healthier Futures’. Some key issues contained in these reports are the need to retain and develop village services, the provision of affordable housing, the importance of flexible local transport, market towns as a focus for jobs and services, support for farm diversification and the promotion of Parish Plans. However, problems with rural service delivery were found to be numerous and key areas needing improvement include poor accountability; failure to satisfy regional and local priorities, too many players, lack of coordination and – ultimately – confused customers.

The Haskins report makes the following recommendations:

- Greater decentralisation of decision making to the regional and local level
- Greater transparency and accountability with clearer definition of roles and better communication between policy developers and delivery experts
- Delivery organisations being more rationally organised and better coordinated.

This Framework for Sustainable Rural Action is North Warwickshire’s means of implementing the recommendations of the Haskins report at a very local level. The strategy will follow national documentation which is designed to aid this process including the Countryside Agency’s Rural Services Standard 2001/2. In summary, the Government’s key priorities, as shown in its Rural Strategy (July 2004) are as follows:

- *Economic and Social Regeneration – supporting enterprise across rural England whether in terms of private commercial business or social enterprise;*
- *Social Justice for All – tackling rural social exclusion wherever it occurs and ensuring fair access to services for rural communities; and*
- *Enhancing the value of our countryside – protecting the natural environment for this and future generations.*

Regional

There has been much work done to date to ensure that rural issues are recognised. At a sub regional level, the Rural Forum for Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire – in which North Warwickshire is actively involved – has been proactive in ensuring issues are addressed and funded. This can also be echoed in the Warwickshire and Worcestershire Vital Villages partnership which attracted seven years' worth of SRB funding to help rural communities and the Advantage West Midlands funded Market Towns Initiative. There are a number of relevant publications relating to regional rural issues which include the following:

- Sustainable Communities in the West Midlands (ODPM 2003)
- Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry – A Framework For Rural Action (June 2003)
- The State of the Countryside in the West Midlands 2004 (Countryside Agency 2004)
- Stepping Stones to Healthier Futures – the rural economies of the West Midlands (Countryside Agency July 2004).

Also of significance is '**Rural Renaissance – Advantage West Midlands Rural Framework**' (February 2005).

This is of particular relevance to North Warwickshire as it highlights, and increases the relevance of the West Midlands Economic Strategy to rural areas. The vision for Rural renaissance is as follows:

'Achieve sustainable development in the rural West Midlands, by improving access to opportunity and the number and quality of jobs available within sustainable rural communities'.

While this looks as if the vision has a purely economic focus, the detailed commitment is much more wide ranging:

- Fostering and supporting rural business growth
- Identifying and supporting rural skills development
- Developing a modern rural infrastructure and environmental conditions
- Regenerating sustainable, well supported rural communities
- Championing the rural West Midlands

Advantage West Midlands also emphasises that it will increasingly be working 'with locally owned Economic Development Strategies' to help guide its investment. In this case this should also include the North Warwickshire Framework for Rural Action.

Most importantly however, is the recent development by the Rural Accord; a partnership of key stakeholders in the region who have worked together to produce the **West Midlands Rural Delivery Framework (2006)**. At the time of writing, this was undergoing an extensive consultation exercise. When finalised the document will set the priorities, actions and targets for the rural West Midlands region and the North Warwickshire Partnership is keen to see that its own Framework for Sustainable Rural Action integrates closely with this.

What are North Warwickshire's rural issues?

Issues can be split into two different types. There are those which are based on 'hard evidence', that is those which can be shown through facts and figures. However these only tell part of the story and need to be put in context with other information such as that which has been gathered via consultation with local communities.

Facts and figures

- We have analysed the 'hard facts' about North Warwickshire in a number of ways. We have looked at census data (2001), at information pulled together by the County Council and other agencies, at the new Index of Multiple Deprivation (2004) and at very localised data which has been compiled by the Borough Council. (2005). This information will be updated on a regular basis.

Consultation

- Facts and figures only give us part of the picture however. We needed to know what those who live and work in our rural Borough think. We have undergone an extensive consultation exercise to get the widest range of views possible and the results of this are contained in the latter half of this document.

RURAL NORTH WARWICKSHIRE: THE FACTS

Population

The population of North Warwickshire is growing. There was an increase of 5.8% between 1971 and 2003 (1.1% between 1992 and 2003). With the exception of Rugby, this growth is slower than for the rest of the County. However, the number of households is growing due to changes (nationally) in the way the population lives, for example more single parent families. The Borough saw an increase in households of 11.5% between 1992 and 2002.. Atherstone Central and Coleshill South have particularly high numbers of lone person households (35.7% and 35.5% respectively), with 18.6% of the Coleshill South single person households being occupied by lone pensioners. Lone parent households are particularly prevalent in Atherstone Central, Arley and Whitacre, Dordon and Hurley and Wood End, with between 9.2 and 10.8% of ALL households in these areas falling into this category.

The population of North Warwickshire is also ageing, in line with national trends. Since 1992, there has been over a 30% increase in the number of residents ages 85 or above, an obvious concern for a rural area where access to services depends so much on the ability to be able to travel. In addition there has been a significant decrease in the numbers of young people, particularly in the age 0 to 4 age band (23.8%) and those aged 15 to 29 (21.9%). These differences are more marked than the County averages as the table below shows:

Population according to age – changes since 1992 (Quality of Life 2004)

	Warwickshire	North Warwickshire
Age 0 to 4	- 9.7%	- 23.8%
5 to 14	6.1%	3.9%
15 to 29	-9.2%	-21.9%
30 to 44	11.9%	3.6%
45 to 59 / 64*	15.8%	19.4%
60 to 65 / 74**	4.2%	4.5%
75 to 84	19.4%	26.9%
85+	33.3%	42.9%
All ages	6.2%	1.1%

Key:

*Females age 59, males 64

** females age 60, males 65

With regard to the ethnic composition of the Borough, it is predominantly white British (97.2%), followed by white Irish / Other White and Asian making up the largest minority groups.

Income

While North Warwickshire income levels show higher than average earnings when averaged and compared with County figures, this masks the real situation at a much more localised level. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 shows that 13.4% of North Warwickshire households earn less than £10,000 per annum. Particular areas of concern (shown as 'Super Output Areas', which look beyond the traditional ward boundaries at much smaller populations), are parts of Central Atherstone and Mancetter South / Ridge Lane.

- Warwickshire County average income is £32,000 per household
- The mean income for North Warwickshire is below this, at £28,957 per household

- Atherstone Central ward has the largest percentage of households in the County earning below £32,000 at 81.9%
- In Atherstone Central, 19.6% of households earn less than £10,000. 7% of households earn less than £5,000 per annum.
- Other wards with a significant number of households earning under £5,000 each year include Atherstone North (6.6%), Polesworth East (6.2%), Atherstone South and Mancetter (6.2%) and Baddesley and Grendon (5.8%)

(information from 'Household Income Levels in Warwickshire' (Warwickshire County Council, February 2004) and CACI Paycheck Data 2004)

Low income levels are of concern because they are linked to high levels of debt, and this is a rapidly growing problem in the Borough. In 2003, the majority of enquiries dealt with by the North Warwickshire Citizens Advice Bureau (33.8%) were debt related, followed by requests for advice regarding benefits (19.1%).

