

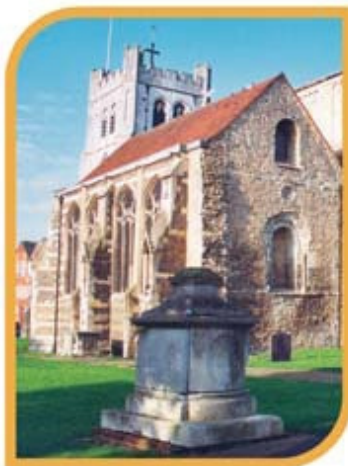


“Putting Epping Forest First”

THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

2010 to 2031

August 2010



Together making Epping Forest a great place to live, work, study and do business

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Together making our District a great place to live, work, study and do business

Foreword

Welcome to the Community Strategy for the Epping Forest District setting out our plans to make Epping Forest a '**great place to live, work, study and do business**'.

We know the Epping Forest District is already a great place to be for the majority of our citizens. In recent surveys you have said you are very happy with your homes and this area as a place to live. However like you we at One Epping Forest are not complacent and we want to make our area and our communities even better and tackle those areas and problems where people face real difficulties.

To produce this new long term plan we have listened closely to local people and their priorities for improvement. We have also looked hard at the latest information and data from partners, telling us how things are changing and listened to our key stakeholders about what they think needs to be done. We have brought all this together in this strategy to provide a blueprint for how we should work together.

'Putting Epping Forest First' sets out our priorities for tackling the difficult issues that no single public service or agency can hope to tackle effectively on their own. Issues such as cutting crime and ill-health and protecting the green and unique character of our district for future generations to enjoy.

The vision, values, and objectives set out in this document are intended to provide long term guidance for our work over the next twenty years but will be reviewed frequently to ensure they remain relevant to people's concerns and changing times. They will be supported by annual action plans setting out in detail what will be done by the partners each year and performance indicators setting out how we will measure success.

This time, building on the experience of previous years the Partnership has taken a conscious decision to limit the number of its objectives. We want to focus our activities on a smaller number of key areas where we can make a real difference, addressing important issues that otherwise simply wouldn't be tackled effectively.

On behalf of the partnership, I'd like to thank all the agencies, groups and individual members of the public who have contributed to the production of this strategy.

Cllr. Diana Collins

Chairman, One Epping Forest

Introduction

What is One Epping Forest?

One Epping Forest is the Local Strategic Partnership for the District, originally established in 2002; it was restructured and renamed in 2009. The Partnership is made up of representatives from local councils, education, the police, health services and business and community groups. It exists to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of the district and deliver the shared vision, outcomes, and values enshrined in the Community Strategy. Its role is to bring all the agencies and groups that have a role in delivering these outcomes together, pooling and combining resources, talent and expertise, coordinating and leading activity with the one aim of ***‘Together making Epping Forest District a great place to live, work, study and do business’***.

What is a Community Strategy?

The Community Strategy is the long term plan to deliver better quality of life and improve the economic, social and environmental well being of the Epping Forest District over the next 20 years and beyond. Based on a clear understanding of local needs and residents priorities it seeks to support ‘sustainable communities’ for the future.

It is the cornerstone of all the other plans that affect public services and long term planning policies in the district included in the Local Development Framework which replaces the Local Plan. It tells local people, and importantly regional and national government, on whose support and cooperation we depend, how we will achieve the outcomes in this strategy. It brings together the key plans of partners into one coordinated local strategy including the Essex Strategy.

Our Vision

The central element of the strategy is a clear statement of our ambitions, a shared vision of what we want to achieve on behalf of our communities. This is set out below.

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Making the most of our proximity to the capital while dealing with the challenges this poses to the protection of our green and unique environmental heritage. Building thriving, growing, cohesive and sustainable communities where improving quality of life, aspiration and attainment are achievable for all residents. A place where the different villages, towns and communities that make up our district are cherished and the public services that support them, work together as ONE, committed to excellence and efficiency’.



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Outcomes

The outcomes set out below will be the focus for work in the four key theme areas the partnership has identified to enable us to deliver the overall vision. They set out the things we want to achieve and the place we want to become over the lifetime of the strategy.

Safe

‘A place where people work together so that all in our communities, especially the most vulnerable are able to lead lives free from the blight of crime and fear of crime and can play a full role in the life of their community in an environment that supports and sustains respect.’

