

ANNEXE 1

Surrey's Rural Strategy Review Issues facing Rural Surrey 2009-2014

Waverley Response Key Issues Summary

Overall, Waverley agrees that the overall goals, aims and objectives of the 2003 Rural Strategy are still relevant and applicable. Waverley would like to draw attention to the following key issues which need addressing as part of the new Rural Strategy:

- The Strategy needs to be assessed and reviewed at frequent and regular intervals
- Access to services in rural areas is the key issue. Given that a full range of services can never be delivered in every rural community, this will be through a planned combination of public transport and community transport related to key areas:
 - i. The elderly and disadvantaged population for whom transport in a rural environment is proportionately more problematic
 - ii. The younger people who require access to further education employment opportunities and leisure activities in nearby towns for which transport is a critical factor
- Access to and the poor capacity of rural Broadband presently inhibits business success and many rural areas are still served by inadequate broadband provision
- Town and Parish Councils need involvement with current issues and engagement with major service providers coupled with opportunities to share information rather than additional training
- CCTV in rural areas as set out in the report is neither practical nor likely effective. Rural areas need a more effective response to the increase in rural crime together with preventative action geared to the rural situation. Increased levels of Neighbourhood Policing and Support Officers has shown a good level of increased confidence in rural communities
- Greater support for the full range of rural businesses; not restricted to farming which accounts for only a small element of commercial activity in the countryside. Programmes targeted at leisure provision and support and people working from home in a wide variety of fields, is now urgently needed. The Strategy must recognise the increasing value of non-agricultural businesses to the rural economy.

1 The Surrey Rural Partnership

The Surrey Rural Partnership was formed in 2007. The Partnership brings together all the organisations with a concern for the future of rural Surrey and Waverley is both a member of the Partnership and a key contributor to the Officer Steering Group. The Partnership acts as a rural voice in the County including with the Surrey Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement and other strategic processes. The Rural Partnership is one of the consultative and delivery partnerships of the Surrey Strategic Partnership and a refreshed Rural Strategy will be a constituent part of the Surrey Community Strategy

2 Review of the Strategy

The Surrey Rural Strategy was published in October 2003. In May 2008, the Surrey Rural Partnership agreed a project brief for a review of the Rural Strategy. In June 2008 four workshops were held for members of the Rural Partnership and representatives of partner organisations to discuss and agree current issues in rural Surrey and possible actions needed.

3 Consultation on Issues

This consultation is to check whether there are additional issues or suggestions for the Strategy ahead of the publication of a new draft Rural Strategy. The issues are set out in four main sections:

- Aims and objectives
- Rural Communities
- Rural Economy
- Rural Environment

In this overview, the issues are summarised in headline form and Waverley's draft comment is set out.

The responses are being assimilated by Surrey County Council on behalf of the Surrey Rural Partnership, and the new Draft Strategy will be issued for public consultation in the Summer of 2009.

4 Aim and objectives of the Rural Strategy (Paragraphs 6-11)

The Rural Strategy is for:

- those who live or work in rural areas
- those who live in urban areas and who value the countryside for recreation and its special 'sense of place'
- those who visit from outside the County.

The 2003 Strategy set as its aim to promote actions which work towards the achievement of a more sustainable future, whether social, economic or environmental for Surrey's rural areas.

The objectives of the 2003 Rural Strategy were:

- to promote thriving rural communities with a high level of self reliance and security, and good access to high quality public services
- to encourage a diverse and vibrant rural economy supporting stable levels of employment

- to conserve the rural environment in sustainable ways, to enhance it where appropriate, maintain and improve biodiversity and enable local people and visitors to enjoy it for leisure and recreation
- to ensure the active participation of all those concerned with actions to sustain Surrey’s rural communities, rural economy, rural environment and countryside access.