Employment and jobs

North Warwickshire has a population of 61,860. In the 1940s and 1950s, 12,000 people were employed in the mining industry. When the mines closed, mainly between 1986 and 1991, the unemployment rate rose to 5.8% although this has now fallen to 1.5% (January 2006). However it is acknowledged that the latter does not take account of 'hidden unemployment' caused by long term sickness and those who choose not to register. Research by Sheffield Hallam University states that in mid 2004 'real male unemployment' in North Warwickshire was 8.9% when these factors were taken into consideration. The official unemployment rate in Dordon ward, for example, stands at 2.5%, in Polesworth West at 1.9% and in Polesworth East at 2.7%. In economic terms the Borough is known as a 'Lagging Area', (DEFRA 2004) an area of low economic productivity and income. The only other such defined 'lagging area' in this region is the Staffordshire Moorlands district.

The legacy of the mining industry can clearly be seen across the rural areas of the northern part of the Borough: the landscape is defined by naturally, and artificially regenerated spoil heaps such as those at Birch Coppice, Pooley and Hartshill which give the area a unique and striking appearance. One colliery, Daw Mill, still operates, the only working mine in the Midlands and one of the most efficient in Europe.

The west of the Borough has good road and rail connections in contrast to its eastern side, and this is reflected in transport, storage and communication providing a large proportion of local employment in the west, with wholesale and retail and also manufacturing featuring strongly. However it is important to take account of more localised variations: for example in Atherstone Central and Coleshill South more than 6% of people are employed in hotels and catering, and Fillongley has particularly low levels of employment in the transportation sector. Surprisingly, given the proximity of the Hams Hall Warehouse and Distribution Park, Coleshill Wards do not show high levels of employment in this sector. Recent discussions with the Hams Hall Business Action Group suggest that many of their employees are sourced from the Birmingham conurbation.

Enabling local people to access local jobs has been a major part of the North Warwickshire Economic Strategy and Action Plan, resulting in the 'People into Employment (PEP) project. Between 1981 and 1991, North Warwickshire experienced the lowest rate of jobs growth in Warwickshire (6%), but during the 1990s the area enjoyed a period of substantial employment growth: nearly 5,400 jobs were added between 1991 and 2001, proportionately the fastest rate of growth in the County (22%).

However, local people have not necessarily benefited from this job creation. Despite the creation of over 5,000 jobs, over ten years, the number of local residents employed within

the Borough increased by only 315 – this represents just 6% of the net employment growth. (WCC, Partnership Day for North Warwickshire, 2005).

North Warwickshire draws the highest proportion of its working population from outside Warwickshire, 47% in 2001, up from 37% in 1991, thus providing significant competition for North Warwickshire residents seeking local work. The most significant inflows are from Tamworth (3,470), Birmingham & Solihull (4,570), Leicestershire (1,450) and Coventry (720).

North Warwickshire also has the highest proportion of its workforce commuting out of the County, almost one in two in 2001. A third of these out-commuters work in Birmingham and a further 12% in Solihull, 17% travel to Tamworth and 12% to Coventry. (Quality of Life 2004) Rural North Warwickshire is often seen as a pleasant place to live, which inflates housing prices making them less affordable for local people on lower incomes.

Detailed information about the nature and patterns in rural employment are not known for North Warwickshire: this is a gap that will need to be addressed. However, across the rural sub region as a whole (the rural parts of Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Coventry and Solihull), less than 1% of employees work in the agricultural sector (Rural Needs Analysis, Ecotec, June 2003).

Although the population is growing, this is at a slower rate than for the rest of the County. The Countryside Agency document 'Rural Economies' (2003) states that: 'In-migrants [ie people moving in to the Borough from elsewhere] are particularly significant for rural areas as they are often more economically active and more likely to set up new businesses (even if over retirement age) than existing rural residents'. The Rural Needs Analysis (Ecotec 2003) goes on to say: 'It is often the quality of the environment, which attracts people to live and work in rural areas, and this is therefore an important asset in economic terms'. In North Warwickshire's case, this also inflates housing prices as shown through the Housing Needs Survey (2003), making the economic situation more difficult for those people on low incomes who cannot afford to buy a property in the area.

According to the Countryside Agency (2003), 41% of rural workers work in 'micro businesses', ie those with less than ten employees. In North Warwickshire, 75% of the Borough's businesses employ 1 to 10 employees (Chestertons, 2001). Many rural workers will be self employed, but the Rural Needs Analysis shows that figures for rural wards are not available. The analysis (2003) states the following, which is crucial to understanding a fuller picture of rural employment patterns and identifying the need for further research:

'Figures for rural wards are not available....There is a tendency for people in rural areas to have non standard employment profiles. Many have more than one job, or supplement a job with self employed work. Others may be officially child carers, retired but continue to carry out part time work for themselves or others. The Countryside Agency Rural economies report suggests that the rural self employed are often earning well above average incomes. However there remain a significant minority (16%) who earn less than £150 per week. The pattern of interconnected household incomes acts to shield vulnerable members of the household with temporary or more long term incomes.'

A quarter of all rural self employed are over 55. In migrants to rural areas are more likely to set up new businesses themselves. The Countryside Agency...states that 60 – 66% of rural businesses were started by owners who moved to the area from elsewhere. Many self employed people made lifestyle choices to move away from urban areas and set up businesses within a rural lifestyle. This group may earn less than average but rank personal fulfilment and ambition above making money. This type of motivation often means small rural businesses may not want to develop or employ more staff'.

The Rural Needs Analysis (2003) also highlights concerns that women may be under reported in unemployment figures in rural areas as 'caring responsibilities are more difficult to manage in rural areas with a lack of childcare or mobile facilities....transport to work may be an issue....and this may prevent women from taking work and claiming benefits'.

The rural economy can also be very vulnerable to external factors, as shown by the 2001 outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease. While North Warwickshire was not directly affected, the knock on impact for the agriculture and tourism sectors was keenly felt, and across Warwickshire and Worcestershire as a whole even some non food production services, freight and transport saw some negative impact upon their business (KPMG, 2001).

Despite the lack of figures available, we do know the following about the North Warwickshire rural economy:

- 75% of the Borough's businesses employ 1 to 10 workers
- 75% of businesses occupy premises of less than 5000 sq ft (464sq m). Only 8% occupy premises over 10,000sq ft (930 sq m).
- There is a lack of suitable accommodation to enable growing business to expand so they tend to leave the area
- There is a demand for small, good quality premises, especially space for managed workshops / offices
- Many investors are deterred from coming to the borough due to the lack of suitable premises
- There is demand for small premises (less than 5000 sq ft but especially less than 1000 sq ft).