Sustainable

‘A place with strong cohesive communities where together we protect, capitalise upon and enhance the green and unique heritage of our district but plan effectively for meeting the needs of current and future generations for decent homes, jobs, services and transport in a manner always sensitive to our environment.’

Healthy

‘A place where the health and well being of all our residents is promoted, with partners focusing on the communities that suffer the greatest health inequality, supporting them to transform their lives while positively tackling the other social and environmental factors which create the health divide.’

Aspiring

‘A place where all our children and young people are cherished and protected, where aspiration and attainment are prized and the infrastructure and support to make the area a beacon of learning excellence are provided.’



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Managing performance

The partnership has agreed two overall measures of success which we will monitor yearly to see if the strategy is really making life better for our residents. These are:

- **Your opinions and satisfaction with Epping Forest District as a place to live**
- **Your thoughts about how able you are to really influence and control decisions in your local area.**

These two indicators will be supported by annual action plans which will set out in greater detail all the performance indicators and targets that we will use to test and monitor our effectiveness at delivering our objectives.

A Profile of Epping Forest District

Introduction

This section looks at some key facts about the district and the results of public consultation that has influenced the strategy.

Epping Forest District is an area of contrasts, a mix of urban and rural, wealthy and healthy, but with some of the most deprived places in Essex, green with open land, hedgerows and woodland where people aspire to live, but with problems of traffic congestion and pollution. A place with good communications and transport links in and out but difficult to get around without a car in some areas, particularly if you are young or old, and difficulties accessing services. While affluent in some areas in the main, social problems around crime and fear of crime, ill health, economic inactivity and disadvantage, are still apparent and often concentrated in the same key areas. Housing is at a premium and more affordable homes are needed, as are the jobs and infrastructure to support them. Yet a key message from residents is to protect and enhance what is special about the district, which is its green and unique heritage and its fragile eco-systems.

Some Key Facts

Population and place

- Most of the 131 square miles of our District are green and rural, with 94% of it being in the green belt (31,680 hectares).
- Approximately half of our 123,900 residents live in the areas comprising 5.2% of the district around the four towns of Loughton, Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell and Waltham Abbey, close to the boundary with Greater London.
- Most of the rest of the population live in a mixture of market towns such as Epping and Chipping Ongar, large villages such as Sheering, Theydon Bois and Nazeing or in small rural hamlets such as the Lavers. There is not a single homogenous population and historically, many communities have been small and isolated.
- Communication and access to services are a cause of concern. In the Epping Forest District, opportunity and access is inextricably linked to the ability to get about.
- The district is becoming one of the most ethnically diverse places in Essex, which is unsurprising given its proximity to the capital, one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. Epping Forest has the second highest number of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) residents in Essex (18,300) and the second highest numbers of Gypsy and traveller residents in the county. It has the highest numbers of Ethnic Minority Group pupils at 15.5% compared with an Essex average of 9.6%.
- This district population is set to grow by 16% over the next 25 years, less than the Essex average of 24%. The area currently has fewer than average residents in the 15-34 age group, and higher than average residents in the 35-64 age group and the 75+ age group compared to England as a whole. There are 8,300 children at primary school, and 6,000 at secondary school. The 2001 census found 30% of households in the district had one or more people with a limiting long term illness.

Housing and development



Pressure for development has always been intense and the demand for more sustainable homes, jobs and leisure has never been greater. Levels of demand have contributed to high house prices pushing them beyond the means of many people on average and low incomes. In 2008 the district had the highest house prices in Essex, and the third highest in the 48 districts that make up the region. With an average income of £24,000 and an average house price of £351,000 the ratio of income to property prices was 14.2. Previous plans proposed an additional 3,500 new houses to be built by 2021 plus an estimated 3,000 more where the

boundaries of Harlow might expand into what is currently Epping Forest District. Demand for housing will also require sustainable local provision of jobs and services, placing more stress on a district already struggling to protect its fragile green areas and provide land to accommodate growth. Currently the district has 53,500 dwellings, 24% detached, 32% semi detached, 25% terraced and 19% flats. Of the total, 85% are in the private sector with 12% council and 3% social landlord. A significant proportion of properties are owned outright by householders. In March 2010 there were over 5,000 households on the Council Housing register, an increase of over 1,000 households (26%) over the previous two years.

