

Healthy Places Background Information



Sustainability, Health and Local Authorities

Sustainable communities and health

Recent legislation and guidance has promoted the principle of sustainable development throughout local government,^{i ii iii iv v vi vii} particularly in the development of spatial planning and transport planning documents. The following framework is in place to ensure that sustainability and community involvement are paramount in local policy formation.

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)

LSPs were introduced by the Local Government Act 2000. They are non-statutory bodies initiated and led by local authorities and made up of representatives from the public sector, business, the voluntary sector and community organisations.

LSPs: "provide the forum for collectively reviewing and steering public resources, through identifying priorities in Sustainable Community Strategies and LAAs." (Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities: Statutory Guidance^{vii})

Their primary role is to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), based on data and evidence from the local area, to establish a shared set of priorities for action. The long-term vision embodied in the SCS will then be used to guide and produce a three-year Local Area Agreement (LAA) that sets local priorities and targets for monitoring. Certain bodies are statutory 'partner authorities' and as such must be involved and co-operate in preparing LAA targets that relate to them.

All local authorities are required to prepare an SCS^{viii} but only upper-tier authorities are required to prepare an LAA. An LAA should reflect the local priorities identified by both upper- and lower-tier LSPs, and therefore upper-tier authorities are required to consult partner authorities in preparing and modifying their strategy^{ix}.

(Note: The Government no longer requires new LAAs. See note on page 00.)

Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)

An LSP is required to consult and seek out the views of all groups within the community in drawing up their strategy^x and there is now a broad legal duty to involve the community in local decision-making^{xi}.

There has been a change of nomenclature from 'community strategies' as originally legislated and 'Sustainable Community Strategies', to emphasise that sustainability should be at the heart of decisions.

A Sustainable Community Strategy should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK. This goal is "to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations" (*Securing the Future – UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy 2005*).^{xii}

Health is an important part of the principle of 'sustainable development'. For a local priority or policy to be sustainable, it should respect five principles^{vii}:

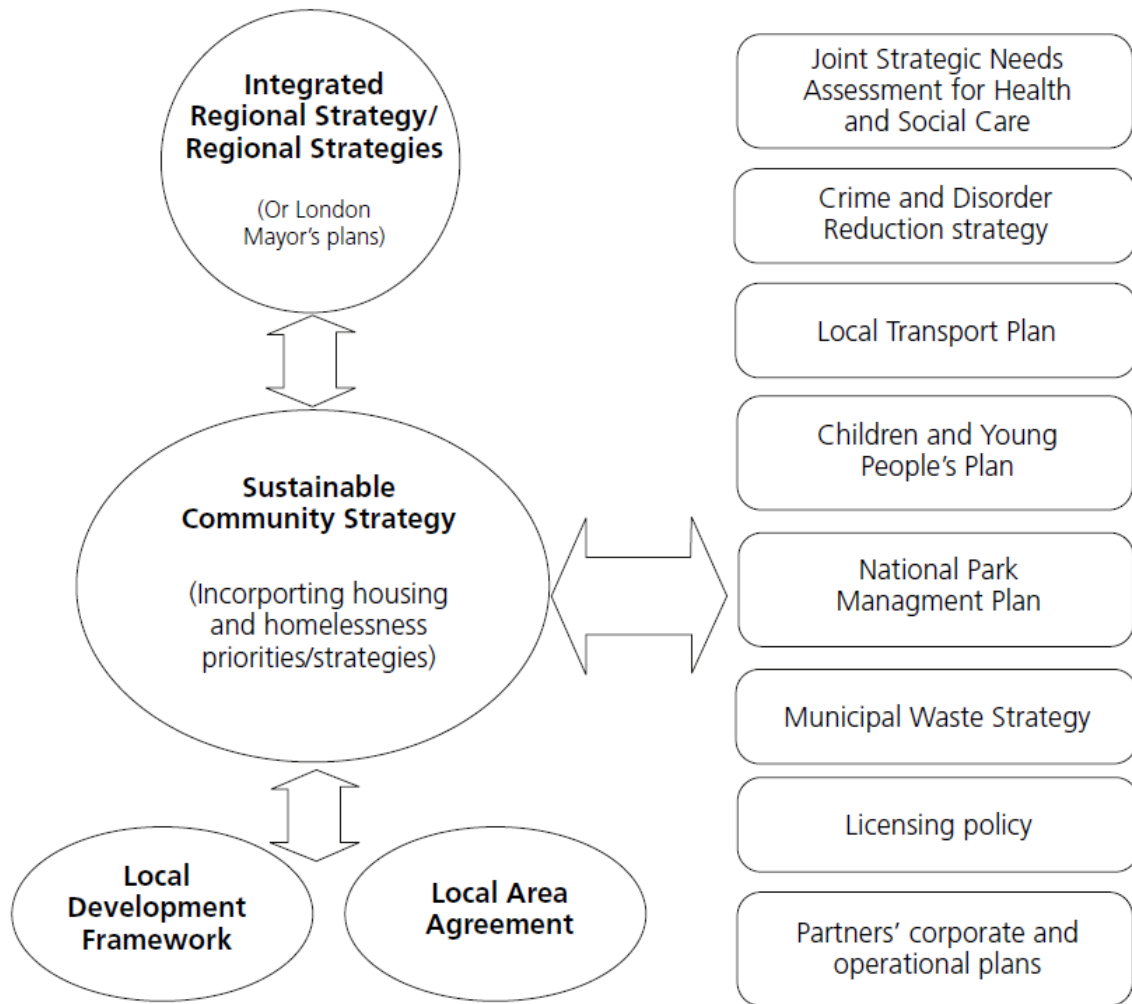
- living within environmental limits
- *a strong, healthy and just society*
- achieving a sustainable economy
- promoting good governance
- using sound science responsibly.

Sustainability will shape the content of long-term local strategies, which will in turn guide the immediate local priorities within an LAA and this agreement will direct all local authority decisions on resource allocation and development for the duration. Alongside this, the SCS and LAA will guide the construction of other longer-term local plans including the Local Development Framework (LDF) and Local Transport Plan (LTP). (See Figure 4 for an explanation of LDFs and LTPs.)

It is important that the development of a healthy community is given a key priority in the overarching Sustainable Community Strategy. If this is done, the health agenda will filter through all areas of local authority activity.

The requirements of community and stakeholder consultation in the SCS process create the potential for public advocacy prioritising a healthy community. The Sustainable Communities Act 2007 provides a process by which ideas generated by local communities can be fed through the local authority and selected for consideration by central government.

Figure 4 Relationship between Sustainable Community Strategies and other statutory local plans



Source: Department for Culture, Media and Sport^{vii}

- i Local Government Act 2000.
- ii Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- iii Sustainable Communities Act 2007.
- iv PPS 1 Delivering sustainable development.

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- v Department for Culture, Media and Sport. *Planning system: General principles*. 2006. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- vi Department for Transport. *Delivering a Sustainable Transport System*. 2008. London: Department for Transport.
- vii Department for Culture, Media and Sport. *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities: Statutory Guidance*. 2008. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- viii Local Government Act 2000, S.1(a). Note: Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits an authority to discharge any functions jointly with another so an SCS could be led by a county or district council.
- ix Local Government Act 2000, S.4(3).
- x Local Government Act 2000, S.4(3).
- xi Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- xii Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. *Securing the Future – UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy*. 2005. London: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.