



# Northern Community Area Partnership

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FAO David Maynard, Corporate & Library Services Department, Wiltshire County Council, County Hall, Trowbridge  
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Dear Sir

**An opportunity to comment on the revised framework for the Sustainable Strategy for Wiltshire, and the long list of Local Area Agreement Outcomes**

The Wiltshire Strategic Board (WiSB) is to be congratulated by substantially re-working the document after an initial poor draft, and for separating the Local Area Agreement Outcomes from the Strategy itself. The Local Area Agreement Outcomes are merely a short-term response to critical issues and have little or nothing to offer any strategy that is focussing on a future context.

**GENERAL POINT**

The page settings of the document are sized for US paper not for A4 UK paper consequently by re-sizing to UK margins you save two pages in the total length of the document. Also it would help if the document had been set up with English UK rather than English US. We note that this is applicable to many WCC documents.

**SPECIFIC POINTS**

The strap-line of the document: *Creating a County Fit for our Children* still rings hollow. We presume that we mean "our children when they become adults". However, this ignores the South West Regional growth projections that entail substantial inward migration and the future likely population projections for Wiltshire indicate a significant proportion of adults who are not "our children". On balance, the strap-line is somewhat trite. If there has to be a strap line then we would advocate: ***Creating a County Fit for the Future***

We address the questions posed:

**Introduction (pages 2-3)**

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

**Question 1**

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

The aim of creating strong and sustainable communities is as good as any in providing a powerful and underlying purpose. HOWEVER, on page 3, the document states:

*The current consumption patterns of Wiltshire's communities are currently consuming twice their 'share' of the world's natural resources, i.e. if everyone in the world lived like we do, then there would need to for 2 Earths to meet those needs.*

This is incorrect; it is three earths not two UNLESS Wiltshire is indeed doing better than elsewhere in the rich world, which, sadly, we doubt. Since this would be a ground-breaking achievement, we would like to examine the data and run the numbers to determine if Wiltshire is really doing so well.

Also on page 3, the document states:

*“If we are successful, in ten years Wiltshire will be a place of stronger and more sustainable communities, an example to the rest of the country of how public, voluntary and private interests can work together in the interests of our communities.”*

The year dates of the Strategy reflect planning horizons. We believe it is naïve to anticipate, and perhaps misleading to those who are not so well versed in these matters, to suggest that in ten years, “...Wiltshire will be a place of stronger and more sustainable communities”. That is quite simply unachievable. The south west regional strategy is more enlightened, and realistic, with its horizon to 2026.

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

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

**Question 2**

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

This is a reasonable analysis even if somewhat brief

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

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

**Question 3**

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

This is a reasonable list. However, merely identifying a list of good things does not constitute a basis for a sustainable strategy. What is needed is an analysis of root causes underpinning the things we celebrate so this can be replicated. In fact, root cause analysis is either woefully inadequate or completely missing in the document.

**What aspects of Wiltshire life are not currently moving in a sustainable direction? (pages 7-9)**

**This section seeks to identify trends which will detract from the quality of life in Wiltshire, if we do not take effective action to address them. In other words what factors have the potential to weaken our communities and make the County, overall, less sustainable?**

**Question 4**

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

What has not been done is to identify root causes of these negative trends. Such an analysis is imperative in order to build a sustainable strategy. Understanding what has not worked well in the past is essential in order not to commit similar mistakes in the present because that is what will make the future unsustainable.

**What should be the aims of a Sustainable Community Strategy for Wiltshire? (pages 9-15)**

**This section starts to gather together the potential aims of the Strategy, given the previous analysis. The aims are drawn from the following three sources:**

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

**Question 5**

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

This is an unsophisticated and coarse way to build a strategy. In essence the strategy outcome is being dictated by the availability of government largesse. Why carry out the trend analysis earlier, identification of good things and poor aspects, then make a quantum leap to a set of “wants” predicated on actions for which one can receive money. That is no way to lay the foundations of a new future. All one does by following the traditional practice of matching ones strategy to fit a pre-ordained government programme of funding is to build a future that looks pretty similar to the present. One that we know has a short economic horizon, one that institutionalises social inequality and one where the value of the natural environment is a nice to have, rather than a need to have. This current strategy is one based on short term expediency and has little evidence of foresight.

**Question 6**

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

We agree that the selection of outcomes provides a basis for funding, we do not agree that they contribute in any meaningful way to a sustainable future

**Question 7**

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

On page 4 the document notes, correctly, that many of the issues can only be solved if people change their lifestyles, and this will require commitment and leadership by example.

What is so dispiriting is the apparent lack of leadership shown by WISB.

Apparently a key strand in delivering the priorities that the Board has chosen to champion has involved the development of the concept of ‘*Leading by Example*’. Is the Board really serious in trying to claim credit for such a basic management concept as leading by example? That “concept” has been around for so long that it is now self-evident.

The next step involves the Board’s member organisations in “*putting their own house in order*” with respect to the three aims: healthy living, improving skills for life, and waste efficiency (*sic*). Firstly, it is not “waste efficiency” it should read “resource efficiency”. Secondly, these three aims have been around for a decade at least and, quite frankly, if the Board is proud to say that it will put its own house in order on these issues then we need a new Board. That is not leadership by any stretch and is completely unchallenging and lacks any sort of inspiration. It is what is termed in the vernacular, “low-hanging fruit” in other words, stuff that one is able to achieve with little or no effort.

The Government of the South West has provided a regional sustainable development framework with 15 themes. It is challenging. We would think that WISB should be looking at that framework and aiming to support that as a minimum. That would be some semblance of leadership. Even then, it would only echo what many organisations are already doing now.

We believe that there is still some way to go in order to develop a sustainable strategy for Wiltshire and we look forward to hearing of further progress.

**Yours faithfully**



**Dr Richard Pagett**

**Vice Chairman  
Northern Community Area Partnership**