Waverley Comment

The overall goals, aims and objectives of the 2003 Rural Strategy are still relevant and applicable

As a general comment the actions proposed need to be strengthened and more action focussed with clear measurable targets to assess progress and achievement

5 Rural Communities (Paragraphs 12-15)

This part of the consultation document sets out a number of issues for rural communities. The SWOT analysis for this section is set out below:

<p>Strengths Established and cohesive communities Community spirit Relative affluence Low crime rate Communication links High levels of employment</p>	<p>Opportunities Affordable housing Parish councils - can be local voice IT/home working Community ownership of shops, PO’s, pubs, etc New grants programmes</p>
<p>Weaknesses Lack of affordable and sheltered housing High age profile. Shortage of labour Resistance to change Lack of activities/access for young people Lack of social care Dormitory villages. Hidden deprivation Difficulties of access to some services: health and education</p>	<p>Threats Government focus on urban areas Lack of affordable housing Closure of village shops and post offices Climate change/pressures on resources Energy costs Growing affluence gap –outward migration of young people</p>

Waverley comments:

Under strengths:

- *After community spirit add “and volunteering”*
- *add Market towns as service centres to a wider area*

Under weaknesses

- *After High age profile add “potential isolation and loss of independence without suitable infrastructure”*
- *start difficulties of access list with e.g and also add transport.*

Under opportunities:

- *add ‘high entrepreneurship level in area’*

- *Diversification*
- Under threats*
- *Economic situation leads to further centralisation of services*

5.1 Town and Parish Councils (Paragraphs 16-18)

The report identifies the variable capacity, visibility, willingness and ability of Parish and Town councils in Surrey and suggests a number of opportunities for local action including:

- Training for clerks and councillors
- Parish Planning
- Clustering of Parishes to share experience and co-ordinating local action
- Improved communication to promote resident engagement

Waverley Comment:

Waverley broadly agrees with the issues set out and will continue to work with and support its Town and Parish Councils in delivering aspirations for local communities. However, the Strategy needs to recognise the voluntary nature of the parish councillor role and the capacity issues many parish councils have.

5.2 Local Services for Local People (Paragraphs 20-23)

The report notes the impact of loss of services to rural communities and that Market Town Healthchecks and Parish Plans have proved to be very successful across Surrey. Surrey Community Action provides guidance and support for communities undertaking Town and Parish Plans but there is need for funding to continue this work.

Waverley comment:

Waverley agrees that the Market Town Healthchecks and Parish Plan work has been effective in place shaping and community capacity building and should continue as a priority. It also agrees that funding for the co-ordinator post is essential and should be a priority within the LAA. In addition, the Market Town Fund created by SEEDA has been invaluable in generating economic and environmental improvements and should be prioritised as a means of sustaining smaller rural communities in the coming years.

5.3 Libraries and Information (Paragraphs 24-27)

The consultation refers to the importance of access to information communication technology is particularly important to rural communities. It proposes that libraries could be promoted as community hubs and that village halls could be used as learning centres.

Waverley Comment

The importance of improving broadband provision for both rural communities and businesses is underplayed. Cable providers and broadband providers are reluctant to improve facilities in rural areas since they do not have the volumes of potential customers to generate the level of return on their investment they are seeking. The Rural Strategy should prioritise lobbying technology providers and regional partners to fund the necessary infrastructure improvements.

5.4 Education and Young People (Paragraphs 28-31)

The consultation notes that schools are at the heart of rural communities but that lack of staff, facilities and activities continue to be an issue in some areas. It also notes that provision and access to childcare, youth training and youth facilities can be issues in rural areas. It identifies the lack of opportunities for young people and that this is perceived as one of the reasons why young people move away from rural areas.

Waverley Comment

Facilities for young people are widely acknowledged as being in need of enhancement. Much is done by local communities to supplement the statutory provision but more co-ordinated provision, as proposed, is essential.

No reference is made to the raising the Participation Age in Education or training.

The provision of careers advice on local employment opportunities will be meaningless without suitable local jobs. The early indications of the recession are that it is becoming increasingly difficult for young people and those leaving universities to find suitable employment and this issue is more acute in rural areas. Further inter-agency targeted work should take place to support those young people not in education employment or training (NEET).