Wealth and disadvantage

Epping Forest District has a reputation for great affluence which masks the existence of areas of deep social deprivation. The affluent and poor areas can often be located next to each other. Many residents enjoy a very high standard of living. For some people the 'Premier League' dream really does exist with some of the country's top footballers, club owners and managers living in the district. However the District scores mid table for Essex in the governments Indices of Multiple deprivation showing high levels of concentrated disadvantage in key areas such as Waltham Abbey. It also scores 3rd in the county for deprivation in relation to access to services and contains the most deprived ward against this measure.



Transport



Epping Forest is the only district in Essex to enjoy the benefits of London Underground services, although these are extremely crowded at peak times. Travelling to and from work in London is part of the daily routine for a large number of resident commuters. Despite rail and road links, many people struggle to travel in and around our district. High levels of car ownership leads to congestion which is in the top 25% nationally, exacerbated by half the population of the district living in such a small area so close to London and by many other people travelling through on a daily basis. Future housing developments may lead to further pressure on roads and transport.

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Health and well being



This is generally a healthy place to be but there are also profound health inequalities, with parts of the district showing some of the highest life expectancies in Essex, and some among the lowest, including one area in Waltham Abbey recording the second worst outcome on this measure in the county. The District recorded the 3rd highest variation in areas with the highest and lowest life expectancy in Essex. Almost nine years separates the areas in the district with the best and worst life expectancy, while the Essex

average variation is 6.8 years. The district has a smoking prevalence rate of 21.6% compared with an Essex average of 22.8%. The district has the highest numbers of people Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) in car accidents in the county, but this has improved over recent years.

Obesity is on the increase locally especially among children with the most recent figures (2009) showing the position of the district deteriorating. Almost 9% of children in reception were found to be obese compared with an Essex average of 8.2%, a significantly worse figure than the year before. Other data has shown an obesity rate among adults of 23%, while the Essex average is 25%.

Education and children

Primary school education is perceived to be of a generally high standard throughout Epping Forest District. However, the picture becomes more mixed at secondary and further education levels, and the district does not have a major higher education institution within its boundaries. In 2008 the district was ranked 10 out of 12 Essex districts for success at GCSE, 58% of pupils achieved 5 or more A-C grades at GCSE compared to an Essex average of 63%. All schools have showed improvement in 2009. There are high levels of pupil mobility with almost 2,000 of the 14,000 pupils in the district coming from outside the area, almost 90% from outside Essex, against an Essex average of 3.5%. Almost 1,300 local children are transported outside the district to attend school. Epping Forest residents are the most dissatisfied in the county with their Local Education Authority. The district has low levels of 'looked after children' (20 per 10,000 compared to an Essex average of 43). The teenage conception rate in the district is 25.4 per 1,000 15-17 year olds compared to an England average of over 40.



Crime and safety



In comparison with many other places, Essex and the District of Epping Forest are safe places to live and this is reflected in the crime figures with the county being significantly below the national average for crimes per 1,000 of the population, and the district figure just slightly above the county average. Criminal damage and theft from vehicles are the largest crimes in the district. Crime fell by 8% last year following a general downward trend over previous years (down 18% in last 5 years); however

residents continue to believe it is increasing. Fear of crime and worries about vulnerability are disproportionately high in some areas and disconnected from actual

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crime statistics. Often local areas with quite low levels of actual crime show high rates of fear of crime, higher even than in areas that do have significantly higher crime rates. People feeling unsafe outside in the evening and during the day are broadly in line with the Essex average (under 30% of people are fearful in the evening, and under 4% during the day). Crimes such as domestic burglary are proving much more difficult to drive down and remain a concern. Evidence indicates nearly half of offenders committing crime in the district live in London, which is unsurprising considering the proximity of the boundary with Greater London.

Economy and skills



The district has the lowest levels of NEET's (children Not in Education, Employment or Training) in the county and with 14% of its workers without qualifications it scores slightly below the county average. Epping Forest has the 3rd highest rate in Essex for working age adults with NVQ level 1 qualifications; 80%, behind Brentwood (80.2%) and Chelmsford (87.3%). However, only 57.2% of the working age population have an NVQ level 2 qualification (ranked 7th in Essex) and 35.4% have an NVQ level 3 qualification (ranked 8th in Essex). Epping Forest is below the County average for working age population with an NVQ level 4 or above; 19.6% (ranked 8th in Essex) of working-age adults, compared to 23.4%. Data shows that Epping Forest's unemployment rate has been just above the regional average since 2007, but is below the national average at around 5%. In July 2009, Epping Forest was slightly below the Eastern region average for number of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants at 3.3% of the population, compared to a regional average of 3.4% and a national average of 4.1%. Epping Forest has more people working as managers and professionals than the county, region and national averages. Similarly, there are fewer people in the sales / customer service / machine operatives / elementary occupations category than the rest of Essex, Eastern region and England. A key feature of the local economy is the high numbers who commute to the capital and the lack of large scale employers outside the public sector. In localised areas horticulture is prominent and farming features heavily in land use.

