

WHAT IS A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY?

DCLG is working to create thriving, vibrant, sustainable communities which will improve everyone's quality of life. The work is guided by the Communities Plan *Sustainable Communities: Building for the future* published 5 February 2003, which outlines a £38 billion programme of action for economic, social and environmental development in both urban and rural areas in England.

Action includes tackling low demand, which affects 850,000 homes in the North and Midlands housing shortages in the wider South East. Four areas were identified to play a key role as national priorities for regeneration and growth. These 'growth areas' are the Thames Gateway, Ashford in Kent, London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough (LSCP) and Milton Keynes/South Midlands (MKSM).

Definition of a 'sustainable community'

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

For communities to be sustainable, they must offer:

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

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

The components of a 'sustainable community'

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

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

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

Active, inclusive and safe - *Fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities*

Sustainable communities offer:

- a sense of community identity and belonging
- tolerance, respect and engagement with people from different cultures, background and beliefs
- friendly, co-operative and helpful behaviour in neighbourhoods
- opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities, including for children and young people
- low levels of crime, drugs and antisocial behaviour with visible, effective and community-friendly policing
- social inclusion and good life chances for all.

Well run - *with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership*

Sustainable communities enjoy:

- representative, accountable governance systems which both facilitate strategic, visionary leadership and enable inclusive, active and effective participation by individuals and organisations
- effective engagement with the community at neighbourhood level, including capacity building to develop the community's skills, knowledge and confidence

- strong, informed and effective partnerships that lead by example (e.g. government, business, community)
- strong, inclusive, community and voluntary sector
- sense of civic values, responsibility and pride.

Environmentally sensitive - *providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment*

Sustainable communities:

- actively seek to minimise climate change, including through energy efficiency and the use of renewables
- protect the environment, by minimising pollution on land, in water and in the air
- minimise waste and dispose of it in accordance with current good practice
- make efficient use of natural resources, encouraging sustainable production and consumption
- protect and improve bio-diversity (e.g. wildlife habitats)
- enable a lifestyle that minimises negative environmental impact and enhances positive impacts (e.g. by creating opportunities for walking and cycling, and reducing noise pollution and dependence on cars)
- create cleaner, safer and greener neighbourhoods (e.g. by reducing litter and graffiti, and maintaining pleasant public spaces).

Well designed and built - *featuring quality built and natural environment*

Sustainable communities offer:

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

Well connected - *with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services*

Sustainable communities offer:

- transport facilities, including public transport, that help people travel within and between communities and reduce dependence on cars
- facilities to encourage safe local walking and cycling
- an appropriate level of local parking facilities in line with local plans to manage road traffic demand
- widely available and effective telecommunications and Internet access
- good access to regional, national and international communications networks.

Thriving - *with a flourishing and diverse local economy*

Sustainable communities feature:

- a wide range of jobs and training opportunities
- sufficient suitable land and buildings to support economic prosperity and change
- dynamic job and business creation, with benefits for the local community
- a strong business community with links into the wider economy
- economically viable and attractive town centres.

Well served - *with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all*

Sustainable communities have:

- Well-performing local schools, further and higher education institutions, and other opportunities for lifelong learning
- high quality local health care and social services, integrated where possible with other services
- high quality services for families and children (including early years child care)
- good range of affordable public, community, voluntary and private services (e.g. retail, fresh food, commercial, utilities, information and advice) which are accessible to the whole community
- service providers who think and act long-term and beyond their own immediate geographical and interest boundaries, and who involve users and local residents in shaping their policy and practice.

Fair for everyone - *including those in other communities, now and in the future*

Sustainable communities:

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