Waverley's own scheme (almost unique among local authorities in the south east) to provide entry to employment, apprenticeship and alternative curriculum opportunities has also found that accessing its services without an effective transport infrastructure is very challenging for young people.

This section should also link to the question of affordable housing – of real concern to rural young people and families.

5.5 Health and Social Care (Paragraphs 32-35)

The consultation identifies that rural issues were recognised in the 2007 Surrey Health Strategy but that access to hospitals and health centres can be a particular problem for older people and people with disabilities in rural areas.

The suggested actions propose community self help and better information and advice on what is available.

Waverley Comment

The biggest issue of sustainable community transport to help people access health services is omitted from the actions. The reorganisation of health services in Surrey seems to have resulted in some anachronistic and inappropriate transport solutions which are severely disadvantaging rural communities. Rural transport schemes such as the Waverley Hoppa service do not receive adequate support for the health service transport they provide.

5.6 Crime, Community Safety, Fire & Emergencies (Paragraphs 36-39)

The Consultation notes the series of emergencies that have affected rural Surrey since 2003 including major fires, flooding and foot and mouth. It also notes the fear of crime and need for reassurance continue to be an issue in rural areas and outlines some of the activities that are underway to address local concerns.

Waverley comment:

The response to the Foot and Mouth outbreak showed that there was a potential local information and support resource available for the statutory response agencies through the town and parish councils.

We are not aware of a 'real need' for CCTV in rural areas of Waverley. Whilst CCTV is used proactively across Waverley, road safety, driver behaviour and inappropriate use of rural roads is far more of a concern for Waverley's rural communities.

Crimes that affect rural areas are often different from that experienced by those living in our towns. Recent crime series affecting mainly rural areas of Waverley are theft of York stone, night time tool thefts from garages/ sheds, and tack theft. Arrangements needed to tackle these types of crime differ from that of more urban areas. Investment in target hardening and preventative measures such as covert cameras suitable for rural deployment and equipment marking devices and solutions are more appropriate than other approaches often used in more urban areas.

5.7 Housing (Paragraphs 40-43)

The consultation notes that the demand and cost of housing, whilst Surrey-wide issues, are exaggerated in rural areas.

Waverley Comment

Waverley agrees that the issue of the lack of affordable housing is a top issue for rural Surrey and with the recession, looks set to be a serious concern for the duration of the new Rural Strategy. Waverley is also aware that the limited availability of worker accommodation causes recruitment problems and also increases costs for businesses in agricultural and tourism sectors. The work of the Rural Housing Enabler should continue to support communities with housing need.

5.8 Transport (Paragraphs 44-47)

The consultation notes that transport is a major issue that in rural areas and cuts across many other issues including access to services, education, health, social services and leisure.

There is recognition that community led solutions to local transport issues need support and that maintaining rural roads is an ongoing issue.

Waverley Comment

Waverley supports the proposition that community-led solutions need support and longer term funding. Rural bus routes are constantly under pressure and it is unsurprising that rural communities need to prioritise vehicle ownership to access services when public transport

solutions are inadequate. In the absence of subsidised public transport routes additional investment into community transport schemes both to subsidise routes and the capital infrastructure is essential. Transport in the evenings, particularly for young people, is a particular challenge that needs to be addressed.

6 Rural Economy (Paragraphs 48-51)

The consultation document notes that patterns of work in rural Surrey continue to change and that support mechanisms for rural businesses are also changing. The new English Rural Development Programme (ERDP) and its Surrey based LEADER programme will provide some opportunities up to 2013 but high costs of fuel, feed, supplies, land, employment and housing all have a negative effect on Surrey’s rural businesses.