Your Voice Matters!

We asked local people what they thought about the district and areas for improvement and this is what they told us:

- Nine out of ten residents are already happy with their own homes and over 85% are satisfied overall with their local area as a place to live. In the areas with the poorest satisfaction scores, over 75% of residents still described themselves as satisfied overall.
- In terms of issues to be addressed, local people, in common with those across the county, have concerns around activities for teenagers, roads and pavements repairs and crime issues. However in Epping Forest specifically, protecting the green and unique environmental nature of the district is a major issue emerging across all groups and areas from recent consultation. This is a top local priority at the moment, second after crime in people responding to the "Your Voice Matters" consultation, and the top priority for the future along with addressing other green issues relating to carbon emissions.

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- There are no issues or factors that residents rate highly important in making somewhere a good place to live and which they think are really in need of improvement locally.
- A substantial majority, over three quarters of residents, feel that this is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. Residents in Waltham Abbey and Loughton are particularly positive about this aspect.
- People locally are more likely to be dissatisfied with local bus services and local transport information.
- Only around a quarter of respondents feel that they can influence local decision making.
- Consultation with the public has also highlighted a perceived link between Anti-social behaviour and the need to create more activities and facilities for young people as alternatives to ‘hanging around on street corners’.
- Young people taking part in the “Big Youth Debate” also echoed these concerns about crime and safety, but raised greater concern about issues around carbon emissions and the environment generally, and access to transport. The area of greatest concern however was for the provision of more activities for young people.
- Face to face group discussions with residents in some of the more deprived areas of the district show people are positive about where they live and their community, but have concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour.



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Our Key Challenges

Some Key Issues to be Addressed

In order for One Epping Forest to take work forward it needs to understand what promotion of the 'economic, social and environmental well being' means for Epping Forest and what the partnership can do locally to improve quality of life and add value. These key challenges listed below have been drawn from the evidence from public consultation and information submitted by partners about issues to be addressed in the longer term. The point of the partnership and this strategy is not purely to describe the area and its problems but to work out what it needs to do collectively, and its partners individually to effectively address them. The main approach to meeting these challenges will be set out in this long term strategy, the practical projects will, in the main, be set out in the delivery plans which will be produced to manage activity in the short and medium term and in key plans such as the Local Development Plan and the Council Plan etc.

The key issues emerging from the research and consultation are set out below:

- *How do we protect the green and unique heritage of our district while making effective provision for a growing population for jobs, infrastructure and homes?*
- *How do we relate to London maximising the opportunities of our location without importing its drawbacks?*
- *How do we ensure that we fully play our role in meeting the future challenges of reducing carbon emissions, congestion and promoting greener living?*
- *Many residents are unable to buy and in desperate need of Council or Housing Association housing. How can we contribute to bridging the housing affordability gap so that we ensure that younger residents aren't forced out of the area to get on the housing ladder?*
- *How do we combat the disconnection between falling crime rates and non-declining fear of crime rates while making our communities even safer?*
- *How do we make sure that as our community becomes more diverse we meet the challenges of supporting these different communities with different needs effectively and build a climate of mutual respect?*
- *How do we achieve our potential with regard to educational attainment, continue to raise aspiration for all pupils and support our schools?*
- *What can we do to support the wider economy of the district so that we build prosperity that everyone can share? Focusing support for the rural economy in particular, to maintain its sustainability and developing enhanced access to services, reduced journeys and environmental damage.*
- *How do we make sure that the district gets its fair share of national, regional and countywide funding at a time of reducing public expenditure to support the priorities of local people?*
- *Should the partnership become a major voice for local communities, looking to exert greater influence over what is done by all the publically funded agencies operating in this area so that it really reflects local peoples needs and aspirations while services are better joined up and duplication reduced?*

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- *By pooling budgets and developing joint working arrangements, can the Partnership maximise output and get more value for money for its spending?*
- *What should we do to improve activities for teenagers?*
- *How should we promote active citizenship, engagement in community and social life, and empower communities locally?*
- *What can the partnership really do to narrow the major gaps in health that exist locally between our most affluent and poorest areas?*



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Meeting These Challenges

This section sets out the key themes and objectives that the partnership will pursue in the longer term and how it will measure its success.