(Chestertons 2001).

Chestertons also recommended, as a result of their findings, that:

'Recognition should be made for the potential to support the rural economies with workspace and offices sensitively designed to accommodate small indigenous niche businesses. This will assist in sustainable diversification whilst recognising that any developments would be ad hoc and small scale'. (Chestertons, 2001)

Local Employment Key Issues Summary:

- **Low unemployment rate masks pockets of deprivation due to local variations**
- **Low numbers of local people are accessing local jobs despite growth in the area**
- **House prices are inflated by people choosing to live in the Borough but commuting to the nearby conurbations**
- **More research is required into the patterns of local rural employment**
- **There is a need to support the rural economy through the provision of small work / office space**

Skills

The 2001 Census shows that around a third of those living in the ex – mining wards of Atherstone Central, Dordon, Polesworth East, Atherstone North, Hurley and Wood End, Atherstone South and Mancetter, Baddesley and Grendon, and Arley and Whitacre, are employed in routine or semi routine occupations. It is possible that this is linked to the fact that North Warwickshire is the only district in the County where the proportion of residents in

employment working more than 45 hours per week is significantly higher than the national average: 32% compared to 27% for England and Wales (Quality of Life 2005)

The above wards, plus Hartshill show particularly high percentages of those aged between 16 and 74 with no qualifications, over a third in all cases with Atherstone Central standing at 43.3%.

Dordon features within the most deprived 20% of Super Output Areas (SOA) in terms of education, skills and training. SOAs are replacing electoral wards as the primary means of dissemination of small area government statistics as they give a more accurate and detailed picture.

The whole of North Warwickshire is below the Warwickshire average in terms of numbers in managerial / professional employment, and similarly regarding numbers of 16 to 74 year olds with a degree or higher. There is a clear East / West split with Atherstone and Polesworth showing the lowest performance in terms of the higher skilled professions (Quality of Life 2005).

The Recruitment NOW (PEP) project, which links local people with local jobs and helps them overcome individual problems in accessing employment showed through a recent evaluation report (March 2005) that the highest demand for its services was for assistance in finding a job locally, there was little interest in undertaking training unless this could lead directly to employment. There was a particularly high uptake of the Recruitment NOW service from Dordon and Polesworth wards and this continues to be reflected through the new 'PEP' project.

Low skills and aspirations are a particular feature of former coalfield areas. The Coalfield Communities Campaign in its 2006 Education Briefing 3, identifies two key areas where progress needs to be made:

"The gap in performance between coalfield schools and the national average must be closed, especially in the crucial mid - teen years. The drop – off in levels of attainment compromises young people's prospects and reduces the likelihood of them carrying on into higher education

The government needs to re engage adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills with education, so they can improve their own prospects and those of their family. Without appropriate advice and support, potential learners often lack the confidence to take up the learning opportunities that exist in their communities"

Skills key issues summary:

- **High employment in routine / semi routine occupations**
- **Long working hours**
- **High levels of those with no qualifications linked to former mining areas**
- **An East / West split with the higher skilled professions relating to the west of the Borough**
- **A need for training to link directly to a job**

Health

Health issues are of particular concern. Out of the top 25 wards in Warwickshire for those having a limiting long term illness, 9 are in North Warwickshire (census 2001): along with Nuneaton, this is the highest concentration of wards in any one district within the County.

The table below illustrates the issue:

Ward	% population with a limiting long term illness	% of which (figure in middle column) are of working age
Atherstone Central	22.4	10.8
Arley and Whitacre	20.7	10.6
Atherstone South / Mancetter	20.7	10.1
Baddesley and Grendon	20.5	9.8
Coleshill South	20.2	9.0
Dordon	20.2	9.0
Atherstone North	20.0	8.7
Polesworth East	19.8	8.4
Hartshill	19.1	8.4

Census 2001

In particular, life expectancy for males is lower than for the rest of the County with the exception of Nuneaton. This is possibly due, at least in part, to mining related illness: the Coalfield Communities Campaign has done much to raise awareness of this issue.

A high number of the Borough's residents are also providing unpaid care (50 or more hours per week) which could link to the fact that the population is ageing. The highest levels are in Fillongley, Coleshill South, Atherstone South and Mancetter and Polesworth East: in all of these wards over 12% of the local population provides this level of care. Kingsbury, Coleshill North, Baddesley and Grendon and Polesworth West also figure highly, between 11.6 and 11.9% of their populations (Census 2001). It is possible that the need for unpaid care in rural areas is greater as those in need are less able to access services themselves and are therefore dependent upon a carer to assist them: this area would need further research.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 shows the level of older people helped to live at home to be 74 per 1000 aged over 65. The national average for England was 84 per 1000 although the shire counties overall averaged 72 per 1000.

A recent survey (Quality of Life in Warwickshire, 2005), showed a 64% satisfaction rate with local health services, slightly below the County average of 67%. Those with regular contact, such as those with long standing illness, seemed happier than those who used the service less often. Health issues are closely related to the local environment, detailed in the next section.

Health issues summary

- **Particular health concerns relating to former mining wards**
- **High numbers providing unpaid care: more research is needed**
- **Further investigation into the reasons for the below – average satisfaction rate for health services in North Warwickshire**

Environment

“Rural areas are often perceived to have few environmental problems. But waste, cleanliness, safety and green space all also require management in rural areas. The siting of waste sites can be an issue (impact of traffic, despoliation of landscape etc), as can the provision of recycling facilities and arrangements for farm waste. Fly tipping is an increasing rural issue with visual and safety implications. Rural areas are often assumed to have ample green space, but in many rural areas most land is in private hands with no public access. Some villages may actually have fewer green spaces than urban communities. In addition, rural people may not be knowledgeable about rights of way, and rights of way need to be used and managed to encourage their usage. Rural cleanliness and attractiveness also needs attention and good management” (Commission for Rural Communities, July 2005).

The character of North Warwickshire reflects a range of influences; the valleys of the Rivers Tame and Anker contrast with the higher land in between. The attractive rural image is interspersed with evidence that the area was once instrumental in serving the nearby conurbations; former mine workings, canals, historic buildings such as the old hatting factories, former power stations, marshalling yards and flooded gravel workings. Additionally the area still continues to serve nearby urban areas through distribution and freight, water treatment plants and sewage works, Daw Mill Colliery and the Kingsbury Oil Terminal.

North Warwickshire remains essentially rural with its communities set in an attractive undulating lowland landscape. Most of the borough lies within the Arden area - an historic region of former woodland, pasture and heath, which provided the setting for some of Shakespeare's plays. Today it retains an intimate character with ancient woodlands, mature hedgerow oaks and a strong sense of unity. This landscape is the result of several thousands of years of human intervention. A large percentage of the county's ancient woodland is in North Warwickshire. Almost 6.7% of the area is wooded, well above the Warwickshire average of 4.9% (Habitat Biodiversity Audit 2005).