The SWOT analysis for this section is set out below:

<p>Strength Beautiful countryside – attracts visitors and businesses Proximity to big markets – Surrey towns and London Guildford/Egham/Staines – recession resistant, strong economies Diverse economy Commuters bring money into Surrey External investment Good transport/access infrastructure</p>	<p>Opportunities Housing targets and infrastructure Educate commuters to buy/spend locally Promote local businesses/services to new residents LEADER programme to promote diversification Internet shopping: local businesses sell widely IT/new technology – living, working in rural areas Strong voluntary/community sector can fill gaps</p>
<p>Weaknesses Some low incomes Transport/access difficulties Difficulties of access to some services: education and training, banking, post offices Dependence on London economy Low level of local food production Relatively fewer agricultural holdings NIMBYism towards new development</p>	<p>Threats Climate change/flooding Diseases – foot and mouth/Blue Tongue/habitat diseases Loss of/change in use of rural facilities – shops, pubs, Pos Housing targets – complexity of where/what Cost of living for young people – external migration Mobile society/lack of affinity to local communities</p>

Waverley Comment

Under weaknesses

Limited Broadband infrastructure in rural areas

High percentage of employment in financial services

Under opportunities

Add '2012'

6.1 Rural Towns (Paragraphs 52-55)

The report notes the interdependence between towns and surrounding countryside but that this varies across Surrey. It also notes the centralisation of services has meant that some rural towns have lost facilities and that maintaining a good retail mix is difficult.

Waverley Comment

Waverley has supported the development of Town Initiatives and Market Town Healthchecks in each of its main towns. These require ongoing nurturing and support from the three tiers of local government. The role of the Market Towns Co-ordinator funded by SEEDA has been very welcome and must continue, particularly since the county council withdrew its direct support for economic development. It is very surprising that a county the size of Surrey does not have a proactive economic development unit. There has also been pressure to convert employment land into residential land because of the high land values, and it is essential to maintain an appropriate level of employment land in rural towns if they are to remain competitive for the future. The rural towns have a high number of independent businesses as well as high street fascias, and activities to encourage more people to shop locally and support their independent shops should be supported.

6.2 Rural Businesses (Paragraphs 56-58)

The report notes the wide range of rural businesses in addition to farming, food and tourism. It also notes the need for local planning policies to help rural businesses adapt to changing demand. Although some work has been done to develop rural broadband, investigating further electronic infrastructure and support needed is proposed.

Waverley Comment

More co-ordinated support, particularly during the recession, is needed for rural businesses alongside urban businesses. The broadband issue needs greater emphasis if Surrey's rural businesses are to be able to take advantage of the next generation of broadband infrastructure roll-out.

6.3 Tourism (Paragraphs 59-62)

The report notes that tourism and leisure services are one of the main growth sectors of the rural economy and that many jobs and small businesses particularly in rural towns are underpinned by tourism and visitor income. The work of the Visit Surrey Partnership, bringing together the public and private sectors and underpinned by Tourism South East is also noted. The issues raised include the need for additional infrastructure for visitors (including toilets, signing, parking, accommodation, and access to information); sustainable transport solutions and the opportunity to promote rural based businesses and facilities to residents.

Waverley comment

Waverley's visitor economy has always been an important component of the rural economy and it welcomes the emphasis on working together with the Visit Surrey Partnership to take forward issues. A lot of work has been undertaken by Town Partnerships to provide information, events and access to the market towns e.g Haslemere Initiative themed weekends, Christmas Market and the Visitor and Local Information Centre – funded by Haslemere Town Council; the Hidden Britain project and events organised by Farnham Town Council; and projects in Cranleigh and Godalming.

6.4 Farming, Food, Forestry, Horticulture (Paragraphs 63-66)

The report notes the impact of farming and forestry on the maintenance of the landscape even if the economic value of the sectors is relatively low. The interconnectedness of farming and food has been recognised regionally and nationally, and a new Surrey Farm Study is expected to be published shortly. Despite the high percentage of woodland, forestry continues to be weak.

Issues raised in this sector include the value of local food and horticulture; the opportunity for additional procurement and the opportunities for greater collaboration between farmers and growers and others to develop more effective supply chains.