Theme One - Safer

Why is this an issue?

All our research tells us that crime and particularly the fear of crime remain central issues for our residents even though the actual crime rate in our district has been declining for sometime and it remains below national averages. Those in our community that are young or old can feel particularly vulnerable and often fear of crime has a major negative effect on their quality of life and their ability to fully engage in all the good things that living



in our district has to offer. While our crime rate is comparatively low issues around domestic burglary, a particularly invasive and unsettling crime, continue to buck this downward trend and domestic violence is becoming an area of growing concern. The position of the district next to the capital, with tube and bus links giving easy access, continues to facilitate offenders travelling into and out of the area, a problem not encountered to the same degree in other areas in Essex and this is reflected in the crime figures. Although significant advances have been made in

improving the technical standards and coverage of CCTV within the district, our research tells us more needs to be done. The district council has adopted a CCTV strategy and action plan covering the next 3 to 5 years which will ensure practical and effective use of CCTV whilst not infringing on civil liberties. Parents and residents generally are concerned about provision of additional, purposeful activities for children while the Killed and Seriously Injured rate due to road accidents remains relatively high even though it is declining. Road Safety remains a key concern as do safety improvements to the road infrastructure and combating excessive speed, particularly in the forest.

The communities that make up our district are changing and our population is becoming more diverse, and while this can and does bring many benefits it can also bring challenges. While the vast majority of our residents, from whatever culture they come from wish to live in peace with their neighbors and provide an environment for themselves and their families to flourish there are some who wish to exhort people to carry out violent acts to bring about change. While most residents feel that people from different backgrounds and religions get on well together, it requires all parts of our community to work together to undermine those that would cause division and promote discord.

How will we measure success?

We will become a place where people work together so that all in our communities, especially the most vulnerable, are able to lead lives free from the blight of crime, and the fear of crime and can play a full role in the life of their community in an environment that supports and sustains respect.

What are we going to do about it?

Key Objective 1. Deliver innovative programmes to tackle fear of crime and promote respect, and enable all residents and stakeholders to play an active role in making their communities safer.

Key Objective 2. Build better links with partners in London, Hertfordshire and across Essex to deliver more integrated community safety programmes.

Theme Two - Sustainable

Why is this an issue?

Epping Forest District is a great place to live, and our residents tell us that a major factor in people living their lives here or aspiring to live here is its green and unique nature and environment. In our 'Your Voice Matters' survey this was one of the top two priorities for the Partnership to address now and the single most important issue for the future. The Forest, the Lee Valley Regional Park, formal and informal green spaces, and the fact that over 94% of the district is Green Belt are clearly assets that residents prize. Partners are aware of the need to constantly improve how we all protect the environment in its widest sense, reducing carbon emissions, recycling and reusing more and developing sustainable transport options tackling over reliance on the car.



One of the key environmental challenges the Partnership faces is the sustainable use of natural resources. By reducing consumption of resources such as electricity, gas, water and other materials, we can reduce our carbon emissions, contribute significantly to sustainable development in Epping Forest and influence others through the example we set.

It is now widely known that as a result of climate change, our region is expected to experience significantly warmer and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers and more frequent severe weather, in the form of heat waves and storms. Without decisive action climate change will have a severe impact on our communities' health and quality of life, economy and natural environment. It is therefore important that we prepare and plan for these changes by adapting and building resilience into our organisations and services. This will ensure business continuity and avoid unnecessary expenditure in the face of a changing climate.

However, there is recognition that the area must develop as the population grows and new creative and sustainable ways need to be found to conserve and reduce energy consumption, and meet the needs of future generations. This is an extremely difficult balance, particularly in an area where housing supply and affordability are key issues.



The district's rural nature and inadequate public transport also make it very difficult for people to get about without access to a car and, as such, car ownership is high. These challenges are compounded by significant hotspots of deprivation, including access to services in an otherwise affluent area requiring action by a range of partners if they are to be effectively addressed. The tube network in the district makes it accessible and an even more attractive place for commuters, but there are significant transport and development challenges around expanding access to the motorway network to employment opportunities outside the district, and tackling emissions from congested roads within the district.