North Warwickshire has many wetland habitats, such as reedbeds, marsh and swamp, which support many species of birds, plants, and insects as well as mammals such as otters and water voles. These cover nearly 120 hectares, or 0.4% of the area, which may seem very small, but is over a quarter of the total for the whole of Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull. In addition, 2% of the borough is open water in the form of rivers, lakes, ponds, canals and reservoirs. These wetlands are concentrated around the Tame Valley, and Alvecote on the River Anker, and are an important wildlife corridor.

Over the past hundred years, however, much wildlife has been lost due to intensive farming, new development and pollution. One approach to tackling this problem has been to designate areas that contain particular habitats and species for their importance as conservation sites and to promote sustainable woodland and countryside management. The past two decades have also seen growing recognition of the broad benefits of trees, woodlands and forests. These provide opportunities for recreation, health benefits, landscape enhancement and for enriching interest in wildlife. North Warwickshire has 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and 43 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (includes SINC's which are shared across borders), a number of local wildlife sites, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens. North Warwickshire has 655 listed buildings and over 1200 known archaeological sites recorded on the County Sites and Monument Record, including 28 'Scheduled Ancient Monuments'. The historic environment encompasses both designated and non-designated sites and features.

The environment is under pressure in many ways and hundreds of small changes in our towns and villages could alter the familiar scene. There is a demand for new housing. Town centres must adapt in the face of competition and changes in people's shopping patterns and behaviour. Traffic continues to grow, with the resultant increase in atmospheric pollution and traffic noise. Many hedgerow trees and woodlands are ageing and likely to be lost in the next few years and there are potential further open cast mining proposals.

Land use planning seeks to ensure that new development goes in the most sustainable locations, where it can support services and community life. It also aims to protect and enhance both natural and man-made heritage.

The amount of household waste collected continues to grow, whilst there is only a limited amount of landfill space left for the refuse collected.

Households in North Warwickshire generate relatively high levels of household waste, compared to other areas. A doorstep-recycling scheme introduced in January 2003 by the Borough Council has provided 20,500 households with a fortnightly collection service for paper, cans, glass and textiles. In April, a further service introduced 14,500 households to a new kerbside collection for green waste. In April 2003 green bins were introduced which can be used to recycle leaves, weeds, hedge trimmings, grass clippings and other vegetable material.

Progress has already been made in cleaning up the Borough. Action is taken to positively discourage people from dropping litter or fly tipping. Increased staffing and equipment has been provided by the Borough Council to improve the cleaning of streets, roads and public places. The aim is to extend the clean-up campaign to bring public authorities and residents together to tackle problems and strengthen people's sense of pride in North Warwickshire.

Environment Issues summary

- ***A clean and tidy image of the Borough is important for local pride and to encourage quality investment***
- ***Many 'problem' sites exist because they once served the conurbations and have now been abandoned: these need investment***
- ***Natural habitats need protecting and enhancing***
- ***The Borough's heritage needs to be protected and enhanced***
- ***Access to the countryside for local people needs to be encouraged and managed***

Housing

In 2003, the Borough Council undertook a Housing Needs Survey. This showed that the cost of housing has risen dramatically over recent years, mirroring the national picture. Average property prices now range from around £76,500 for one bedroom properties to around £223,750 for four bedroom properties (HNS 2003). Prices across the borough are fairly similar except for Coleshill where the mid range price is higher than average.

The Housing Needs Survey 2003 looked at the minimum entry price of properties to assess what people could afford, showing real evidence of housing need. It did not use average house prices as this can hide the minimum price at which someone can enter the market. The survey showed the minimum entry price paid was £65,000 for a one bedroom dwelling up to £143,000 for a four bedroom dwelling. Minimum rents were estimated to vary between £320 and £490 per month.

When this information is coupled with the statistics which show the low levels of income across the borough, there are particular concerns about the affordability of housing in the area which is linked to the levels of out – commuting detailed under 'Local Economy'. The Housing Needs Survey showed a particular shortage of two and four / over four bedroom properties.

The need to provide affordable housing in rural areas was highlighted in the Rural White paper (November 2000).

Much of North Warwickshire's housing was constructed by the Coal Industry Housing Association, to accommodate large numbers of migrant workers from Scotland and the North East in the 1950s and 1960s who came to work in the prosperous coalfields of the area. With the demise of the coal industry, there are now a number of housing estates, of mixed tenure and varying age and condition. Much of this housing stock is often of poor standard, and is therefore the cheapest available in the area and so tends to be rented by the more vulnerable groups. Estates tend to be isolated, having served rural collieries which exacerbates the problems experienced by those who live there as shown in the 2003 Housing Needs Survey.

Housing Issues Summary

- ***Lack of affordable housing for local residents***
- ***Many former housing estates linked to the coal mining industry now offer poor quality accommodation and are physically isolated***

Access to services

Regardless of where people live, in the countryside or in urban areas, they need to travel to access work, services or social activities. Accessibility of services is a major issue in a rural area, particularly with an ageing population who are not so readily mobile. 'Services' can mean many things, from the provision of a local shop or community centre, to the availability of information, the provision of public transport or access to health or leisure facilities to name but a few. There are two ways to look at this, explored later in this document: that the services are provided locally, or that they have to be accessed by some form of transport.

Research has shown transport to be the biggest concern of rural communities and the issue they most want addressed (Rural Connections, The Countryside Agency, 2005). People living in rural areas need to travel greater distance to access the full range of essential services. The transport problem is exacerbated as rural areas are sparsely populated and often there is no or limited business case for public transport, resulting in rural services being reliant on subsidies just to operate basic services.

Nationally two fifths of long-term unemployed men in rural areas say that difficulties in getting to work are a barrier to finding a job (Rural Connections, The Countryside Agency, 2005). Recruitment NOW's evaluation report (2005) quoted that service users identified transport as the second largest barrier to accessing employment after lack of experience. Transport was deemed a barrier to employment by 36% of their registered users (125 times).

The population of the Borough, as with any rural area, is dependent upon the car. Car ownership itself is not a reliable indicator of deprivation: isolated rural communities may still show high levels of car ownership because it is essential to 'get by'. Poor public transport in rural areas results in families on low incomes being more likely to own a car, despite its costs, resulting in them spending 30% more on motoring than people living in densely populated areas (Rural Connections, The Countryside Agency, 2005). Particularly significant though are the levels of households with no car or van, over a third in Atherstone Central (35.7%) followed by Dordon (24.8%) and Atherstone South and Mancetter (24.5%). (Census 2001). Rural households in North Warwickshire with only one car or van per household (42% Census 2001) are often overlooked as they are classified as having private transport. These households are often at a disadvantage, as the main wage earner frequently uses the sole vehicle to access employment, leaving the rest of the family in a rurally isolated

location, with limited suitable transportation, if any, to access essential services and/ or employment.