Waverley Comment

Waverley awaits with interest the findings of the new Farm Study but broadly concurs with the issues and suggested actions. The Surrey Food Links brand has not yet achieved its potential and more effort needs to be put in generating added value products for local farmers and growers and in creating better connectivity between local producers and consumers. An action should be added that will raise awareness of land managers and local consumers of the potential of wood fuel, as a local energy source, that would stimulate forestry and woodland management.

7 Rural Environment (Paragraphs 67-70)

The report notes that the environment is one of the features most highly valued by people who live and work in the county. It has been changing fast in recent years with the growth of scrub woodland and the extension of horse pastures. Surrey has more open access countryside and more registered commons than anywhere else in the south east.

A number of trends including climate change; new house building; and traffic growth will impact on the rural environment.

The SWOT analysis for this section is set out below:

<p>Strengths 80% of Surrey is countryside Large extent of protected land: AONB, AGLV, SPAs, SACs, Ramsar sites, SSSIs Variety of habitats Huge volunteer force Large area of public open access land</p>	<p>Opportunities European funding Pay and play, eg for horseriding 2012 Olympics Eco industries: eg woodfuel Common land as a resource</p>
<p>Weaknesses Over-developed in places: housing, airports, offices Traffic: noise, lack of tranquillity Widespread incremental change Flooding and development in floodplains Lack of understanding of need for management</p>	<p>Threats Development pressures: housing, airports, minerals, waste Disease Increasing population – increasing pressures Overuse: erosion: conflicts with mountain biking, four-wheel drives Ignorance of need for appropriate land management Climate change leading to local changes which provoke local reaction, eg biofuels, polytunnels</p>

Waverley Comment

Add under threats :

- *Increasing population - increasing pressure eg fly tipping & garden waste dumping, car parking on verges*

7.1 Planning, Minerals, Waste & Countryside management (Paragraphs 71-74)

The report sets out the statutory framework for minerals and waste and also the work undertaken to maintain and improve the character and appearance of the countryside. It highlights the problem caused by absentee owners and the impact of new development and land uses. It also notes that practical action to conserve and improve the countryside can be hampered by lack of available funding.

Actions proposed include using local evidence gathered in Parish Surveys to respect local character in different areas and developing a framework for rural proofing local development frameworks

Waverley comment

Waverley agrees with the actions proposed. More targeted actions to reflect local concerns about Waste and Minerals issues and their impact on the countryside is needed.

7.2 Heritage and landscape (Paragraphs 75-79)

The report refers to studies and actions to preserve heritage and landscape features and proposes information and guidance for landowners.

Waverley Comment

Further actions beyond information and guidance are needed.

7.3 Nature Conservation including woodlands (Paragraphs 80-83)

A significant proportion of Surrey has protective designations – Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SSSIs and SNCIs) and over a quarter of Surrey's woodlands are protected sites many of which are classified as Ancient Woodland. The report sets out actions in place to bring more sites under appropriate management and proposes more very local management of individual sites and more proactive management by local authorities of areas under their ownership.

Waverley comment

Waverley agrees with the actions proposed. The proposed action for local authorities to manage sites under their ownership should be extended to all public bodies. No reference is made to Natural England, the National Trust and other major land management organisations.

7.4 Recreation and Access (Paragraphs 83-86)

This section of the report covers footpaths, cycle paths and byeways and other land for sport and recreation. There is concern over the potential conflict between motorised vehicles and walkers, horse-riders and cyclists.

Waverley comment

Further work needs to be done on effective actions. Promotion of Defra Environmental Stewardship schemes to land managers.

8 Conclusion

The issues paper has set out a number of concerns to inform the new Surrey Rural Strategy. At this stage, the proposed actions need a sharper focus and to be more specific about what will be achieved. There is no clear ownership attached to a number of the proposed actions, and no timescales. If this remains the case, it is difficult to see how some of the actions will be delivered.