While a significant proportion of the community already travels out, and others commute in, there remains the need to deliver enough good quality employment options in the district which can provide greater choice for residents and reduce the environmental impact of commuting. The aim is to enhance and further promote local economic productivity. The district has a strong culture of entrepreneurship and this should be

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encouraged to ensure that this business start-up activity continues and has a good survival rate. An important area to explore and build on is the promotion of our built and natural heritage, encouraging tourism, making the district a destination for Londoners, promoting our unique town centres and capitalizing on our proximity to London as a gateway to Essex. Proposals to promote and expand high speed broadband links to enable more people to work from home in less urban settings, or changing the use of small barn complexes to sites for employment units might help boost the rural economy while meeting environmental concerns. The need to ensure an effective legacy from the Olympic Games and a concern that we should be using the environmental legacy we have to support employment and tourism more remains apparent. The district does not currently have a separate long term plan for economic development setting out the challenges the future might bring for the district, with an agreed vision with all stakeholders on how we meet them and compete effectively with other areas for inward investment. This would provide an effective base for engagement with central government and regional development agencies to ensure the area receives its fair share of grant aid in competition with other areas and can fully engage in new Local Enterprise Partnerships. The Partnership recognises that economic disadvantage can also have major impacts on ill health, crime and educational attainment, and it needs to prioritise work to build prosperity that everyone can share particularly in areas of high need in the district.

As our population grows and continues to change, provision needs to be made for additional housing in a manner appropriate to our overriding priority which is to protect and conserve the areas environmental heritage. This will put further pressure on available land, transport services and jobs. The continuing high cost of housing makes it very difficult for people, even with good incomes, to get on the housing ladder, and in many cases this leads to young people moving out of the district to access housing. More affordable housing is required than is being delivered and new targets have been proposed. Decisions need to be taken on the proportion of affordable homes on new developments and a new look taken at higher density provision for appropriate sections of the community, in appropriate areas and in consultation with local people. This would help meet need but also ensure that green space is not swallowed up. In an area where residents clearly place such a high value on protecting the environment, approvals should only be given for new build which meets the highest standards for energy efficiency and can provide 'lifetime homes'. These will be largely questions for the new Local Development Framework (LDF) which replaces the Local Plan but the analysis of public consultation and the evidence set out in this strategy should provide guidance.



In an area where residents clearly place such a high value on protecting the environment, approvals should only be given for new build which meets the highest standards for energy efficiency and can provide 'lifetime homes'. These will be largely questions for the new Local Development Framework (LDF) which replaces the Local Plan but the analysis of public consultation and the evidence set out in this strategy should provide guidance.

While the natural and built environment, and requirements for jobs, homes and transport are key challenges, it is important to not lose sight of the importance of building sustainable communities. Supporting strong communities, which can help look after their neighbours and are able to take on the challenges of the 'Big Society', will be another key challenge. The real and potential loss of facilities in rural communities, but also in urban areas, as public expenditure contracts, will offer new opportunities for local communities to take on greater control of their areas.

How will we measure success?

We become a place where together we protect and enhance the green and unique environmental heritage of our district but plan effectively for meeting the needs of current and future generations for homes, jobs, services and transport in a manner always sensitive to our environment.

What are we going to do about it?

Key objective 3 Ensure that the protection of the Green Belt and the unique character of the district, together with capital infrastructure and carbon reduction improvements to promote greener travel options and reduce congestion, are major priorities in the Local Development Framework and a green strategy is produced which enhances environmental education and joint action between the partners.

Key objective 4 Devise and implement a long term Economic Development Strategy which identifies opportunities for growing and supporting skills, business and employment, including infrastructure to support rural enterprise and tackles economic deprivation in hotspot areas.

Key objective 5 Together support the provision of a range of affordable, innovative and environmentally friendly, lifetime housing including higher density homes in appropriate locations.

Theme Three - Healthier

Why is this an issue?