There are lower than average levels of satisfaction with bus service provision. In Atherstone, there are high levels of people walking to work (23.2% in Athertone Central), and significantly high numbers of people travelling to work by public transport in Water Orton (10.9%), Coleshill North (7.5%), Kingsbury (6.2%) and Coleshill South (6.0%), possibly reflecting the proximity of Birmingham. However, most people use the car (81.3% in Polesworth West, the highest figure). Encouragingly, car trips to primary schools reduced by 3% between 2002 and 2003 (Quality of Life 2004) and there was a small increase of those cycling to work between 1991 (1.1%) and 2001 (1.3%). (Census 2001).

“Conventional public transport can not always meet the diverse accessibility needs of people who live in remote rural areas, particularly those with mobility impairments or for other reasons are unable to fully access public transport. Community transport provides an appropriate and much needed alternative to other modes of public transport.” (White Paper A New Deal for Transport: Better For Everyone, 1998).

The County Councils Flexibus service ensures most villages have at least a weekly service to their local service area, but some are restricted to one service in each direction. Local voluntary community transport organisations endeavour to fill this gap in services by enabling local residents to access services, however due to lack of/ limited core funding, the services they can offer are frequently restricted. Community transport in North Warwickshire enables those individuals and groups who are rurally and mobility isolated the opportunity to access both essential and non-essential services. They are only able to offer services at cost prices and so some times journeys can be prohibitively expensive for some rurally isolated individuals.

Access to services: key issues

- ***Rural areas need to consider the issue of accessibility as a whole. Equality of access to services, and choice for local people has to be central to service deliverers in rural areas. Not only does the issue of bringing people to the service have to be considered, but also the need, where this is possible to take the service to the people.***
- ***There is a need to assess what services are provided in communities (such as shops, post offices, community facilities, health services and so on) so that a detailed analysis can then be undertaken as to how local access to facilities can then be enhanced in a sustainable manner***

Safer Communities

Between June 2004 and June 2005 there were 86 recorded crimes against farms in North Warwickshire, 26% of the Warwickshire Police Force total. A number of premises have suffered repeated crimes, the most being five. Many businesses are vulnerable as the rural nature of the borough offers access to remote roads with links to dual carriageways and the motorway network. Warwickshire Police operates a Rural Watch scheme (similar to Neighbourhood Watch), and the Coleshill Business Action Group ensures that businesses are linked to quickly report crime and to help one another in being aware of any suspicious activity.

However, in 2004/5, crime levels were down 18% for the whole of North Warwickshire. The main areas of concern relate to ‘teenagers hanging around on streets’ and ‘vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to properties or vehicles’. However, perceptions of crime and safety issues vary hugely. This is especially significant in the older age groups; in those aged 75 and over, for example, there were no reported victims in 2004/5 and yet 54% of those in this age group have a fear of violent crime. This is likely to be due, at least in part to the isolated nature of many of the properties in the borough due to its rural nature

CONSULTATION

Much public consultation has recently been undertaken. While earlier consultation was not specifically geared to looking directly at rural issues, much information provided is of relevance.

North Warwickshire Borough Council undertook a household satisfaction survey in February 2005. Generally, people felt that the following were important in making somewhere 'a good place to live'. These were:

- Low crime levels (68%)
- Health services (51%)
- Clean streets (46%)
- Education provision (33%)
- Affordable decent housing (31%).

For North Warwickshire, residents put the following as their priorities for addressing problems in the area:

- Activities for teenagers (43%)
- Levels of crime (36%)
- Road and pavement repairs (33%)
- Clean streets (32%)
- Public transport (32%)

Various other events have also been held recently, including Partnership days which are held annually, a recent 'Quality of Life' event the Market Towns Healthchecks and the Arley Community survey. While all of these events have had a very different focus, there are common themes present which are of relevance to the rural needs of the Borough. In no particular order, these can be summarised as follows:

- Services should be accessible, whether these are related to leisure facilities, health services, shopping centres, school and other educational facilities and so on.
- There are two ways of making services more accessible. Firstly to deliver them in the community and secondly to ensure that there are good and reliable transport links.
- Public Transport – affordable, relevant and reliable - is essential in a rural area; not everyone has a car – an especially important point bearing in mind the ageing population.
- There is too much information 'out there'. Communication must be improved and obtained from one place – a 'single access point'.
- Rural social life is vital. With young people this is more likely to involve travel to busier areas (or provision of specific activities in the villages). Young (school age) people do not necessarily want to just socialise with people from their town or village, other friends may live miles away, necessitating travel by public transport, cycle or lifts by car. For others who are not so mobile, whether due to lack of car ownership, health problems and so on, provision of facilities in the town or village are essential. Elderly residents in particular rely on going to the local shop / post office / community facility for much of their socialising, which has a positive impact on their health and continued independence.
- Settlements need a wide range of accommodation types. Local people should not be forced out when they are young due to lack of suitable affordable housing, nor when they are elderly due to lack of accommodation appropriate to their needs.
- Communities need a sense of spirit and belonging. Many are just full of commuters who play little role in local life. Local newsletters are needed so people know what is going on.

- Organisations need to be inclusive and welcoming to new people.
- Information needs to be in a variety of forms to reach everyone, such as the internet, newsletters, radio etc.
- Crime is a concern. Fear of crime is high. Motor crime – such as speeding and racing on rural roads – is a real problem.
- The attractiveness of the environment is a real benefit: this should be valued and enhanced. More education on looking after the natural environment is needed.
- The farming environment should be appreciated and enhanced, looking at diversification in both the natural environment and the local economy.
- The history and heritage of the Borough are important in defining its character and should not be underestimated.
- Learning in rural areas can be done in a number of ways – such as through informal leisure activities.
- School facilities should be more widely used by the local community.
- Tourism is an important part of the local economy – both very localised and as a central location for larger attractions in the region. The canal network, rural walks and local heritage are especially important.
- A more diverse range of local businesses should be supported.
- Financial problems are an issue in the area – often people don't access benefits because they are isolated and cannot access the services that could help them.
- Links with other rural districts need to be built upon and strengthened.

To complement this information, a further consultation was undertaken in June and July 2005 specifically relating to needs arising from the rural nature of the Borough. A survey was distributed to over 2700 households and businesses through a variety of means including assistance for those people who may have had difficulty filling them in. Three hundred and twenty three forms were returned; a response rate of 11.5%.

The questions on the forms were deliberately broad. This was to encourage a wide range of replies as the 'tick box' approach tends to pre-empt responses and the idea of this survey was to invite people to raise whatever issues they felt to be relevant within a rural context rather than being constrained by a set of pre defined options. This led to some very detailed replies, increasing the complexity of the analysis, but giving a very detailed picture of rural life in North Warwickshire.