Health issues are fundamental to a person's quality of life and our district is a very healthy place to be for a majority of residents. We have some of the healthiest areas in the county, in terms of life expectancy, our health services in general are good, and, in the main, people are satisfied with the hospitals and primary care services which serve our area. In environmental terms, pollution and air quality can be poor in some areas due to high density of traffic but our housing is liked by over 90% of residents and over 90% of our properties already meet the 'decent home' standards and this will shortly reach 100%. The need for health and social care services locally is expected to increase as the population ages. Locally our age structure is already older than the national average, and over the next 15 years the over 65s will increase by 27% and the over 85s by 52%. The



district also has some of the widest disparities in health in Essex and both these factors while impacting on individuals and their families also have significant implications for service providers and public resource allocation. The gap between the areas with the best and worst life expectancy is significant. Understanding why this health inequality exists locally and taking concerted action to address the factors that are making it happen should be key aims. The Partnership needs to understand what lifestyle factors, environmental issues or access to services, advice and support might be underlying this problem and to intervene where possible and practicable. On many indicators of ill health, Waltham Abbey and the surrounding area appears to have poorer health than the rest of the district. Some places also appear to have falling life expectancy when the trend is for inexorably rising life expectancy elsewhere. Obesity is becoming a greater problem nationally and locally, and is a particular cause of concern among children. On average, the district has lower smoking prevalence, alcohol misuse and teenage conception rates than the rest of the country but there are pockets within the district where they are higher.

How will we measure success?

We become a place where all our residents are helped to live healthy, active lives, with partners focusing resources on the communities that suffer the poorest health, supporting them to transform their lives, and where social and environmental factors which create the health divide are tackled and addressed effectively.

What are we going to do about it?

Key objective 6. Prioritise interventions to reduce health inequalities, targeting resources to the areas and people with poorer health, while improving access to services and addressing the lifestyle related, environmental and other causes of ill health.

Key Objective 7. Champion, identify and support partnership projects that help to promote healthy living and 'well being' across the district, sharing information and resources effectively.

Theme 4 - Aspiring

Why is this an issue?

While our overall performance is good in ensuring our young people are in education, training or employment, this remains a key area for action in the future. There are almost 30,000 children and young people living in Epping Forest District. Drawn from an increasing diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, many live, like 35% of the population, in small rural settlements in the green belt. While the district has very significant and often hidden areas of disadvantage it remains a fairly affluent area with some very good schools especially at primary level, but our overall educational attainment level has been



below where we might expect it to be at secondary level. This has a real impact on children's life chances (particularly those children from the most deprived areas); their employment and health prospects and a range of other important 'quality of life issues'. Many parents recognise this and place their children in schools and colleges outside the district; we have the highest numbers of children travelling both in and out of the district to attend school. This attainment gap and 'out commute' also has major implications for building strength and achievement in local education provision, as well as impacting on the environment and community cohesion.

The area does not currently have a major higher education institution within its borders, and cannot offer the full range of opportunities locally. The proximity to London and the range of world class colleges and universities which exist there makes this less of an issue; however, opportunities around a new/relocated campus/institution capitalising on the unique character of the district might be a reasonable aspiration to be pursued given the districts environmental heritage and its location right next to London.

While thankfully there are relatively few children and young people at risk in the district our priority must always be to work effectively in partnership to safeguard and promote wellbeing. Obesity and its associated health issues are a growing problem among young people and the rates in Epping Forest District are increasing, while the teenage pregnancy rate has come down, termination rates are higher than the East of England average and both these factors pose major challenges for both the individual and wider society which needs to support them. It remains a core goal of the partnership, and a priority for residents and young people to provide good quality, organised activities to enable our younger residents to have fun, thrive and grow and learn in a safe environment. New opportunities for developing 'lifelong learning' and building effective 'early years provision' will have major benefits for individuals, families and the wider community.

The Community Strategy

How will we measure success?

We become a place where all our children and young people are cherished and protected, where aspiration and attainment are prized and the infrastructure and support to make the area a beacon of excellence in education and learning is provided.

What are we going to do about it?

Key Objective 8. Improve partnerships and strengthen capacity to increase attainment in our schools and college and develop new plans for capital investment and enhanced higher education opportunities in the district.

Key objective 9. Support, and challenge arrangements for safeguarding our most vulnerable children while investing in purposeful activities to give all our young people the best and healthiest start in life.

Delivering the Strategy - Excellent Public Services

Central to the Partnerships ability to deliver the objectives listed in this document will be the quality of services provided locally, particularly those in the public sector.

We want to be a place characterised by 'Joined-up', public services that share information and resources, pool and align budgets and deliver value for money. The Partnership needs to maximize the effectiveness of public spending and prioritise frontline services, to make a real contribution to quality of life in our district.

This is an issue because over £8 billion of public money is spent each year in Essex, a proportion of this in Epping Forest and these budgets will undoubtedly be reduced in the coming years. This funding helps provide a wide range of important and valued public services, from schools and colleges, hospitals and health centre's to benefits and social services, housing and transport.