The questions were as follows:

1. *What facilities / services do you use in North Warwickshire? How do you get there? Do you experience any problems in accessing services / facilities in the Borough? If so, what would you like to see done about this?*
2. *What facilities / services do you travel outside the Borough for? Do you experience any problems with this? If so, how could this be improved?*
3. *How do you find out what is going on in your area? Is this OK or would you like to find out another way? How?*
4. *What would you wish to change in your local community? Please give details. How do you think such a change could happen?*
5. *Do you play an active role in your community? If you do, what is it you do? If you don't, what prevents you from doing this?*
6. *(For working people) Do you work in North Warwickshire? If yes, where do you work? How do you get to work? Is travel a problem? If you don't work in the area, why is this?*

Analysis

A detailed analysis of the public consultation exercise is available separately from North Warwickshire Borough Council. However, the key points arising from each of the questions can be summarised here.

What facilities / services do you use in North Warwickshire? How do you get there? Do you experience any problems in accessing services / facilities in the Borough? If so, what would you like to see done about this?

31.6% of respondents said they used libraries, including the mobile library. Shopping and leisure facilities were well used, as were medical facilities (doctors). Open spaces and parks were mentioned, 9% of respondents specifically referred to Kingsbury Water Park.

Most people used the car to access local facilities although walking and public transport were popular. Only four respondents cycled which is an area that should be addressed as part of promoting sustainable transport.

The main difficulties in accessing facilities concerned the use of public transport which was seen as too slow, infrequent or unreliable.

What facilities / services do you travel outside the Borough for? Do you experience any problems with this? If so, how could this be improved?

Leisure activity was the main reason that people travel outside the Borough (40%), followed by shopping (36%). Hospital visits were also cited by 30 respondents. As with the first question the main problems with accessibility are around public transport – its frequency, accessibility, reliability, time taken and affordability. This was particularly shown to be a major problem for elderly residents in outlying villages: a major cause of concern with the Borough having an ageing population.

How do you find out what is going on in your area? Is this OK or would you like to find out another way? How?

Most people use local papers (mentioned by 46% of respondents), including free papers. However this is a concern regarding Borough wide issues as there is no paper which covers the whole area. The Atherstone Grapevine and church events and magazines were popular. Parish Councils were well used, cited by 13% of respondents who referred to notice boards and Parish newsletters, and North Talk (the Borough Council newsletter) was mentioned by 10% of those returning the survey. Libraries, leaflets, posters and the internet all had their place, and 19% find out by word of mouth. Many complained that they hear about the event after it has happened and there was a clear desire for more publications to be delivered direct to the door. As might be expected, communication needs to take a variety of forms if it is to reach its widest audience as illustrated by these results.

What would you wish to change in your local community? Please give details. How do you think such a change could happen?

The answers to this question were extremely varied and can be summarised as follows:

- Better facilities for teenagers and younger children was the most mentioned topic (19% of responses). Many people feel threatened by groups of teenagers even though they are not causing a problem. Young people have to travel to get to many activities and there was a desire for more local provision such as youth clubs.

- More visible local policing was the second most requested issue (14%). Speeding traffic through certain villages was raised, and vandalism and graffiti were a concern.
- Transport: the need for better integrated and more affordable public transport was mentioned by many: there was a particular desire for village services, better Sunday services, more local train stations / services and faster buses to towns and cities.
- Recycling and tipping: people wanted more recycling facilities including that for garden waste across all parts of the Borough.
- Town / Village facilities: more / better managed / improved village halls were desired, and the importance of a wide variety of good quality, accessible shops was emphasised as well as the need to sustain local post offices.
- Accommodation: The need for a variety of housing in villages was raised.
- The image of the Borough was mentioned frequently, with particular concerns over litter and dog fouling

Do you play an active role in your community? If you do, what is it you do? If you don't, what prevents you from doing this?

48% of respondents considered themselves to play an active role in their community. Activities were varied, mainly around churches, parish issues, schools and local clubs. 44% did not consider themselves active due to work commitments, caring commitments, age and ill health. Of particular concern are those who would like to help but are unsure of what they can do, or those who have tried but feel unwelcome and have become disillusioned. It seems that further work is needed here to encourage their involvement as it is the active people upon whom the sustainability of rural communities depends.

(For working people) Do you work in North Warwickshire? If yes, where do you work? How do you get to work? Is travel a problem? If you don't work in the area, why is this?

Commuting patterns were reflected here with 39.8% of those who worked having employment in the Borough and 60.2% travelling elsewhere to work. Within the Borough, Atherstone was the key place of employment (24 respondents), followed by Coleshill (6) and Polesworth (4). Twelve respondents worked from home, mainly in the rural villages. Of those commuting out of North Warwickshire, Birmingham was the most popular destination.

Most people travel to work by car (59 respondents), although 14 walked. Only 3 travelled by bus, less than those cycling (4), which reflects the issues mentioned earlier around public transport and the need for this to be frequent and reliable: particularly significant for those working shifts. Access to rail services was also a particular concern.

The reasons that people do not work in the Borough are also reflected in the 'hard facts'. The jobs in the Borough tend to be low paid, not matched to the skills that people have and, in some instances people prefer to live here because it is pleasant and some distance away from their workplace. Interestingly, the fact that the Borough is rural and dispersed means that their local job centre is outside North Warwickshire and they are therefore directed to work areas outside the Borough. This clearly shows the need for stronger partnership linkages outside Borough boundaries.

Consultation: conclusions

The factual information, coupled with the results of the consultation, indicates a number of issues which need to be addressed, and these are reflected in the Theme Group Delivery Plan which forms part of this Rural Proofing pack . It may be that many of the issues are already being recognised and addressed by partners, however, partners need to bear in mind that it is also how people *perceive* what is being done and, from the survey returns

many people are not aware of work which the partnership is already undertaking. So clearly there needs to be a good look at how information is communicated, and how services are delivered, where they are delivered, and to whom.

The results of the consultation are far too detailed to be included in a document of this nature, however they are available separately upon request. The broad issues raised have been accounted for and incorporated into the Theme Group Delivery Plan . Each of the Community Partnership theme groups will be asked to look at the consultation results in detail however, as there are specific issues raised relating to their areas of expertise which they will wish to pick up – for example where residents have raised concerns over speeding traffic, or where there has been a suggestion for a facility for community use

In summary; the whole point of rural proofing is to ensure that rural needs are addressed through the work of the north Warwickshire Community Partnership, and that change happens on the ground as a result.

Key Documents

A New Deal for Transport: White Paper 1998

Arley Community Survey Warwickshire Rural Community Council 2003

Atherstone and Polesworth Healthchecks, Tellus42 2002

Census 2001, Warwickshire County Council

Coalfield Communities Campaign Education Briefing 3, 2006

Coventry, Solihull, Warwickshire and Worcestershire Rural Needs Analysis, ECOTEC, June 2003

Great Ways to Go – Good Practice in Rural transport, Countryside Agency 2001

Habitat Biodiversity Audit: Warwickshire Wildlife Trust 2005

Household Income levels in Warwickshire, Warwickshire County Council, February 2004

Housing Needs Survey: North Warwickshire Borough Council 2003

Industrial and Commercial Building Study: Chestertons for North Warwickshire Borough Council, 2001

Quality of Life in Warwickshire, Warwickshire County Council, November 2004

Quality of Life in Warwickshire, Warwickshire County Council, November 2005

Recruitment NOW final evaluation report, September 2005

Rural Connections – achieving social inclusion through transport schemes: Countryside Agency 2005

Rural Delivery Review: Lord Haskins, DEFRA October 2003

Rural Proofing the Shared Priorities: a decision makers guide: Commission for Rural Communities July 2005

Rural Renaissance, Advantage West Midlands Rural Framework: Advantage West Midlands February 2005

Rural White Paper, DEFRA November 2000

Stepping Stones to Healthier Futures, the rural economies of the West Midlands: Countryside Agency July 2004

Sustainable Communities in the West Midlands (ODPM 2003)

The state of the Countryside in the West Midlands 2004: Countryside Agency 2004

DELIVERING THE FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL ACTION

It is vital that all of the information gathered is used to best effect when addressing the rural needs of North Warwickshire.

The Community Plan is the 'overarching' document for the Borough; it brings together all of the stated needs and aspirations of our communities. The Community Plan Theme Groups then develop detailed action plans to ensure that problems can be dealt with by those best placed to do so, whether this is communities themselves, agencies, individuals: the solutions are varied depending on the issue being faced.

The information contained in this document will be used to help inform the Theme Groups when they are producing their action plans.

This part of the Framework is twofold.

- Firstly, we have compiled a **Framework for Rural Sustainability**. This translates our facts, figures and consultation issues into a series of key aspirations, upon which the sustainability of our Rural Borough depends. We have divided this up into three key aims:

AIM A: Thriving, vibrant and sustainable rural communities

AIM B: A diverse and dynamic rural economy

AIM C: An attractive, varied and productive rural environment.

The table is split into three columns. The first is a broad objective relating to rural need. The second is a more detailed aspiration which can achieve change for our communities. The third column defines the theme group or groups responsible for delivery.

- Secondly we have devised a **Rural Checklist**. This is based upon guidance from the Countryside Agency but tailored to ensure that it is locally relevant. All members of the North Warwickshire Community Partnership, including all Theme Group representatives, will use this to help ensure that the services they are delivering are taking proper consideration of the rural nature of the area.

ENSURING DELIVERY

The Framework for Sustainable Rural Action will be reviewed on the same timescale as the Community Plan (every three years). While it is intended to be a one – off document, its relevance and effectiveness needs to be tested and, as it complements the Community Plan it would be sensible to integrate the two processes.

Theme Groups revise their Action Plans on an annual basis to ensure that they are up to date and achieving set targets. They will now also be expected to show how they will deliver on specific aspirations as detailed in the following tables. They will set their own targets for achieving these and show how they perform against these as part of their annual review process.

In addition, theme groups will be expected to 'rural proof' all of their actions to ensure that rural issues are fully addressed and integrated into the action planning process

FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL SUSTAINABILITY

Aim A: Thriving, vibrant and sustainable rural communities

Objective	Aspiration	Theme Group Lead
A1 To ensure that communities have fair and equal access to a wide range of services	A1.1 To ensure that each community has access to a good quality, multi purpose facility such as a village hall or school. To be run by and for local communities.	Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport)
	A1.2 Training and support to be given to communities to manage their own facilities. To be offered regularly to take account of movement within communities.	Community life (voluntary and community activity) with Education and Lifelong Learning
	A1.3 To ensure that facilities are accessible to all who wish to use them.	Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport)
	A1.4 To actively support the retention and improvement of village shops and post offices and the provision of new facilities.	Local Economy
	A1.5 To promote and develop the idea of villages being 'local service centres' for small outlying settlements and that access to these is developed and sustained.	Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport)
	A1.6 To deliver services in communities (eg learning, leisure, health, policing) where this is possible, or to ensure that such services are accessible to all sections of the community.	Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport)
	A1.7 To support and develop a usable, relevant, affordable and sustainable rural transport network.	Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport)
	A1.8 Further research will be undertaken in relation to the below – average satisfaction rate for health services in North Warwickshire, and also in relation to the high numbers providing unpaid care in the Borough.	Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport), Health and Wellbeing
	A1.9 Enable individuals to make healthier choices by improving access, information and education	Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport), Health and Wellbeing

<p>A2 To encourage communities to see themselves as continually changing, with a mix of age, social class, income and ethnic background: to have a positive view of their future and to feel a sense of pride and belonging.</p>	<p>A2.1 To encourage a wide range of residential accommodation in each community to serve their varying needs and ensure that communities are vibrant and sustainable.</p> <p>A2.2 To ensure adequate provision of facilities in settlements or where this is not possible to ensure that access to those facilities is provided.</p> <p>A2.3 To ensure that the availability of services is adequately communicated and publicised in a variety of ways to reach all sections of the community.</p> <p>A2.4 To ensure that communities have responsibility for defining their own needs and aspirations, eg through the production of Parish Plans and local planning documents.</p> <p>A2.5 To ensure that people feel safe in their communities and are not disadvantaged by physical or social isolation</p>	<p>Community Life (Housing)</p> <p>Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport)</p> <p>All theme groups</p> <p>Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport)</p> <p>Community Safety</p>
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Aim B: A diverse and dynamic rural economy

Objective	Aspiration	Theme Group lead
<p>B1 North Warwickshire will be a place where business will want to invest, to succeed and to remain.</p>	<p>B1.1 North Warwickshire will capitalise upon its attractive appearance and will invest in ensuring that the area is visually appealing.</p> <p>B1.2 Support will be available to assist appropriate new businesses wishing to start up in the area and for existing rural businesses wishing to diversify provided this is appropriate to the rural nature of the Borough.</p> <p>B1.3 Facilities to help small businesses will be made available such as start up and incubator units, and access to broadband.</p> <p>B1.4 Collaborative working between North Warwickshire businesses will be encouraged and supported.</p> <p>B1.5 The importance of the local Market Towns of Atherstone, Coleshill and Polesworth will continue to be recognised and promoted as essential service centres.</p> <p>B1.6 Village shops and Post Offices will continue to be recognised as being vital to sustainable rural communities and advice and assistance will continue to be given.</p> <p>B1.7 Business tourism will be promoted and developed through encouraging a wide range of good quality accommodation, conferencing and leisure facilities.</p> <p>B1.8 A skilled pool of local labour will be encouraged and developed.</p>	<p>Environment with Local Economy</p> <p>Local Economy</p> <p>Local Economy</p> <p>Local Economy</p> <p>Local Economy</p> <p>Local Economy, with Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport)</p> <p>Local Economy with Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport)</p> <p>Local Economy</p> <p>Education and Lifelong Learning with Local Economy</p>
<p>B2 Local people will benefit from a successful rural economy.</p>	<p>B2.1 A flexible approach will be adopted to help local people overcome barriers they have in accessing local employment, such as transport, training, childcare and other issues that may be problematic.</p>	<p>Local Economy with Education and Lifelong Learning and Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport).</p>