The list of services is very long, as is the number of different organisations that deliver them. Many of these are controlled directly by central government, and often they are centrally driven and links between each of those agencies, providing services locally, are often under developed. Problems of duplication and a lack of coherence can result in a poor service to the citizen, inefficiency and waste.

Given the necessity of making significant savings in public spending in order to reduce the public sector deficit, it is important to drive out waste, building better, closer management ties between public services and develop new structures that streamline and focus scarce resources at areas of greatest need. The 'Big Society' and new approaches to providing services more efficiently in a difficult economic period offer new opportunities for local communities, businesses and the voluntary sector to work with partners to provide services and facilities that local people value and need. The West Essex Partnership (WEP), including One Epping Forest, has been established and its work programme is being developed to help agencies providing public services across West Essex to better coordinate, plan and join up their services. To ensure that the area does not lose out in competitive bidding processes, the Partnership will need to ensure that strong links are built with government, and it engages effectively with decision makers so that they fully understand the problems and challenges the area faces.

The key objectives below will focus the work of the partnership to support the delivery of outcomes set out in this strategy:

- a) **Build better links with county, regional and central government funding agencies to ensure Epping Forest District receives a fair share of external funding.**
- b) **Establish mechanisms to promote, support and deliver better joined up public services locally.**

Our Core Values

Set out below are the values that will underpin how the Partnership will undertake all its work. All the agencies involved in the partnership will adopt these principles in their work collectively and individually in Epping Forest.

Listening

We will listen and communicate effectively with all our communities, promoting opportunities for local people to shape and direct how the Partnership works.

Innovation

We will learn from best practice elsewhere, looking for new ideas that will help the partnership to deliver better services.

Equality

We will strive to promote equality and support community cohesion in everything we do, recognising and meeting, where possible, the differing needs and experiences of all our residents, while fostering mutual respect.

Mixed Economy

We will concentrate on putting the customer and citizen first, developing a mixed economy of service delivery, involving the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Valuing Partners

We will value all our partners and their staff who are helping to deliver “Putting Epping Forest First”, supporting flexible inter-agency working and ensuring the principles of the Essex Compact are enshrined in all our work.

Total Place

We will strive to manage all our spending more effectively together and join up public provision where possible and in the interest of customers.

The Community Strategy

Appendix 1 - What are we going to do about it?

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|---|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Vision</p> | <p>Together making Epping Forest a great place to live, work, study and do business Making the most of our proximity to the capital while dealing with the challenges this poses to the protection of our green and unique environmental heritage. Building thriving, growing, cohesive and sustainable communities where improving quality of life, aspiration and attainment are achievable for all residents. A place where the different villages, towns and communities that make up our district are cherished and the public services that support them, work together as ONE, committed to excellence and efficiency.</p> | | | |
| <p>Theme</p> | <p>Theme one Safe</p> | <p>Theme two Sustainable</p> | <p>Theme three Healthy</p> | <p>Theme four Aspiring</p> |
| <p>What are we going to do about it?</p> | <p>a) Build better links with county, regional and central government funding agencies to ensure Epping Forest receives a fair share of external funding</p> <p>b) Establish mechanisms to promote, support and deliver better joined up public services locally</p> | | | |
| <p>Success Measurement</p> | <p>A place where people work together so that all in our communities, especially the most vulnerable are able to lead lives free from the blight of crime and fear of crime and can play a full role in the life of their community in an environment that supports and sustains respect.</p> | <p>A place with strong cohesive communities where together we protect, capitalise upon and enhance the green and unique heritage of our district but plan effectively for meeting the needs of current and future generations for decent homes, jobs, services and transport in a manner always sensitive to our environment.</p> | <p>A place where the health and well being of all our residents is promoted, with partners focusing on the communities that suffer the greatest health inequality, supporting them to transform their lives while positively tackling the other social and environmental factors which create the health divide.</p> | <p>A place where all our children and young people are cherished and protected, where aspiration and attainment are prized and the infrastructure and support to make the area a beacon of learning excellence are provided.</p> |

Appendix 2 - One Epping Forest is supported by these organisations

City of London Corporation
Epping Forest District Council
Epping Forest College
Epping Forest Community Transport
Essex County Council
Essex Fire Service
Essex Police
Federation of Small Businesses
Jobcentre Plus
Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
Local Business
Multi Faith Forum
NHS West Essex
Parish Councils
Voluntary Action Epping Forest