	<p>B2.2 Local people will benefit from a diverse range of employment choices and options to achieve their aspirations and boost their income.</p> <p>B2.3 Business and services will be encouraged to trade and procure locally and to promote themselves more widely.</p> <p>B2.4 Local tourist and heritage attractions will be developed and widely promoted where appropriate.</p> <p>B2.5 Personal income will be boosted whether through encouraging better paid / skilled jobs, access to a range of financial services (eg the Credit Union) or encouraging benefit claimants to take up their allocation.</p> <p>B2.6 The importance of farming in the local economy will be recognised and supported</p> <p>B2.7 Further research will be commissioned to inform a detailed understanding of the rural economy</p>	<p>Local Economy</p> <p>Local Economy</p> <p>Local Economy and Environment</p> <p>Local Economy</p> <p>Local Economy</p> <p>Local Economy</p>
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Aim C: An attractive, varied and productive local environment

Objective	Aspiration	Theme Group lead
<p>C1. To conserve and enhance the local environment</p>	<p>C1.1. To ensure that the town and village streets and rural roads are kept clean</p> <p>C1.2. To ensure that existing buildings are well maintained and looked after and new buildings are of appropriate high quality design.</p> <p>C1.3 Where appropriate to encourage brownfield sites to be brought back in to reuse. See also C2.4.</p> <p>C1.4 The natural environment will be maintained and opportunities identified to enhance its natural beauty, ecology, character and heritage</p> <p>C1.5 The historic environment (archaeological sites, historic buildings and landscapes) will be maintained and protected and opportunities taken to conserve these assets and promote public access and understanding of their contribution to local distinctiveness</p>	<p>Environment</p> <p>Environment</p> <p>Local Economy with Environment</p> <p>Environment</p> <p>Environment</p>
<p>C2 To promote and develop local environmental sustainability</p>	<p>C2.1 Local people will be encouraged to become involved in the conservation and enhancement of the local environment, increasing their awareness, skills and sense of belonging.</p> <p>C2.2 Accessibility to the local environment will be encouraged, promoted and enhanced whilst minimising harmful environmental impacts.</p> <p>C2.3 Recycling will be further increased and awareness of the benefits promoted.</p> <p>C2.4 Established Brownfield sites should be subject to an ecological survey prior to development: these sites are often significant for wildlife and measures for its protection may be needed.</p> <p>C2.5 Brownfield sites should, where appropriate, be subject to archaeological appraisal prior to development as they can be of particular importance for industrial archaeology.</p>	<p>Environment, Community Life, Health and Well Being.</p> <p>Environment, Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport)</p> <p>Environment</p> <p>Environment with Local Economy</p> <p>Local Economy</p>

	<p>C2.6 Encourage a variety of transport options to reduce dependency upon the car.</p> <p>C2.7 Promote the use of local produce through encouraging, where appropriate, local farm shops, farmers markets and the use of local food in eating establishments.</p> <p>C2.8 Diversification of farms should be supported where the proposed use is appropriate to the rural environment and economy.</p> <p>C2.9 Encourage local business to develop sustainable practice and to become involved in the local community.</p>	<p>Community Life (Access, Choice and Transport)</p> <p>Local Economy</p> <p>Local Economy and Environment</p> <p>Local Economy and Environment</p>
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A checklist for ensuring equality and inclusion for rural communities

This checklist has been created to help all who are involved in delivering services to ensure that they are addressing the needs of a rural area. It is based on the Countryside Agency's Rural Proofing Delivery Checklist (2002) and adapted to ensure its relevance to North Warwickshire.

NB The term 'service' in this checklist refers to a service, policy OR project

Targeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the policy, service or initiative targeted on particular groups? • Is it flexible enough to meet rural need where disadvantage tends to be scattered rather than concentrated on neighbourhoods and confined by restrictive boundaries? 	
Bidding rounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will this involve a bidding round? • Will small rural communities and institutions need longer timescales or extra support to put together successful bids? 	
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be consultation on the service with local people or groups? • Is the method used capable of reaching those with poorer access to information points such as libraries or post offices? • Is there scope for specifically targeting rural groups and identifying their views? How will these views be accounted for? • How is the information given out, and how will it reach all of those who need it? 	
Pilots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the service be tested through pilots? • What are you aiming to achieve through the pilot? • Are there examples of good practice from elsewhere that can be applied? 	
Sparsity costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the service cost more than for urban areas, where travel times to clients may be longer and outlets may be smaller and lacking economies of scale? • Is there scope to introduce a sparsity factor within funding allocations to take account of any higher (unit) delivery costs • Is there scope to overcome extra costs through other means such as sharing premises with other service providers. 	
Market Driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the existence and cost of the service dependent upon the market economy? • What can be done to ensure that services are still delivered in rural areas where costs may be higher, the market smaller because of the scattered and small population, and the potential for profit lower? 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it possible to stimulate demand for a service, perhaps by joining with other services? • Could the private sector be encouraged to take on less profitable markets, perhaps by arranging for less profitable areas to be 'bundled' with those that are more profitable? 	
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the service depend on local service outlets and / or a good transport network for users? • Do these already exist? • If not, how will this be addressed? • Could joint provision, telephone or IT based delivery, mobile or outreach delivery or flexible transport options be used to reach populations where transport links are poor and service outlets few? • Will users, eg for business advice or training, have the time or spare capacity to access them and, if not, is it possible to provide a temporary 'relief service' ? • Is there a strategy for 'signposting' to relevant information: how will information reach those who need it? • How will use of existing services be maximised / how will new services be developed where there is a proven need? • How is the service or facility provided in respect of addressing the needs of all sections of the community? 	
Joined up working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it possible to link with others in the area? What opportunities are there for joint working? 	
Rural variations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the initiative be applied in different types of area? (eg market towns and more remote rural areas). • If so does it need to be tailored to different circumstances and needs? • Is there sufficient flexibility to allow this? 	
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can service delivery be adapted easily so if one method of delivery is shown not to work, a different means of delivery can be adopted instead? 	
Equality and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the service been assessed for the following aspects of equality and diversity: age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion. • If the answer to any of the above is 'no', then an Equalities Impact Assessment must be undertaken. (For advice, contact the Policy team at North Warwickshire Borough Council on 01827 719331, or Email PolicySupport@northwarks.gov.uk) 	

